

Challenges in Schooling of Muslim Minority Children

A Review of Policies and Programmes in India

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Abstract

The Constitution of India has established various provisions to safeguard the interests of minority groups. At national level, Muslims constitute the largest minority, comprising approximately 17.22 crores or 14.2 per cent of India's total population. India is home to nearly 11 per cent of the global Muslim population, ranking third in terms of Muslim population after Indonesia and Pakistan. According to the 2011 Census, Muslims have the highest percentage of illiteracy at 42.7 per cent. To address the concerns of minority communities, including Muslims, the Ministry of Minority Affairs was established as an apex body. The Ministry is tasked with formulating overall policies and plans to address issues affecting notified minority groups. The Sachar Committee Report of 2006 extensively reviewed the educational status of minority communities highlighting their educational backwardness, economic marginalisation, and social exclusion. This paper reviews progress in participation of Muslim minority children in schools by reviewing policies and programmes related to access and participation post-2006. It also explores the issues and challenges on the educational development and socio-economic upliftment of the Muslim community with particular reference to Madarsas. It further investigates the prospects for addressing these issues within the framework of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

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INTRODUCTION

The word 'minority' is derived from the Latin word 'minor' and the suffix means 'small in number'. The Indian Constitution mentions it in a few articles but it is not defined anywhere. Article 29 mentioned the word 'minorities' which refers to a section of the people or a group within the majority but Article 30 states about religious and linguistic minorities. In general, 'minority' means a group lesser in population in terms of race, religion, language, etc. The Indian Constitution of India has framed various provisions for safeguarding the interest of minorities. With regards to the religious minority in India, the Hindu population is considered a majority while the rest of the population professing other religions is considered a minority because the Hindu population is more than 80 per cent and the remaining 20 per cent constitute other religions. Therefore, Muslims come under religious minority groups. They formed the largest minority at 14.23 per cent, followed by Christians (2.34 per cent), Sikhs (1.9 per cent) and so on. The share of the Muslim population in India consists of almost 11 per cent of the world population making it the third highest after Indonesia and Pakistan. (Government of India, 2012)

Education is one major concern of the Government of India and the state governments ever since independence and gave a considerable amount of attention

as a factor vital for national growth and development. The Constitution of India committed to achieving elementary education under Article 45 of the Directive Principle of the State Policy. The Right to Education was implemented on 1st April 2010 by the government to provide free and compulsory education to all children of 6 to 14 years under Article 21A of the constitution, irrespective of caste, race, sex or religion. Therefore, making it a constitutional obligation to the Government of India as well as the states to strictly implement and provide support to educational entities. The Constitution also provides legal protection towards minorities by prohibiting the state from making any discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them in Articles 15 and 16, Articles 29 and 30 deals with the cultural and educational rights of minorities.

The United Nations Declarations on the Rights of Minorities 1992 called for state action to protect and promote the existence and identity of minority groups. The report of the National Commission for Religious and Linguistic minorities 2007 also emphasised ensuring that a person of a religious and linguistic minority shall fully exercise his or her rights without any discrimination and to create favourable conditions to develop their culture, tradition, religion and customs. But the question remains whether all sections

of the country have access to school education, especially the minority groups such as, Muslims Christians, Sikhs and others.

As mentioned earlier as per the Census 2011 data Muslims constitute 14.2 per cent of the total population of India, i.e., 17.22 Crores. Muslim population makes up the majority in Lakshadweep and Jammu and Kashmir while its population is substantial in the states of Assam, West Bengal, Kerala, and Uttar Pradesh. The stratification of Muslim society is sub-categorised mainly into Shia, Sunni and Dalit Muslims.

According to the Census 2011, Muslims have the highest percentage of illiterates at 42.7 per cent. The enrolment of Muslim children has been increasing as is reflected in the literacy rate over the decades and the execution of the education policies by specific focus on the selected group. To address the concerns of minority communities including Muslims, the Ministry of Minority Affairs was established as an apex body. The Ministry is tasked with formulating overall policies and plans to address issues affecting notified minority groups. The Sachar Committee Report 2005 extensively reviewed the educational status of minority communities highlighting their educational backwardness, economic marginalisation and social exclusion. The creation of the Ministry of Minority Affairs and the Sachar Committee Report led to the formation of the National Commission

for Minority Educational Institutions (NCMEI) to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice as provided in the Article 30 of the Constitution of India.

This paper reviews progress in participation of Muslim minority children in schools by reviewing policies and programmes related to access and participation after 2006. It also explores the issues and challenges on the educational development and socio-economic upliftment of the Muslim community with particular reference to *madarsas*. It further investigates the prospects for addressing these issues within the framework of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

EDUCATION PROFILE AND LITERACY

The National Policy on Education in 1968 emphasised making efforts to protect and promote the educational rights of the minority. More stress had been given in the National Policy on Education 1986 that greater attention should be paid to the deprived and disadvantaged sections among the minorities. The National Policy on Education 1986 reported that some minority groups are educationally deprived or backward. It may be important to note that India's commitment to providing *Education for All* since the nineties at the global level resulted in the *Plan of Action* in 1992. Finally, the constitutional landmark of Right to Education, 2009 made a big difference in the promotion of education inclusively

to every state and Union Territory within the country.

The literacy level of Muslims is lower than other minorities since the mid-1960s. The Sachar Committee in 2006 pointed out that the Muslim community is doubly disadvantaged based on the literacy levels from different time series. The census data from 2001 and 2011 illustrates that the decadal improvement in the literacy rate for the country increased from 64.8 per cent in 2001 to and 72.98 percent. In 2001 Muslim literacy rate was 59.1 per cent which was lower than the National Average of 65.1 per cent and others except for SCs and STs which was 70.8 per cent. Within a decade there had been a substantial increase in the literacy levels of the Muslim minorities to 68.53 per cent (Government of India, 2000 and 2012). It is therefore reflected that the efforts were made over the decades to bring positive results by uplifting the socio-economic and educational standards of the minorities, especially those who are more educationally deprived or backward as per the NPE. However, Muslims have the highest percentage of illiterates in the country at 42.7 per cent and lag behind other communities in comparison to the literacy rate of Jains (94.9 per cent), Christians (84.5 per cent), Sikhs (75.4 per cent), and Hindus (73.3 per cent) (Government of India, 2012).

The percentage distribution of persons by education for socio-religious groups in 2009–10 conducted by NSSO for the age group

17–29 highlights disparities in literacy rates. The Muslim minority reflected that 22.3 per cent were not literate while 63.8 per cent had the education till secondary schools and only 9.8 per cent possessed higher secondary education. It points out to the similar trends as with other population groups and reflects that although there has been an increase in Muslim enrolment yet the achievement is limited only up to secondary level education (Government of India, 2012).

School Enrolment

As discussed in the earlier section before the nineties the enrolment rate of Muslims had been the lowest among all the religious minorities or Socio-Religious Communities (SRCs). But due to the efforts made over the decades to uplift the educational and socio-economic status of the minorities, there has been an increase in the enrolment rate of the SRCs, the increase is highest among the SC or STs which is 95 per cent, followed by Muslims at 65 per cent as per National Sample Survey Office (NSSO). In 2004–2005, the enrolment rate of Muslims was higher than OBCs but was lower than the national average. The DISE data indicates a notable rise in the participation of Muslim minority children in elementary education programmes between 2006–2010. For instance, the percentage of Muslim children enrolled in primary classes has steadily increased from 9.39 per cent in 2006–07 to 13.04 per cent in

2009–10. Similarly, in upper primary classes, Muslim enrolment rose from 7.52 per cent in 2006–07 to 11.47 per cent in 2009–10, reflecting an overall positive trend in Muslim enrolment across the elementary level. As per the 2011 census, the gross enrolment rate of Muslims has doubled to 13.8 per cent but ranked lowest in the higher education level enrolment. The enrolment rate is improving in the subsequent years up to 12.73 per cent, 13.14 per cent in 2014–15, and 15.6 per cent in 2021–2022 (Government of India, UDISE Data various years).

The 2021–22 UDISE data on the percentage share of enrolment of Muslim Minority in schools reflects that Kerala and Assam with lower share in population reflected higher enrolment due to higher proportion of Muslim children. On the contrary Jammu and Kashmir and West Bengal with higher share of Muslim

population reflected lower enrolment. The UDISE data from 2012–2022 on total enrolment reflects that during these years only marginal increase is reported from 12.7 per cent to 14.31 percent. Table 1 illustrates on the share of Muslim children in enrolment from the total enrolment which is further disseminated between different levels of education reflecting continued trend of decrease in enrolment from primary to higher secondary.

The gender-based data on the other hand reflects that the share of Muslim boys and girls enrolment in the higher secondary level is encouraging as girls participation is higher at 11.65 per cent as compared to boys at 9.92 per cent in 2021 (Government of India, 2023).

The higher participation of girls reflects to explore the reasons for this trend as this may be linked with the economic reasons. This is an area for

Table 1: Share of Muslim Enrolment to Total Enrolment, 2012–13 to 2021–22 (%)

Year	Primary	Upper Primary	Secondary	Higher Secondary	Total
2021–22	15.62	14.41	12.61	10.76	14.31
2020–21	15.64	14.26	12.61	10.46	14.26
2019–20	15.38	13.87	12.27	9.89	13.95
2018–19	14.60	13.04	11.49	8.86	13.12
2017–18	14.70	13.11	11.23	9.05	13.20
2016–17	14.99	13.01	10.82	8.66	13.25
2015–16	14.43	12.60	10.24	8.05	12.72
2014–15	14.37	12.60	10.02	8.34	12.73
2013–14	14.34	12.52	9.87	8.27	12.70

Source: UDISE Data from various years

Table 2: Share of Muslim Enrolment to Total Enrolment, 2012-13 to 2021-22 (%)

Year	Primary Level (I-V)		Upper Primary Level (VI-VIII)		Secondary Level (IX-X)		Higher Secondary Level (XI-XII)		Total Enrolment (I-XII)	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
2021-22	15.89	15.38	14.97	13.89	13.40	11.88	11.65	9.92	14.80	13.86
2020-21	15.92	15.38	14.89	13.66	13.64	11.66	11.24	9.73	14.80	13.77
2019-20	15.66	15.13	14.54	13.23	13.29	11.33	10.67	9.15	14.49	13.45
2018-19	14.87	14.34	13.71	12.40	12.43	10.62	9.56	8.20	13.65	12.64
2017-18	14.96	14.45	13.80	12.46	12.18	10.37	9.84	8.33	13.73	12.70
2016-17	15.26	14.73	13.75	12.30	11.83	9.91	9.47	7.92	13.82	12.72
2015-16	14.68	14.19	13.30	11.93	11.23	9.34	8.77	7.40	13.25	12.22
2014-15	14.62	14.14	13.34	11.90	10.92	9.20	9.01	7.74	13.25	12.24
2013-14	14.61	14.09	13.23	11.86	10.69	9.14	8.84	7.76	13.21	12.24
2012-13	14.45	13.96	12.78	11.47	9.79	8.40	7.62	6.72	12.88	11.98

Source: UDISE Data from various years

further exploration since the trends are found to be similar in the other social groups as well. At this point it would be important to examine the share of Muslim population in

the states for instance Lakshadweep stands out as having the highest proportion of Muslims, comprising 97 per cent of its population as per Census data.

Table 3: Share of Muslim Population to Total Population (%)

76-100 (%)	50-75 (%)	26-50 (%)	1-25 (%)
Lakshadweep	Jammu and Kashmir	Assam, West Bengal, Kerala	Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Karnataka, Delhi, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tripura, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Manipur, Goa, Daman and Diu, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu, Mizoram, Sikkim, Punjab, Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Himachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Meghalaya, Chandigarh

Source: Census Data, 2011

Jammu and Kashmir follow closely, with 68.31 per cent of its residents practicing Islam. Assam, West Bengal and Kerala also have significant Muslim populations. Nearly 47 per cent of India's Muslim population is concentrated in the states of Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Bihar. Other states that also have high proportions of Muslim Population are namely Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Gujarat, Assam, Kerala, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Manipur, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand and Rajasthan.

As per the census data the states with a higher concentration of the Muslim community and comparing the rate of enrolment in the subsequent years it may be notable that West Bengal has the highest rate of enrolment at 23.7 per cent, followed by Bihar with 17.2 per cent, Uttar Pradesh with 13.6, and Assam with 11.1 per cent. But in the Union Territories of Lakshadweep and Jammu and Kashmir where the Muslim community makes the majority at 96.58 per cent and 68.31 per cent respectively has an enrolment rate of only 0.08 per cent in Lakshadweep and 6.8 per cent in Jammu and Kashmir (Government of India, 2012).

Policies, Schemes and Programmes for Muslim Minority Students

Education Policies

The education policies in India made special provisions based on the

constitution to protect the interest of all the citizens especially those who are disadvantaged due to any reason. National Policy on Education (NPE) 1968 emphasised making strenuous efforts to equalise educational opportunity to all and mentioned the need to protect the rights of minorities and to promote their educational interest. The NPE 1986 also echoed a similar commitment and gave importance to providing incentives to all educationally backward sections of society, particularly in the rural areas. The policy stressed giving greater attention to those minorities who are educationally deprived or backward in the interest of equality and social justice. It also provided a constitutional guarantee to enable minorities to establish and administer their educational institutes and protect their language and culture.

NEP's 'Plan of Action' in 1992 reflected on educational institutions managed by the minorities for recognition and devising effective monitoring mechanisms for the implementation of the programmes. It also laid the onus on the State government to formulate the mechanisms for policy implementation through the scheme for setting up a state-wise federation of minority institutions for maintaining quality parameters. During this time forty districts were identified with the highest concentration of Muslims from eleven states namely—Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Kerala, Bihar, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Haryana,

Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat. Special provisions were made for scholarships and other facilities to retain children with the collaboration of the States, especially through the Boards of Education and other Advisory Bodies (Government of India, 1992).

In 2004 Ministry of Human Resource Development (now the Ministry of Education) established National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions (NCMEI) for protecting and safeguarding the rights of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice as provided in the Article 30 of the Constitution of India with adjudicatory functions and recommendatory powers. The main functions of the Commission are resolving the disputes regarding affiliation of minority educational institutions to a university, addressing the complaints regarding the deprivation and violation of the rights of minorities, to establishing and administering educational institutions of their choice and advising the Central Government and the State Governments on any question relating to the educational rights of the minorities referred to it.

As mentioned earlier in January 2006 Ministry of Minority Affairs (MoMA) was established as an apex body for the central government's regulatory and developmental programmes for the minority religious communities. MoMA was carved out of the Ministry of Social Justice

and Empowerment to ensure a more focused approach towards the issues relating to the notified minority communities and formulation of overall policy and planning. Later in March 2006 Sachar Committee was formed to look into the matter of the Muslim community in particular due to the developments arising out of the National Policy on Education and India's international commitment to provide *Education for All* in 1990 which further led to the formulation and implementation of the landmark initiative.

Subsequently, in 2010 came the constitutional landmark with the Right to Education (RTE) to provide free and compulsory education to all children 6–14 years under Article 21A. This reiterated the participation of all children in school as a fundamental right providing the opportunity for all children to learn. Similarly, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 also lays special focus on underrepresented minorities in school and higher education by acknowledging the importance of interventions to promote the education of children belonging to all minority communities, particularly those communities that are educationally underrepresented.

Education Programmes and Schemes

In 1983, the 15-Point programme was announced by the Prime Minister for the Welfare of Minorities Education of Disadvantaged Minority Children.

Education was prioritised in the points 11 and 12 for the minorities with special focus on coaching classes in minority educational institutions for competitive examinations and providing technical skills by setting up ITIs and Polytechnics by government or private agencies in predominantly minority areas. The centrally sponsored schemes included Area Intensive Programme for educationally backward minorities; modernisation of *Madarsa* education by introduction of Science, Mathematics, English and Hindi in traditional *Madarsas* and *Maktabs*. The other schemes included appointment of Urdu teachers, language teachers and incentive schemes for supporting the states in accelerating the participation of the Muslim minority students. In addition, many other schemes related to the quality parameters were also launched namely in-service training for teachers from minority managed institutions; orientation courses for managers of minority institutions in modern management techniques by the SCERT; appointment of regional language teachers in minority institutions; remedial coaching in minority institutions and computer literacy.

Initiated by the Department of School Education and Literacy under the Ministry of Education in 2014–15 two schemes namely—Scheme for Providing Quality Education in Madarsas (SPQEM) and Infrastructure Development of Minority Institutes (IDMI) were

launched. The schemes were to address the quality parameters under the Scheme for Providing Quality Education to *Madarsas* and Minorities (SPEMM) which was later transferred to the Ministry of Minority Affairs in April 2021. Infrastructure Development of Minority Institutes (IDMI) is another scheme to expand infrastructure in private aided or unaided minority schools and institutions for quality enhancement and facilitate the education of minorities by augmenting and strengthening school infrastructure in minority institutions (elementary, secondary, or senior secondary schools) to expand the facilities for formal education to children of minority communities. It also ensures educational facilities for girls, children with special needs and those who are most deprived educationally among the minorities.

The National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions (NCMEI) plays an advisory role for implementing the schemes and programmes for the minority managed institutions at the central and the state levels. Thus, the guidelines of the SPEMM not only limits to the execution part but also on inbuilt monitoring mechanisms. The process involves State Governments where all the proposals are submitted with the approval of the state level committee under the chairmanship of the secretary of the relevant department, including the Secretary of Education and Secretary of Minority Affairs of

the State Government. The State Level Committee scrutinises and recommends the proposal under the scheme. On receipt of proposals from the State Government, the Project Approval Board set up under the Chairpersonship of the Secretary of the concerned Ministry of Government of India considers the same on merit and accord approval and thereafter the funds are released.

All programmes and schemes ensure that there are equal opportunities provided right from the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) service through *Aanganwadi* centres to access, equity and quality parameters. There are pre as well as post matric scholarships as well for financial support to the students belonging to the economic backward category. For ensuring the participation of girls at school level *Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV)* scheme runs in the areas where a substantial percentage of the population are minorities. Furthermore, for girls who made commendable progress can avail the Scheme of Begum Hazrat Mahal National Scholarship (earlier Maulana Azad National Scholarship for Meritorious Girls belonging Minorities) for equitable prospects.

State Initiatives

Different states have also initiated various schemes and projects for the upliftment and growth of the Muslim community. Scholarship programmes are being implemented

for almost every state for minority student. The West Bengal government has been addressing the significant socio-economic shortcomings cited by the Sachar Committee through innovative programmes and schemes such as, honorariums for teachers, bicycles for girls' students of *Madarsa* studying from Classes IX to XII, scholarships under the Talent Support Programme for students securing less than 50 per cent marks, etc.

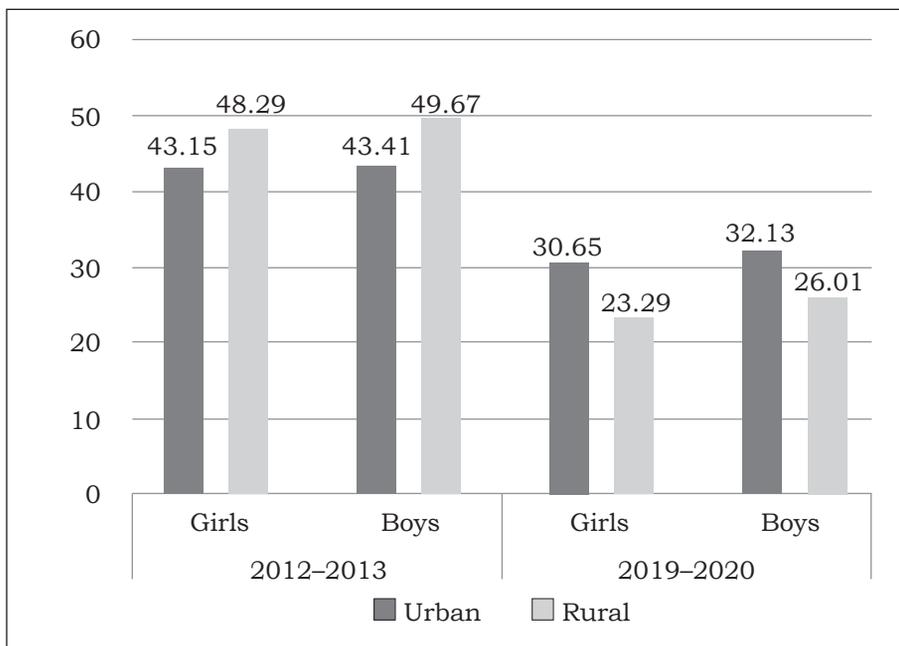
To provide quality education to the meritorious students of the minority communities in the state, the 'Bihar State Minority Residential School Scheme' has been started where free education will be provided from IX–XII standard. Not only these states but other states like Kerala, Delhi, Karnataka and others initiate various policies in line with the Sachar Committee Report 2006.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 does not have specific recommendations on the Muslim minorities or other minorities in particular but recommends the declaration of those geographical locations identified as aspirational districts by the NITI Aayog and the regions where there is a larger concentration of educationally-disadvantage Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) as Special Educational Zones (SEZs) where additional attention and efforts may be made while implementing the schemes and policies to get maximum results to bring radical change in the educational system.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

The educational progress of Muslim minority students is an area of concern since there are accessibility and equity issues related to it. As discussed in the previous sections the progress is recorded yet when it is compared between 2012 and 2019 the trends are not as favourable with reference to the location namely rural and urban context. Education forms the cornerstone of individual development and should be accessible to all. For instance, Fig. 1 exemplifies how the enrolment rate of muslims remains more or less the same or has become lesser because that as the muslim enrolment rate improves the enrolment rate of other

minorities has grown significantly. Therefore, the enrolment rate of muslims seems to decline if we look at the graph in Fig. 3 despite the increase. Also, the enrolment rate in the rural areas is higher than in the urban because muslims tend to enroll themselves in the *Madarsas* and other local educational entities which are an informal system of education rather than those formal education entities, the *Madarsas*, and other local educational institutes located more in the rural than that the urban. But, the enrolment rate of formal education is more in the urban as per the NSSO. During the 2019 as illustrated the trend had been reversed with the decrease in



Source: UDISE Data for various years

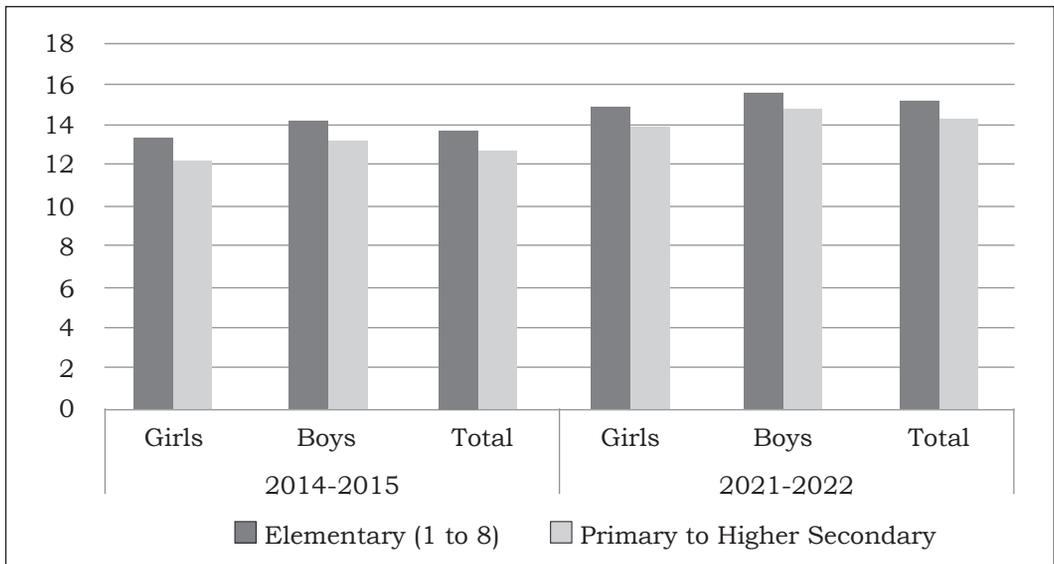
Fig. 1: Enrolment of muslim students among minorities (%)

enrolment in rural areas and increase in the urban areas.

The UDISE data trends on the muslim minority from 2018–2022 reveal that the three States namely West Bengal, Assam and Kerala have the highest level of participation from primary to higher secondary level at 31 per cent, 39 per cent and 32 per cent, respectively 2018–19 and 32 per cent, 40.1 per cent and 36.1 per cent in 2021–22. Similarly, the three Union Territories Lakshadweep, Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh scored highest at 99.5 per cent, 61.51 per cent, and 54.8 per cent in 2018–19 and 99.7 per cent, 62.9 per cent and 56.2 per cent in 2021–22. Fig. 2 reflects that the participation rate of the children declines from primary to higher secondary levels

during the years yet there has been an increase in the level of enrolment from 2014 to 2022. There has been an increase in the enrolment of Muslim girl students to the total enrolment by 1.6 points during the selected period at the elementary level. When the total category is compared during the same time line the increase in the elementary level is recorded by 1.43 points.

However, the Sachar Committee reported that the enrolment rate in Kerala and Karnataka is good which is above 90 per cent and satisfactory, i.e., 80 per cent in Delhi, Karnataka and Maharashtra. The committee also reported that 25 per cent of the Muslim population have either never attended school or have drop out of school which is higher than the rest



Source: UDISE Data for various years.

Fig. 2: Muslim minority enrolment to total enrolment (%)

of the minorities. This statement resonates that the participation of muslim minority children is divided between *madarsas* and formal schooling and there are numerous programmes for enhancing the participation of the students in the formal sector. The following section explores the initiatives taken by the centre or specific state to address the issues of the muslim minority group.

The SPQEM and IDMI schemes have been on roll since 2014 as discussed in earlier section which focuses on the qualitative and quantitative aspects of *madarsas*. It's observed that the education provided in some *madarsas* lacks modern subjects such as, science and mathematics, essential for a comprehensive learning experience. Moreover, the segregation of muslim students in such institutions poses challenges for their educational advancement. Additionally, the allure of tradition often outweighs the inadequacies of the syllabus, hindering muslim students from accessing education aligned with contemporary needs (Mollah and Bera, 2018).

As per the UDISE data on total recognised *madarsas* accounts for 19965 in 2021–22. It may also be noted that most *madarsas* in India are privately managed by religious groups in six states namely—Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bengal, and Assam but simultaneously many are funded by the state as well. These state-funded

madarsas offer equivalent education in comparison to the mainstream schools, and their certificates hold the same value, improving the job prospects of students educated in *madarsas*.

This poses to the challenge of funding as *madarsas* mainly rely on charity and donations from the muslim community. Some *madarsas* have additional income from their own property, like land and buildings. In certain states like Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal, there are *madarsas* boards that provide government grants to registered *madarsas* but most *madarsas* prefer not to take these grants to maintain independence and avoid government intervention. Many researches points out that the modernisation on *madarsas* needs to be an holistic approach to knowledge, rejecting the distinction between religious and worldly knowledge (Asma and Shazli, 2015; Ali, 015); Wani and Kidwai, 2021; Ahmed, 2023). In this regard, there are diverse perspectives on the basis of region and also the ways of intermingling traditional knowledge with the modern trends.

Finally, for attaining inclusivity, social justice, tolerance and economic development the focus needs to be on standardising and mainstreaming *madarsas* education. The role of National Council for Minority Educational Institutions (NCMEI) and National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) can be crucial in integrating

modern subjects into *madarsa* education, catering to learners up to pre-degree level.

CONCLUSION

It may be derived that the muslim minorities despite being the majority among the minorities has the lowest literacy rate. There are various socio-economic reasons due to which their participation in education had been limited and addressed adequately by the education policies and programmes over the years. Many efforts have been made by various programmes and schemes that resulted in improved literacy.

The policies, programmes and schemes with special focus on muslim minority students resulted in the improved literacy rates as well as participation of students in

the schools. Though the indigenous learning methods are in the process of modernisation and have a long way to go since its implementation is a challenging task across the nation due to regional disparities. The rural and urban distribution and the gender parity are the critical areas impacting the participation of the children with reference to access and equity paradigms. Though it may be noted that modernisation of *madarsas* also plays a crucial role in providing wider reach to education based on collaborative efforts from all stakeholders. Post Sachar Committee there has been substantial progress in the educational status of muslim minority. The same spirit of reaching the unreached continues within the broader framework of the SEDG in the NEP-2020.

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