

CAREER COUNSELLING CONFERENCE

SINGAPORE, JUNE 1979

Under the auspices of the Asian Women's Institute, thirty international participants and resource people met in Singapore from June 27 to July 3 for a Career Counselling Conference. "Career Education for Asian Women - a Framework", was presented in keynote addresses by two Asian scholars, Dr. Josefina O. Santamaria, associate professor in the department of Guidance and Counselling, De La Salle University, Manila, and Dr. Amnuay Tapingkae, president of Payap College, Thailand.

Beirut University College was represented by two members of the Guidance Office Staff, Mrs. Maha Khuri, Coordinator of Academic Advising, and Mrs. Evelyn Richards, Counselor. In preparation for the conference Mrs. Khuri conducted a study of re-entry students to BUC.

This pilot study was an attempt at bringing out the characteristics and problems of re-entry women as well as serving as an encouragement to pursue further research in other colleges and universities throughout the area. For the purpose of this study a questionnaire was administered in a personal interview to 23 married and 5 single women. It covered four areas: The re-entry woman's background and family life, her motivation for returning, her status at BUC, and the recommendations that she wished to make.

As the findings are made known to various administrators, it is hoped that they will become more aware and concerned for the needs of re-entry women among the student body.

The "Special Problems of the Employment of Women in Lebanon" was presented in a paper by Mrs. Richards. The paper was based on a pilot project sponsored by the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World which surveyed employment practices and projections for the future in the Beirut area. This occupational information included employer preferences concerning starting salary, age, educational preparation, special abilities, experience and benefits for different job categories.

With reference to the status of women, the findings confirm that women are currently employed in traditional careers such as teaching and secretarial positions. In addition, employers indicate their preference for women in these positions in the future. The presentation concluded with the exploration of some of the legal, religious and social aspects of the employment of women in Lebanon. Copies of these studies are available from the IWSAW.

Other panels dealt with "Special Problems of Employment of Urban Poor and Rural Women", and "Career Counselling Services available in Asia and the USA". However, the main focus of the conference was the skills oriented workshops. Led by a team of resource persons from the Career Services Office at Wellesley College, the participants learned counselling, career decision making and job hunting techniques; how to develop information resources, run workshops and reach out to client populations; and job development and placement skills. Each College brought career posters, pamphlets, books and photographs for display in the



resource center. BUC's contribution included a pilot project in developing career materials using slides and tape produced by the Communication Arts Department.

During the concluding workshop activity, representatives from participating colleges formulated action plans for developing and expanding their own career counselling services. BUC's plan includes conducting workshops on attitudes toward work for students receiving work/study grants; strengthening the orientation program by including career guidance; planning workshops for secondary school teachers to introduce them to concepts of career education and how to use career information; exploring the development of courses related to career education; and planning a Career Conference to obtain occupational information and help BUC students become more career conscious.

In addition to the educational opportunities such a conference affords, meeting with local hostesses representing various professional women's organizations was a highlight of the week.

The recurring themes of the Conference are well expressed in the summary of the proceedings:

1. Career Planning is a developmental, **life-long** process.
2. Vocation or occupation is only part of career planning.
3. There is need to define the socio-economic level of the clientele for whom services are being developed.
4. Women continue to have dual roles that are often conflicting. Most women in Asia quit their jobs upon marriage. The major handicaps for working women are marriage and children.
5. While civil and religious laws do not discriminate against women, the attitudes of women themselves and of society in particular were obstacles to a woman's self-fulfilment, utilization of potential and to achieving equal employment opportunities, such as equal pay for equal work.
6. The magnitude of the above problems make re-entry difficult for women.

Even though we come from a variety of cultures, women in general share similar problems. This conference has succeeded in identifying such problems and enabling participants to gain skills to help toward solutions.

Maria Khuri and
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