This thesis arose in part, out of years of research work that has been done since I came to Department of Economics, School of Social Sciences, IGNOU, New Delhi. It is a pleasure to convey my deep and sincere gratitude to **Prof. Narayan Prasad**, for his supervision, advice, guidance and instilling confidence in me from the very early stage of this research work. Above all and the most needed, he provided me unflinching encouragement and support in various ways. His guiding intuition in true perspective has made him as a constant oasis of ideas and passions in research, which exceptionally inspire and enrich my growth as a student and a researcher. I am indebted to him more than he knows. His wide knowledge and logical way of thinking have been of great value for me. His invaluable comments and encouraging criticisms have provided a good basis for the present investigation. Without his encouragement and understanding it would have been impossible for me to finish this work. On this day of submission, I salute him……from the very bottom of my heart.

I gratefully thank **Prof. Gopinath Pradhan**, Director, School of Social Sciences, **Prof. (Mrs.) Anjila Gupta**, **Prof. Madhu Bala**, **Dr. Kaustuva Barik**, **Dr. B S Prakash** and **Mr. Saugato Sen** for their constructive comments during Pre-submission seminar of this dissertation. I am thankful that in the midst of all their academic activities, they accepted to be present on the day of my presentation.

During this research work I have collaborated with many colleagues for whom I have great regard, and I wish to extend my warmest thanks to Principals and teachers of those schools who provided me relevant data for this research work. Finally, I would like to thank the staff of ICSSR library, IME library, NCERT library and NUEPA library for their support from the preliminary to the concluding level of this work.

(Ramesh Chandra Sharma)

29 November 2010