

1 *The Original Vision and Needs for Changes in it*

The Commission was charged to review the ‘overall vision’ of the Aga Khan University that was articulated in the 1983 Harvard Report and to suggest changes that now appear to be “appropriate or necessary”. The foregoing Sections of this Report have reviewed changes in higher education and scholarship, in the world at large, and within AKDN and AKU itself; they have provided bases for responding to our charge. Each Section closed with an effort to discern implications for AKU’s mission and character from the changes it surveyed. We here draw together these implications.

1.1 The Harvard Report declared that the AKU needed to be “distinctive in substance or quality or both” and that it ought not to be a “big conventional university with the familiar array of schools and faculties”. **We have found no reason in the changes we have surveyed to depart from these conceptions.** The developing and Muslim worlds that AKU aims to serve continue to suffer less from quantitative dearth than from poor quality in higher education; the weaknesses of these worlds in research and scholarship will not disappear in the coming two or three decades. We thus conclude that :

AKU’s contribution must be in high quality education directed to well-selected needs. And an AKU making strong contributions to research and scholarship would make it a distinctive and specially valuable institution in the developing and Muslim worlds.

1.2 Since AKU began, private education, both at higher and other levels, has spread and won stronger favour in the developing and Muslim worlds. **AKU has been a pioneer in this movement and has increased opportunities to serve as a model for private higher education in the worlds of its particular concern.**

1.3 **Political changes** in the world at large have brought both very concrete and more diffuse consequences for what AKU might aim to be. There have been such specific changes as the emergence, following on the dissolution of the USSR, of the **Central Asian Republics** with their Muslim, including Ismaili, populations; likewise there have been changes in East Africa which have raised

questions about the future of AKU there; and in Pakistan political uncertainty and security questions have continued to exist. More broadly, civil strife, instability and other political ills have sharpened the questions: What can AKU do to protect itself against political changes and disorder? And, more positively, can AKU make a significant contribution to improved governance of countries in the Third and Muslim worlds? Some of these political changes will affect specific recommendations made in later sections of our report; in this section we shall need to consider policies and designs that may protect the University from disruption, and, further, if a concern with better governance can be a serious part of the mission of AKU.

1.4 We have observed that conceptions of development and the developing world have changed profoundly in recent years. But the ethical and intellectual challenges of improving the lives of vast populations have not lessened. Changes in the character of programmes will be needed, but **the basic vocation of AKU in the service of development should not change.**

1.5 Changes in the world since AKU began will continue in the decades ahead and make **AKU's role as a Muslim university more important and challenging** than it was in the beginning. The world's Muslim population will grow impressively and its spread in Europe and America will widen the relevance of AKU's work beyond the developing countries. The rise of radical Islamic movements and reactions to them, both within and outside the Muslim world, also heightens the potential significance AKU can have as a Muslim university.

1.6 The heightened importance of Islamic loyalties has been related to the globalisation of contemporary life and the recognition of multicultural variety it has stimulated. AKU, like other educational institutions, faces challenges in bridging national, religious and cosmopolitan identities, but also has **an exceptional opportunity as an authentic voice from the developing and Muslim worlds.**

1.7 The Aga Khan University in the first ten years of its life has been loyal to missions proposed for it by its Founder, its Charter, and the Harvard Report. Its experience thus far has brought no reason to change the vision of

AKU as it was conceived a decade and more ago. The multifarious needs in bringing the School of Nursing, the Medical College, the hospital and more recently, the Institute for Educational Development into operation have naturally focused energies and resources on immediate tasks in Karachi and Pakistan. But the **international vocation of AKU has not been forgotten or rejected by the leadership and the staff of the University.** Likewise, resources thus far have not permitted as vigorous development of research as the Harvard Report proposed, but its essential place alongside education and service in the future AKU is fully recognised. The eager participation of faculty and staff in meetings with the Commission has shown a hopeful commitment to broad conceptions of the future of AKU.

1.8 The review we have made of the programmes and future plans of other parts of the Aga Khan Development Network and the Institute of Ismaili Studies has given us a sharpened sense of the resources and stimuli that AKU has from this family of institutions. The text in Section V gives many examples of ways in which AKU's opportunities are expanded by the work and accomplishments of these other institutions; it also shows that AKU may meet needs for education and research that these institutions generate but are not equipped to meet themselves. We in the Chancellor's Commission have been closer to AKDN and IIS than the Harvard Committee was and have a livelier sense that one important element in the vision of the future AKU is that **it does not stand alone but is part of a mutually reinforcing network of Aga Khan institutions that magnify its potential and influence its programmes at any given time.**

2 *AKU as an Institution of Distinction and Quality*

In our review, in Section V 1 above, of "AKU at Age Ten" we have been pleased to find the University moving toward becoming the institution of distinction and quality it was aspired to be. As we now look twenty or thirty years ahead, we ask ourselves what developments must be continued or accentuated to fulfil the vision of what AKU should be.

We must stress at the outset that AKU is a Muslim university that is open to all qualified comers and maintains the atmosphere of free

inquiry that has been the life-giving medium of great universities. This is already a very important basis of its distinction. We have noted in Section III the rarity of such institutions in the Muslim world. Later in this Section we shall address what must be done to preserve and strengthen this distinctive combination of qualities. But first we look at the characteristics of great universities in other parts of the world.

Universities in the modern world attain high distinction in two broad ways : (1) through the quality and breadth of the education they provide, and (2) through their commitment to the advancement of knowledge.¹⁰ These two forms of distinction tend to go together and the coincidence is not accidental. The great universities of the world have educated leaders of the professions and public life in their countries. They have not been institutions devoted purely to research; but, on the other hand they have not been able to rest content with the mere transmission of knowledge to however important a group of students; they have had to contribute actively to the advancement of knowledge.

Universities commonly seek to respond to evident needs of the communities or countries where they are established. They seek to be "relevant" by providing **education and services of many kinds**, including, sometimes, research services so motivated. Some universities, public and private, have grown to great size and made major contributions by responding to the needs of large populations without seeking to be prestigious or to achieve high intellectual distinction in the fields of their efforts. They have gone about their useful work on their home grounds with indifference to applause or influence elsewhere. There have, on the other hand, been important historical movements, exemplified in the land-grant universities of the United States, the "open" universities, or the 1970s "developmental universities" for the Third World that have advertised and promoted the responsive and service functions of universities. There are hazards in wandering too far from the classic roles and character of universities in this pursuit of responsiveness, as the horseshoeing courses of early land-grant colleges and the political entanglements of the "developmental universities" have shown. But it is evident that universities can become models of relevance and service,

as we have already noted AKU's becoming in Pakistan. The educational programmes and the services a university provides may thus be an important source of their prestige and distinction, provided they maintain high levels of quality. They, nevertheless, are less critical to high distinction than the contributions to knowledge a university makes. (The leading American universities, including some land-grant universities, call themselves "research" universities.)

There are in the world many institutions of higher learning that have not grown beyond one or two professional faculties. Without denigrating their utility and accomplishments, it must be said that universities of high distinction have broader concerns. They typically have a breadth of concern that transcends professional specialties and may even be in principle unbounded (as the President of Harvard recently dared to say). In the modern world, the sciences have come to have particular importance; it is doubtful that any university can now be genuinely distinguished without being strong in the sciences, and this of course means that they must be strong in scientific research. Examples like the California and Massachusetts institutes of technology suggest that high distinction in the arts may be less critical. But it has been typical for distinguished universities to be strong in both these great branches of higher learning, or at least strive to be.

The implications of these observations for AKU's future course to distinction should be evident. We have been conscious that **AKU is a small institution and the growth we foresee for it will not basically change the strategies it must follow**. It must preserve its character as an **open, Muslim university devoted to free inquiry**, and it must do things that have a radiating influence beyond its own classrooms, laboratories and clinics. In Section V above we have applauded the successes it has had thus far in developing **models of high quality education** in response to important needs; the growing importance of private higher education in the developing world increases AKU's potential in these respects. We have also noted the spreading of its influence through **pilot projects and consultations** that contribute to policy-making, public and private. These achievements must

¹⁰ Our Secretary has contributed a paper on this general subject to a volume on American Research Universities, to appear later this year from the Johns Hopkins University Press. This paper was reviewed by the Commission and is listed in Appendix C.

continue, and be strengthened, as the decades move on, **by contributions through research and the careers of its graduates.** Like other universities of distinction, AKU must build the capacity to contribute to the advancement of knowledge; it must be strong in the sciences and be concerned in some degree with the broad spectrum of learning from the sciences to the humanities.

3 Levels and Types of Programmes in the Future AKU

We have seen, in reviewing the state of education in the developing and Muslim worlds that there are serious deficiencies at all levels and across the spectrum from general to professional and specialised forms of education. And we have noted that AKU has thus far made its programme choices pragmatically, seeking to address needs from the diploma courses for nurses and short-term training for teachers for secondary schools up through first-degree courses to graduate residency training at AKUMC and the Master's degree in education under IED. A question before the Commission has been : **should this pragmatism continue or should AKU seek to concentrate its future efforts in some preferred level or type of programme?**

Whatever AKU decides to do must obviously be within the range of functions appropriate for an institution of higher education. It may be thought that programmes at the lower end of the range of post-secondary professional education would be questionable for a university that aspires to international significance. But arguments in favour of continued flexibility in response to such needs are suggested by AKU's experience thus far. The international support that brought major contributions to the School of Nursing and IED has been an expression of faith that AKU is doing something of special significance in these programmes; the attention that has been given to these institutions by the Government and others within Pakistan is another such indication. It being notorious that nursing education is neglected relative to education of physicians throughout the developing world, it may be argued that AKU's School of Nursing is addressing a "generic" problem of the developing and Muslim worlds - quite aside from its role in increasing employment opportunities for women - and hence is of broad

international significance. Similar arguments can be made about the upgrading of school teachers through IED (provided of course that the programmes are well done).

The lower levels of post-secondary education embrace very large numbers of students in the developing and Muslim worlds. It is thus necessary for a small institution like AKU, if it is to be more than locally significant at such levels, to achieve a broad impact through multipliers or emulations. There is also a rather discouraging record in programmes at these levels managing to be accompanied by serious research efforts. **Such arguments are not powerful enough to make us wish to see programmes at these levels excluded from AKU's future; but new ones should be made to pass rigorous scrutiny on the breadth of impact they will have.**

At the other end of the higher education ladder, in graduate and post-professional education there are attractions that have made the Commission wish to see them important in AKU's future. The Harvard Report argued that AKU should seek distinction particularly through fostering research; the natural accompaniment of research in universities is graduate or post-professional study. Nations now meet at their tops among the researchers, advanced students and professionals who spread and bring back ideas and knowledge. **A concentration on graduate study and research in the future development of AKU would thus conform to its ambition to be an international university of wide consequence for the developing and Muslim worlds.** The Commission has envisaged various combinations of research and post-graduate study in several future components of AKU, described in Section VII below.

The Commission's conviction that graduate studies and research must show a strong growth in the future AKU **need not imply that further growth of programmes at first degree level should be avoided.** We have been impressed by the serious deterioration of first-degree university education in many of the areas of particular interest to AKU. We have noted the concern this deterioration has raised about the further education of students who go through the Aga Khan schools and we have listened to concerns about the inadequate general education of students entering

the Medical College. In some cases, as, e.g., in **architecture**, we have been strongly advised against a first degree programme for AKU; we have also noted the hostility toward **first degree courses for teachers** in the planning documents for IED and understand its basis in the common mediocrity of teacher-training institutions and faculties of education. In general the national regulation of professions makes for difficulty in first degree **professional** courses that aim to serve an international student body though, happily, AKU has had good experience thus far in nurses' and doctors' education in Pakistan. We include some further consideration of such possibilities at the end of Section VII later in this report, but our attention has been more strongly directed to the possibility of **undergraduate liberal arts education** in AKU's future.

Reasons for a sympathetic view of AKU having a **college of arts and sciences** have been suggested in the preceding paragraph. If and when such a college is established it must aim to contribute to AKU's significance through producing graduates who will be equipped with the breadth of mind and sensibilities that enable them to be leaders in their chosen fields of work in their own countries and even internationally. We believe, in particular, that liberal education has an important contribution to make to **better governance of Muslim countries**. We discuss this prospect of an AKU college of liberal arts more fully in Section VII below.

4 *The International Character and Dispersion of the University*

In describing "The Aga Khan University at Age Ten" in Section V above we included a paragraph addressing its Pakistani and international characters which we repeat here for convenient recall :

"Being set down in a major city in Pakistan with a Pakistani charter and a board that must have at least three Pakistanis among its thirteen members, AKU has been in major respects a Pakistani institution. In its first ten years its student body has been overwhelmingly Pakistani, its faculty largely so, and, as we have regularly heard, it has been strongly concerned to serve the needs of Pakistan. At the same time, AKU has not forgotten its aspiration to be an international university. Its

financial support, board and academic leadership have been strongly international; important relationships with universities in other parts of the world have been established; and aspirations to make the university more international, through the relevance of its accomplishments and the founding of new branches, are warmly supported by the present staff. And using English as its language of instruction, it is immersed in what has increasingly become the international language of the sciences. In its history thus far, AKU has been preoccupied with building its first parts in a particular country, but its commitment to being an international university, serving the Muslim and developing worlds, is firmly maintained."

The ambition to be an international university is a demanding ambition, but it is a natural ambition of universities if they are to deal with the broad corpus of modern knowledge in a globalised world. No university that aims to be great or distinguished can now confine its interests and purposes to a single country or even to a region of the world. Efforts to avoid parochialism in curricula, staff and student bodies have therefore received great attention and resources in the leading universities, particularly in the second half of this century. Presidents of universities like Harvard or Princeton sought in the early years of this century to make their institutions genuinely national in their reach and significance; their recent successors have been busy winning an international character for them. Much of what makes a university international in character goes on in its own country on its own campus. But the establishment of programmes or branches outside the country is also normal, as in the study-abroad programmes or special research institutions attached to American universities. The rationale for setting up such outliers in foreign parts must give justification for the costs and administrative difficulties involved; it must typically rest on grounds that the university cannot fulfil its educational and research missions from its home base; and it must also argue that linkages or networks with other institutions abroad will not suffice.

To say that AKU is to be an international university does not say how far it must spread physically, in how many countries it should have a presence or of what sort. It does not say that it should not have special interests in Pakistan or

perhaps in another country where it may set itself down, any more than Oxford ceases to be an international university by taking a special interest in things British or Michigan by an interest in the American Midwest. It is the range of intellectual vision in research and instruction, and the composition of staff and student body that are critical. There are of course, countries and places within them that are more cosmopolitan than others, and it may be a fair generalisation that it has been harder for universities in developing countries to pursue international interests than for their counterparts in the richer, industrial countries. The presumption which was put into the AKU's Charter that it would engage in activities both within and beyond Pakistan appears to us as prudent recognition that achieving an international character and outlook for AKU, as a university beginning in a developing country, might require a broader geographic spread than would be the case for a university beginning in Europe or North America.

The record of political instability and authoritarian government that the Third World has unfortunately shown gives reason for concern about concentrating all of AKU in a single location anywhere in the Third World. We have been happy that AKU has been able thus far to develop successfully in Karachi. This experience in Pakistan has given encouragement that an institution respected for its quality and valued for the services it provides to the country can gain the favour and support of successive governments, as AKU has with three governments after its founding under General Zia's. But merit and devoted service are not infallible protections; they will not always ensure a university against disruption and intrusion. And universities that are true to their academic responsibilities must sometimes do and say things that are poorly understood by or are unwelcome to governments that have power over them. When the option is available, as it is for AKU, the prudential course must be not to risk all its commitments in a single location.

Special concerns with South Asia and East Africa have followed from those of AKU's founder and the Ismaili community; and being part of the Muslim world has extended these areas of concern from South East Asia and across the Middle East and Africa. The dispersion of the Muslim population of the world to Europe and America

and the opening of Central Asia to the international community have further extended the areas of concern to AKU. Clear ideas on locations and geographic spread for AKU must depend on the fields that it will develop, but we are able at this stage of the discussion to conclude that :

i) **An AKU that has all its principal components in Pakistan will not be a sufficiently international university.** We do not mean to diminish the efforts that have been made and that will continue to be made to give international dimensions and perspectives to the parts of the University now or in future situated in Pakistan. We envisage that AKU may develop units in other countries which would be related to faculties and institutes in the Pakistan centre (as, e.g., a Professional Development Centre in East Africa related to IED or a Nursing Institute there, related to the School of Nursing) and that these will serve to strengthen the international interests at AKU in Pakistan. The components of AKU that are in Pakistan ought to have Pakistani interests; but not all of AKU can give primacy to Pakistan if it is to be an international university. Hence the need for new fields to be developed elsewhere.

ii) **A bipolar AKU in which the Pakistan AKU would be one component and the other would consist of one or more institutes or units in a single location would probably also be too limited.** Earlier views that subjects particularly concerned with Islam and Muslim societies had better be developed in Europe has found confirmation in this Commission's persuasion, set forth in Section VII below, that such subjects need to be developed in Europe in relationships with AKTC and IIS and in insulation from pressures that have come with the rise of radical activist movements in Islam. If this were to be done as the single non-Pakistani site for AKU, there would be no direct engagement with Africa and Central Asia, areas which present ample difficulties, but which are of special interest for AKU.

iii) **We must therefore assume that the AKU of the future will have a presence in at least three regions of the world.** The meaning of a "presence" is of course vague, and large disparities in size and breadth may result. But our judgements on such possibilities must follow on our later consideration of the fields that lie in AKU's future.

Universities that have significant branches in different countries are quite rare. We have reviewed the history of such examples as the University of the West Indies, the now-defunct University of East Africa, and of course the United Nations University. They do not make the future we are proposing for AKU look easy, but we do not see that it can fulfil its mission without accepting the challenges that being international impose on it.

5 *AKU as an Open Muslim University Devoted to Free Inquiry*

Our survey of changes in the world in the last ten years has made it patent that the needs for AKU as a Muslim university have grown in the intervening years; and we expect them to grow rather than diminish in the coming decades. The strains manifest in Muslim countries are rooted in their urgent need for self-respect, in disparities between resources and the aspirations of burgeoning populations, and in disillusionment with the capacities of governments to foster equitable development. They will not soon subside, and until they do, these countries will be prey to extremist movements, internal political crises, and isolating hostilities toward the wider world. There are certainly limitations on what universities can do amid these huge social forces, but salvation will not be found without the clarity and sanity of the enlightened and disciplined minds that university education at its best can give to the Muslim world. The certainty of need and opportunity for AKU does not immediately say what it should aim to do and be, and the Commission has been challenged to make these aims more explicit.

AKU, by its Charter, is a university open, without regard to race, sex, or religion, to all those properly qualified; and it has established the traditions of academic freedom that form the essential bedrock of an international university. At the same time, it seeks to be a Muslim university in ways that do not restrict these qualities of openness and freedom. We recognise that AKU should have a Muslim ethos entering into all of its programmes and activities. But since AKU is not a university exclusively for Muslims nor concerned solely with Islamic learning, we have tried to explore specific aspects of its work which could reinforce its Muslim character.

We believe the elements of a worthy mission for AKU as a Muslim university are relatively easy to discern. It should evidently seek to :

- bring, through research and scholarship, a better understanding of Islam as a culture and civilisation, of its rich diversity, and of the problems of contemporary Muslim societies, for the benefit of both Muslims and non-Muslims;

- provide education for its own students, and materials for the education of others, that will help them in their personal and spiritual adjustment to life in the modern world;

- join with others, Muslim and non-Muslim, in coping with the ills of modernity and bringing more helpful perceptions of the relations of "Islam and the West" than as a "clash of civilisations".

We have, with particular help from the Institute of Ismaili Studies, developed ideas on how these missions may be pursued. They are set forth a little later, when we describe the components we envisage for AKU. Suffice to say here that we believe **research and scholarship** will be essential to AKU's ability to contribute to a host of questions, from understanding the diversity of the Islamic heritage to the conditions for economic growth and improved governance of Muslim societies. We also put emphasis on the contributions AKU can make to the **education of Muslims and non-Muslims**, and on helping **Muslims take their part in the common human enterprise of making modern life meaningful and rewarding.**

As we indicated in Section IV of our Report, we have been impressed with the challenges young Muslims now experience as they juxtapose predominately secular education with their religious and cultural heritage; the prominence of university graduates in the leadership of extremist movements suggests that the encounter has often been a rough one, and that better experiences should be sought. The process of education is, of course, complex and mysterious. We shall be arguing that courses in Islamic civilisations should be an important part of future education in AKU to correct the "technocratic" bias of the University by balancing it with a spiritual dimension in addition to education in liberal arts. But any education is more than a set of courses and

classroom experiences. One of the challenges before AKU is to highlight enlightened Islamic values in its educational processes. We also think that there are now needs and opportunities, greater than before, for Muslims to participate in the common quests of modern humanity. If the phrase, the “Islamisation of modernity” is to be more than a slogan, it must signal an effort to use what Marshall Hodgson called the “Venture of Islam” as essential “resources for new vision” in coping with the problems of life in the modern world. [Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, v. III, p.431] In the determinedly multi-cultural world we now inhabit, the enterprise of shaping values and meaning in the conditions of modernity must be a world-wide enterprise. There is a great need for Muslim voices to participate in this enterprise, and AKU should be exceptionally equipped to do so actively.

6 *Summary, with Some Warnings of Hazards and Tensions*

In sum, the Commission’s study and reflections have not basically changed the conceptions of AKU’s mission that were laid down a decade and more ago. Our conclusions have been mostly to shift emphases among missions already declared, or to try to explicate what had been left vague. We believe AKU must strive to be an autonomous institution, setting its own course in the pursuit of distinction and quality. It will remain a small institution and can only be of wide consequence if it grasps the opportunities its unique position as a private, international and Muslim institution offers it. In the educational programmes it offers, in its research, and whatever else it does it must seek the highest attainable standards of quality and integrity. It must loyally serve the countries where it works and the students who come to it. But it must also seek wide influence, through emulation of its programmes, through the shaping of public and private policies, and through the diffusion of its research and other intellectual products. It must accept the formidable challenges of having branches in widely separated geographic locations and of attempting to serve multiple purposes.

That there will be tensions among the missions AKU has elected to serve, and that these will bring hazards to its future, are almost certainties. AKU, like other universities, will be

asked to do too many things and it will be tempted to respond to programmes that are easy to finance at the expense of those more important to its mission and its claims to distinction. There will be the natural tendency for established parts of the University to crowd to the trough and keep newcomers away from what they seek and need. And what is readily understood by large publics may deflect the University from its proper responsibility to cultivate subjects that are “high and dry to the common palate”. The difficulties of maintaining the Muslim character of a university while retaining the openness and freedom that should be the hallmark of an academic institution engaged in the quest for knowledge are suggested by the experience not only of Muslim universities but of universities throughout the world.

Such risks are inevitable consequences of high and complex ambition. We shall be making recommendations on governance of AKU that may diminish these hazards. But we hope that our reflections on its continuing missions will raise consciousness of them and strengthen loyalties, not merely to parts but to the whole vision of the future AKU.