

Attitude of Elementary School Teachers Towards Inclusive Education

Dr. Sumitra Mishra¹, Hrushikesh Dandia²

¹Assistant Professor, Radhanath IASE, Cuttack, 753002

²Research Scholar, Radhanath IASE, Cuttack, 753002

Abstract

The approach of inclusive education is inevitable in creating an inclusive society, where teachers have crucial roles in modelling the inclusive practices to cultivate a positive attitude in learners. The main objective of this study is to find the attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education in the Angul district of Odisha with respect to their locality, gender and stream of education. In this study descriptive survey method is used, for which a sample of 80 teachers were taken from schools of Angul district using stratified random sampling techniques. Statistical methods such as mean, standard deviation and t-test were used to analyse the collected data. In this study, it is found that, maximum teachers have above-average favourable attitudes towards inclusive education and there is no significant difference in attitudes with respect to their locality and stream of education, but there is a significant difference in the attitude of elementary school teachers with respect to their gender.

Keywords: Inclusive education, Attitude, Elementary school teachers.

Background of the study

Education is one of the most powerful tools in lifting excluded children and adults out of poverty and is a stepping stone to other fundamental rights and thus to create a just, equitable and inclusive society (UNESCO, n.d). To create such an inclusive, just and equitable society, we need to adopt inclusive education in our schools and classrooms. Enabling learning through participation in the life of a community and the nation at large is crucial to the success of schooling (NCF, 2005). The importance of inclusion is stated as, “Education is the single greatest tool for achieving social justice and equality. Inclusive and equitable education - while indeed an essential goal in its own right - is also critical to achieving an inclusive and equitable society in which every citizen has the opportunity to dream, thrive, and contribute to the nation” (NEP, 2020). Existing inequalities create several roadblocks in the process of achieving inclusive and equitable education across all Stages. Studies show that a large percentage of students who either drop out of school or discontinue their education after school belong to Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs & NCFSE, 2023). It should be kept in mind that equal access to education is a matter of right and not a privilege. Index for Inclusive school (2008) defines Inclusion as an approach, an attitude or as a philosophy of education, leading to an inclusive society. Ainscow et al. (2006) also suggest that “inclusion is concerned with all children and young people in schools; it is focused on presence, participation and achievement. Although inclusion may mean different things to different people, it is generally believed to mean the extent to which a school or community welcomes children with special needs as full members of the group and values them for the

contribution which they make. Differences among students could be related to disability, gender, size, color or ethnicity and disability is just one of the differences and does not limit ones strength and abilities. Inclusive education recognizes that these differences are valuable and bring creativity and through them, ideas are shared and experienced. In other words, inclusion is about transforming systems to be inclusive of everyone and not about inserting persons with disabilities into existing structures (UNICEF, 2009).

What is inclusive education? Inclusive education is an all-encompassing approach by which need based quality and equitable education can be provided to all learners, celebrating diversity, accepting and adapting learners with disability and without disability in a common school. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016 defines inclusive education as, *“a system of education wherein students with and without disability learn together and the system of teaching and learning is suitably adapted to meet the learning needs of different types of students with disabilities”*. UNICEF (n.d) defines *“An education system that includes all students, and welcomes and supports them to learn, whoever they are and whatever their abilities or requirements. This means making sure that teaching and the curriculum, school buildings, classrooms, play areas, transport and toilets are appropriate for all children at all levels. Inclusive education means all children learn together in the same schools”*. Inclusive education refers to an educational philosophy and approach that aims to provide equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their diverse backgrounds, abilities, or disabilities (Singal, 2019).

The approach of inclusive education has a long historical background, but it gained momentum in the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994), where emphasis was put on achieving the goal of Education for All with special emphasis on PWDs, by combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming and inclusive communities, and also stressing inclusive education as a fundamental right. In India Right to Persons with Disabilities Act (2016) is a milestone for safeguarding the rights of Children with Special Needs (CWSN) and promoting inclusive education, which replaced the Persons with Disabilities Act (1995). The National Education Policy (2020) is in complete consonance with the provisions of the RPWD Act (2016), which endorses that barrier-free access for all children with disabilities will be enabled and an inclusive and equitable education shall be provided.

In the implementation and practice of inclusive education, there are various barriers exist. Among the attitudinal barriers is a matter of great concern, where the role of the teacher is very important. Teachers play a vital role in fostering inclusive education, ensuring that all students, regardless of their abilities, backgrounds, or needs, have equal access to learning opportunities. Inclusion is not just about placing students with diverse needs in the same classroom but about creating an environment where everyone feels valued, supported, and able to succeed. For realising these objectives of inclusive education, a positive attitude of all stakeholders is inevitable, especially of the teachers.

Review of Related Literature

Studies conducted on the attitudes of primary school teachers towards inclusive education which found that there is no significant difference in the attitudes of the teachers towards inclusive education based on gender, stream and sex (Dave, 2021 & Najnin & Das 2024). Few studies found that most of the teachers show a positive attitude towards inclusive education and there is no significant difference between male and female teachers in terms of their attitude towards inclusive education. Besides this, the study also reveals that the locality of teachers does not affect the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education, as there is no significant difference between the attitudes of rural and urban

secondary school teachers (Kaur & Kaur, 2015; Gandhi et al., 2020; Nengnong et al. 2022; Kumar, Patra & Upadhyay, 2023; Mondal, 2023 & Panda, 2024). Many studies found that the majority of primary teachers have a positive attitude towards inclusive education in primary school education. There is a significant difference between junior and senior teachers, science and arts teachers in their attitude towards inclusive education in primary education. It is also found that the area (rural-urban) of the school and gender do not affect the teachers' attitude towards inclusive education in primary education (Ghosh, 2020 & Mondal, 2023). Most of the studies reveal that the overall attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education was favourable, as teachers having a favourable attitude were higher than those who had an unfavourable attitude (Dave, 2021; Nengnong et al. & Goswami, 2022). Gandhi et al. (2020) conducted a study on the attitude of primary school teachers towards inclusive education in government and private schools on the basis of gender and the locality of the schools. It was found that the private teachers' attitude towards inclusive education was more positive as compared to their government primary teachers. The study conducted on the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education reveals a different scenario of inclusive practice. It found that there is a significant difference between male and female teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. The researcher also found that there is a significant difference between rural and urban teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education (Kaur & Kaur, 2015 & Kaur, 2020). Singh et al. (2020) conducted a study of the attitude of teachers towards inclusive Education, in which the population was comprised of comprised all pre-service and in-service teachers of the Gaya district of Bihar. Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that the teachers have a moderate to favourable attitude towards inclusive education. Findings of this study provide evidence that pre-service teachers have a more favourable attitude towards inclusive education than the attitude of in-service teachers and gender of teachers does not affect their attitude towards inclusive education and both male and female teachers have approximately the same level of attitudes towards inclusive education. The findings of the present study led the researcher to conclude that urban teachers have a more favourable attitude towards inclusive education than rural teachers. Dash et al. (2019) attempted a study on the attitude of prospective teacher educators towards inclusive education and found that most of the teachers had a moderately favourable attitude towards inclusive education in Balangir, Odisha. The attitudes of male and female teacher educators towards inclusive education did not differ significantly. Desai & Pradhan (2016) studied on what are the challenges for inclusive education and found that inadequate resources, negative attitudes of stakeholders and lack of teacher training in inclusive education are the main three problems towards inclusion. The success of inclusive education entirely depends upon the teacher's ability to teach both disabled and non-disabled students. Kalita (2017) found from the study that most of the teachers have moderate attitude towards inclusive education, male teachers' attitude towards inclusive education is slightly higher than the female teachers, there is no significance difference between the attitude of male and female teachers of primary school towards inclusive education, experienced teachers' attitude towards inclusive education is slightly higher than the less experienced teachers. Amr et al. (2016) Studied on "Teacher's attitude and perceived barrier for inclusion of disabled student in normal school" and found that teachers have negative attitude towards inclusion, negative attitudes of non-disabled students towards their special need peers, underprepared school staff, inadequate environment and resource to support the inclusion of disabled students, unsuitable curriculum, evaluation methods and the negative attitude of the family and society towards inclusion are some perceived barriers by teachers in inclusive education. Kumar (2016) found that there is a significant difference in the attitude of teachers in relation to teaching level, gender,

residence and their experience. The findings suggest that the university teachers and female teachers appeared to hold a more positive attitude as compared to the school teachers and male teachers. Das et al. (2013) conducted a study on “Determining the challenges the teachers face in inclusive education” and found that teachers face training and experience-related challenges. Along with these, the non-availability of support services in the school for disabled children is another challenge. Teachers who have more teaching experience have a negative attitude towards inclusive design and those who have personal level contact with the disabled have a positive attitude towards inclusive education. Bansal (2013) revealed that the attitude of male teachers towards inclusive education is more positive as compared to female teachers. Urban primary teachers’ attitude towards inclusive education is more positive as compared to rural teachers.

By going through the various studies (Kaur & Kaur, 2015; Gandhi et al., 2020; Dave, 2021; Nengnong et al. 2022; Kumar, Patra & Upadhyay, 2023; Mondal, 2023; Panda, 2024; Najnin & Das 2024) conducted on attitude of school teachers towards inclusive education, but the studies show very few studies have been conducted in Odisha. Again, the investigator found that there is no clear-cut direction coming from the studies at the elementary level. There is no specific conclusion that determines inclusive education has a fully positive or fully negative direction of findings. Very few studies have been conducted to investigate the attitude of elementary school teachers with reference to their stream of education. In the present study, the researcher has selected three broad areas to explore teachers’ attitude towards inclusive education. They are on the basis of locality, gender and stream. Thus, the researcher has shown keen interest in studying the attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education.

Objectives

1. To study the attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education.
2. To compare the attitude of urban and rural elementary school teachers towards inclusive education.
3. To compare the attitude of male and female elementary school teachers towards inclusive education.
4. To compare the attitude of elementary school teachers having Arts and Science streams towards inclusive education.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There exists no significant difference between the attitudes of rural and urban elementary school teachers towards inclusive education.

H₀₂: There exists no significant difference between the attitudes of male and female elementary school teachers towards inclusive education.

H₀₃: There exists no significant difference between the attitudes of elementary school teachers having Arts and Science streams towards inclusive education.

Methodology of the Study

Considering the nature of the problem, the present study was conducted under the descriptive survey method. In the present study, all elementary school teachers of Angul District are taken as the population. Stratified random sampling techniques were adopted for the study. Using this sampling technique total of 80 government elementary school teachers of Angul block of Angul district were selected. Out of these 80 government elementary school teachers, 40 teachers are selected randomly

from the urban area and 40 teachers are from the rural area. Further 20 male teachers and 20 female teachers are selected randomly from each of the urban and rural areas. The researcher collected the data by personally visiting each of the selected government elementary schools, with the help of the standardized tool named “*Teacher Attitude Scale towards Inclusive Education (TASTIE)*” developed by Sood and Anand (2011). In the present study, statistical techniques such as Mean, Standard Deviation (SD) and t-test are used for the analysis of collected data.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Objective: -1 To Study the attitude of Elementary School Teachers towards Inclusive Education

Table No – 1 Level of attitude of different category of teachers

Variable	Category of teacher	N	Mean	Level of Attitude
Gender	Male	40	114.55	Above average favorable
	Female	40	109.83	Above average favorable
Locality	Urban	40	110.48	Above average favorable
	Rural	40	113.85	Above average favorable
Stream of Education	Arts	40	109.88	Above average favorable
	Science	40	114.45	Above average favorable
Total		80	112.17	Above average favorable

Table 1 indicates the mean score and level of attitude of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education in relation to their gender, locality of school and stream of education. As per table 1, the mean score of male teachers and female teachers are 114.55 and 109.83 respectively which represents both male and female teachers have above-average favorable attitude towards inclusive education. The mean scores of teachers belong to the urban area and rural area are 110.48 and 113.85 respectively which indicates that teachers belonging to both urban and rural areas have above-average favorable attitudes towards inclusive education. The mean score of teachers who have Arts stream and Science stream is 109.88 and 114.45 respectively which represents the both arts and science teachers have above average favorable attitudes towards inclusive education. The mean score of level of attitude of all elementary school teachers is 112.17 which indicates that they have an above average favorable attitude towards inclusive education.

Objective: -2 To compare the attitude of urban and rural elementary school teachers towards inclusive education.

Hypothesis - H_{01} : *The mean attitude score towards inclusive education of urban elementary school teachers does not differ significantly from that of their rural counterparts.*

Table-2 The mean difference in attitude score towards inclusive education of urban and rural elementary school teachers

Locality	N	Mean	SD	SED	df	‘t’-value	Level of Significance
Urban	40	110.48	9.55	2.22	78		Not Significant

Rural	40	113.85	10.3			1.52	
-------	----	--------	------	--	--	------	--

From the Table 3 it is found that the calculated 't' value 1.52 which is lesser than the table value (1.99 at 0.05 level and 2.63 at 0.01 level) with df 78. This implies that there is no significance difference between the attitude score of urban and rural elementary school teachers towards inclusive education. Hence, the formulated null hypothesis (H_{01}) is accepted.

Objective 3: To compare the attitude of male and female elementary school teachers towards inclusive education.

Testing of Hypothesis- H_{02} : *The mean attitude score towards inclusive education of male elementary school teachers does not differ significantly from that of their female counterparts.*

Table-3 The mean difference in attitude score towards inclusive education of Male and Female elementary school teachers

ender	N	Mean	SD	df	SED	't'-value	Level of Significance
Male	40	114.55	10.84	78	2.21	2.11	Significant Difference exists (at 0.05Level)
Female	40	109.83	8.79				

From Table 3, it is found that the calculated 't' value 2.11 is greater than the table value (1.99 at 0.05 level) and less than (2.63 at 0.01 level) with df 78. This implies that there is a significant difference between the attitude score of male and female elementary school teachers towards inclusive education at 0.05 significance level. Hence, at 0.05 level the formulated null hypothesis (H_{02}) is rejected. There is a significant difference between the attitude score of male and female elementary school teachers towards inclusive education at 0.05 level.

Objective 4: To compare the attitude of elementary school teachers who have Arts and Science streams towards inclusive education.

Hypothesis- H_{03} : *The mean attitude score towards inclusive education of Arts Stream Elementary School Teachers does not differ significantly from that of their Science Stream counterparts.*

Table-4 The mean difference in attitude score towards inclusive education of Arts Stream and Science Stream elementary school teachers.

Stream of Teachers	N	Mean	SD	df	SED	't'-value	Level of Significance
Arts	40	109.88	10.78	78	2.21	1.91	Not Significant
Science	40	114.45	8.9				

From the Table 4 it is found that the calculated 't' value 1.91 which is lesser than the table value (1.99 at 0.05 level and 2.63 at 0.01 level) with df 78. This implies that there is no significance difference between the attitude score of Arts Stream and Science Stream elementary school teachers towards inclusive education. Hence, the formulated null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted.

Findings and Discussion

Major findings

The study revealed the following major findings

1. The elementary school teachers have above average favorable attitude towards inclusive education.
2. The teachers from both urban and rural areas have above average attitude towards inclusive education.
3. Both male and female elementary school teachers have above-average attitude towards inclusive education.
4. The elementary school teachers from the arts stream and the science stream both have above-average attitude towards inclusive education.
5. There is no significant difference found in attitude between urban and rural elementary school teachers towards inclusive education.
6. There exists a significant difference in attitude between male and female elementary school teachers towards inclusive education.
7. There is no significant difference observed between the attitude of elementary school teachers having arts and science streams towards inclusive education.

Discussion

The findings of the present study are supported by various other studies. It is found that most of the elementary school teachers have above average favorable attitude towards inclusive education, which is supported by studies conducted by Panda (2024), Patra & Upadhyay (2023), Goswami (2022), Negnong et al. (2022), Mondal (2023), Dave (2021) and Ghosh (2020) whereas it is contrary to findings of Amr et al. (2016). In this study it is also found that there is no significant difference between the attitude of urban and rural elementary school teachers, which is supported by Panda (2024), Mondal (2023), Dave (2021) and Ghosh (2020), whereas it is contrary to the findings of Kumar (2023), Kaur (2020) and Singh et al (2020). Similarly, another finding shows there exist a significant difference in attitude between male and female elementary school teachers is supported by Nanjin & Das (2024), Kaur (2020), Kumar (2016) and Bansal (2013), whereas it is contrary to the findings of Panda (2024), Kumar (2023), Singh et al (2020) and Kalita (2017). Another finding of the present study reflects there is no significant difference observed between the attitude of elementary school teachers on the basis of streams i.e. Arts and Science towards inclusive education, is supported by Najnin & Das (2024) and Ghosh (2020). This indicates that most of the findings of the present study are supported by findings of other studies conducted by different researchers while some are not supported by them.

Conclusion

Inclusive education is the most promising approach to build an inclusive and equitable society, where everyone can get access to participate, perform and contribute their best for a peaceful and prosperous world. It revolves around the psychological constructs such as attitude, perception and acceptance by the

stakeholders. The success of inclusive education not only depends upon the effective implementation of policy and curriculum frameworks but equally depends on the positive attitude of the teachers and other stakeholders, who are really termed as change makers in a nutshell. Inclusive education is a bare necessity in the present age to make education accessible to all.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Ainscow, M., Booth, T., & Dyson, A. (2006). Improving Schools, Developing Inclusion (0 ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203967157>
2. Amr, M., AI-Natour, M., AI-Abdallat, B., & Alkhamra, H. (2016). Primary school teacher's knowledge, Attitude and views on barriers to inclusion in Jordan. *International Journal of Special Education*, 31(1), 67-77.
3. Bansal, S. (2013). A Study of Attitude of Primary School Teacher towards Inclusive Education. *International Journal of Education*, 1, 55-64.
4. Dash, J., Purohit, S., Padhy, S. and Hota, S. (2019). A study on attitude of prospective teacher educators towards inclusive education. *International Journal of Applied Research*, 5(5): 22–26.
5. Dave, Dr Mitesh D. (2021). "A Study of Awaeness of Primary School Teachers Towards Inclusive Education." *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, 9(12).
6. Desai, A., & Pradhan, D. (2016). Challenges, problems and constraints for inclusive education: Indian context. *Scholarly Research Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies*, 4(32), 113-119.
7. Gandhi, A., Rani, K., & Rani, G. (2020). Attitude of Primary School Teachers towards Inclusive Education : Variation by Gender , Locale. *Wutan Huatan Jisuan Jishu Journal*, XVI(1), 78–89.
8. Ghosh, P. (2020). Attitude of Primary School Teachers' Towards Inclusive Education. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT)*, 8.
9. Goswami, P. (2022). Attitude of teachers towards inclusive education at elementary level of Golaghat District, Assam (India). *International Journal of Health Sciences*, 6 (S2), 5490-5501.
10. Kalita, U. (2017). A Study on Attitude of Primary School Teachers towards Inclusive Education. *International Journal of Advanced Education and Researc.*, 2(3), 127-130.
11. Kaur, H. (2020). A Study on Attitude of Teachers towards Inclusive Education. *International Journal of Creative Thoughts*, 8.
12. Kaur, M., & Kaur, K. (2015). Attitude of Secondary School Teachers towards Inclusive Education. *International Journal of Behavioural Social and Movement Sciences*, 4(1), 26-32.
13. Kumar, A. (2016). Exploring the Teachers' Attitude Towards Inclusive Education System: A Study of Indian Teachers. *Journal of Education and Practice*. 7, 1-4
14. Ministry of Education, Government of India. (2020). National Education Policy 2020. Retrieved from https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf
15. Ministry of Law and Justice (2016). Right of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016. Retrieved from <https://ssep.odisha.gov.in/sites/default/files/2024-01/RPWD%20ACT.pdf>
16. Mondal, S. (2023). ATTITUDE TOWARD INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AMONG THE PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER IN PURBA MEDINIPUR DISTRICT. *International Research Journal of Modernization in Engineering Technology and Science*. 5 (12).
17. Najnin, M. & Das, A. (2024). ATTITUDE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN UTTAR DINAJPUR DISTRICT. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT)*. 12.

18. National Curriculum Framework (2005). National Council for Education and Research. Retrieved from <https://ncert.nic.in/nc-framwork/nf2005-english.pdf>
19. National Curriculum Framework for School Education (2023). National Council for Education and Research. Retrieved from https://www.educatio.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/ncf_2023.pdf
20. Nengnong, G.K., Nongbri, C. & Myrthong, B.E. (2022). The Attitude of Elementary School Teachers towards Inclusive Education in Meghalaya. *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education*. 14 (2), 10217
21. Panda, M. (2024). "ATTITUDE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION OF JAJPUR DISTRICT." *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts* 12(6),
22. Patra, S. & Upadhyay, P. (2023). Teachers' Attitude towards Inclusion in Schools: A Panoramic Study. *Educational Quest: An International Journal of Education and Applied Social Sciences*, 14(2), 111-120
23. Singh, S., Kumar, S., & Singh, R.K. (2020). A Study of Attitudes of Teachers towards Inclusive Education. *International Journal of Education*, 9 (1), 189-197
24. Sood, V. & Anand, A. (2011). Teacher Attitude towards Inclusive Education. Agra: National Psychological Corporation.
25. UNESCO (n.d). Inclusion in education. Retrived from <https://www.unesco.org/en/inclusion-education>
26. United Nations. (1994). The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education