

Child 94

Beirut University College, 27-31 October

Child-94 was a national Conference organized by Beirut University College on October 27-31, 1993. Speakers and participants included, physicians, scholars and pioneers in the fields of education, early-childhood education, and educational administration from the university and other academic and developmental institutions in the country.

"Child-94" reminded Lebanese educators of important social, psychological, and cultural aspects of children's education. The organizers, leading educators themselves, assessed needs that are vital for further development of the Lebanese child, age zero to sixteen. Some of the issues raised in "Child-94" were: develop the child's awareness of human rights and social issues, the role of school in promoting children's health, role of education in prevention of smoking, nutrition, immunization and prevention of communicable diseases, Dentistry, Education of children with special needs, play in the social and intellectual context of development - the role of peers, developing awareness of

environmental issues in children, the child's identity, children's literature, emotional health and growth, and the role of the computer in education.

Dr. Nabil Haidar, Vice-President of Academic Affairs at Beirut University College and the driving force behind this Conference identified the goals of "Child-94":

- 1- To transmit the largest amount of available knowledge and data on comprehensive education of the child to school teachers and staff;
- 2- To aspire for using this knowledge for better changes and development.

The three days conference was transmitted, live, on public television making use of yet another dimension for raising awareness.

Beirut University College plays a leading role in assessing educational needs, creating social awareness and directing development in the country. It is known to address important issues often perceived by other

educational institutions as peripheral. In the last few years, BUC was a catalyst in directing attention and awareness towards mental disabilities and environmental issues. It was the first institution of its kind in the country to devise and implement an environmental program on its campuses (1992-93). The relevant project was also presented to the Ministry of the Environment for implementation in public schools and spaces all over the country. Furthermore, BUC was the first to establish an Institute for Women's Studies (1973) in any Arab country. And just recently (1993-94), courses in Women's Studies were introduced to the university's curriculum.

The only shortcoming of Child 94, however, may have been its neglect of any discussion of gender awareness for the child. This mirrors educational curricula in Lebanon, which dismiss the issue. Nevertheless, Women's Studies in the university is a breakthrough and, probably, a good place to begin because it is where future educators are trained. It is hoped that they will opt to introduce gender awareness.