

## Exploring the Teachers' Attitude Towards Inclusive Education at Elementary Level

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### Abstract

*Inclusive Education (IE) aims to provide equal learning opportunities for all students, regardless of their diverse abilities and backgrounds. With the growing recognition of the importance of inclusive education, the National Education Policy 2020 document mentioned that “the education system must aim to benefit India’s children, so that no child loses any opportunity to learn and excel because of circumstances of birth or background”. Therefore, each and every educational development programme shall focus on bridging gaps in access, participation and learning outcomes in school education, where the role and functions of a teacher, particularly at the elementary level, can never be ignored. The present study aims to examine the attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education at the elementary level. A sample of 50 elementary teachers appointed in both rural and urban areas of Balasore district, Odisha were selected through simple random sampling techniques from 10 institutions. Researchers used the ‘Teacher Attitude Scale Towards Inclusive Education’—a standardised tool developed by Vishal Sood and Arti Anand in 2011 for data collection. Collected data were statistically analysed by using percentage, mean, SD and t-test. The result showed that elementary teachers had 67.74 per cent favourable attitude towards inclusive education. Further, it particularly showed that teachers had 28.86 per cent of unfavourable attitude with respect to psychological/ behavioural aspects, 29.74 per cent of favourable attitude with respect to social and parent-related aspect, 26.84 per cent of unfavourable attitude with respect to administrative aspects, and no major differences were found in the percentage of favourable and unfavourable attitude of elementary teachers with respect to the curricular and co-curricular aspects of inclusive education. Moreover, the elementary level teachers appointed both in rural and urban area schools had the same attitude with regard to inclusive education.*

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## INTRODUCTION

“The education system must aim to benefit India’s children so that no child loses any opportunity to learn and excel because of circumstances of birth or background.” (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020). It should not only be in the thought of the stakeholders in the field of education but also reflect in their behaviour. In the twenty-first century where diversity and equality are increasingly valued within society to produce a huge number of intellects regardless of several disparities, an inclusive classroom is essential for preparing students to live and thrive in a diverse global community. Teachers need to be grounded in Indian values, languages, knowledge, ethos and traditions (including tribal traditions), while also being well-versed in the latest advances in education and pedagogy that keep pace to strengthen the concept of ‘Inclusive Education’ and widen the route for every learner from Socio-economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) in the teaching–learning process.

Odisha has demonstrated commendable progress in advancing inclusive elementary education. The state has aligned its educational policies with the National Education Policy 2020, emphasising inclusivity, accessibility and quality in elementary education by reducing systematic, societal, pedagogical and intrinsic barriers (El Ahmad & Kawtharani, 2022). Odisha’s 5T policies have

ushered in a new era for the state’s education system, which focus on Transparency, Technology, Teamwork, Transformation and Time. Further, the policies aim to enhance governance and service delivery in education.

Researchers like Musayaroh, Maryanti and Maulidina (2023), Radojlovic et al. (2022), Chandra (2021), Ghosh (2020), Hlondo and Malsawmi (2019–2020), Bishaw and Jayaprada (2019), Akcamete et al. (2018), and Mahajan (2015) found that the attitude of elementary teachers is a significant factor for the successful implementation of inclusive education at elementary stage.

Against this backdrop, the current study assumes greater relevance. By examining the attitudes of elementary school teachers in both rural and urban settings within Balasore district, Odisha, it seeks to understand the on-the-ground dynamics of inclusive education implementation with respect to different dimensions suggested by the standardised tool used in the present study. The study’s focus on elementary teachers aligns with the understanding that the success of inclusive education is intrinsically tied to the role and attitudes of the educators.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Following objectives are stated by the researcher for the present study:

1. To explore the elementary teachers’ overall attitude towards inclusive education

2. To study the elementary teachers' attitude towards inclusive education at elementary level as per the components, viz., psychological/behavioural aspects, social and parent-related aspect, curricular and co-curricular aspect, and administrative aspect and
3. To find out the elementary level teachers' attitude towards inclusive education with respect to their locale

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the existing scenario of elementary level teachers' attitude towards inclusive education at elementary level?
2. How far does the elementary teachers' attitude support inclusive education with respect to its components, like psychological/behavioural aspects, social and parent-related aspect, curricular and co-curricular aspect, and administrative aspect?

### HYPOTHESIS

There exists no significant difference in the mean scores of urban and rural elementary school teachers' attitude towards inclusive education.

### MATERIAL AND METHODS

The descriptive method is used for the present study. A sample of 50 elementary teachers appointed in both rural and urban areas of Balasore district was selected through simple random sampling technique from

10 institutions. Researchers used the 'Teacher Attitude Scale Towards Inclusive Education'—a standardised tool developed by Vishal Sood and Arti Anand for data collection, which consists of psychological/behavioural aspects, social and parent-related aspect, curricular and co-curricular aspect, and administrative aspect as the major dimensions of the tool. Descriptive and inferential quantitative data analysis techniques like mean, SD, t-test, frequency and percentage analysis through Microsoft Excel are used for the present study.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

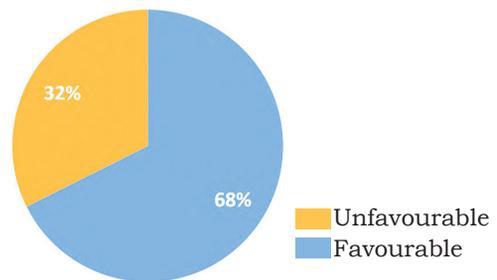


Figure 1: Elementary level teachers' attitude towards inclusive education

1. To explore the elementary teachers' overall attitude towards inclusive education: As shown in Figure 1, the elementary-level teachers showed 68 per cent of favourable attitude towards inclusive education, while 32 per cent showed an unfavourable attitude.

The greater percentage towards favourable attitude indicated that Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) 2001 and Right to Education Act (RTE) 2009 have been successfully

implemented by Government of Odisha in due time. Further, Odisha is progressing towards the successful implementation of NEP 2020 at the elementary level through various training and sensitisation programmes organised by DIET-CRC Linkage (District Institute of Education and Training-Cluster Resource Centre Linkage), and Department of School and Mass Education in which the teachers, regardless of their locality, are being trained in adequate skills and competencies in different thrust areas as well as inclusivity. The mindset of the teachers are also changing with growing impact of modernisation, mass media, and science and technology. Further, they have become concerned about quality, equity and inclusivity in education.

The unfavourable attitude towards inclusive education might be due to the unsatisfactory and improper implementations of Inclusive Education (IE) at the elementary level. This claim finds support in the studies

of Musayaroh, Maryanti and Maulidina (2023), Ghosh (2020), Hlondo and Malsawmi (2019–2020), Bishaw and Jayaprada (2019), Akcamete et al. (2018), Kuyini and Desai (2004), Saklellariou, Strati and Emmanouil (2018), and Radojlovic et al. (2022).

2. To study the elementary teachers' attitude towards inclusive education at elementary level as per the components, viz., psychological/behavioural aspects, social and parent-related aspect, curricular and co-curricular aspect, and administrative aspect: After an in-depth analysis of previous research studies and empirical evidences in the area of inclusive education, and critical discussions with experts, researchers, psychologists, experienced school teachers and teacher educators, psychological/behavioural aspects, social and parent-related aspect, curricular and co-curricular aspect, and administrative aspect emerged out as four principal dimensions to measure teachers'

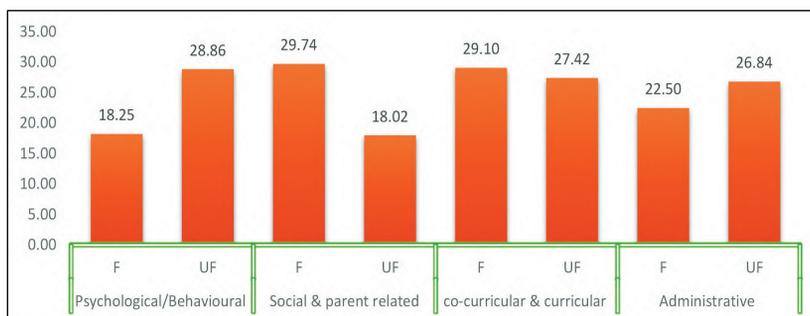


Figure 2: Attitude towards inclusive education with regard to psychological/behavioural aspects, social and parent-related aspect, curricular and co-curricular aspect, and administrative aspect

attitude towards inclusive education by the researchers who developed the tool used in the present study. Teachers show 18.25 per cent favourable and 28.86 per cent of unfavourable attitude in psychological/behavioural aspects of IE, which reflects the more unfavourable predispositions of teachers with regard to the influence of IE on psychological and behavioural characteristics of school children. Teachers show 29.74 per cent favourable and 18.02 per cent of unfavourable attitude in social and parent-related aspect of IE that determines the feelings and inclinations with regard to the influence of IE on development of social values among school children. Further, in the curricular and co-curricular aspect of IE, teachers show 29.10 per cent and 27.42 per cent as favourable and unfavourable attitudinal scores respectively, which depicts teachers' neutral feeling about various teaching-learning methodologies adopted in schools by them to promote inclusive education. Teachers show

22.50 per cent favourable and 26.84 per cent of unfavourable attitude in administrative aspects of IE, which shows the uneven support of the government provisions as well as commitment of administrative machinery for promoting IE in the schools.

3. *To find out the elementary level teachers' attitude towards inclusive education with respect to their locale:* As shown in Figure 3, the mean scores of the rural area elementary school teachers' attitude towards inclusive education was 105.92, which was slightly less than the mean scores of the urban area elementary school teachers' attitude, i.e., 106.88 which shows no significant difference in the mean scores of elementary level teachers' attitude towards IE with regard to their locale with t-value 0.316 at 0.05 level. The result of the study is supported by Chandra (2021), Mahajan (2015), etc. It might be due to the fact that the process of selection and

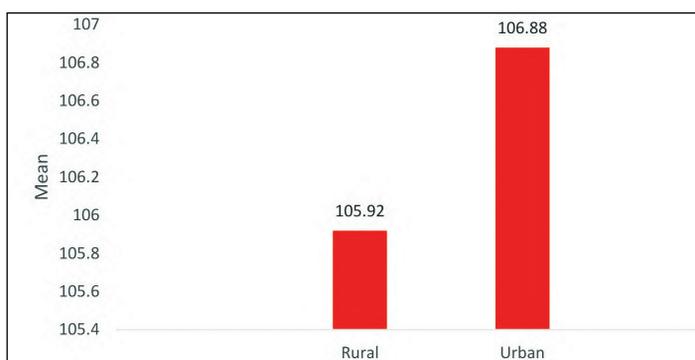


Figure 3: Rural and urban area elementary level teachers' attitude towards inclusive education

recruitment at elementary level by the Government of Odisha follows uniform pattern and training programmes conducted universally across the state.

## CONCLUSION

Inclusive education is the very need of the twenty-first century, in which the success of this noble concept completely depends upon the mindfulness, commitment and attitude of the 'master key' of the education system, i.e., teachers. The findings of the study concluded that although elementary teachers had more percentage of favourable attitude towards inclusive education, they also showed their strong unfavourable attitude towards psychological/behavioural aspects and administrative aspects of inclusive education. Further, the findings of the present study led the researcher to conclude that the attitude of

elementary teachers appointed in both rural and urban area schools was same towards inclusive education.

## IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this research would be helpful in understanding the attitude of elementary teachers towards inclusive education as well as explore the problematic aspects of inclusive education that teachers found to be difficult in an inclusive set-up. The finding of the study will be helpful for the policy makers to critically analyse the barriers of successful implementation of the concept of inclusion. This would impact the content of training and workshops for both pre-service and in-service teachers to nurture their confidence and improve their attitude towards IE. Moreover, this study could serve as a base for further research.

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