Schooling Options for Muslim Children Living In Muslim-Minority Countries – A Thematic Literature Review

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Abstract: **Islamic education of children is a common problem faced by Muslims living in western, European and other developed countries as minority. It can be due to a number of factors such as unavailability of Islamic schools at a particular location, lack of enough number of students to warrant opening a full-fledged Islamic school, curriculum legislated by governments which does not focus on Islamic education or does that in an inadequate manner (non-confessional or based on another faith), lack of integration between religious education and secular subjects, inability of parents to fund their child's education in Islamic school due to high tuition fees, perception that state or secular public schools would provide better education than Islamic schools etc. Purpose of this paper is to examine the schooling choices available to Muslim parents living in Muslim-minority countries and factors that govern parents' selection. This examination not only covers full-time schools but also the supplementary options (Sunday, Evening or Weekend schools). Sunday school concept is a centuries old concept which initiated to provide religious and literary education to children in England and gradually expanded to other parts of world. Muslim communities are also gradually embracing this concept but its development in most places is in infancy. In our analysis, we have reviewed a large body of knowledge and research on Islamic school and presented our synthesized findings with regards to functioning, applicability, sustainability, curriculum and other relevant aspects at Islamic schools in Muslim-minority countries.**

Keywords: **Islamic education, children, Muslim-minority, Islamic schools, countries.**

1. INTRODUCTION

Muslims minorities face many unique challenges. One of such key challenges is providing quality Islamic education to Muslim children (Maimuna, 2015). Different countries treat religious education in schools differently which impact formation, funding, curriculum and functioning of Islamic schools. Considering this and other factors, organization and status of Islamic schools is considered to be governed by external and internal factors (Tayob, Niehaus, & Weisse, 2011, p. 15). External factors may include particular educational policies/ systems in a particular country, legislation, political factors, state-religion separation (or relation) and integration policies. Internal factors may include intrinsic aspects such as mobilization and self-organization of Muslim minorities. Researchers have analysed Islamic education in secular societies and impact of educational policies on schooling for Muslim children which help us assess suitability and usefulness of fulltime Islamic schools for education of Muslim in countries where they live as minority. However, this is one side of the picture which deals with countries where a number of educational options are available to choose from.

The other side of the picture is where children do not have access to right (or any) religious or secular education at all due to economic, political, social and cultural factors. According to an estimate, there are 58 million children of primary school age across the globe (Muslims and non-Muslims included), that are out of school (UNESCO Institute for Statistics/UNICEF, 2015; RIGBY, 2015). If we also include adolescents, the figure reaches 121 million individuals who either never started school or dropped out. Another notable fact is that half the percentage of out-of-school children is those which are caught in conflict. Biggest number of out-of-school children (approx. 33 million) is from sub-Sahara African region with higher percentage for females as compared to males. This is followed by South Asia area which is

approximately 3 times less than this. Rest of the world contributes to make up remaining 15 million (approx.) (UNESCO Institute for Statistics/UNICEF, 2015). Muslims represent a fair share in this large number (Abdulkarim, 2009; Lodhi, 1994).

Based on this, we see a clear difference between developed, developing and under-developed countries. Accordingly, their problems and solutions are to be studied in their specific context and one study cannot be generalized for these different contexts. Scope of current will include 'developed countries' only, in line with above explanation.

2.   RESEARCH AIMS

Current study presents a thematic literature review and synthesis on Islamic schools and cover following relevant aspects:

- Determination of Muslim *parents' preferences* regarding schooling of their children in countries where Muslims are living as a minority

- Review of *perceptions* about Islamic and other schools

- Analysis of *factors* contributing to school selection

- Analysis of *viability of Sunday Schools as an option* for Muslim minorities

Literature review in this study will be spread over papers, books, news, Articles and views expressed by parents through various electronic platforms.

3.   RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

1) Demographic Changes in coming decades warrants more opportunities for Islamic education for children and necessitate review of available option:

Demographic changes and birth rate impact the demand and pressure on school places (Burns, 2015; Eng, 2013; Gloucester Shire, UK, 2012; Jones, 2012; The Jewish Leadership Council, 2011; Weldon, 2015). In current context, this finding is complimented by research from Harrison, (2010) which suggests that rapid increase in number of Islamic schools is linked to immigration and higher birth rates.

According to PEW Research, Muslims are expected to grow at double the rate as compared to overall world population between 2010 and 2050 and are expected to become the largest religious group (Lipka & Hackett, 2015). It is also found by PEW research that median age of Muslims is 23, which is 7 years less than other faiths. This essentially means that a large percentage of Muslims comprises of children and young persons. Number of children is also expected to increase in line with overall projected growth of Muslims around the world. This necessitates proactive planning for future educational requirements. High growth rate of Muslim population is not limited to Middle East and Africa. Rather it is spread over almost all regions of world except Latin America and Caribbean (Lipka & Hackett, 2015). Another important fact highlighted by Pew Research report suggests that Christianity is expected to lose 60 Million adherents between 2010 to 2050, despite 40 million accepting Christianity as their faith (Burke, 2015). Another important fact to keep in consideration is that largest population of Muslims in a single country will be living in India(Hackett, 2015). Though not included in current study (as our focus here is only developed countries), it can be an important research area for future researchers. Future demand for regular, Weekend and Sunday Islamic schools will be governed by these demographic factors.

Muslim population in UK is estimated to grow from 4.8% to 11.3% by 2050 (Gledhill, 2015) continuing its trend to be the fast growing religion in UK (Fenton, 2015). It is also highlighted by analysts that number of Muslims in Europe is expected to double by 2050 and their population in America will surpass Jews making them second biggest religious group(Yuhas, 2015).

Purpose of current research is to assess the important factors leading to parents' decision of school choice for their children and feasibility of incorporating Sunday schools in the portfolio of Islamic educational organizations during this peak growth period in coming decades as pointed out by above mentioned demographic studies and age trends. Focus of our research is specifically the developed countries where Muslims live as minority.

2) Many religious schools are currently very young and need research to support their future developments:

In line with literature presented in this study, it is evident that Islamic schools in many countries are in their initial stages of development and facing many challenges. This research highlights some of those challenges and presents comparative argumentation[1] to analyse the situation.

3) Existing Sunday Schools need a framework to adhere to assess themselves against future educational needs of Muslim minorities:

Many Sunday schools have come into existence in past two decades. Current research would generate information which would help align these Sunday schools in line with broader Islamic community needs in non-Muslim countries in terms of available options and viability of such schools.

4. RESEARCH APPROACH

In current research, we will find answers to research questions based on critical thematic integrative analysis of existing literature using secondary research techniques. For the purpose of this study, secondary research methodology is considered suitable as it enable us analyse historical data, proving or disproving an argument or theory, offering general background information, setting the scene and context for future research (University of Surrey, UK, 2015). Simon and Goes (2011; 2010) present utilizing secondary sources as an alternate source of data which they successfully utilized in their dissertation to explore a topic that was not much researched before. We accordingly see value in utilizing this method of critically reviewing the literature relating to choice of schooling by Muslim parents by exploring a large number of sources and synthesizing relevant information from them. According to Harvard University (Harvard Graduate School of Education, 2008), this approach can be considered a stand-alone form of qualitative research which is notably utilized in educational research (e.g. 'Review of Educational Research' Journal by Sage Journals "publishes critical, *integrative reviews of research literature bearing on education*, including conceptualizations, interpretations, and syntheses of literature and scholarly work in a field broadly relevant to education and educational research").

For current study, only those secondary sources will be used in determining answers to research questions which:

- Relate to research aims, partially or completely

- Lead to interpretations that can be used in achieving research objectives, partially or completely

- Prove or disprove an approach adopted or not adopted in research

- Come from a reliable sources

- Provide insights in to public opinion

- Assist in testing interpretations (Research also utilizes news to put findings into perspective and test certain interpretations. We have been selective in selecting news sources to ensure authenticity and often quoted more than one sources.

5. CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF RELEVANT EDUCATIONAL ASPECTS:

CLASSIFICATION OF SCHOOLING OPTIONS:

Literature review highlights a large variety in terms of names, functionality and types of schooling options (Docker, Fraser, & Fisher, 1989; NSW Department of Education and Training, 2012; Owyang, Vermann, & others, 2012; Sayer & Vanderhoeven, 2000; "Types of school - GOV.UK," n.d.). However, for the purpose of this research, we have simplified representation of this broad variety of schooling options in categories shown in figure 1.

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[1] In logic and philosophy, an argument is a series of statements typically used to persuade someone of something or to present reasons for accepting a conclusion.(McKeon, 2010)
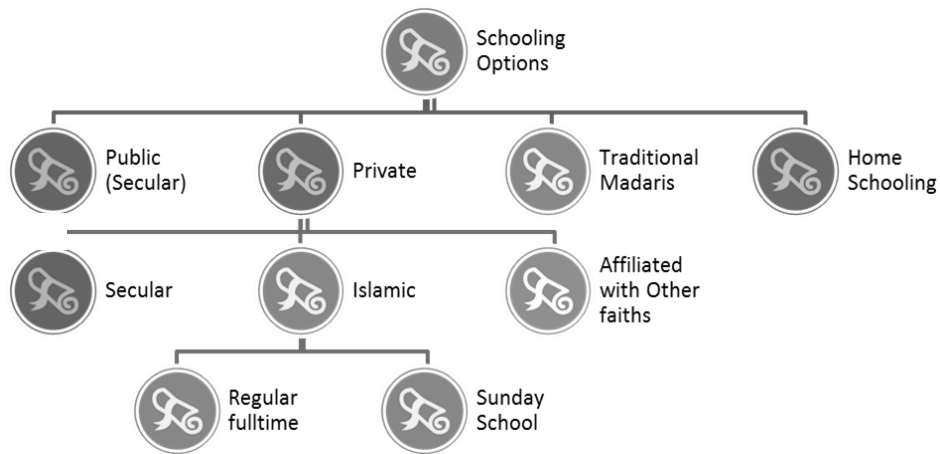
Figure 1: Schooling Options

Our key focus will be full-time Islamic schools and supplementary Sunday schools and while discussing this type of schooling, we will briefly touch on relevant aspects from other types of schooling, as required.

Some of the possible practical combinations of schooling choices from above are as follows:

Table 1 Combinations of Schooling Options (derived from Figure 1)

i.	Public Only
ii.	Public and Sunday School
iii.	Private Secular Only
iv.	Private Secular Plus Sunday School
v.	Private faith school (other than Islamic) Only
vi.	Private faith school Plus Sunday Islamic School
vii.	Home Schooling Only
viii.	Home Schooling Plus Sunday School
ix.	Regular Fulltime Islamic School
x.	Regular fulltime Islamic School PLUS Specialized Sunday Schools (e.g. *Hifdh* i.e. Quran memorization etc.)
xi.	Traditional Madaris Only

Out of these 11 options, three options (ix, x, xi) provide opportunity for fulltime study in an Islamic educational organization. Remaining 8 options deal with 4 different types of schooling options which parents can select as the only schooling option for their children or in conjunction with Sunday school.
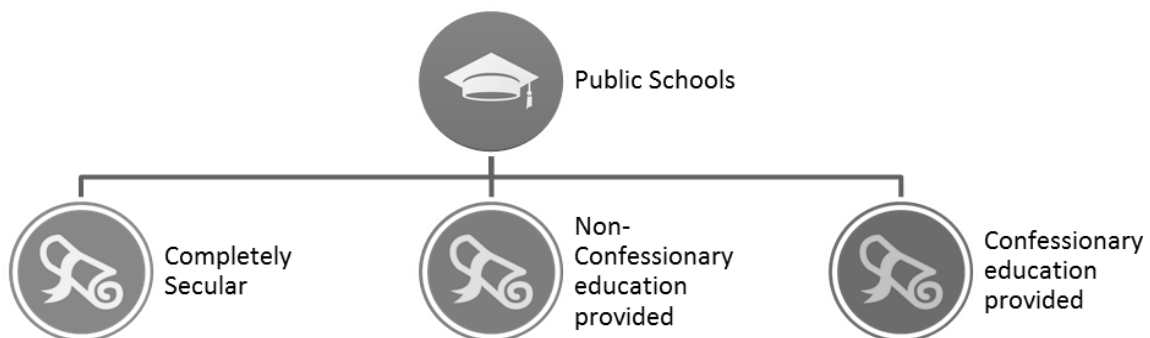
Public schools can be further categorized as below:

Figure 2: Classification of Public schools

As explained in following parts of this paper, majority of Muslim children in non-Muslim countries go for secular public schools due to a number of underlying factors, Sunday schools can be a viable option for parents who also want to provide their children Islamic knowledge without getting their children enrolled in fulltime Islamic schools.

Donohoue Clyne (2001) presents an interesting classification of parent's choices for schooling of their children, from *cultural* point of view:

Classification	Explanation	Relevance to options presented above
Sub-Cultural	Muslim communities and parents establishing separate Islamic schools to provide an Education which reflects Islamic values and practices	Option ix, x and xi
Counter-Cultural	In this option, children go to mainstream schools but parent continue to question what they learn at school and try to ensure that no anti-Islam sentiments are being taught. Responsibilities on community and parents include teaching children Islamic education separately (e.g. as a subject in public school curriculum, at Sunday, evening or weekend schools).	ii, iv and vi In almost half of Europe, Islamic education can be provided in state schools which can also be classified under counter-culture i (in case confessional Islamic education is provide at public school)
Accomodationist	In this opinion, parents consider it very important to integrate with mainstream secular education. Their belief behind this is that it is required for survival in non-Muslim countries. They consider that providing Islamic education is responsibility at home. This point of view requires parents to be Islamic role model at home which, at times, is not possible due to various factors.	i, iii, v
Assimilationist	This point of view is held by parents who consider themselves "not very religious". Such parents have adopted secular view of religion as marker of ethnic identity. They are mainly concerned with acceptance in society and consider education as a tool for this.	i, iii, v

Option vii and viii can be classified into various categories depending on given situation and preferences. Similarly options involving public schools can also be classified differently depending on its types as explained in Figure 2.

Our research will explore rationale, limitations and outcomes of these choices in line with research aims. Traditional Madaris and home-schooling are not included in scope for current research considering their very different nature to the other schooling options explored through this study.

SECTION A: PSYCHOLOGICAL BASIS:

Before we start discussing factors that affect parents' choices, it is important to have an overview of psychological aspects that govern formation of 'opinions' and decisions regarding 'choice'. It is not meant to be an all-encompassing overview of relevant literature on these aspects (as it would go beyond the scope of this paper) but a broad overview which will help us understand the factors governing parents' choices (explained in coming sections) in a clearer manner.

OPINIONS:

Parents' decision regarding selection of schooling option for their children is governed by their 'opinions'. Following is an overview of some important points regarding opinions:

- "Opinions are formed either from internal reasoning and logic, or from external interactions with others with views on this topic. When introduced to new information or innovations in a certain product class, individuals associate the information with their current opinion on that class. If the opinion on the topic is negative, it may be difficult for the new information to change the individual's opinion to a positive one, and vice versa. Intuitively, having a positive opinion towards a product will most likely increase the likelihood of adopting it" (Kozuki, 2007).

- Though it was traditionally believed that humans make fully-informed rational decisions while keeping available alternatives in consideration with a preference to enhance utility. However, recent research points out decision making irrationalities Soc.

- "Social influence is the process by which individuals adapt their opinion, revise their beliefs, or change their behaviour as a result of social interactions with other people. In our strongly interconnected society, social influence plays a prominent role in many self-organized phenomena such as herding in cultural markets, the spread of ideas and innovations, and the amplification of fears during epidemics" (Moussaïd, Kämmer, Analytis, & Neth, 2013)

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- Moussaïd et al identified two major attractors of opinion:

1. The expert effect (induced by the presence of a highly confident individual in the group) and

2. The majority effect (caused by the presence of a critical mass of laypeople sharing similar opinions)

This tells us that people would get influenced to shape their opinions on what they hear from people influential to them and what they see most people in their interaction believing. There are some *tipping points*, when impact of one of the above mentioned two sources of influence would take over the other and opinions would shift in a particular direction.

- Further to above point, following finding from Wu & Huberman (2008) is of particular relevance: "The emergence of email and global access to information through the web has started the change the discourse in civil society and made it even easier to propagate points of view and misleading facts through vast numbers of people; views which are surprisingly accepted and transmitted on to others without much critical examination". So, we can interpret from this that media and electronic information systems have a strong influence on opinions held by people.

- Favourable opinions do not necessarily transform into an observed choice; rather, a favourable opinion towards an alternative may encourage an individual to try the alternative for a trial period after which previous alternative/ choice may (or may not) come back. (Rogers, 2003)

- It is also to be kept in mind that long-term and short-term opinion formation is different. In short term, a person may form certain opinion which can change over time. Sarnoff-Ross (2010) explains it as trial phase. Once trial phase is over, people can switch back to their earlier opinions. We also come to know from information provided by Sarnoff-Ross that when presented with evidence debunking their convictions, people became even more rooted in their original beliefs either as a defence mechanism or as a form of protest.

- Research also shows that those who generally have more self-confidence are more willing to reconsider their position while those who feel insecure or negatively challenged are less likely to budge. It often takes a long time for people to get comfortable with the fact that they may not know a thing or they may be incorrect in their opinion (Sarnoff-Ross, 2010).
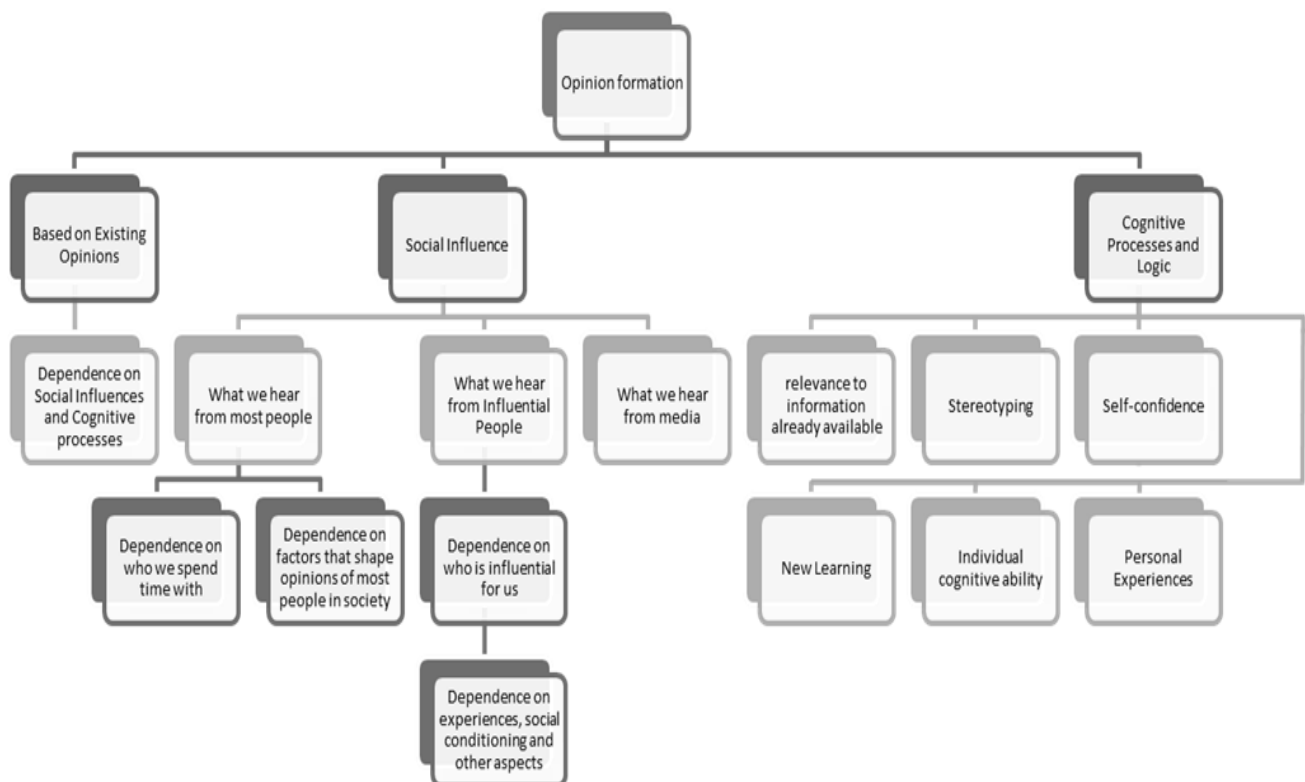

Figure 3: Opinion Formation - Influential Factors Model (based on literature review)

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION ON OPINIONS:

From above, we see that our opinions get influenced by what people around us think in majority or what influential people say. If we apply that in context of societies where Muslims live as minority, their opinion can therefore possibly get influenced by common beliefs and opinions in society. With increasing Islamophobia (which is accordingly triggered by factors such as media reports (their particular style, methods and if there is any underlying bias), opinions of people considered influential in society and individual cognitive processes), we can expect two types of results. One, increasing effort from minority community to look the same and behave the same way in line with what is considered as acceptable in society. This often results in distances from religion in order to better assimilate with society[2]. The other possible outcome is people becoming firmer in their opinions when they see people differing from them. This often results in people getting more attached to their religions and become more practicing either due to emotional attachment which wakes up or due to further study they may undertake to respond back to criticism. We see both types of people in societies where Muslims live as minority. It is also influenced by company that a person remains surrounded with and emotional attachment he or she has with it. In deciding which way to go, it is possible that decision is not made on completely rational ground with complete information and knowledge about consequences.

DECISION MAKING AND HEURISTICS:

Following discussion focuses on psychological aspects on decision-making:

Wargo (2012) has compiled a very useful overview of psychological aspects behind choices we make. This information is highly relevant in terms of understanding decision-making process parents go through when choosing a schooling option for their children. Main points from Wargo's literature review are as follows:

Psychological Aspects of Decision Making	Implications in terms of choice of Schooling
According to the theory of expected value, a person's behaviour is determined by how much a goal is valued, and by the degree that the person expects to succeed.	Parents target certain goals and outcomes from their children's education and assign them certain 'value' or weightage. Different goals can have different priorities. From these goals, they may be able to let go the lower priority ones but not those with higher value to them. If they see their high-value goals being fulfilled through a particular option or choice, it is likely they will make that choice and vice versa.
	From this theory, we can understand the impact of factor of religiosity among parents which determines how much value parents give to Islamic education of their children – 'a core concern', 'somewhat needed' or 'not a consideration at all'.
	It can also be interpreted from the perspective of parents who prefer Islamic education of their children and give them high value.
	If the expectancy of achieving this goal is there through Islamic school, parent are likely to choose this option. In case expectancy is not their (i.e. if it is perceived that Islamic schools will not be able to provide the Islamic education parents are looking for), parents may choose not to send their children to Islamic schools.
	Value given to secular education and other factors

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[2] There have been some recent debates on "Assimilation VS. Multi-culturalism". One of such testimonials is "Britain or Islam". Criticism on multiculturalism is even more severe in Europe where senior officials are report to critique this (Emerson, 2011). Some researchers, however, have proven that this sort of an argument does not have firm basis as the two entities ('religion' and 'nationality' are mutually exclusive). More information on this can be found from in report from Gallup, titled "Beyond Multiculturalism vs. Assimilation" (Mogahed, 2007)

Psychological Aspects of Decision Making	Implications in terms of choice of Schooling
	along with decisions associated with them, can also be interpreted the same way through this theory.
Use of heuristics[3] also impacts decision-making. For example, the idea that the relationship between value and losses/gains is nonlinear (as commonly referred: "losses loom larger than gains") is important for decisions involving risks, and opens the door for framing effects (i.e. how a matter is presented). People are generally found more risk averse (even if they have to give up potential extra gains from other alternatives)	If parents get a perception that Islamic schools may offer lower educational standards (this perceptions can be formed due to number of internal and external factors mentioned under psychological aspects of opinions discussed above). They would try to avoid this perceived 'loss' (i.e. lower educational quality) and choose other alternatives. Similarly, depending on opinions, options and value given to Islamic education, some other parents may opt to avoid the 'loss' of 'religious values' in their children and hence look for Islamic education options for their children through Islamic schools.
Another two relevant heuristics are 'representativeness' and 'anchoring'. 'Representativeness' means the tendency to ignore statistics and focus instead on stereotypes whereas 'anchoring' refers to starting from a known point and estimating a value to be near that.	These two are possibly the major causes of Islamophobia where generally non-related issues (mostly international) are considered a local problem which often results in either fear of local Muslims or discriminatory behaviour against them ("What Is Islamophobia?," 2014; Yahya, 2015). Similarly, people see the information presented to them through various sources as an anchor and form their perceptions accordingly. If we look at it from another angle, we can interpret the expectations parents have from their children in terms of educational achievements which are based on anchor parents have set in their mind either due to pre-immigration ideals or societal norms. In some cases, they believe that Islamic schools are not doing enough - as opposed to statistics which show a large number of Islamic schools showing better results as compared to public schools (ISCPAC, 2011; "Islamic Schools Rated Britain's Best," 2013; MacGuill, 2013; Musharraf, 2015)- whereas in other cases (more relevant to migrants from less-stable socio-economic back-grounds) parents may settle down for lower academic results and may not have much problem with that.
People also estimate the likelihood of an event based on the ease with which it comes to mind, or its 'availability'. According to this heuristic, people refer to their past experience (primary, secondary of tertiary) and expect a response on its basis.	This can also be related to our study in a couple of ways: - First implications can be in terms of Islamophobia or fear of Islamophobia. Many Muslim parents send their children to Islamic schools from fear of Islamophobia and discrimination which their children may face in public or other private schools. - Second implication can be *'relevance'* to prior experience in terms of schooling. For those who had good experience about a particular type of school, this experience may come to their mind readily with 'ease' and may impact their decision ('availability' factor)

[3] Heuristic is any approach to problem solving, learning, or discovery that employs a practical method not guaranteed to be optimal or perfect, but sufficient for the immediate goals. Heuristics can be mental shortcuts that ease the cognitive load of making a decision (e.g. rule of thumb etc.)

Psychological Aspects of Decision Making	Implications in terms of choice of Schooling
According to 'affect' heuristic, people make judgements about things based on how they feel towards certain options.	This links to our previous discussion on opinions which get developed due to a number of factors. Opinions ultimately govern how we feel about certain things – this feeling, in turn, governs our decisions and choices when selecting from available options.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION ON DECISION-MAKING:

From above discussion, it becomes clear that parents' choice of schooling would be an outcome of a number of various underlying factors such as value they give to certain educational aspects and/or religious affiliation, their expectancy of achieving their goals from a particular type of school, loss-averse nature due to which they try to avoid perceived loss in terms of aspect they value highly, the bench-mark they have in mind and their experience (which may or may not be direct).

SECTION B: "PUBLIC (SECULAR) SCHOOL", "FAITH SCHOOL (OTHER THAN ISLAMIC)" OR AN "ISLAMIC SCHOOL"?

First point that we need to explore is parents' opinion about 'Islamic' schools in general and factors that affect their choice of schooling in line with above discussion. This will assist in furthering the study and exploring where Sunday school fits in line with parents choices.

In order to explain this triangular relationships, we will use following theme for literature review:
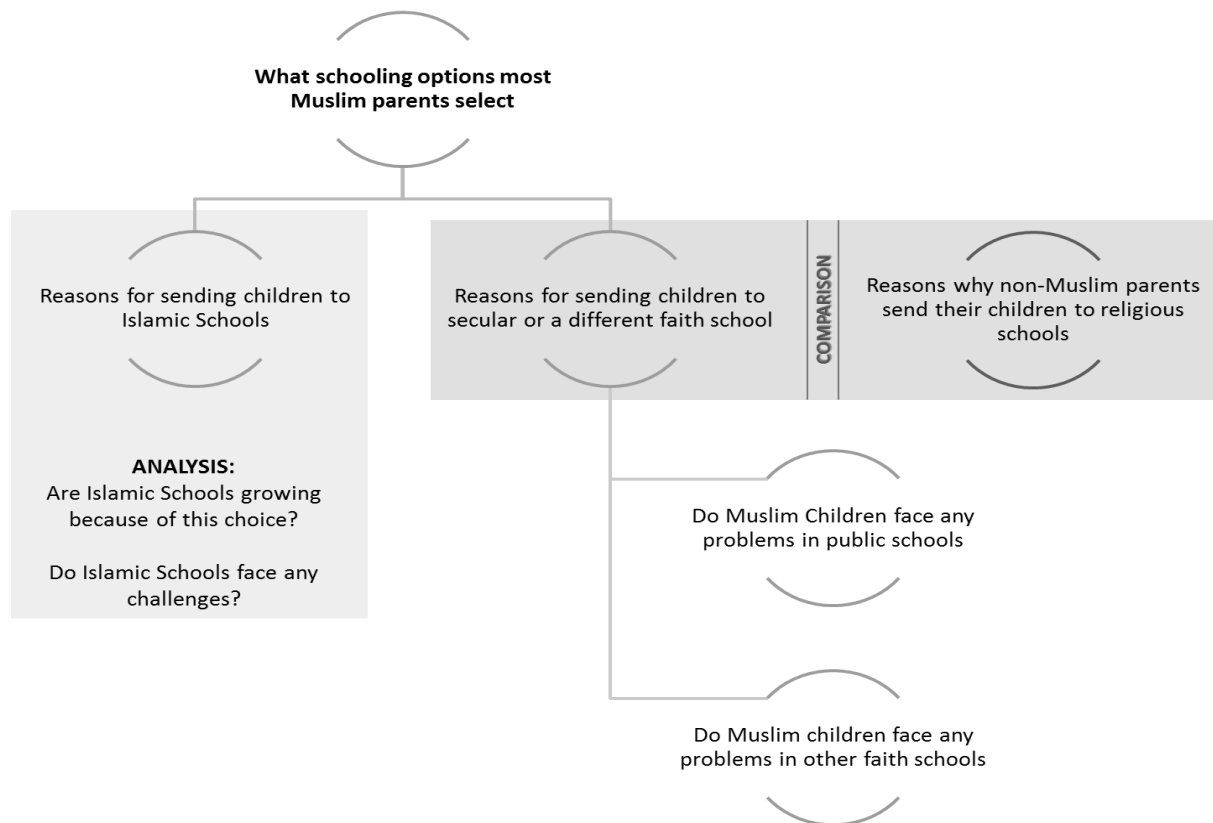

Figure 3: Theme of Analysis for Schooling Choice

DO MOST MUSLIM CHILDREN GO TO ISLAMIC SCHOOLS

Majority of Muslim children in Muslim-minority countries go to public or other faith schools.

Following is an overview of some relevant findings:

- According to Jones, (2013), 20% of young Muslims in Australia go to Islamic schools and rest is distributed among public or other schools.

- According to Islamic Centre of North America (Siddiqui, 2009), 1% of Muslim children were going to Islamic school in US at the time of their study. However, Haddad, Senzai, & Smith, (2009) and Keyworth (2011, p. 15) estimate this percentage to be 3.8%. In either case, it is clear that majority of Muslim children in America go to public schools in their locality (Badawi, 2006).

- According to studies conducted by Veinguer, Dietz, Jozsa, & Knauth (2009, p. 114) and Mancini & Rosenfeld (2014, p. 311), 1% of Muslim children in Britain go to Islamic schools and rest goes to public or church schools. Aslan (2009) also finds out that majority of Muslim children in Britain attend public schools.

- Musharraf (2015) studied Islamic education in Europe and presented a comprehensive analysis covering 31 countries. According to his study, most of the Muslim children in Europe as well go to public schools.

Above pattern is found to be different to findings about other religious groups. There can be various reasons for that (minority vs. majority in a country, level of secularization, historical contexts, prevalent approach in a society etc.) which are beyond the scope of current research. Following is a brief overview of children of others faiths going to their faith schools:

- Approximately 50% of Catholic children in Australia go to Catholic schools (Dixon, n.d.; South Australian Catholic Primary Principals Association (SACPPA), 2008). Catholics form 25.3% of population as per 2011 survey ("2071.0 - Reflecting a Nation: Stories from the 2011 Census, 2012–2013", 2012).

- 50% of Jewish children in WA, Victoria and NSW (Australia) attend Jewish schools (Graham & Darlinghurst, 2014). 0.5% of Australian population adheres to Judaism ("2071.0 - Reflecting a Nation: Stories from the 2011 Census, 2012–2013", 2012).

- 60% Jewish children in Britain go to Jewish schools (Miller, Grant, & Pomson, 2011, p. 30)

- In America, 15% of catholic children go to catholic schools. Schools have got the capacity but enrolments are on a sharp decline (Vitello & Hu, 2009). (This reduced enrolments are impacting schools in many ways – some schools have even removed crosses and statue of mother Mary to change school type)

- Christianity is prevalent religion in Europe and most catholic or Greek orthodox children go to schools belonging to their faith. Similarly, high percentage of children attend confessional education of their religion, where available in public schools (Musharraf, 2015).

REASONS BEHIND CHOICE MADE BY MUSLIM PARENTS FOR SCHOOLING THEIR CHILDREN:

We will now analyse reasons behind this choice. First we will review reasons why parents who send their children to Islamic schools make this decision and then review the opposite.

WHY DO MUSLIM PARENTS SEND THEIR CHILDREN TO ISLAMIC SCHOOLS:

According to researchers (Barrett & George, 2004; Hodge, 2002; Rizvi, 2014), parents prefer their children to retain religious and cultural values and accordingly are more inclined to sending their children to Islamic schools.

According to an e-brief from Parliament of Australia (Phillips, 2007), Muslim parents send their children to Islamic schools to avoid bullying and intimidation and to ensure their safety. In addition to safety reasons, another key reason, as mentioned by researchers (Rizvi, 2014; Sedgwick, 2014a, p. 241) is impossibility to stick to certain religious value while studying in public schools e.g. Islamic concept of modesty where gender segregation is required in certain cases. In a case study mentioned by Sedgwick, parents send their children to Islamic schools due to factors such as mixed gender physical exercises, swimming classes and difficulties in sticking to Islamic dress code. It is also important to note that most parents interviewed in above study used the word 'we' to represent themselves and Islamic schools showing an alignment between their mutual values and understanding. Sedgwick also mentions about parents in his case study who prefer Islamic schools for above mentioned reasons without getting impacted by some reports on possible lower standard of education despite some complaints about low performance and lack of trained teachers.

Point about educational standard is variable from situation to situation and is often an outcome of perceptions in many cases. We have come across findings from many researchers and reporters suggesting outstanding academic and overall achievements of Islamic schools ("France's first private Muslim school tops the ranks," 2013; Abbas, 2011, p. 71; C. B. Henrietta Cook, 2015; Huus, 2011; Sridhar, 2008, p. 136; Woods & Woods, 2009, p. 199). Our this interpretation is

further complimented by a study from Ameli et al. (2006, p. 9) who point out some of the reasons for Muslim parents getting attracted to Islamic schools also include 'high academic achievements' and 'discipline' which according to some other researchers were pointed out as weaknesses. A large study in European context including 432 schools and 40000 students also put forward some findings which are in contradiction to some common perceptions about Islamic schools (Driessen & Merry, 2006). For example, research concluded that there was no difference in non-verbal intelligence, cognitive capacities, home learning climate, attitude towards work, social behaviour, language achievement levels, student well-being and confidence between students at Islamic and other schools. Islamic school children demonstrated higher achievement levels in mathematics and primary school final examinations. Another A study carried out by the Ministry of Education in Denmark found that a high percentage (41%) of the pupils in Muslim independent schools progressed into upper secondary school, against a national average of 26% (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark, n.d.). Interestingly, in France as well, "best-performing secondary school in the general education category according to Le Parisien's table was in fact the 'Lycée Averroès', a private Muslim school in the northern city of Lille" ("Private Muslim school is France's 'best lycée' - The Local," 2013)

In American context, similar findings were put forward by (Huus, 2011) who mentions "As with other religious schools, parents seek out Islamic schools in part to shelter their kids from the rough-and-tumble exchanges and atmosphere they commonly encounter in public schools". Another study from CAIR reveals similar harassment and bullying at schools (CAIR, 2012). Report suggests that more than 10% of American Muslim students reported physical bullying such as slapping, kicking, or punching, 17% of the female respondents who wear a hijab reported being bullied at least once because of this, 50% of American Muslim students reported being subjected to mean comments (e.g. being called 'terrorists') and rumors about them because of their religion, more than 21% of students reported experiencing some form of cyber-bullying. 63% of survey population reported such incidents to teachers whereas 53% reported to their parents out of which only only 17% answered that it 'Often,' or 'Very Often' helped.

A study in European context revealed 61% of teachers at Netherlands witnessing discrimination with Muslim children (Bouma & Ruig, 2015).

Other contributing factors found from information presented by Sedgwick (2014) based on his comprehensive qualitative and quantitative research in European context include 'seeking sound Islamic knowledge', 'mutual trust', 'accommodation of individual needs' and 'feeling of being assimilated into Islamic community', 'convenient location', 'lack of own understanding of Islam which parents did not desire for their children to be passed on to' as additional factors.

From above, we identify that many Muslim parents prefer full-time Islamic school as schooling option, where it is available. This interpretation endorsed by findings from numerous other researchers and reporters (Bita, 2015; Cook & Butt, 2015; Freeman & Tranter, 2011; McNeilage, 2013; Jones, 2013).
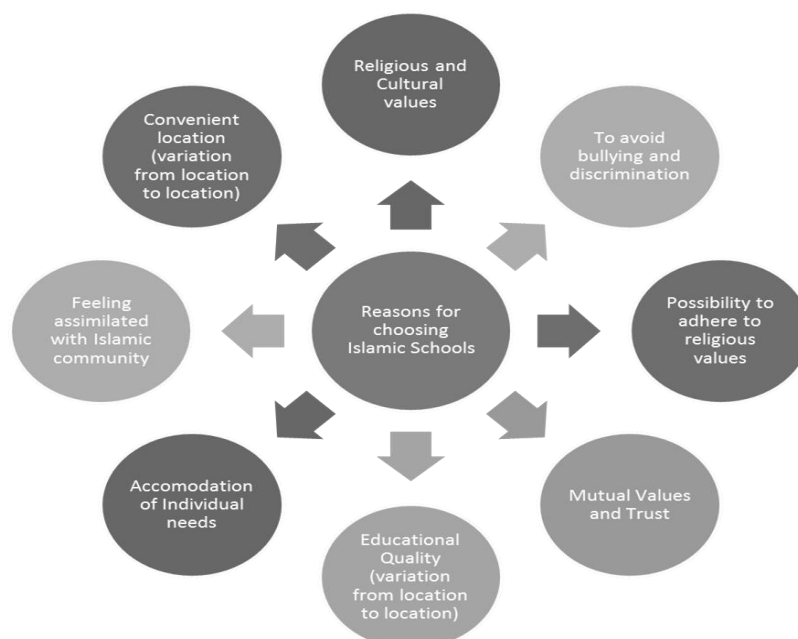

Figure 5: Why Do Parents Choose Islamic Schools? (Outcomes of literature review)

ANALYSIS: ARE ISLAMIC SCHOOLS GROWING BECAUSE OF INCREASING INTEREST FROM PARENTS?

Our comprehensive literature review suggests Islamic schools are growing at a rapid pace.

Peter Jones (2012) who researched on Islamic Schools for 7 years, points out that number of Islamic schools in Australia has doubled from 1996 to 2008. In line with national trend, enrolments at Victorian Islamic schools have also more than doubled in 8 years since 2007 representing 103% increase (as opposed to 4% and 13% growth in Jewish and Catholic Schools respectively), contributing to a 16 per cent overall increase in independent school enrolments in state (POWLEY, 2015). According to this report, overall Victorian school population grew by 9% during same time.

Though many Islamic schools are expanding, they are still overwhelmed with high number of enrolment applications. Jones point out an interesting sign at AFIC Malik Fahd School mentioning: 'There are 25,000 Muslim students in Sydney. We cannot take them all. No place in any class K-12'. C. B. Henrietta Cook (2015) presents data from a number of Victorian schools which suggest massive growth in enrolments and huge number of applications against limited availability of seats.

Similarly in England, demand for Islamic education is growing fast and schools are springing up to meet it, reports Abrams, (2011) pointing out a 75% growth in 10 years. Applications for enrolments are much more than the available slots. Abrams finds, "the demand from parents seems to be huge – one school in Birmingham recently attracted 1,500 applications for just 60 places". Another Islamic school in Leicester was reported to have five applications for each place. Report from Huus (2011) highlight same trend in US where Islamic schools are on the rise and enrolments are increasing.

In Europe as well, Islamic schools are increasing (Musharraf, 2015). System of education in Europe varies from country to country. Some allow teaching confessional education of religion of choice, some offer an alternate non-confessional subject on Ethics, some only allow non-confessional comparative religion teaching approach and some allow establishing supplementary or full-time Islamic schools. All of these available options are being explored by Muslim communities and options for religious education are increasing from overall perspective. In countries where religious education is not allowed in schools or where Muslim community is not resourced enough to run Islamic schools, supplementary schools (Sunday, weekend etc.) are offering Islamic education to Muslim children.

ANALYSIS: WHAT CHALLENGES ARE FACED BY ISLAMIC SCHOOL

In our study, we find most Islamic schools to be very young and in a stage where they are in the process of establishing and strengthening themselves. We also find some schools that are really sophisticated well-established organizations, making strong contributions for Muslim communities.

Literature review suggests that the struggle in initial periods is not limited to Islamic schools but most faith schools face similar situation (Beinart, 1999; Grace & O'Keefe, 2007; Gray, 2014; Jones, 2012; Meyer, 2007; Vitello & Hu, 2009).

The most comprehensive classification of stages of development for Islamic schools, according to our literature review, is proposed by Haddad, Senzai, & Smith (2009c). They have mentioned three stages of development:

1) Challenging (where schools find most financial difficulties and struggle to find good teachers),

2) Stability Stage and

3) Professional Stage.

According to researchers, most Islamic schools in America are considered to be in first phase.

Research in Australian context also reveals similar findings. Peter Jones (2012) points out that Islamic schools face same problems as other small faith-based private schools i.e. "having adequate sponsorship and support from the community as well as knowledge of how the system works, getting well trained staff and an experienced principal, and in the long run, having properly trained imams qualified in Australia as well as Australian teaching materials". This issue about financial stability is also pointed out by Ozgur, (2005). In his study, Gray (2014) found the biggest problem faced at the time of enrolment to a faith school (Catholic in his research) was affordability.

In her study, Dr. Hoda Badawi (2006) points out the most frequently cited of areas for improvement for Islamic schools as 'lack of facilities and resources' and the 'lack of programs and services' which, she believes, are related to financial strains faced by most Islamic schools. Similar findings are obvious in works from many other researchers/ reporters (Woods & Woods, 2009, p. 102, EDWARDS, 2015; Puddy, 2015).

These finding compliments the points about three stages of development of Islamic schools mentioned above. This is partly due to the fact that government funding in many countries either doesn't exist or is limited (OECD, 2012; Rizvi, 2014). Keyworth (2011) in her study presents an analysis of age of Islamic schools in America and point out that 85% of them are less than 10 years old. In her study, she also highlight that key challenges faced by Islamic schools in having adequate space (majority of schools are either in process or have applied for building extensions), variation in teacher certifications (the issue which is also faced by public and most private schools) and importance of engaging with community to clarify common misunderstandings.

In addition to this, Abrams, (2011) highlights a number of cases about Islamic Schools in England where poor management skills and lack of adequate understanding of applicable legislation caused many problems for schools.

Ozgur (2005) also highlights some opportunities and challenges faced by Muslim schools including: 'enhancing public perception about Islamic schools', 'keeping mission alive', 'leadership', 'attracting, training and retaining qualified staff', 'building an effective board', 'diverse parent body', 'curriculum', 'lack of a road map' and 'building bridges, partnerships and networking'.
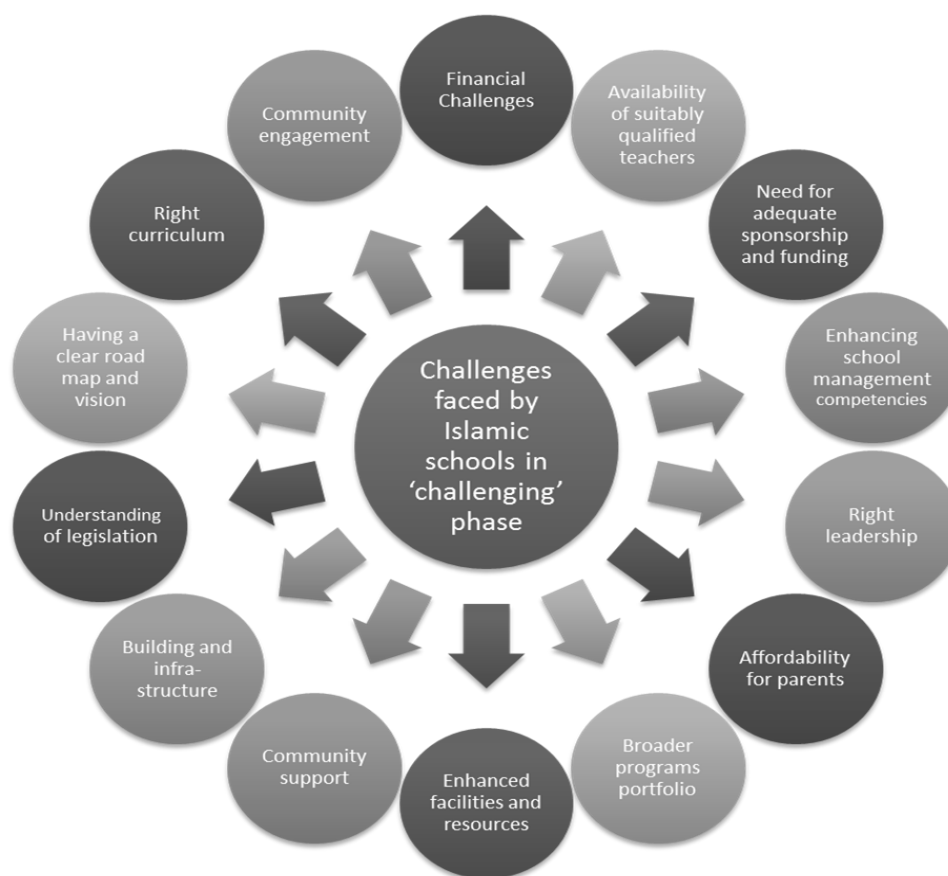

Figure 4: Challenges Faced by Islamic Schools (Outcome of literature review)

REASONS FOR MUSLIM STUDENTS GOING TO OTHER THAN ISLAMIC SCHOOLS:

We have seen that there is an increasing interest in Islamic schools and there are long waiting lines. This implies that Islamic schools do not have capacity to cater for needs for broader population.

According to other researchers, some of the reasons for high percentage of Muslims attending secular public or other faith schools include 'lower capacity of Islamic schools' and 'huge waiting lists' (Haddad, Senzai, & Smith, 2009c; McNeilage, 2013; SMH, 2007).

Peter Jones, who extensively researched Australia's Islamic schools for his PhD, says that only 15 to 20 per cent of Muslim students attend Islamic schools. He also pointed out that demand is immense but Islamic schools do not have room to cope up with this high demand (McNeilage, 2013).

Aslan (2009) finds out that factors that determine choices Muslim parents make to educate their children include what schools are available locally (which also links to above point about unavailability of Islamic Schools to cater need for population), over-subscription in certain schools (also complimented by research quoted above), affordability of education in private schools etc. Most Muslim parents are not able to afford high fees at Islamic schools and the alternate option for them is public schools (Nimer, 2014, p. 53). Jones (2012) identified that most Muslim students are not able to attend Islamic schools because their parents cannot afford school fees, or there is no school in their locality or they may not be able to pay school bus levy. This problem with affordability is not unique to Islamic schools and other faith schools face similar issues too (CHILCOTT, 2012). Referencing a number of studies, Grace & O'Keefe (2007, pp. 27–28) present information on closure of a number of Catholic schools due to their unaffordability by parents. Researchers mention about the struggles of schools that rely on fee payment by parents and challenge put forth by Bishop of USA to catholic community to share the burden of their faith schools. If Islamic schools are to survive, these potential implications with fee structure and funding considerations may require to be addressed.

Another factor for Muslims attending public or non-Islamic faith schools, particularly catholic, is their perception about higher educational quality in these schools and their preference for that over embedded religious values in Islamic schools. There are different opinions about this perceived high quality of education and evidences pointing out the findings contrary to what many parents believe is not ignorable. Cobbold (2013) is of the opinion that Catholic Schools have lost any Academic Advantage over Government Schools. Cardak & Vecci, (2013) have found that the relative performance of Catholic schools has declined since 1980. Cobbold interprets that "The advantage that Catholic schools once held over government schools has virtually disappeared and attendance at Catholic schools may now lead to lower completion rates in secondary school and university". However, it is to be kept in consideration that this trend is not prevalent across the board and there may be variations from school to school. We have also explained some findings about educational standards in Islamic schools in previous sections.

According to findings presented by Merry (2010), disinterest from parents in Islamic schools is because of steep school fees, too great a commute, concerns over integration, academic quality or simply a rather casual religious adherence. Merry (2010) does not find it surprising as "most Muslim parents do not frequent the mosques or practice even the most minimal religious requirements". 'Integration' was also found to be a contributing factor in such descision by Jones (2012) who interviewed a few students who mentioned a feeling of being in a bubble isolated from the rest of society. However, in his study *most* students said that going to Islamic school strengthened their faith and they had plenty of opportunities to do valuable interactions with broader community. Aslan (2009, p. 199) and Ameli, Azam, & Merali (2006, p. 10) mention about initiatives taken by Muslim schools to foster greater integration and collaboration with other schools which supports our above interpretation. Driessen & Merry (2006) also highlight studies, in Dutch context, concluding that almost all Islamic schools had an open attitude towards Dutch society and played a positive role in creating conditions for social cohesion and certainly did not hinder integration.
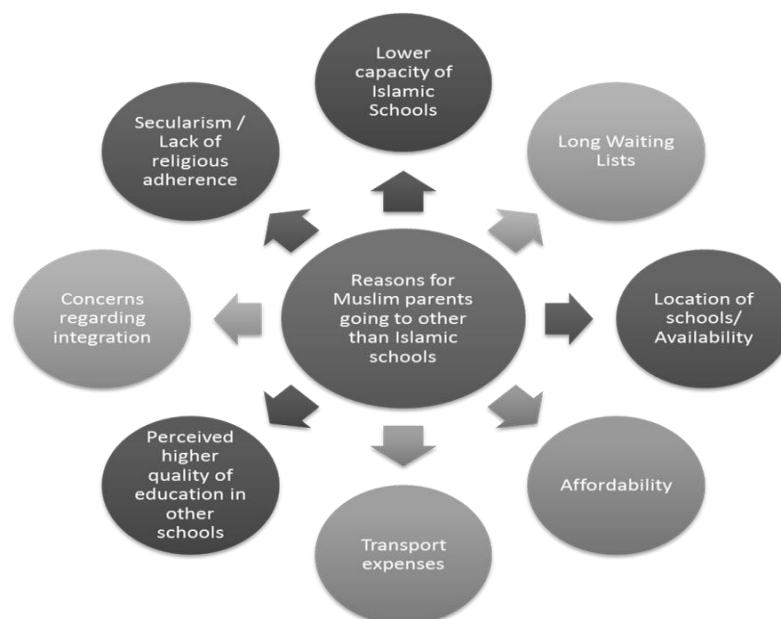

Figure 5: Reasons for Muslim Children going to other than Islamic schools (Outcome from Literature review)

CHOICES FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION BY NON-MUSLIM PARENTS:

There is a difference in approach adopted by non-Muslim parents with regards to sending their children to religious school. Most parents send their children to religious schools for better religious upbringing (as is the case with Islamic schools). This also includes many parents who are themselves not practicing but still adopt religious education for their children. The other group that we find from literature review is those parents who want better discipline and educational standards for their children and see that 'goal' achievable through religious schools ('expectancy') and hence send their children to religious schools. Following is an overview of key findings:

- In a study conducted by Gray (2014), it was identified through quantitative analysis that primary reason for catholic parents enrolling their children in catholic schools was better religious education (81% respondents). Academic instruction came at third. School services and variety in offerings were included as contributing factors, though, at a lower priority list.

- Study on Jewish schools entitled "The Rise of Jewish Schools" mentions that Jewish parents who are not very practicing or religiously knowledgeable, still enrol their children in Jewish schools for "preparing their children to lead more observant, less assimilated lives than they do" (Beinart, 1999). Some of the other reasons mentioned for parents' choice for Jewish schools include 'students not being well-versed Judaism' and 'students not being able to maintain Jewish identity' in public schools. The Shengold Jewish Encyclopaedia explains that Jewish parents send their children to Jewish schools because they consider it essential for their children to understand what it means to be a Jew and to respect themselves (Schreiber, Schiff, & Klenicki, 2003, p. 144).

- A report by The Sydney Morning Herald, titled "School choice is not just keeping the faith" (Tovey & Mitchell, 2013) points out that when it comes to where their children will get education from, parents are basing their decisions on factors other than religion. This reports highlights that parents are considered to be making this choice for factors other than religion e.g. such as perceived better standard of education. Report suggests that many atheist and non-Christian parents also prefer private religious schools (mainly affiliated with Christian faith) over public schools for better educational standards and facilities irrespective of their own beliefs and some even baptize their children to secure them a place in private Christian schools (even though they are not Christian themselves) (CHILCOTT, 2013; Turner, 2014).

- Similar trend is noted in US by Clauss-Ehlers (2010, p. 720).

DO MUSLIM CHILDREN FACE ANY PROBLEMS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

This sub-section deals with 'experiences' which form opinion and govern choice.

Hodge (2002) conducted a comprehensive study of Islamic beliefs and practices to assist social workers understand specific aspects related to Islamic faith while performing their tasks. He points out that desire for Muslim youth to practice their faith in schools often results in conflict and some of the religious obligations such as prayers and fasting may not be possible without assistance from school staff.

According to Haboush (2007), Muslim children may be at a risk for failure as their teachers may not be familiar with their culture.

Barrett & George (2004, p. 277) present findings that reveal a number of other related issues as well, such as, pork being included in menus at times without any alternative (Also reported by: Daily Mail Australia, 2014; RT, 2014; The Times, 2015) etc.

Barrett & George point out that Muslim parents are concerned about their portrayal in educational materials which may not objectively represent their religion.

In certain cases, if they fail to fully adopt secular values, they may be ridiculed or mistreated. Reviewing the news related to Muslim children in public schools reveals the fact that this finding from Hodge (2002) is correct (BBC, 2014; Esposito & Burgat, 2003, p. 83; Gilligan, 2014; MALM, 2015; The Guardian, 2015; The hindu, 2012; The Moscow Times, 2015; Times of India, 2015).

Md-Yunus, (2015) also highlight this fact about discrimination and potential unacceptance due to cultural and religious practices in her study focussing on techniques teachers can adopt to impart inclusive education for Muslim children living in Muslim-minority countries.

This treatment for Muslim kids, however, has not been uniform across the board and we see positive behaviours as well governed by factors such as level religious tolerance prevalent in society, inclusiveness as a culture and acceptance of different cultures in schools and general community. Notable positive initiatives in terms of inclusiveness include provision of halal food for Muslim in certain countries (Esposito & Burgat, 2003, p. 196), conducting research relating to inclusion of Muslim children and understanding their needs (Parker-Jenkins, 1995), issuing guidelines for teachers to ensure inclusivity (Asmar, 2007), initiatives to curb Islamophobia and provision of laws to allow Islamic religious education of children (The Muslim Council of Britain, 2007) etc. However, there has been a variation in approach adopted by various schools and governments (as highlighted in above paragraphs and reported by The Muslim Council of Britain) and this issue needs to be taken up in further research.

EXPERIENCE OF MUSLIMS IN OTHER FAITH SCHOOLS:

Aslan (2009) mentions the fact that many Muslim parents, rather then sending their kids to Muslim schools, are happy to send their children to church (or Christian) schools as long as they learn about Islam as well.

In many Catholic and other Christian schools, children from non-Christian parents participate in religious rituals as do Christian children as a mandatory requirement in these schools and study an 'integrated' curriculum which combines religion values of school with secular subjects such as social science or sex education. "While the usual subjects are taught - English, Maths, Science, History and Geography among others - each is approached from a Biblical perspective" report Johns & Hallett (2014).

Scharbrodt, Sakaranaho, Khan, Shanneik, & Ibrahim (2015) also report a similar finding and highlight the fact that even if Muslim children skip their religious education class, as per their right to do so, they still will have to study 'integrated curriculum' which has religious influence on all aspects. This would mean that Muslim children will be no different if going to these schools. This finding is found to be correct in line with some of the news reports about Muslims attending Christian and other non-Islamic schools.

"All pupils at the Rosary Catholic Primary attend Catholic assemblies in the morning and Mass at the nearby church, while crucifixes and statues of the Virgin Mary line the corridors", reports Laura Clark for The Daily Mail (CLARK, 2012). 90% of children at this school are Muslims, mostly of Pakistani origin according to report. They participate in Christian rituals and listen to teachings attributed to Jesus with permission from their parents (CLARK, 2012; Pickard, 2012).

In a similar finding, but from a different part of globe, it was found that "In the Sydney diocese 145 Muslim primary and high school children attend schools dedicated to the names of Catholic saints - where *Jesus Christ*, not *Allah*, is at the core of faith and students take part in distinctly Catholic rituals such as saying The Lord's Prayer and attending Mass" (SMH, 2007).

Reason mentioned for this choice in the report is that some Muslim parents have "*bypassed*" Islamic schools, where faith and culture is embedded in curriculum, for a "*more mainstream*" education "even if it's not relevant to their faith - and their children get roped into Christian observances". Report also mentions that "Muslim students can be found in Catholic, Anglican and Presbyterian schools, but the vast majority are enrolled in public schools".

Another report from Canada discussing a case study of Cardinal Ambrozic Catholic Secondary School, Brampton, reveals the increase in number of Muslims attending the school over the years and the fact that it is fine for some of the Muslim parents even if school adheres to and teaches different faith (HAMMER, 2011). Some parents fear conversion of their children to Christianity and bullying. However, they overcome this fear and give preference to educational standards in Catholic schools which they perceive to be better than other alternatives in line with their pre-migration concepts, as pointed out by Shafique Virani, a professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Toronto. A BBC news article from UK brought into light reports about Evangelical Christian groups with an intent on converting pupils being allowed into state schools (Burns, 2013). Musharraf (2015) mentions similar findings for some other European countries as well.

Fear of conversion mentioned in studies quoted above can be understood by finding from Perl & Gray (2007) who point out that chances of disaffiliating from Catholism get significantly reduced after attending Catholic high school for at least three years. This interpretation is further augmented by important finding highlighted by Pew in the 2009 study 'Faith in Flux', "*Religious change begins early in life. Most of those who decided to leave their childhood faith say they did so before reaching age 24*" (PEW Research, 2009). Sedgwick (2014b, p. 241) mentions case study of a parent who is hesitant

to send his daughters to public schools fearing risk of assimilation – a viewpoint which supports above arguments. From this, it can be interpreted that "Religious commitment as a child and teenager may be related to the propensity to change religion" (Gray, 2014).

Yahiya Emerick, a former President of the Islamic Foundation of North America, believes, "In my experience, the only children who remain Muslim are those who had very strong Islamic tendencies in their family or those who went through Muslim schools" (Emerick, 1999).

SECTION SUMMARY:

From above, we interpret that if Islamic schools have to make their mark in coming decades, offer a competitive service and increase their ability to offer enrolments to broader community (Muslim and non-Muslim), they will need to plan their way to move from 'challenging' stage to 'stabilizing' and then 'professional' stage. We understand the fact that this improvement journey will require deep and wide analysis and availability/ creation of support mechanisms involving Muslim community, professionals in the field of education and other relevant disciplines, adherents of other faiths, government bodies and other stakeholders. Focus areas would vary from school to school and country to country. However, it may be a good idea to conduct SWOT analysis based on information summarized in Figures 5, 6 and 7 with customization/ update from any other data available to schools locally.

From this section, we conclude:

- *Due to various factors, majority of Muslim children living in non-Muslim countries still attend public or private schools affiliated with other faiths where they may get very little or no Islamic education.*

- *On the other hand, a very rapidly increasing percentage of Muslim parents prefer their faith and cultural values over other factors and want to send their children to Islamic schools.*

- *Current capacity of Islamic schools is far lesser than the number of children who want to enrol. Those children who cannot get enrolled accordingly go to other schools.*

- *Therefore, Sunday school may provide an alternate route to attainment of Islamic education for these children. Rest of the paper will be dedicated to explore this aspect.*

SECTION C: SUNDAY SCHOOL

SUNDAY SCHOOL CONCEPT:

Original idea behind Sunday schools in Britain and America was to teach poorer working children, often known as 'white slaves', on their only day off (AUSBUN, 2014; Dicey, 1962, p. 223). Early Sunday schools used to teach reading and writing using Bible (AUSBUN, 2014; Larsen, 2008). The concept of Sunday school grew very rapidly (BBC, 2008; Howse, 2011; Song, 2013) and "by the mid-19th century, Sunday school attendance was a near universal aspect of childhood" (Larsen, 2008). Larsen also explains, "Even parents who did not regularly attend church themselves generally insisted that their children go to Sunday school. Working-class families were grateful for this opportunity to receive an education". Sunday school was initially the sole educational option available to majority of children (BBC, 2008; Howse, 2011; Mahood & Mahood, 2005, p. 33; Song, 2013). Sunday schools not only catered for the need of children but also many adults used to attend them (Howse, 2011). Historically, missionaries used Sunday schools (Boylan, 1990, pp. 70, 76, 2015; Fahlbusch, 2008, p. 230; Oliver, 2006) as first steps to establish day schools.

Taking lead from Christian Sunday schools which worked on charity and provided free education to the poor (Boylan, 2015), with the passage of time, Jewish Sunday schools also started to surface (Richman, 1900; Rosenbloom, 1958).

Context and times have changed since then. One of the key reasons for existence of Sunday/ supplementary schools today is their role in imparting essential religious knowledge which is often lacking in public schools (Fahlbusch, 2008, p. 230; Rosenbloom, 1958, p. 71). This is often done as 'supplementary' classes.

There have been various opinions about relevance of Sunday schools in 21st century (Boylan, 2015; Harris, 2015; Prosser, McCullar, & Qualls, 2002, pp. 5–6; Song, 2013; Thomas, 2005) with some considering it still relevant, some considering it a matter of past and some recommending reformed agenda to support its growth and sustained relevance.

ISLAMIC SUNDAY SCHOOL – A VIABLE OPTION?

Sunday school is already being implemented as a widely accepted concept among Muslim minorities living in developed countries. In there study, Haddad, Senzai, & Smith (2009d) have highlighted that though children of most practicing Muslims in America go to public schools, most of them have Sunday school exposure. However, they also argue that this form of education may result in mixing of religious values with cultural aspects. Highlighting the importance of traditional educational system Oliver (2006) mentions, "Statistics show that the Sunday school, neither in its traditional form, nor in its modern version, can successfully replace the traditional religious education system". In the light of this finding, we interpret that Sunday school can help development of religious character to some degree but needs to be complimented with other educational options (including learning at home) for achieving relevant objectives. Aslan, (2009, p. 198) also points out the fact that having a secular personality being prepared at full-time secular school and receiving supplementary religious schooling part-time can raise an internal conflict and therefore many Muslim organizations have developed full-time Islamic schools. However, as explained under previous sub-sections, Sunday Schools would still be very relevant for Muslim parents who want to inculcate Islamic character in their children due to lack of authentic Islamic studies options at public schools.

It is interesting to note that Sunday schools were used as primary method of providing religious knowledge to Muslim children before demand for full-time Islamic schools grew in America and schools were subsequently established (Ghannouchi, 2012).

IMPACT OF LEGISLATION AND EDUCATIONAL POLICIES:

It is also to be noted that formal full-time Islamic schooling is not available in many Muslim-minority countries (Aslan, 2009, p. 203; Musharraf, 2015). In some countries, it is mainly due to funding. Rizvi(2014) finds out that 1 in 5 applications for state funding of Islamic schools is not accepted in Britain and only 11 schools are able to secure funding. According to another research this number is 12 and represents 0.06% of British schools (Leach, 2014). On the other hand, percentage of state funded Christianity schools was found to be 33.61% or 6751 schools.

Following is a list of 36 developed countries as per the UN classification (UN, 2015, p. 139) and geographical grouping (UN Department of GACM, 2014) with relevant information from literature review about Islamic/ religious education in these countries. This data is analysed with the hypothesis that in most countries from the list, it is difficult to establish full-fledge Islamic schools either due to lack of funding and financial feasibility or other issues.

Country	Finding
Japan (Asia Pacific and other countries)	According to Japanese law: "The State and its organs shall refrain from religious education or any other religious activity" (Takeda, 1968) and accordingly religious education is not encouraged in Japan.
	In subsequent years after the rollout of this law, notifications from government's education department has clarified that this restriction was regarding sectarian education and general religious sentiment was considered acceptable (Inoue, 2009). Research shows that general awareness of religion is receiving increased acceptance in light of some recent events (Inoue, 2009; Sugihara, 1998).
	"In private schools, according to Article 24 of the School Law, it is possible to teach religion in place of ethics and the teacher's license is issued specifically to allow for such a teaching"(Inoue, 2009; Sugihara, 1998). Important point to note is that according to section 20 of Japanese constitution, "No religious organization shall receive any privileges from the State, nor exercise any political authority" (Inoue, 2009). Therefore, funding is not available for private schools in Japan.
	Cost of sending children to public schools in considerably lesser than private schools (Maisie, 2014).
	In Japan most Muslim children go to public schools and parents are not satisfied about this as their children are not able to practice their religion (Ito, 2012).

	One of reasons for this is unavailability of ANY Islamic school in Japan. "There is not a single Muslim elementary or junior high school in Japan" (YILDIRIM, 2015).
	This is also confirmed from a question posed by a Muslim parent on an Islamic website asking for an educational option for his children in the absence of any Islamic schools in Japan ("Japanese Muslims seeking Islamic education for children," 2002).
	Parents accordingly demand for establishment of Islamic schools, as identified in surveys.
	Recent researches suggest the same finding and mention that Islamic education for children in Japan mainly relies on informal means and volunteer efforts (Ishikawa, 2015; Ito, 2012). Such volunteer programs also include Sunday schools in mosques (ICJ, 2013).
	In accordance with above, we interpret that Sunday/ Supplementary schools play a key role in transmission of Islamic knowledge to Muslim children in Japan.
Cyprus (Asia Pacific and other countries)	Northern Cyprus is a highly secular country and does not allow any Islamic school to be opened (Musharraf, 2015) and on the southern side, there are hardly any Muslims left due to migration towards North and Turkey. In line with above, the only option left for Muslim parents to impart Islamic education, if they wish to, is supplementary schools.
Bulgaria (Eastern European Group)	Islamic education in Bulgaria operate formally as well as informally with around 700 weekend or after-school classes happening in country (Osterman, 2014). There are provisions for delivering Islamic education in schools, however its implementation and availability is found to be limited (Musharraf, 2015).
Czech (Eastern European Group)	Religion is allowed to be taught in schools outside compulsory and optional subject times. However, Islamic education has faced severe opposition and resulted in limited or no availability, despite being constitutional right of Muslim community (Musharraf, 2015). Sunday schools can therefore be a viable alternate option.
Republic Estonia (Eastern European Group)	Religion in Estonia is offered as non-confessional optional subject (Musharraf, 2015). Musharraf also explains that there are no alternative for this RE subject. Religious organizations deliver confessional instruction through supplementary (weekend/ evening/ Sunday) schools and have right to establish private schools.
Hungary (Eastern European Group)	Religious associations in Hungary have the right to provide religious education in public schools if requested by students or parents. Religious instruction is not part of the curriculum in public schools, but the government permits primary and secondary school students to enrol in extracurricular religious education classes. The only support government provides in RE is provision of space to conduct classes and not much else Musharraf (2015). Due to some policy issues, Muslims, a small minority, cannot benefit much from this legal provision. Most students get their Islamic knowledge from weekend/ Sunday schools.
Latvia (Eastern European Group)	All schools in Latvia are required to offer a choice between a non-confessional course, "Christian Faith," and a course in "Ethics" in grades 1 through 4. They also can offer a non-confessional course, "Christian Ethics," as an alternative to secular "Ethics" in grade 7 and an elective course, "History of Religions," in high school (Musharraf, 2015). Religious communities which have state-recognition can deliver confessional RE in schools outside normal curriculum if parents request so. Other religious groups, irrespective of official recognition, can open private Islamic schools (Musharraf, 2015). There are no known private Islamic schools in Latvia though. In such circumstances, Sunday schools can possibly be viable.
Lithuania (Eastern European Group)	Sunni Islam is one of the state-recognized 9 traditional religions which have presence in country for more than 300 years. Accordingly, Muslim community can provide religious education in schools, if requested by parents (Musharraf, 2015). Musharraf (2015) also explains that Muslims in Lithuania are a very small minority and though the provision for education on religion of choice is there, adequate information or research about current status of Islamic education in schools could not be found.

Poland (Eastern European Group)	Poland is one of the most Christian countries and instructions of Christianity is embedded in schools which was identified as violation of religious freedom by European Court of Human Rights in 2010 (Musharraf, 2015). Alternate to Christianity RE in schools is a subject on ethics which is either unavailable or taught by priests. Muslims in Poland are not very well-organized. There is no formal Muslim educational institution. However there is some informal Islamic education for children in many cities (supplementary instruction). The number of participants varies from 40 to 150 persons, with the greatest number in Bialystok and the surrounding area (Musharraf, 2015).
Romania (Eastern European Group)	All confessions and religious communities that are accredited by the state are eligible for state support; they have the right to establish schools, teach religion in public schools, receive government funds to build religious places, pay clergy salaries with state funds and subsidize clergy's housing expenses, broadcast religious programming on radio and television, apply for broadcasting licenses for denominational frequencies, and enjoy tax-exempt status ("Romania - International Religious Freedom Report," 2005). Legislative provisions appear to be quite favourable for faiths, including Islam, to be taught. However, there is a reported discrimination with regards to teaching of other faiths as opposed to Greek orthodox with some reports suggesting children being forced to attend class in Greek Orthodox Christianity (Musharraf, 2015). Where adequate Islamic education is not available in public schools, Sunday schools may be viable to provide supplementary education.
Slovakia (Eastern European Group)	Religious education is provided in public schools by officially registered religious organizations. However, Muslims are not registered due to certain legislative conditions which exclude them from this right and hence there is no Islamic education in public schools (Nielsen, Akgönül, Alibašić, & Racius, 2014a, p. 543). Country does not have even a single mosque and applications to build one are rejected again and again.(Musharraf, 2015) We cannot ignore usability of Sunday/ weekend schools in Slovakia provided above mentioned circumstances.
Slovenia (Eastern European Group)	Musharraf (2015) explains situation in Slovenia as follows: - Non-confessional religious and ethics education is provided as an optional subject. Religious communities have no involvement in contents for this course. This course is not expected to meet spiritual needs of adherents of faiths - Laws allow religious communities to establish private Islamic schools but Islamic community in Slovenia does not have human and financial resources to be able to start such venture - There are many confessional weekend schools running in the country which provide classes on weekend and one weekday evening and are attended be reasonable number of students.
Austria (Western European and other groups -WEOG)	Dr. Jenny Berglund explain that religious education in Austria is compulsory in public schools with an opt out option (Berglund, 2015). 13 recognized religious communities, including Islam have right to provide confessional religious education in public schools. Government also provides funding for various religious organizations and for religious lectures in public schools. Finding teachers qualified to give religious instruction was found as a barrier to providing effective Islamic education in public schools. To cater for that, teacher training institute is now functional. There are a few private Islamic schools as well which follow national curriculum but have a more Islamic culture. A proposed law in country, however, is expected to put greater restriction on Muslims as compared to Jews and Christians which will require dissolving of all their institution into a government appointed entity, inability to accept foreign donations and other restrictions which are not imposed on other religious communities. Though most beneficial options for Muslim community is expected to be 'further strengthening of Islamic education in state schools', other options may be to utilize Sunday schools to fill any gaps.
Belgium (Western European and other groups -WEOG)	According to Musharraf (2015), Islamic education in Belgium can be offered in public schools under state sponsorship. System is well developed and offered in coordination with Muslim organization. 40% of Muslim children in schools attend this subject and rest sit in alternative non-confessional ethics class. Two commonly

	cited reasons for this are 'high level of secularity (particularly in immigrants from Morocco)' and 'lower educational standards'. Those who believe that quality in public schools is not up to required standard prefer sending their children to private Islamic schools. Such private schools are overwhelmed with enrolment requests and cannot cater for all demand. Considering limited availability of Islamic schools, Islamic Sunday schools can be a quick-fix arrangement, though establishing full-fledge Islamic schools may be more beneficial for community in longer term. Role of Islamic Sunday schools can be expanded to adults as well as their level of religious knowledge is expected to be low considering prevalent secularism among many Muslims in the country.
Denmark (Western European and other groups -WEOG)	'Christianity studies' is a compulsory subject at schools. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from Christian studies on religious grounds, and some Muslim parents do so. Muslim organizations and parents can establish private schools with certain amount of funding from government (60%). There are 18 Islamic schools in Denmark. Most masjids also offer supplementary schooling (Musharraf, 2015).
Finland (Western European and other groups -WEOG)	In Finland, non-confessional RE can be provided to students according to their faith, including Islam. Whereas Lutheran Religious Education (LRE) is taught in all schools, alternate RE is offered only if the municipality or town contains a minimum of three pupils that are members of one of Finland's registered religions, and if parents demand that religious education in their specific tradition be offered to their children. Considering non-confessional nature of religious education subject on Islam, alternate source to provide confessional education, for parents who prefer that, can be Sunday/ Weekend Islamic school
France (Western European and other groups -WEOG)	In French primary schools, no religion course can be organized, whereas in secondary schools religion can be taught by chaplains (but not during the school timetable). However, as identified in a study in 2004, no Islamic chaplaincy operated in any public secondary schools. In addition to this, the banning of the hijab in public schools has provided impetus for the establishment of independent Islamic schools in France (Musharraf, 2015). Private schools can be legally opened in the country, however, their number is limited and they charge high fee due to funding issues. Many parents send their children to catholic schools which they find better than public schools in terms of acceptance of their children (Musharraf, 2015). Supplementary schools make sense in these circumstances as well.
Germany (Western European and other groups -WEOG)	In Germany, a state allows religious education in public schools in partnership with recognized religious communities. However, due to various factors, only 2 Muslim organizations have been able to get official recognition. One of them represents Alevi's who are influenced by Shiite Islam, Sufism, and Nestorian Christianity (Berglund, 2015, p. 17). They define themselves from political perspective rather than Islamic. Though Government allows religious education in public schools, only a few schools have reached an agreement with Muslim organizations to offer such courses (Musharraf, 2015). Musharraf also explains that private Islamic schools can be opened in Germany as per constitution, however, majority of children attend public schools. A little less than 20% of Muslim children attend Sunday schools.
Greece (Western European and other groups -WEOG)	Prevalent religion in school is Greek Orthodox Christianity. Musharraf (2015) explains that education of Muslims in Greece is dependent on an international treaty with Turkey that was signed after world war 1. According to this agreement, Greek government established schools for Islamic community. Unfortunately, these schools are far from meeting enrolment requirements from community. There is no financial aid available for private schools. It is apparent that first priority for Muslim community in Greece should be to liaise with government to strengthen this available option and make it realize that existing schools are not only providing lower standard of education but also are insufficient to meet demand. However, unless this gets realized, supplementary education can be of assistance.
Ireland	In Ireland, government allows public schools to be run by religious communities.

(Western European and other groups -WEOG)	90% of public schools are run by catholic church. Other religious groups operate 6%. This leaves very little room for those who do not want a school run by a religious organization or those who do not prefer to go to a school managed by a different faith group than their own. Muslims can also operate public schools (Musharraf, 2015).However, current number of Muslim schools is not sufficient to cater for needs of Muslim population in the country. Also, for Muslims present in areas where population is not sufficient to warrant having a school run by an Islamic organization, Sunday or other supplementary schools can be an easy-to-establish viable solution.
Italy (Western European and other groups -WEOG)	Catholic education in schools is a mandatory subject though parents have an option to opt out. Even if they opt out, there is a high potential for indoctrination of Christianity as schools are generally fixed with their religious symbols, such as crosses in abundance. Religious education teachers being previous missionaries is also a topic of controversy in Italy (Musharraf, 2015). Therefore, in Italy as well, there can be potential benefits of establishing Sunday/ Weekend schools for Muslim community.
Luxembourg (Western European and other groups -WEOG)	Luxembourg is in progress of moving towards a highly secular French model where religion is kept out of schools. RE subject is being replaced by teaching of morals and ethics. Parents, therefore, have to look elsewhere for confessional education required for spiritual upbringing of their children. Supplementary schools can help achieve this.
Netherlands (Western European and other groups -WEOG)	There is no separate compulsory religious education course in Dutch schools. RE is obligatory for primary schools (age 4–12 years) - includes Geestelijke Stromingen (GS), or neutrally taught courses on diverse spiritual traditions. GS often focuses on Christianity—historically the country's majority religion. In public primary education, religious communities are granted the right to provide confessional religious education. The government currently provides 10 million euros per year for five different RE classes in public schools including Islam. The religious organizations involved are able to select their own teachers (Berglund, 2015, p. 20). Equal treatment of public and private schools is a part of constitution in Netherlands which provides freedom to establish schools to teach relevant culture or faith. All schools are fully state funded. State run primary schools comprise 33% of total primary schools. Schools with Christian affiliation form 60% and all other religious comprise of remaining 7%. At the moment there are 46 Islamic primary schools in Netherlands. A number of schools are in the process of being established and there is still a need for an additional 120 such schools. In addition to other condition for establishing private schools funded by state, one of the conditions is minimum of 200 children attending the school (Driessen & Merry, 2006). Muslims comprise of 6% of Dutch population and number 920,000. Requirements of additional schools based on demographic distribution suggest shortage of Islamic schools as compared to Muslim population (and hence the need for 120 additional schools as mentioned above). Driessen & Merry highlight shortage of qualified Dutch speaking Islamic education teachers. Moreover, there study reveals that 70% of school-teachers in Islamic schools are not Muslims. Many schools considered religious education as a responsibility of parents and classes were generally found to be 1 hours per week (4 to 5 hours a month). A barrier to ease of education at Islamic school was found to be considerable travelling distances. Another important consideration to be kept in mind for coming years is increased restrictions on Islamic schools from a particular political party and proposals which can massively change the way Islamic schools function currently. "The requirement that new schools have no more than 80% of its students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds will prove to be impossible to meet. At present, some 90% of the students who attend an Islamic school can be characterized as disadvantaged and less than 2% of the parents were born in the Netherlands. This means that once this new ruling has been adopted in Parliament, it will most certainly lead to an abrupt halt in the founding of new and the further marginalization of existing Islamic schools", explain Driessen & Merry. In the situation where Islamic education provided in 'Islamic Schools' is very limited and there is an increased restriction on existing and new schools, Sunday schools running in parallel and supporting communities educational needs can help

	sustainability of community's cultural and moral values.
Portugal (Western European and other groups -WEOG)	According to Musharraf (2015), "The Law of Religious Freedom allows Islamic instruction in public schools, depending on the number of pupils/parents who express interest in so (minimum ten). In practice, there is currently no public school in Portugal with enough Muslim pupils of more or less the same age who could benefit from this offer". Musharraf also mentions that most mosques offer supplementary weekend/ evening education, filling this gap in schooling options in terms of imparting Islamic studies knowledge.
Spain (Western European and other groups -WEOG)	Muslim community signed an agreement with government regarding provision of Islamic education in schools where there is a demand. However, implementation on that is minimal (Musharraf, 2015). Pépin (2009, p. 80) reports: "As things stand, in spite of existing agreements, the Jewish, Protestant and Muslim faiths are not on the same footing as the Catholic religion. The Muslim religion suffers most clearly from this discrimination" As we identified for other countries, Sunday schools can assist Muslim children gain necessary knowledge of their faith.
Sweden (Western European and other groups -WEOG)	In Sweden, 'Teaching about Religions' is a compulsory subject. Though this subject is claimed to be non-confessionary, it is found to be tilted towards Christianity. Most of the students in Sweden, go to public schools. Sunday schools can therefore be used to offer confessional Islamic information as a supplementary system.
United Kingdom (Western European and other groups -WEOG)	In UK, there is no specific instruction on Islamic education provided in public schools. maintain linguistic and cultural traditions. (Musharraf, 2015) However, there is a non-confessional subject, presenting overview of various religions, available to students. Local education authorities are able to support ethnic minority communities to set up supplementary schools, which provide education in evenings or on Saturdays, to
Iceland (Western European and other groups -WEOG)	Schools offer a compulsory subject in Christianity with an opt-out option. However, studies have found direct indoctrination of Christianity in various forms during school education. Moreover, as a legal requirement, general teaching practices have to be shaped by "the *Christian heritage* of Icelandic culture, equality, responsibility, concern, tolerance, and respect for human value" (Musharraf, 2015). There are no known Islamic schools in Iceland. Sunday school, therefore, remains the only option if Muslim parents want their children to attend Islamic instruction classes.
Norway (Western European and other groups -WEOG)	Private schools in Norway are very rare. Though government provides reasonable amount of funding for private schools, it has set a very strict criteria regarding eligibility. Literature review conducted by Musharraf (2015) suggests that there was only one private Islamic school operating in year 2003-04. On the other hand, state offers a course on religions in schools which traditionally focuses on Christianity, however, in recent time, representation is also given to other religions. It is pointed out by Musharraf (2015) that most mosques offer some kind of supplementary education to avoid Muslim students getting deprived in Islamic study.
Switzerland (Western European and other groups -WEOG)	According to Musharraf (2015), decisions regarding religious education in schools are made be cantons. Though, number of school-going Muslim children in Switzerland has considerably increased, provisions to offer Islamic education in public schools as an alternate religious education subject are available only in a few areas. Main obstacle faced by Muslim community is availability of teachers with relevant teaching qualifications to provide Islamic education in state schools. Sunday schools, however, do not require formal teaching qualifications and can help community overcome this hurdle.
Australia (Western European and other groups -WEOG)	In Australia, government provides reasonable funding for private education in line with Australian Education Act and Regulations 2013 (Department of Education and Training, 2015). In 2013, government funding per child was $11,864 for each student in public schools, $9547 for students in Catholic schools and $7790 for other private school students (Bita, 2015b). Private schools (including Islamic schools) accordingly have to acquire remaining funds through fees and donations. Most Muslim children in Australia go to public schools (Akbarzadeh & Saeed, 2001,

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	p. 117). 78% of mosques studied in research by Akbarzadeh & Saeed confirmed functioning of a weekend/ Sunday/ mosque school.
Canada (Western European and other groups -WEOG)	According to Salisbury & Tooley (2005b, p. 9), children attending private schools in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba and Quebec receive 1/3rd of funding given to public schools per pupil (which is 50% of total operating costs). The other 6 provinces do not provide any funding to private schools. However, provinces of Alberta, Ontario and Saskatchewan provide complete public funding to Catholic or Protestant schools that are run by 'separate' public schools (i.e. another form of public schools which is focussed on religious education) which serve around 20% of Christian population in these provinces. It is also to be noted that in all Canadian provinces, parents who send their children to private school and claim federal tax credit for any components of education that pertains to religion. Only 7% of school going Muslim children go to day Islamic schools (Zine, 2008, p. 6). Zine also highlighted another interesting finding: "Many students are placed on waiting lists, as soon as they are born and some Islamic schools have waiting list of 650 or more". From this, we interpret severe shortage of Islamic day schools and inevitable need for supplementary Islamic schools for students who are not able to attend full-time schooling options.
Malta (Western European and other groups -WEOG)	In the scholastic year 2008-2009, 11.9% of the student population attended independent schools, compared to 61.4% at state schools and 26.7% at church schools (Cutajar, 2010). Government contributes 15% of private schooling cost. Muslim population in Malta was estimated to be only 6000 in 2013("Maltese perceptions of Muslims," 2013). Catholic education is a part and parcel of public schools however those who do not want to attend it, can opt-out (Gatt, 2006; Nielsen, Akgönül, Alibašić, & Racius, 2014b). There are two known full-time Islamic schools in Malta. One of them teaches Maltese curriculum with added Islamic studies courses. This school receives some government funding. Number of students in this school are on the increase (Ameen, 2013; James, 2013). The other school, commonly referred to as 'Arabic school' receives no governments funding, unlike catholic schools, despite excellent administrative records (EPASI, 2008). This school teaches Libyan curriculum. Muslim students are on the rise in Malta due to African conflicts and need for Islamic schooling is increasing accordingly (Piscopo, 2013). Considering this scenario and the fact the not all the Muslim community is centred around existing 2 schools, Sunday school can be a useful option for many parents.
New Zealand (Asia Pacific and other countries)	In New Zealand, 30-40% funding is available for private schools from state for those schools which comply with relevant government requirements (NCEE, 2015). Only 3.4% to 4% of students go to private schools and number of private schools is declining as Government is merging them in public sector (M. Cook, 2013; NCEE, 2015; Salisbury & Tooley, 2005b, p. 107). Fees charged at private schools is more than 10 times of what is required to be paid at state-integrated religious schools and 20 time more than state schools, approximately (New Zealand Now, 2015). Most of the integrated schools are catholic (Beca, 2014; Casinader, 2006) which make catholic education a much cheaper option as compared to education of other faiths. There are at least two private Muslims schools known to be running in New Zealand (third one being closed to due to financial pressures). However, numerous Sunday, evening or weekend schools are operating (Shepard, 2006) to fill the void created from the lack of availability of Islamic schools and extremely high cost of education in private schools.
United States (Asia Pacific and other countries)	Private schools do not receive any government funding in US (Zyngier, 2011). Sunday schools are therefore a viable option to provide essential Islamic knowledge without any financial burden on parents.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION ON COUNTRY-SPECIFIC OVERVIEW:

From above we conclude that confessional Islamic education cannot be taught in public schools in many cases. We also reviewed situations where it can be taught but due to a number of factors, it is practically not happening. Moreover, even in countries where Islamic schools are available, most of Muslim children attend public schools. In such circumstances,

Sunday/ weekend schools serve as a viable option, sometimes the only available option, to deliver necessary Islamic education to Muslim children.

However, in order to make this option succeed, Muslim community will need to focus on its better management. Noman Ali Khan, a prominent American Muslim scholar, recommends making supplementary schools to be a 'fun-place' where kids should look forward to go to and socialize with other young Muslims (Noman Ali Khan, 2013).

CRITICISM:

It is to be noted that in many cases (as clear from case studies of developed countries mentioned above), Sunday/ weekend schools are the only educational option for Muslim children and its absence would seriously deprive Muslim children of any exposure to Islam (Noman Ali Khan, 2013).

However, countries where Islamic day schools are also present, critiques say that supplementary schools are producing split personality Muslim children – children act one way Monday to Friday and another way on the weekend (Zine, 2008, p. 198).

This criticism may be valid in certain cases, the fact that not all the Muslim children can go to Islamic schools as of now and in foreseeable future due to factors discussed in this paper (unavailability of school or places within schools, lack of affordability, commuting involved etc.), rejecting Sunday schools based on this criticism may cause a void in transmission of Islamic knowledge to young Muslims. An alternative approach for Muslim community may be to work collectively, engaging expertise from within and outside the community, to enhance quality of education and instructional effectiveness at Sunday/ weekend schools.

6. SUMMARY

In this paper, we systematically reviewed relevant literature to explore schooling options available to Muslim children in Muslim-minority developed countries. Study revealed that Muslim parents' preference for Islamic day schools is increasing at an unprecedented rate resulting in increased demand for Islamic schools. Most Islamic schools, though growing at a very rapid pace, are in their early stages of development and face certain challenges including financial pressures, having right leadership, understanding applicable legislation, finding qualified teachers etc. Majority of Muslim children in countries under discussion still go to public school or other faith schools which exposes them to discrimination and other issues. However, this finding is not common across the board and we did find some very welcoming and inclusive approaches as well. We also thematically explored factors underlying parents' choices for schooling options. In our review of various available choices, we found a definite place for Sunday/ weekend schools as this is the only source of exposure to Islam for most children going to public schools. Findings from this research can assist Islamic schools in working on specific opportunities for improvement identified through extensive literature review. Parents can also see the broader picture and important role that Islamic schools play in spiritual upbringing of Muslim children. If Muslim community is serious in preserving religious identity of their next generation, they have to take Islamic education of their children very seriously and make best use of available options with a focus on continuous improvement of community institutions.

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