His Highness the Aga Khan on the importance and impact quality education can have

by NANOWISDOMS ARCHIVE

"Quality education at all levels is, and has been, critically important for all societies at all times. In the developing world education offers the poor: opportunities for new futures; women; higher status, and new roles in their families and communities; migrants: an asset that is portable; and refugees: an asset that is both portable and secure. For these reasons, the Aga Khan Education Service has for many years operated several hundred schools in Eastern Africa and Central and South Asia -- many in isolated settings -- with a particular interest in the education of girls. I say this because the rest of my remarks this evening will focus on higher education, and I do not want to be understood, even by implication, as believing that primary and secondary school is of lesser significance. It is critical to the existence of an informed citizenry everywhere. Quality school level education is particularly important in the developing world where only a small percentage of the population will ever be able to attend a university, and where population growth is massively more rapid than the expansion of capacity of its universities. Finally the school system has a vital role to play in preparing those who do go on for further studies to make full use of that opportunity. It is the supply system for higher education and therefore cannot be neglected....

"The decision to create the Aga Khan University -- or AKU as we refer to it -- as the first private university in Pakistan, more than twenty years ago, was taken in the context of the deteriorating quality of higher education in the developing world. As a private university, AKU would have to remain small, but to justify the investment required it would have to become a role model for a country of more than 120 million people. To assume and retain this status AKU had to be a quality institution not only in terms of its academic offerings, but also in terms of admission and financial aid policies, governance, management and its financial health. The attraction of Board members of international standing in fields of education and development played a critical role in this quest. Academic excellence was achieved through careful selection of faculty and the nurturing of partnerships with..."
important institutions in the West, many of which are represented in this room -- Harvard, Johns Hopkins, McMaster, Toronto, Oxford, but also in Asia with the National University of Singapore....

"The quality and impact of the university can be further gauged from the fact that over the last fifteen years Pakistan's professional licensing body has recommended that all medical colleges in Pakistan adopt AKU’s model of community based medical education. Similarly, the Pakistan Nursing Council has adopted AKU’s nursing curriculum.... This is the kind of role that a small private university with strong international connections can play if it focuses on quality, relevance and impact and seeks opportunities to share its experience and human resources with other institutions and society as a whole."

His Highness the Aga Khan's 2001 Association of American Universities Centenary Celebration address (Washington D.C.)

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