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WB survey on Bangladesh

Most primary students fail in basic skills

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Two-thirds of the students who completed primary education failed to achieve the minimum competence level in all four basic skill area in Bangladesh.

This leads to higher level of illiteracy, which is restricting the growth potential and affecting the standard of living of the people, said a World Bank Report.

The four basic skills are reading, writing, written mathematics and oral mathematics. The skills were measured in a survey conducted at a randomly selected sample of 5200 individuals in rural areas.

The World Bank Report titled 'Assessing basic learning skills' revealed among the primary school completers, as many as 29 per cent failed to master the lowest achievement in any of the basic skills while as few as 10 per cent achieved the minimum competence level in each areas.

According to the report, some 28 per cent achieved minimum levels in reading, while 13 per cent in writing, 37 per cent in oral mathematics and 17 per cent in written mathematics.

The report shows among those who passed the primary education, males performed better than females and fewer than one in five adult females had achieved a minimum basic skill level.

Besides this, both male and female youths scored higher than their adult counterparts, with exception of oral mathematics in the case of males. On the other hand in primary level the students who had attended maktabas and madrasa scored particularly low level.

The survey also shows that 16.2 per cent aged above 15 achieved the minimum basic skill. However the rate of the basic skill of female students is only 6.9 per cent.

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Apart from these, the family literacy background also played an important role in case of achieving basic skills. A total of 1749 families surveyed in the tested sample, the percentage of households having at least one member achieving the minimum basic skill level was 64.4 per cent for oral mathematics, 48.1 for reading, 31 per cent for written mathematics and 25.5 for writing.

The poor quality in primary education raised serious concern about the quality of schooling both at the primary and secondary level. Most of the basic learning needs covered in the test would have been taught in the junior grades of primary school in maximum developing countries.

The findings suggest that basic learning skills or literacy are not the panacea for the ills of the developing world. However, it is not the decisive factor of production in improving the welfare of poor people. The decisive factors are the improvement in population quality and advancement in knowledge. Without mastering basic learning skills it is difficult to contribute in a meaningful way to the critical task of developing the pool of resources in the country.