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ABSTRACT

Key words: Muslim, Minority, Higher Education, College, Uttar Pradesh

The 21st century is witnessing huge change in terms of the way education is being imparted. A great need is there to bring everyone under the umbrella of education. No nation can afford to neglect any section of society. Muslims constitute the second largest religious group in India and thus the largest minority. Muslim community has set up many educational institutions at all levels; in spite of that, Muslims in India are, considered to be educationally backward. Number of institutions increased but the quality of education declined. Education is one of the most lacking aspect in the Muslim community. This study was an effort to get to know the reason why do Muslims are educationally backward and what role Muslim minority higher education institutions are playing in this regard, functioning of these institutions in Uttar Pradesh, their aims and objectives, strategies to achieve these objectives, courses and structure of education, functioning in terms of infrastructure, instructional facilities and faculty programmes and activities, the problems they facing and how far these institutions are trying to create equal opportunities of education for Muslim minorities in Uttar Pradesh. Population in the present study comprised four Government aided Muslim minority P.G. colleges of Uttar Pradesh, which are decades old. This case study involved four-fold approach: Investigator's on-the-spot observation; College Principal's Perception; Faculty's Response (40) and students' reactions (400) on various dimensions of the college profile and their achievements over the long period of their existence as well as their contribution to the Muslim minority's well-being and uplift as the supreme cause of higher education provided therein. The eight objectives of the study stand the test of scrutiny based on data collection directly from the stakeholders as well as beneficiaries which tends to promote the veracity of the objectives under study. The set of 4 sample colleges have a long history of their own and their outstanding contribution to the development of Muslim Minority higher education in Uttar Pradesh over the decades speaks volumes of progress and development of education among Muslim boys and girls at higher education. Contrary to popular belief, the awareness level for higher education among Muslim minorities seems to have multiplied as the data of these four college reveals. This set of selected Muslim minority institutions not only feel proud of their academic and professional excellence but also of the fact that a big chunk of their students, especially girls, successfully knock through national level competitions. As perceived by the principals of the sampled colleges the major factors responsible for poor status of Muslims in higher education, were; parents' illiteracy as the major

bottleneck, poverty as the second biggest factor, difficult accessibility to higher education institutions and Parda system. In this process three fundamental issues have also come to the fore as hurdles to sustainable development in higher education. **First**, the orthodox belief that all modernity is counterproductive; **Second**, the wide-spread inertia to change in the mindset of educators and teachers by and large; and **Third**, the various types of unproductive teaching force known differently such as guest teachers, contract teachers outsource teachers etc. working half-heartedly at school and higher education, that has really spoiled the whole system of education in India as such. For facilitating Muslims involvement in higher education, these sampled institutions seeking measures like financial assistance by the college, scholarships by the Government, hostel facilities at subsidized rates and counselling and remedial classes of students, free books reservation in admission, fee relaxation and merit scholarships. The findings of this study, provides enough potential for further research possibilities such as Research in breaking inertia to change and modernization, contrary to the popular belief that Muslim minority institutions in India are, against the change, quick-fixed to tradition, this set of Muslim institutions of the selected sample proved it otherwise, for the sample colleges themselves, a good deal of research possibilities are available to conduct intensive case studies of respective institutions to bring out their research based souvenirs on the eve of their golden, platinum and centenary celebrations etc as due, to guide other sister institutions. Another myth that is commonly observed in Islamic view of education according to some Muslim Scholars is, that 'Education is not important for girls and that it may instill a wrong set of values'. This common belief among Muslim parents is shattered by all the sample Muslim institutions chosen for the study, and revealed that Muslim girls are eager and keen to pursue further education and ready to prove their merit, they need more and more opportunities, so this is a matter of deep concern and research. Besides many a problem that a Muslim minority institution confront in its day-to-day functioning, the findings of the study refer to issues like taking up a leadership role in promoting awareness about the importance of education for community upliftment seems to be a welcome move to show that the minority institutions, too, can do it. The problem identified in the above discussion and their remedial measures may provide potential guidelines for planners and policy makers and it is hoped that such research provide guidelines for revamping the government policies and programmes related to minority higher education in enhancing the educational status of Muslims in the country.