



Teachers' Perceptions and Classroom Practices Regarding Foundational Literacy and Numeracy in Primary Schools

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Received: 06 May 2026 | Accepted: 16 May 2026 | Published: 22 May 2026

Abstract

The NEP 2020 has given prior emphasis on the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) as an essential prerequisite to learning so that every student attains the ability to read and comprehend basic text and carry out basic calculations by Grade-III. In order to support this, trainings and modules have been provided to teachers under the NIPUN Bharat Mission. In this context, this study was conducted to explore teachers' perceptions and examine classroom practices and challenges faced by teachers in the implementation of FLN in the primary schools of Puri district of Odisha. Qualitative descriptive research design was adopted for the study and the sample consisted of 40 primary school teachers selected through a multi-stage sampling technique. Data were collected using semi-structured interview schedules and classroom observation schedules designed for both literacy and numeracy competencies. The findings revealed that teachers hold a positive perception towards FLN and have received regular training; however, limitations in infrastructure and time constraints affect effective implementation. Classroom practices indicated that while basic literacy and numeracy skills are being addressed, there is limited focus on higher-order skills and individualized support. The study also identified key challenges such as shortage of teachers, lack of separate classrooms, additional non-academic duties, and varied learning levels among students. The study implies the need for strengthened infrastructural support, learner-centered pedagogical practices, and continuous professional support for teachers to ensure effective implementation of FLN in primary schools.

Keywords: Foundational Literacy and Numeracy, Teachers' Perceptions, Classroom Practices, Primary Education, FLN Implementation, NEP 2020.

1. Introduction

Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) refers to a set of critical skills in reading, writing, and mathematics that children are expected to learn by the end of Grade 3 (Swargiary, 2024). The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 highlights the priority of achieving universal acquisition of foundational literacy and numeracy skills at primary level by 2025 (Ministry of Education, 2020). These early competencies form the bedrock for a child's academic trajectory, ensuring that they can engage with more complex learning material in later grades (Swargiary, 2024). Foundational learning paves the way for all future learning of a child. The NEP 2020 lays down the roadmap in school education as a continuum starting with the foundational stage (NCERT, 2021). The acquisition of FLN is pivotal for a child's ability to comprehend written texts and perform basic arithmetic, both of which are essential for lifelong learning and cognitive development (Swargiary, 2024). Realising the criticality of this stage, multiple strategies have been suggested in the policy to be implemented in mission mode (NCERT,

2021). When the students are not able to master the basic foundational skills of reading and writing and performing basic mathematical calculations, they become unprepared for the complexities of the curriculum beyond grade III (Ministry of Education, 2020). Accordingly, under Samagra Shiksha, a dedicated mission entitled 'National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN Bharat)' was launched by the Government of India on 5th July 2021 (NCERT, 2021). The aim is to ensure that every child in the country attains foundational literacy and numeracy by Grade 3 by 2026–27 (NCERT, 2021). In India, FLN has gained renewed importance due to its direct influence on the country's broader educational and developmental goals (Swargiary, 2024). Early mastery of these skills significantly reduces dropout rates and boosts academic achievement, laying the foundation for socioeconomic mobility (Swargiary, 2024). The implementation guidelines of the mission describe the academic and administrative structure required to prioritise foundation stage learning across the country (NCERT, 2021). To ensure effective coordination, the mission follows a 5-tier implementation mechanism extending from the National level to the School level through State, District and Block/Cluster level (NCERT, 2021). According to surveys such as the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), a considerable number of students in Grades 3 through 5 continue to struggle with basic reading and mathematical skills, which hampers their educational progression (Swargiary, 2024). It emphasized the importance of integrating FLN skills into early education to achieve foundational learning goals as outlined in the NIPUN Bharat Mission (Sthapak, 2025).

2. Rationale of the Study

Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) has gained significant attention in educational research and policy discourse globally, with international organizations such as UNESCO emphasizing that foundational skills in reading, writing, and numeracy are essential for ensuring quality education and lifelong learning outcomes. Evans and Hares (2021) highlight that strengthening FLN is crucial for improving long-term educational achievement and addressing learning poverty at the primary level. In India, the Ministry of Education has prioritised foundational learning through the National Education Policy 2020, and this vision is operationalised through the NIPUN Bharat mission, which aims to ensure that all children attain foundational literacy and numeracy skills by the end of Grade III.

In the Indian context, several studies have examined different dimensions of foundational learning. Kumar and Behera (2022) reported that home environment plays a significant role in shaping children's foundational literacy and numeracy development, while Srinivas et al. (2025) found that parental support positively influences FLN outcomes. Mallik and Suna (2025) further highlighted the influence of gender and socio-cultural factors on students' acquisition of foundational competencies. At the pedagogical level, Sthapak (2025) identified teacher preparedness, curriculum structure, and classroom practices as key determinants of FLN implementation, while Sthapak and Sawlani (2024) emphasized the importance of inclusive and equitable approaches in foundational education. Similarly, Sari (2025) noted that activity-based numeracy instruction significantly enhances students' conceptual understanding at the elementary level.

Recent evidence from the Indian and Odisha context further suggests that although FLN policies are well structured, challenges persist at the classroom level. Studies indicate that teachers generally demonstrate positive perceptions towards FLN implementation; however, infrastructural constraints, workload, and limited instructional resources often hinder effective classroom practices (Panda et al., 2025). Research on SCERT-developed FLN workbooks in Odisha found that while structured teaching materials support learning, their effectiveness largely depends on teacher training and integration into daily classroom instruction (Satapathy et al.,

2025). District-level findings from Odisha also reveal variation in students' foundational learning outcomes, indicating inconsistencies in classroom implementation of FLN strategies (Satapathy et al., 2025).

Despite these contributions, most existing literature focuses on policy frameworks, parental influence, or large-scale quantitative assessments, with limited attention given to the lived classroom realities of teachers. In particular, there is a lack of in-depth qualitative exploration of how teachers perceive FLN and how these perceptions are reflected in actual classroom practices in government primary schools. Therefore, a clear research gap exists in understanding the relationship between teachers' perceptions and classroom practices regarding FLN in the context of primary education in Odisha. This study addresses this gap by providing contextual, qualitative insights into teachers' perceptions, instructional practices, and challenges in implementing FLN in government primary schools.

3. Objectives of the Study

The study was conducted with the following objectives:

1. To explore the perceptions of government primary school teachers regarding the implementation of Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN).
2. To examine classroom practices employed by teachers for developing foundational literacy skills among students.
3. To examine instructional practices used by teachers for promoting foundational numeracy skills among students.
4. To identify the challenges faced by primary school teachers in implementing Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN).

4. Scope and Limitations of the Study

The present study is confined to the Puri district of Odisha. It focuses exclusively on the primary school system governed by the government. The participants of the study include only government primary school teachers. The scope of the study is limited to understanding teachers' perceptions and classroom practices related to Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) within this specific geographical and institutional context. Therefore, the findings may not be generalized to private schools, other districts, or different educational settings.

5. Methodology of the Study

The present study was conducted through the qualitative descriptive research design. The population of the study comprised all government primary schools of Puri district, Odisha. A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for the selection of the sample. One block, namely Brahmagiri Block, was selected randomly from Puri district, followed by the random selection of five clusters, namely Bhandarikuda PS Cluster, Brahmania CPS Cluster, Khajuria NUPS Cluster, Talamala PS Cluster, and Aruagobindapur PS Cluster. Further, eight primary schools were selected randomly from each cluster. From each selected school, one FLN teacher was purposively selected, making a total sample of 40 primary school teachers.

To explore the perceptions of teachers regarding Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN), a semi-structured interview schedule consisting of 10 items was used. The interview included aspects such as training related to FLN, importance of FLN, teaching practices, assessment strategies, and learning outcomes. To observe classroom practices related to foundational literacy and numeracy in Classes I–III, two classroom observation schedules comprising 10 competency-based indicators each were used. The literacy observation schedule included components such as oral language, phonological awareness, reading, writing, and teacher support, while the numeracy observation schedule focused on number recognition, counting, basic operations, measurement, and activity-based teaching methods. To identify the challenges faced by teachers in implementing FLN, another semi-

structured interview schedule consisting of 10 items was used, covering issues related to classroom management, time constraints, learning diversity, and institutional support.

The semi-structured interview schedules and observation schedules were validated by experts in the field of elementary education and educational research. The semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with the selected teachers to explore their perceptions and challenges. Classroom observations were conducted during regular teaching sessions of Classes I–III to examine literacy and numeracy practices adopted by teachers. The data collected from the teachers through semi-structured interviews were analysed by thematic analysis techniques. The classroom observation data were analysed using frequency and percentage analysis to examine the extent of literacy and numeracy practices observed in the classrooms. Triangulation of interview and observation findings was carried out to enhance the credibility and validity of the study.

6. Result and Discussion

The result of the study stated under three heads as follows:

6.1. Teachers’ Perceptions regarding Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN)

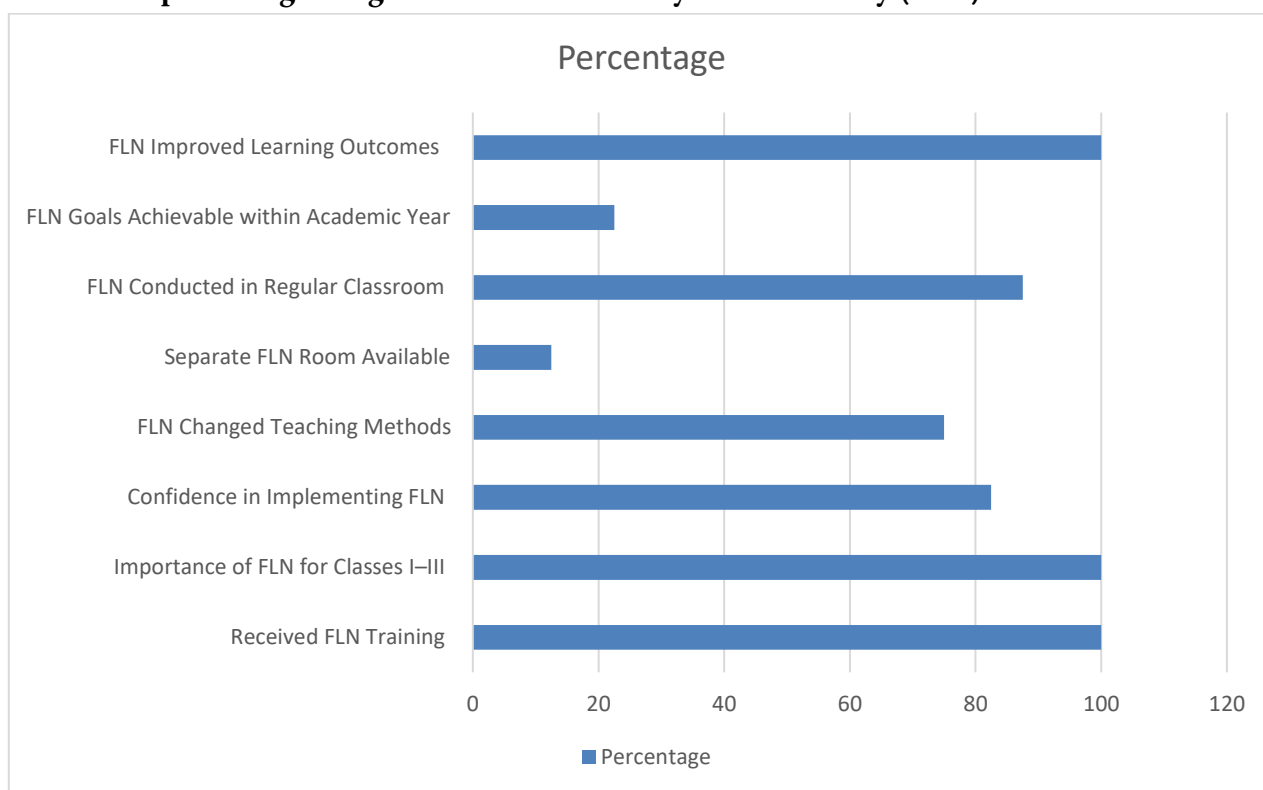


Figure 1: Teachers’ Perceptions Toward FLN Implementation in Government Primary Schools

Figure 1 indicates that all the primary school teachers have received training related to FLN through regular cluster-level and annual block-level programmes, reflecting systematic efforts for capacity building. However, only 12.5% (5 out of 40) reported having a separate FLN room with designated literacy and numeracy corners, while 87.5% (35 out of 40) conduct FLN activities within regular classrooms due to space constraints. All the teachers considered FLN to be highly important for children in Classes I–III. However, only 22.5% (9 out of 40) believed that FLN goals are achievable within the academic year, whereas 77.5% (31 out of 40) found it difficult, mainly due to time constraints. Despite these challenges, all the teachers agreed that FLN implementation has improved students’ learning outcomes, indicating an overall positive perception of the programme.

The findings indicate that although teachers possess a positive attitude towards FLN and acknowledge its importance in improving foundational learning outcomes, several practical constraints affect their confidence in achieving FLN targets within the stipulated time. The gap between teachers’ positive perceptions and their concerns regarding implementation reflects the influence of infrastructural limitations and workload-related

challenges at the school level. Similar findings were reported by Panda et al. (2025), who observed that teachers generally support FLN initiatives but face difficulties due to shortage of time, classroom space, and administrative responsibilities. The findings therefore suggest that effective FLN implementation requires not only teacher training and awareness but also adequate institutional support and realistic classroom conditions.

6.2. Classroom Practices for Developing Foundational Literacy Skills

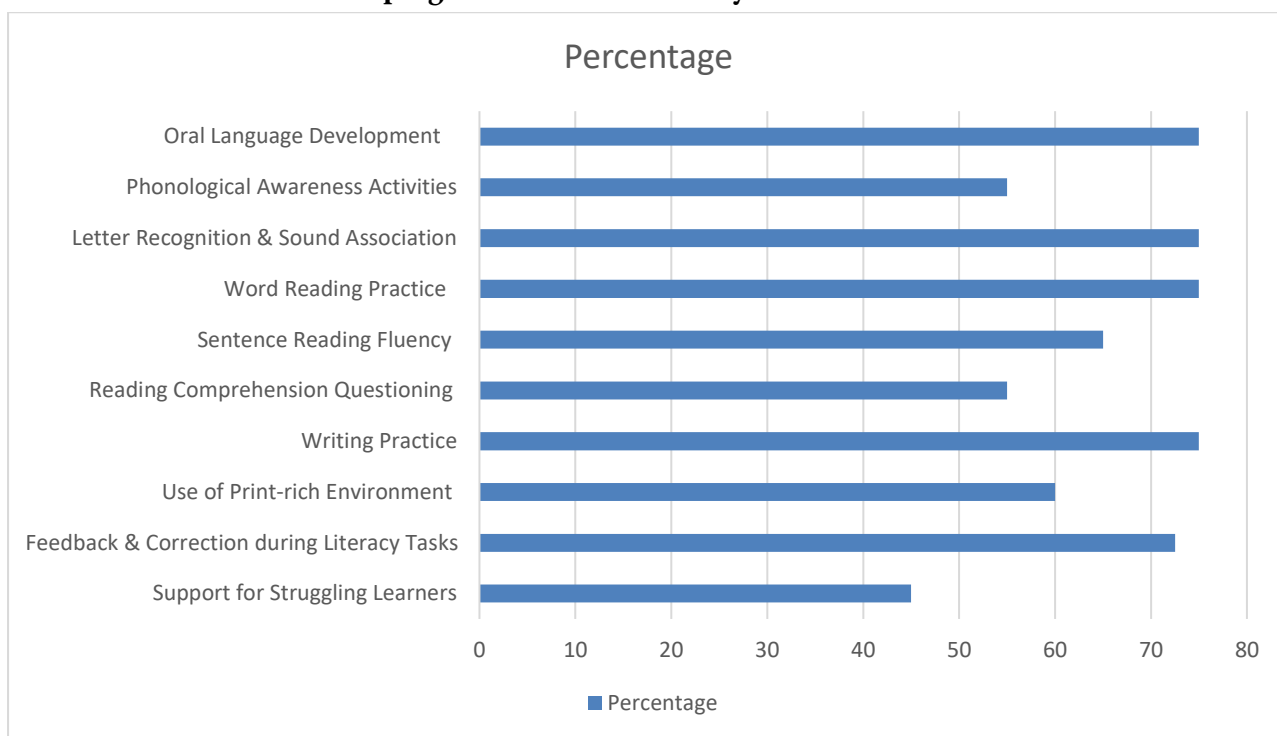


Figure 2: *Observed Foundational Literacy Practices in Classes I–III*

Figure 2 shows that a majority of teachers adopted basic practices for developing foundational literacy among students of Classes I–III. Activities related to oral language development, letter recognition, word reading, and writing practices were observed in 75% of the classrooms (30 out of 40). However, phonological awareness activities and reading comprehension strategies were only partially observed in 55% of the classrooms (22 out of 40). The use of print-rich materials was evident in 60% of the classrooms (24 out of 40), though their effective utilization remained limited. While teachers generally provided feedback during literacy activities, individualized support for struggling learners was observed in only 45% of the classrooms (18 out of 40). Overall, the findings suggest that although foundational literacy practices are being implemented, greater emphasis is needed on structured, activity-based, and learner-centered approaches for effective learning.

The classroom observation findings suggest that teachers are primarily focusing on basic literacy competencies such as oral language, letter recognition, and word reading, which are essential components of foundational learning. However, limited emphasis on phonological awareness, comprehension strategies, and individualized support indicates that literacy instruction remains partially activity-based and competency-oriented. This may affect students' ability to develop deeper reading comprehension and independent learning skills. The findings are consistent with the observations of Sthapak and Sawlani (2024), who highlighted that foundational literacy classrooms often emphasize basic reading practices more than higher-order literacy competencies. Therefore, teachers may require additional pedagogical support and practical training for implementing learner-centered literacy practices effectively.

6.3. Classroom Practices for Promoting Foundational Numeracy Skills

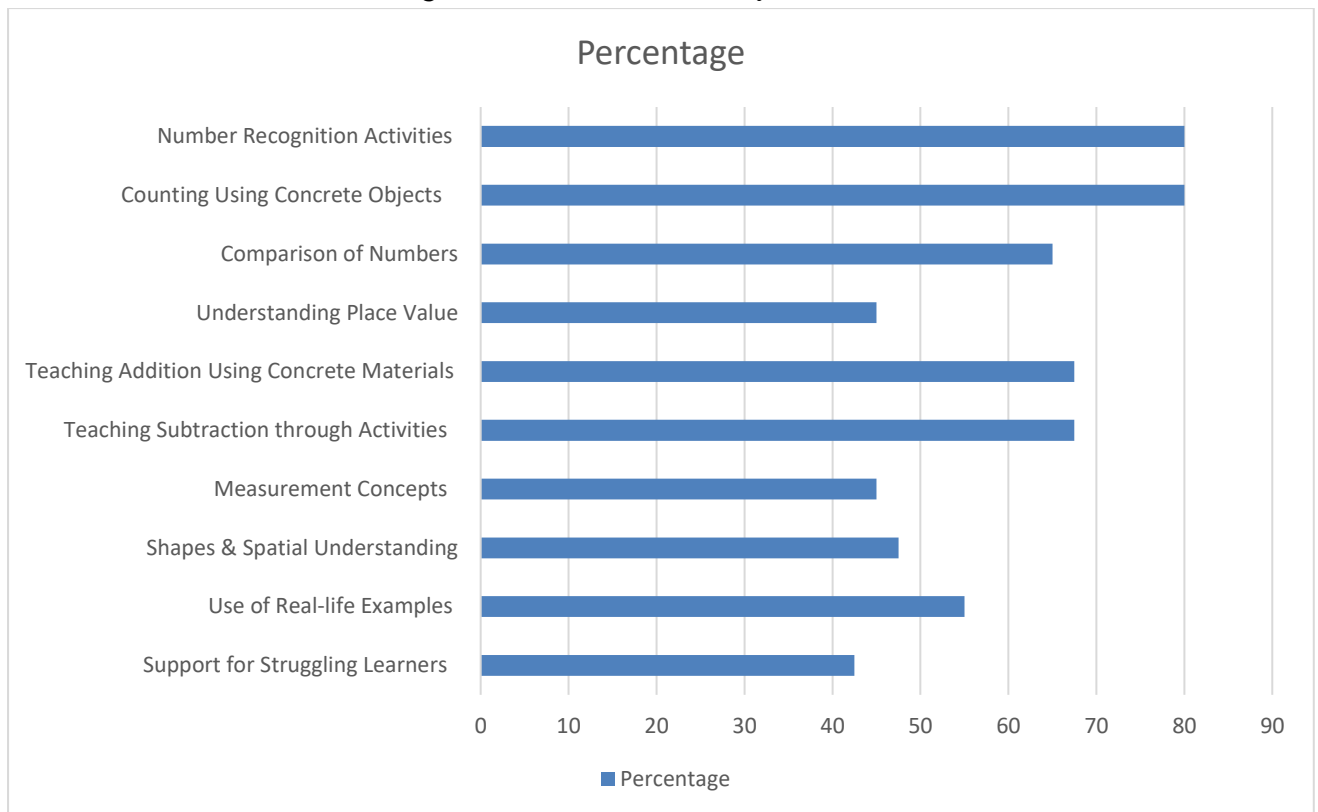


Figure 3: *Observed Foundational Numeracy Practices in Classes I–III*

Figure 3 reveals that a majority of teachers focused on basic numeracy skills such as number recognition and counting, which were observed in 80% of the classrooms (32 out of 40). Teaching of addition and subtraction using activity-based methods was also evident in 67.5% of the classrooms (27 out of 40). However, the teaching of concepts such as place value, measurement, and spatial understanding was less consistently observed in 45% of the classrooms (18 out of 40). The use of real-life examples in numeracy teaching was present in 55% of the classrooms (22 out of 40), but was not uniformly practiced. Additionally, support for students facing difficulties in numeracy was observed in only 42.5% of the classrooms (17 out of 40). These findings indicate that while foundational numeracy practices are being implemented, greater emphasis is needed on conceptual understanding, diverse teaching strategies, and support for learners with varying abilities.

The findings reveal that teachers are making efforts to develop foundational numeracy through counting activities, number recognition, and basic arithmetic operations using concrete materials and activity-based methods. However, comparatively less attention towards place value, measurement, and spatial understanding indicates that conceptual learning in numeracy is not being addressed adequately in all classrooms. This may limit students' mathematical reasoning and problem-solving abilities at later stages of learning. Similar findings were reported by Sari (2025), who emphasized that conceptual understanding and experiential learning are essential for strengthening foundational numeracy competencies among elementary school students. The findings therefore suggest the need for more structured and competency-based numeracy instruction in primary classrooms.

6.4. Challenges Faced by Teachers in the Implementation of FLN

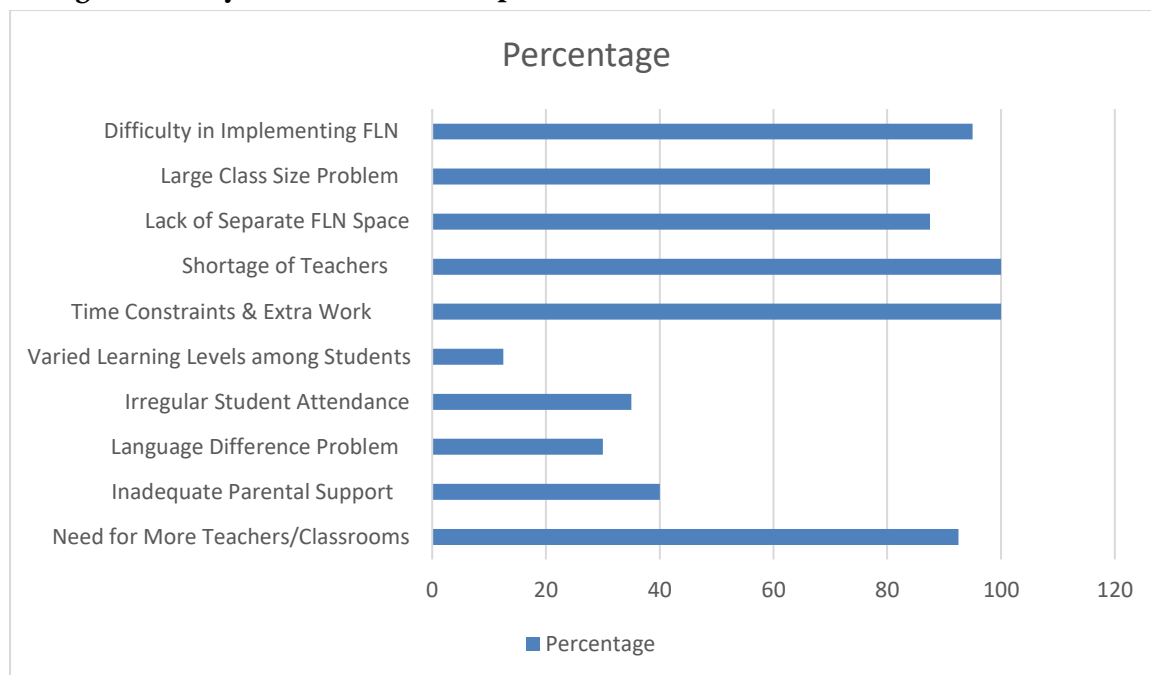


Figure 4: Major Challenges Faced by Teachers in Implementing FLN

Figure 4 reveals that almost all teachers face difficulties in implementing FLN. A large proportion (87.5%, 35 out of 40) reported that the availability of only one classroom for Classes I–III, along with the absence of separate FLN space, creates challenges in managing multiple classes simultaneously. This situation is further complicated by the shortage of teachers, as one FLN teacher is often required to handle all three classes in the same classroom.

In addition, all teachers indicated that time constraints and additional non-academic duties make it difficult to cover both FLN competencies and the regular syllabus. Although teaching-learning materials (TLMs) related to FLN are available, a few teachers (12.5%, 5 out of 40) highlighted that varied learning levels among students pose challenges in effective implementation. Most teachers suggested that the provision of additional classrooms, recruitment of more teachers, and reduction of non-teaching duties would significantly improve the implementation of FLN.

The challenges identified in the study clearly indicate that infrastructural and administrative issues significantly affect the implementation of FLN in government primary schools. Shortage of classrooms and teachers, combined with additional non-academic duties, reduce the opportunities for individualized instruction and effective classroom management. Such conditions may hinder the successful implementation of learner-centered and activity-based pedagogical practices recommended under FLN. Similar observations were made by Panda et al. (2025), who reported that workload and infrastructural limitations are major barriers to effective foundational learning implementation in Odisha schools. Therefore, strengthening institutional support, improving classroom infrastructure, and reducing teachers' administrative burden are essential for achieving the objectives of FLN effectively.

7. Implications of the study

Based on the findings, the following implications are suggested for strengthening the implementation of Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) in Government primary schools:

- Adequate infrastructural facilities such as separate classrooms and designated FLN spaces should be provided, as the lack of proper space makes it difficult to manage Classes I–III effectively in a single classroom.
- More teachers should be appointed to reduce the burden of handling multiple classes by a single teacher

and to ensure better individual attention to students.

- Teachers should be relieved from non-academic duties so that they can devote more time and attention to FLN teaching and classroom activities.
- Proper time allocation and academic planning should be ensured to balance the completion of FLN competencies along with the regular syllabus.
- Regular and need-based in-service training programmes should be strengthened to enhance teachers' skills in activity-based and competency-oriented teaching.
- Teachers should be encouraged to make effective use of available teaching-learning materials (TLMs) to improve classroom engagement and learning outcomes.
- Continuous monitoring and support from educational authorities should be ensured for the effective implementation of FLN programmes.

8. Conclusion

The findings of the study reveal that teachers possess a positive perception towards the implementation of Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN), supported by regular training and a clear understanding of its importance for early grade learners. However, this positive perception is not fully reflected in classroom practices, as the implementation of both literacy and numeracy skills remains partially effective, with greater emphasis on basic skills and relatively less focus on higher-order competencies and individualized support. The study also highlights several practical challenges that hinder effective FLN implementation, including shortage of classrooms, insufficient number of teachers, time constraints, and additional non-academic responsibilities. Although teaching-learning materials are available, infrastructural and systemic limitations restrict their optimal use. Overall, the study concludes that while FLN initiatives are progressing in the right direction and have shown improvement in students' learning outcomes, there is a need for better resource allocation, strengthened classroom practices, and enhanced institutional support to achieve the desired goals effectively.

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APPENDIX I

Semi-Structured Interview Schedule on Teachers' Perceptions of FLN

Q1. Have you received training related to FLN?

Yes No

↳ If yes, how has it influenced your teaching?

Response: _____

Q2. How do you understand the concept of Foundational Literacy and Numeracy?

Response: _____

Q3. How important do you think FLN is for children in Classes I–III?

Very important Important Less important

↳ Please explain your view / elaborate.

Response: _____

Q4. Do you feel confident implementing FLN competencies?

Yes Somewhat No

↳ What makes you feel so?

Response: _____

Q5. Has FLN changed your classroom teaching methods?

Yes No To some extent

↳ Kindly describe the changes.

Response: _____

Q6. How do you assess whether children have achieved foundational skills?

Response: _____

Q7. Do you think FLN goals are achievable within the academic year?

Yes No Partially

↳ Why?

Response: _____

Q8. In your opinion, what factors influence successful FLN implementation?

Response: _____

Q9. Do you think FLN has improved students' learning outcomes?

Yes No Not sure

↳ *Please elaborate.*

Response: _____

Q10. Would you like to suggest any improvements regarding FLN?

Response: _____

APPENDIX II

Classroom Observation Schedule for Foundational Literacy Practices

Sl. No.	FLN Literacy Competency Indicator	Observed (Yes/No/Partially)	Remarks
1	Promotion of oral language through discussion or storytelling	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partially	
2	Activities for phonological awareness (rhyming, sound identification)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partially	
3	Letter recognition and sound-symbol association	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partially	
4	Word reading practice (decoding skills)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partially	
5	Sentence reading with fluency	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partially	
6	Reading comprehension questioning	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partially	
7	Writing practice (words, sentences, or creative expression)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partially	
8	Use of print-rich environment (labels, charts, storybooks)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partially	
9	Teacher provides feedback and correction during literacy tasks	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partially	
10	Support provided to struggling readers and writers	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partially	

APPENDIX III

Classroom Observation Schedule for Foundational Numeracy Practices

Sl. No.	FLN Numeracy Competency Indicator	Observed (Yes/No/Partially)	Remarks
1	Number recognition activities as per grade level	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partially	
2	Counting using concrete objects	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partially	
3	Comparison of numbers (greater/smaller/equal)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partially	
4	Understanding of place value	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partially	
5	Teaching addition using concrete materials	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partially	
6	Teaching subtraction using activity-based method	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partially	
7	Introduction of measurement concepts (length, weight, time)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partially	
8	Teaching basic shapes and spatial understanding	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partially	
9	Use of real-life examples in numeracy teaching	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partially	
10	Support provided to students struggling in numeracy	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Partially	

APPENDIX IV

Semi-Structured Interview Schedule on Challenges in FLN Implementation

Q1. Do you face difficulties while implementing FLN?

Yes No

↳ *Please describe the main challenges.*

Response: _____

Q2. Does large class size affect FLN teaching?

Yes No Sometimes

↳ *How?*

Response: _____

Q3. Is shortage of teaching-learning materials a problem?

Yes No Sometimes

↳ *Explain.*

Response: _____

Q4. Do time constraints affect completion of FLN competencies?

Yes No

↳ *Kindly elaborate.*

Response: _____

Q5. Do students' varied learning levels create challenges?

Yes No

↳ *How do you manage this?*

Response: _____

Q6. Does irregular student attendance affect implementation?

Yes No

↳ *In what way?*

Response: _____

Q7. Do language differences (home language vs school language) create difficulty?

Yes No Sometimes

↳ *Please explain.*

Response: _____

Q8. Is parental support adequate for FLN learning?

Yes No Sometimes

↳ *How does it influence classroom work?*

Response: _____

Q9. Do you receive sufficient administrative or institutional support?

Yes No

↳ *Please describe.*

Response: _____

Q10. What measures would help overcome these challenges?

Response: _____

Cite this Article:

Das, A. & Lenka, S. (2026). Teachers' Perceptions and Classroom Practices Regarding Foundational Literacy and Numeracy in Primary Schools. *International Journal of Emerging Voices in Education*, 2(5), 20–31.

Journal URL: <https://ijeve.com/> **DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.59828/ijeve.v2i5.53>