

ABSTRACT

Elementary education is a fundamental right of every child and has been duly enshrined in our constitution. It is a bed-rock of the educational pyramid contributing much towards socio-economic development of a country. The government at national and regional level is trying to universalize it, but these efforts are thwarted because the system is besetting with grave disparities in the provision of physical and material facilities, male and female education, urban and rural areas and other qualitative and quantitative aspects of elementary education particularly in the region of NWFP. Such problems and issues have been identified in various policies and plans by the government but the situation has not sufficiently improved. If elementary education has been expanded, its quality still suffers for various reasons. The phenomena of wastage in terms of dropouts, repetitions and failures still prevail which obstruct the goal of universal elementary education.

Now the question arises as to what changes and improvements have been made so far? What disparity still exists between the urban and rural schools, and what priority was given by the government to the development of urban and rural schools? These are some of the questions that have necessitated a thorough investigation into the problem. The study is guided by the objectives of analyzing in depth the policy initiatives, specific situation leading to disparity between male and female education and between urban and rural elementary schools. The study also propose a long range action plan (2001-2015) for universalization of elementary education, provision of teachers, development of infrastructure and availability of financial resources.

The study conducted is expected to contribute with respect to influencing the policy of the government by providing guide-lines to all concerned regarding development of elementary education in the region. It is also expected to provide a rationale for equitable distribution of physical and financial resources for the development of elementary education. The study will hopefully facilitate the

implementation of a long range perspective plan (1998-2015) in the region and will prove a useful document for researchers and other training institutions.

The study is descriptive in nature. Related to quantitative aspect of the problem, which requires, statistical method. For this purpose, authentic statistical reports issued by the government both at national and regional levels have been analyzed. Two periods i.e 1995-96 and 2000-01 have been compared to ascertain the progress or deficiency of these periods. Every item collected for analysis has been worked out in percentage and interpreted accordingly. The study has also been supported by a case study in the District Nowshera NWFP.

The researcher has advanced certain recommendations for bringing about reforms and improvements in the system of elementary education in the region. The areas of reforms are focused on bringing about qualitative and quantitative improvement to minimize wastage and to increase enrolment. Besides, improvement of physical facilities of elementary education, as a crucial problem has also highlighted. In short, the determination of government, through political commitment and liberal financial resources is a pre-requisite for achieving the goals. The same issues have also been addressed in the case study in District Nowshera, NWFP.