



Literacy for a Billion

## **Mobile and TV help teaching literacy in India, Switzerland and Brazil - O Globo (Brazilian newspaper) published on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2012**

Read original article in Portuguese from here:

<http://oglobo.globo.com/educacao/celular-tv-ajudam-alfabetizar-na-india-na-suica-no-brasil-6112980>

The following translation has been done with the help of Google Translate:

SAO PAULO - The popularization of televisions and mobile phones, available to almost two-thirds of the world population, according to United Nations (UN), begins to be exploited as a weapon to combat functional illiteracy.

In India, for example, a method developed by Professor Brij Kothari, Indian Institute of Management (IIM), has helped youth and adults with little access to books and magazines to develop reading and writing.

In Europe, an educational program created by the Swiss Ursula Suter has contributed to professional training of unemployed living in rural environments.

Greater access to technology is also starting to be explored in Brazil, where the mathematician José Luis Poli works on an electronic application to combat school dropouts.

The difficulty in reading and interpreting texts, which reaches approximately 24% of the world population, has represented an obstacle to economic growth in developed and emerging countries, mainly because of the shortage of skilled labor.

A survey by the McKinsey Global Institute, conducted in 70 countries, estimates that over the next 20 years, the lack of labor can lead to stagnation of the world economy.

In Brazil, where 20.3% of the population has some degree of functional illiteracy, scarcity of skilled workers produced an increase on the number of work permits issued to foreigners, in the first quarter of this year.

Studies show that voluntary reading improves school grades, and consequently the performance of the student to meet the professional demands - explains Juergen Boos German, director of the Frankfurt Book Fair, one of the leading global forums for discussion on education.

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Literacy for a Billion

One of the solutions to combat functional illiteracy was developed in India, which adopted a method called Same Language Subtitling (SLS), created by Brij Kothari, founder of the nonprofit PlanetRead.

The program inserts subtitles in Hindi language, attractions and films broadcast on Indian television, one of the most popular media in the country. The strategy is to get people with a low level of literacy to associate words with their phonetic spelling, which, in evaluating the Indian professor, leads to an "automatic learning".

The procedure is offered today to about 150 million people in Indian educational institutions and by public television network Doordarshan, which, since 2006, adopted the subtitles in some sights.

Another method that has achieved success is developed by educator Ursula Suter, founder of social enterprise Avallain AG. Aiming to reduce functional illiteracy in Ireland, where 25% of adults have reading difficulties, the teacher created a Swiss online platform, with playful activities, in which users train comprehension and written in situations of the daily life such as a job interview or in the supermarket.

The program, part of the e-learning category, with support from the Irish government, has trained 54,741 readers, many of them unemployed and living in rural environments. With the good results, the method has been exported to Germany (382,250), Turkey (4000) and Kenya (200).

With increased access to computers and cell phones, it is possible to overcome barriers in the process of literacy of young adults. The lack of public transportation options, lack of time and timidity move people away from training schools. At home, however, in front of the computer, learning is confidential, and people can find time to practice reading and writing - evaluates Ursula Suter.

In Brazil, where 72% of the population has mobile phone, the mathematician José Luis Poli works on a program for smartphones that offers reading and writing activities for children and adults. The application, in testing, will contain 4800 exercises, for Portuguese, mathematics and science.

The mathematician seeks, in a second stage, to offer professional courses through mobile phones. The educational project has been tested in schools in São Paulo with children and adults with special needs. In 2013, Poli wants to test the application with 5000 people across the country. The next year, will attempt to display the educational approach to the federal government.

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