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India has 37 Per Cent of World's Illiterate Adults

Author: IANS

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The "EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2013-14: Teaching and Learning: Achieving Quality for All", commissioned by the Unesco, said 10 countries (including India) account for 557 million or 72 percent of the global population of illiterate adults.

"India's literacy rate rose from 48 percent in 1991 to 63 percent in 2006, (the latest year for which data was available), but population growth cancelled the gains. So there was no change in the number of illiterate adults," the report said.

Stressing the importance of "quality education", Unesco's New Delhi director Shigeru Aoyagi said India was facing a challenge of quality education.

"Though we have more than 99 percent children in schools because of the Right to Education Act, the quality of education being imparted is a big challenge that should be addressed," he said.

"The most crucial agents of quality education and learning are teachers and students. Teachers are the most important element that can improve the quality of education," he said.

The report said that without attracting and adequately training enough teachers, the learning crisis will "last for several generations and hit the disadvantaged the hardest".

The report also said that a global learning crisis was costing governments \$129 billion a year, and that 10 percent of global spending on primary education was being lost on poor quality education that was failing to ensure that children learn.

"It leaves one in four young people in poor countries unable to read a single sentence, affecting one-third of young women in South and West Asia," it said.

The countries include Bhutan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan.

At the report launch, Delhi Education Minister Manish Sisodia said it was essential to change the content in our textbooks, so that the "future generation is more aware" about the various issues prevalent in society.

"The country will not change with IIMs (Indian Institutes of Management) and IAS. It will only change from the classrooms," Sisodia said.

"There is no other option but to spend quality money on education, and make it a priority," he added.

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