Chapter 7

Summary, Findings and Policy Recommendations
Parents’ positive attitude towards child’s education is important in determining school attendance and academic achievement of the child. Favorable attitude towards schooling and education enhances parental involvement in children’s present and future studies. Parental attitude is a measure or an index of parental involvement. A child, brought up with affection and care in the least restrictive environment would always be able to cope up better with the sighted world. Therefore, it is a fact that the family shapes the social integration of the child more than a formal school. The Warnock Report (1978) stresses the importance of parents being partners in the education of their children. The role of parents should actively support and enrich the educational processes. Korth (1981) states that parents should be recognized as the major teacher of their children and the professional should be considered consultants to parents.

Despite its importance, however, families’ active involvement in their children’s education declines as they progress from elementary school to middle and high school (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Lee, 1994). And this scenario is more visible in the disadvantaged classes. Research suggests that schools involvement can affectively reverse the decline in parent involvement by developing comprehensive programs of partnership (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Epstein & Connors, 1994). Previous researches shows that family involvement helps in achieving higher attendance, better grade point averages and lower dropout rates at all levels of schooling.

Because of so much importance being given to the role of parents and their perception towards schooling and education as a whole, this area of research was chosen.

Today access of Muslim children to education is a social issue, especially in India with various reports coming time to time to depict how poorly Muslim children perform on the education front. Educational problem will be solved only if education meets the needs of its recipients. It is important to note what kind of perceptions, attitudes and expectations the parents have with regard to the education of their children and how can this demand be increased by positively impacting their perceptions towards education.

The multiethnic characteristic of a country is a challenge to the national development. Moreover, the psychosocial characteristics of its religious minority groups are likely to make this challenge much more complex. Inspite of the progress the country has no
far made towards universalizing primary education it is of crucial important to note that a greater majority of school age children of the Muslim community are still not enrolled in the school or comprise of biggest percentage of out of school children. Obviously, the non-enrolment and illiteracy relate to the section that comprises the chore hard, and the disadvantaged religious minorities. It is of crucial importance to look into the causes of low participation of this section in education and to make endeavours to address its educational needs.

Muslims make up almost 14 percent of India’s vast population, yet remain the country’s most disadvantaged minority and religious group being a shaming embodiment. They rank lowest in literacy, live in ghettos much more than any other socio-religious category and less than 1 percent hold public sector and government jobs.

This kind of separatism of Muslims gives them a lack of choice that makes them stay together in concentrated ghettos where there are not many state-sponsored schools and if they are they are either too far away or have the worst infrastructure and no good teachers. Irfan Engineer, director of the Center for Study of Society and Secularism says that “Muslims just aren’t in schools, comparatively.”

India is a secular country, but religious beliefs draw quite deep political lines. In a Hindu-dominated nation, Muslims have already endured a riotous, bloody history that, according to a slew of reports, continues to leave a very dark mark on India’s classrooms. Poverty, communalism, separatism as well as segregation hinder Indian-Muslims’ educational trajectory, including infrastructure and achievement at all spheres.

A groundbreaking 2006 report documented the extreme discrimination and deprivation faced by Muslims in India across all socio-economic scales. The Sachar Committee harped on the “deplorable conditions of Muslims” in terms of poverty, education, separatism, discrimination and employment.

A new study seven years later by the U.S. India Policy Institute concluded that Muslims have “not shown any measurable improvement,” especially in education.
“Nothing’s changed from the government,” scoffed Vibhuti Patel, the head of the Economics Department at the SNDT Women’s College in Mumbai, who calls government assistance “meager” and Muslims’ progress “marginal.”

Child labor is very high for Muslims,” she said of her findings. “Most adults are manual laborers and unskilled workers and don’t have opportunities to get good jobs because they are forced to support the family.”

India’s Muslim community has the lowest college enrollment of any religion-based group in the country. Data speaks that only 11 of every 100 Muslim students enroll in higher education. Muslims in rural India, where most of India’s population resides, fare far worse which was also one reason why rural areas of Aligarh district was chosen.

When it comes to putting food on the table, education falls several notches on the “vital scale.” So far as is quite visible in various figures, datas and reports the political will to push for more improvements is not always there.

A huge mass body of work is their to do on current education system. “Politicians have not done enough to get Muslims into schools,” commented Meera Sanyal, a politician from India’s Aam Aadmi Party running in the upcoming election. Next to poverty, ensuring Muslim students pass through the school system “is one of the major bottlenecks in the education of Muslim children,” according to the Centre for Equity Studies.

There simply aren’t enough teachers to catch the thousands that fall through the cracks which was also voiced out by the respondents during focus group discussions with them.

After the submission of the Sachar Committee Report, several studies have undertaken data-based analysis of the socioeconomic and educational conditions of Muslims in India. Many researchers, policy makers and, in fact, common Muslims believe that education can be the only mechanism to enhance their socioeconomic status and facilitate entry into better paid jobs. At the same time there are concerns about access to educational facilities and possible discrimination in the formal labour market.
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A variety of factors have been identified to explain the observed relative deprivation among Muslims in India. These include differentials in endowments across social groups, actual or perceived discrimination, behaviour patterns or attitudes and supply of educational and employment opportunities. Perceptions about discrimination interact with endowments, opportunities, supply side conditions and attitudes and in turn they all collectively give rise to a whole new complex different pattern of participation in employment and education. For such a complex scenario, a different set of policy actions may be required to ameliorate these conditions. Based on extensive interactions with Muslims, it has been argued that Muslims carry a double burden of being labeled as “anti-nationalists” time to time and being appeased at the same time. The fact that the so-called appeasement has not resulted in any benefits is typically ignored. Identity markers often lead to suspicion and discrimination by people and institutions.

Discrimination too is pervasive everywhere that is in employment, housing and education. Gender injustice is usually identified purely with personal law to the exclusion of gender-related concerns in education and employment that Muslim women do face on a continuing basis. The public focus on personal law and other socio-cultural characteristics of the community also has another negative externality; the cause of backwardness in all spheres is assigned to the community itself. Moreover, the feeling of insecurity among Muslims is high, especially in communally sensitive states and among women. The discriminatory attitude of the police and others compounds this feeling and ghettoization is a result of insecurity and discrimination in housing, schools and jobs.

The widespread perception of discrimination among Muslims results in a sense of alienation and is therefore seen by the Community as an important cause of inequity. Limited access to good quality schools is a major problem that affects female students more adversely. Discrimination and “communalization” of reading material and school atmosphere adds to this problem. Consequently, Madarasas, at times, are the only source of education in the neighbourhood part from education, employment is the other major concern. Low participation in government jobs is partly seen as a result of discrimination.
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The employment situation has deteriorated because globalization and liberalization processes appear to have affected Muslim occupations (mainly self-employment) more adversely than others, especially for women. The Muslim community’s perceptions summarized above highlight a process wherein identity based discrimination reduces access, enhances inequity and adds to insecurity. Security problems also reduce access to schools, housing, infrastructure etc. (especially for women), which in turn contribute to inequities. While it is difficult to get concrete data on the perceptions of specific population groups about the security, identity and equity issues, one promising line of work is to develop social-psychological measures of perceptions of fairness and self-esteem. Such work is in its infancy in India and has used relatively small sample sizes for empirical investigations, but provides some very interesting insights. Singh et al (2010) collected data from Hindu, Muslim and Christian respondents to estimate ‘perceived fairness scores’ across different areas of opportunity - social, economic, employment, education and political spheres.

7.1 Chapter wise summary:
The whole work done can be summarized as follows:

Chapter One:
Chapter one is introductory in nature and gives a solid base to the whole work done. This chapter starts by explaining the whole background against which this study was started. While explaining the purpose of attempting this study, the chapter also elaborates upon the bleak and pathetic condition of Muslims education as compared to the other socio-religious categories with the help of suitable data. The chapter also focuses upon the illiteracy percentages as well as enrolment percentages of Muslim children at the primary as well as secondary levels and depicts the poor figure the data pose. Against this backdrop, the chapter presents the objectives of the study, the research questions that it would attempt to answer and the hypotheses that it would be testing. Having described the methodology that would be adopted, the chapter ends by explaining the significance of the study, future research scope, limitations of the study and the proposed scheme of work.
Chapter Two:
In the second chapter review of related literature has been done comprehensively. More than thirty five articles were reviewed in order to have a good measure of the work done as well as the research gaps that needs to be filled. To get a more diverse picture the reviews were divided into two broad segments that is Indian study and international study. This way of conducting review was selected to analyze as to how much attention this subject of research has gained in Indian and in other countries. Having completed the review for various countries based on their level of development, the research were clearly jotted down to be pursued and filled in the further chapters. Some major gaps found were that very few perception based studies on education sector in India; scope of studies conducted limited to few states and particular segment. Further, no evidence of any such study for was found for U.P. or in the selected area i.e. Aligarh district, most of the related literature found was for higher education segment only, and no attempt was made to measure Muslims perceptions and no recent study was recorded.

Chapter three:
Chapter three presents the educational and socio-economic profile of the study area that is Aligarh district. The chapter starts with presenting the major district highlights from the 2011 Census. It constitutes the general characteristics of the district including its location and geographical area, topography, physical features, climate, administrative set up, physiographic regions, population distribution, density of population, sex-ratio, literacy rate, educational levels, religions followed etc. The chapter further discusses various indicators of educational as well as socio-economic development and on this basis also provides the status of villages chosen for the study under two blocks. Suitable statistics have been provided to show where the selected villages stand in comparison to the other villages of Aligarh district with respect to education levels as well as the level of economic development. The data clearly shows that there is a direct relationship between level of literacy and development, as, those blocks that had higher literacy rates were flourishing in all major aspects of development as compared to those depicting lower educational status. The chapter ends by providing major district statistics to give an overview of the whole study area on various fronts.
Chapter four:

Chapter four elaborates the database and research methodology used in the research work. As this work is a survey based research, it is primarily based on primary data but along with it, secondary data sources are also consulted to get a thorough glimpse of the condition of schooling and overall status of education in the study area that is Aligarh district. Pilot survey is followed by the comprehensive primary data collection through intensive field surveys, interviews of Muslim parents and focus group discussions from four selected sampled villages. Secondary data collection is done mainly through district statistical offices, reports, books, internet etc. Sample size is of 300 Muslim parents from two blocks and four villages of Aligarh district. The type of sampling used is purposive, multi-stage as well as random. Purposive because the selection of blocks was done on the basis of level of economic development and further selection of two villages from each block was also done on the basis of literacy rate. Multi-stage sampling because the data collected was at the block level the at the village level and then came down to single unit from all four villages. Purposive random sampling was followed as only Muslim families were selected on random basis. Different statistical tools have been used in the following chapters for the analysis of the collected data. The major tools used are factor analysis, chi-square test, spearman’s correlation test and Monte-Carlo parallel analysis. The sequence in which the factor extraction was completed and final hypothesis testing was done was, first exploratory factor analysis was conducted after the normality and factorability check. Having extracted the factors and checking their reliability through Cronbach’s alpha value, the next step is the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on AMOS (Analysis of Moment structure) software. The factors extracted from EFA are used here to conduct CFA. Path diagrams are drawn that display the cause and effect relationship between the latent and observed variables. AMOS generates model fit statistics to access the overall fit. Having tested the model fit, the composite reliability, average variance extracted and discriminant validity are calculated to find out if the model exhibit validity and reliability or not. The data collected showed very good model fit. Further, structural equations modeling is conducted and the best part about it is that the final hypothesis testing can be done through it by using t-values of critical ratios and standardized regression weights.
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These were the major tools used. Softwares used in the whole analysis were SPSS, AMOS, Excel and Monte Carlo.

Chapter five:

Chapter five provided detailed responses of all the respondents. The final questionnaire was divided into five parts to get a detailed picture of the problem area. The first part looked into the socio-economic profile of the respondents. Majority of respondents were found to be involved in agriculture or as casual workers; of general category within the annual income of 75000-1lakh, with just primary or middle school literacy. Percentage of dropout among both girl as well as boy child were found to be quite high. Second part looks into the general perception of Muslim parents towards schooling. Majority of respondents agreed that with just secondary schooling, no decent job is possible; however, more than 50% blamed their minority status as the major reason behind their condition. Fear of educated unemployment was another fear expressed. The third part analyzed the importance accorded to education. Most felt that education is important but, they accorded high importance for male child. Job prospect came out to be the most important determining factor. In the fourth part, the respondents were asked to give their perceived returns to different levels of education in which they estimated almost similar returns from 8th to 12th level. Last and fifth part was about the driving factors towards demand for schooling. Academic reputation, educational programs, scholarships, mid – day meals and recommendations from other parents emerged out to be the most influential driving factors. Thus, these responses provided a glimpse of determinants of schooling among Muslim parents of Aligarh district.

Chapter six:

This chapter presents the results of primary data analysis and thus, helps in finding the factors that affect the schooling decisions by the Muslim parents of Aligarh district. Having run the exploratory factor analysis, the factors that were retained were expected earnings of the parents, socio-economic conditions, job-market perceptions, example of peers and neighborhood and the apprehensions of Muslim parents regarding their minority status and fear of discrimination in job market. Reliability of all these were checked which came out to be well within the prescribed range. Moving forward with CFA on AMOS, path diagram was drawn to know the strength
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of association between variables. Further, the model was run to check the goodness of fit and the values pointed towards a good model fit. Psychometric properties of model were also tested to know the validity and reliability which was acceptable. Finally, under the structural equations modeling, path diagrams were drawn and model was run. Here too all nine indices of goodness of fit showed empirical support that overall, model fits the data well. The hypotheses were tested by looking at the critical ratios or t-values and standardized regression weights to test the significance.

Chapter seven:

Chapter seven is the final chapter of the research work. It provides with the summary of the whole work, major findings of the study and at the end in the light of all these provides useful policy recommendations to be followed.

7.2 Major findings:

From the comprehensive data collection and analysis of data in the light of the objectives and hypotheses that were set, the major research findings are as follows:

a. One of the most important and significant factor affecting parents decision making regarding demand for schooling is their socio-economic condition. How well Muslim parents perform on the socio-economic front clearly impacts their expectations from education.

b. Neighborhood and peers remain another important component behind formation of perception regarding education as well as job market expectations.

c. Fear among Muslims and their apprehensions about their minority status and discrimination in job market plays a significant role in affecting Muslim parents perception and then their demand for schooling.

d. From the survey and focus group discussions, it was found that separatism gives Muslim parents lack of choices, so they live in concentrated ghettos which leads to another problem of dissemination of imperfect information about various government schemes and returns to education. This also poses
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issues of access to schools as there are very few state sponsored schools in these ghettos.

e. Ghettoisation among Muslims takes a toll on girls access to education as, security issues emerged out to be the most important concern among parents, which further contributes to inequalities.

f. It was observed that deficits in participation in higher schooling is higher when parental education is lower and also when parents know fewer people both inside and outside their locality who have attained success through education.

g. Parents perceive a wide gap between what a male and female child can earn. The results showed clear bias in parents perceptions.

h. Regarding girls marriage, it was not marriage, uncertainty in earnings or social dogma, but, more than 60% respondents pointed out the security issue as schools were very far away and no arrangement of conveyance was available which can be one important policy recommendation.

i. Mid-day meal, government scholarships, incentives, good facilities, proper infrastructure and good sincere teachers were the most emphasized points raised by the respondents and most of the respondents did not have access to any of these.

j. Chi-square analysis found that there is a good association between the annual income of household or their financial status and the highest level of education that they expect for their children to achieve.

k. Correlational analysis depicts that the annual income of the household and expected returns from various levels of education starting from schooling and then ending to higher education have a statistically significant linear relationship.
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7.3 Policy recommendations:

Thus, from the whole study it can be deducted that the issue is not just Muslims education but, a whole lot of complex multi-dimensional issues involved to it. Muslims perceptions interact with supply side constraints and conditions, various opportunities, attitudes and endowments to give rise to a whole new and different pattern of participation in education.

Now, to ameliorate such perception based conditions, a totally different set of policy status is required. Some of the policy recommendations are as follows:

a. Replacement of formal education at the secondary level by vocational training which may counteract the economic disincentives of seeking education by preparing Muslim boys and girls to be self-employed.

b. As the situation is pretty complex, so, actions have to be so strong that they strike at the perceived notions of Muslim parents directly and changes their trajectory of perception towards education and against biases in general.

c. Evolve an acceptable, transparent diversity index which may include Muslims status, gender and other elements depending on the context

d. The educational infrastructure of many schools is in an abysmal state and needs urgent attention

e. School within a reasonable distance of Muslim dominated habitations and by removing gender, socio-economic and disability barriers to education.

f. Special focus on micro planning and preference in opening schools in areas with concentrations of Muslims esp. in urban and rural ghettos.

g. Undertaking a special enrolment drive for the weaker sections, providing more female teachers in schools and separate toilet blocks for girls are some of the significant strategies

h. The separate needs for vocational/skills training, in large scale, are also imperative; additional financing, outside the 6% referred especially for Muslims.
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i. Extension of mid-day meals and other incentives; accountability and teacher absenteeism check through ICT; conveyance and security issues to be targeted.

j. The issue of extension of Clause 12 (1) (c) of RTE Act to minority institutions needs a review; the larger national obligations to meet the rights of economic weaker sections should extend to all institutions including minority (religious and linguistic) institutions

k. Timely interventions to ensure access of educationally deprived categories esp. Muslims

l. There must be greater co-ordination between different departments of government on school education policy, even while ensuring more autonomy to the local community in matters of day to day management of schools.

m. There is need for a national body to monitor the quality of both government and private schools, to ensure that minimum standards are met in terms of learning outcomes

n. The dignity of school teaching as a profession must be restored, and at the same time there should be transparent systems for ensuring accountability of school teachers. The training of school teachers is extremely inadequate and also poorly managed. Pre-service training needs to be improved and regulated, while systems for in-service training require expansion and major reform in all states.

o. Special strategies are required to ensure greater access to schools in backward regions, remote locations and difficult terrains

p. There is a need for durable changes. Firstly, are cognition that deprivation amongst the minorities exists due to systemic causes which can be set right only through broad based public policy initiatives, not entirely through special purpose vehicles such as the minority/Muslim/Christian oriented programs

q. By assisting Muslims to strive to access their share within the mainstream such as the regular ministries, departments and programs of government of India and many major states. Both union and state governments concerned and Muslim community can work in tandem to remove the situation of educational
backwardness. As a matter of fact, Muslims have to reconcile themselves to the fact that there would exist some degree of discrimination against them despite the constitutional professions of equality of opportunity. They themselves had took some independent steps to ameliorate the situation, with opening of community schools being be one such step (Ahmad1981, 1457-1465).

Concluding Views

Thus, in conclusion, the whole research work clearly demonstrates that the conditions of Muslims on education front is pathetic. However, it’s not the oft-beaten argument that Muslims conservatism affect their enrolment in schools. It was found that Muslims realize the importance of education but there are so many constraints in front of them them being a minority group, that directly attacks the perception they have towards the whole education system. This research work presents all the factors that actually determine the demand for schooling among Muslim parents of Aligarh district. This work is a positive step in understanding the expectations, perceptions and apprehensions of Muslim parents of Aligarh district regarding education and also suggests way-outs to deal with it. This work ascertains that it is crucial to understand Muslims perception in order to design effective policies as a redress for low enrolment rates among this group. This work presents all the determinants of perception formation and perceived returns among Muslims regarding education and also tries to know as to how much these perceives returns deviate form estimated returns and also tries to know the reason behind such deviations.

Thus, this study ends with achieving all the objectives with which it was started. It tests all the hypothesis that were set and also tries to answer all the questions that this area of study can project. However, there is a whole ambit of work that still needs to be done and this is just a step in this direction with the hope that many new researches will come up in future so that the question raised through this work may be successfully answered. And this can happen only if the projected problem is redressed.