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12:00 AM, September 27, 2018 / LAST MODIFIED: 12:00 AM, September 27, 2018

Poor reading skills of primary students

Devise policy to address the problem



Despite remarkable progress in universal primary education, poor reading skills among the primary students continue to be a blight on Bangladesh's success. According to a new study by World Vision Bangladesh, 54 percent of students in grade three do not understand what they are reading, while around 33 percent cannot read five words in 30 seconds. The importance of reading skills in the life of a student makes this statistic really troublesome.

Reading comprehension is important for the simple reason that “a child who cannot read cannot learn.” It strongly impacts their future academic performance as well as their emotional and social well-being. Experts say that not having adequate reading skills may be especially troubling after the third grade because teachers in the subsequent grades tend to spend significantly less time helping the students to learn to read, with shifts in the curriculum that involve acquiring knowledge of newer subjects. Understandably, those with poor reading skills perform poorly and are at high risk of dropping out. Although primary education is free in Bangladesh and the textbooks are provided by the government, dropout rates both at primary and secondary levels are still alarmingly high.

Lack of reading skills is thus a failure not just of the parents, teachers and schools, but also of the government which tends to focus more on student enrolment, not on the quality of their education. Also, lack of reading skills as a contributor to a student's future performance or the dropout rate is seldom discussed. We think the government should pay more attention to this and devise a policy to make reading fun and an achievable skill for the preliterate students.

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