CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Conceptual framework

India, a nation having population in billions, has amazed various other countries by the quality of some of the human resources that the Indian education system has produced. The Vedas, The Puranas, Ayurveda, Yoga, Kautilya's Arthashastra are only some of the milestones that the traditional Indian knowledge system boasts of. There are evidences of imparting formal education in the ancient India under the Gurukul system. But it is the English language and the reformation movements of the 19th century that had the most liberating effect on the pre-independent India. Thus, the British, although rightly criticized for devastating the Indian economy, can also be credited for bringing a revolution in the Indian education system.

Indian education can be divided into Primary, Secondary, Senior Secondary and Higher education stages. But it is the Primary education which serves as a base for all other educational stages and even for the whole life. If the children get access to better primary schools, then their parents as well as their surroundings would start thinking for their future rather than to just leave on fate. According to World Development Report (2000-2001), “The value and the role of knowledge are different in every culture, but a good basic education is essential in every culture and at all levels. Basic knowledge and access to information enable people to choose good governments (or to oust bad ones). The effectiveness of the investments in health and sanitation depends upon the good basic knowledge among citizens. The effectiveness of the extension services for poor farmers depends upon their capacity to understand what is being explained to them.”

Social justice and equality are by themselves the strong argument for providing basic education to all. It is an established fact that basic education improves the level of human well-being especially with regard to life expectancy, infant mortality, nutritional status of children etc. The different articles of Indian constitution are a
good example for promoting universal elementary education since the commencement of the constitution.

The Constitution of free India that came into force in 1950 than proposed to achieve the target of universalization of primary education within a period of ten years (i.e., by 1960). Countless efforts have been done by Indian government to achieve this goal.

Although six times the number of targeted years has passed, the goal has not been achieved yet. Consequently to achieve this fabulous goal, the right of children to free and compulsory education or the Right to Education Act (RTE), has been enacted by the Parliament of India on 4th August 2009. It describes the modalities of the importance of free and compulsory education for the children between 6 and 14 in India under Article 21a of the Indian Constitution.

India became one of the 135 countries which made education a fundamental right of every child as the act came into force on 1st April 2010. With the result of the entire efforts of the Indian government, India had achieved total literacy rate of 74.04% (2011 census). The total enrolment of the children in the primary schools was 127.9 million*. (*8th All India School Education Survey, UGC Annual Report 2010-11)

**Meaning of Primary education**

Education is said to be the third eye of man. Primary education is crucial for spreading mass literacy which is the basic requirement for the effective functioning of democratic institutions, economic development and modernization of the social structure. It also represents the first indispensable step towards the provision of equality of opportunity to all its citizens. According to the Kothari Commission (1964-66) “Primary education has a very extensive role to play in changing the men and society. It has to be entirely reformed and related to the life, needs and aspirations of the people so that it may serve as a powerful tool of social, economic and cultural transformation”.
Saiyidian, K.G. (1995) in his book “Problems of Educational Re-Construction” observed “It (Primary Education) is not concerned with any class or group, but has to deal with the entire population of the country. It touches life at every point.”
**Objectives of Primary Education**

Objectives of primary education according to the Kothari Commission (1964-66)

1. To make productive citizens
2. Reduction in stagnation
3. To earn respectful earning
4. To fulfill local needs and responses of the society

According to Sen, Amrtya in his speech on “The importance of basic education” at Commonwealth Education Conference, Edinburgh, (2006) the following are the main objectives of Primary Education

1. To give an adequate mastery over the tool of learning.
2. To bring about a harmonious development of the child’s personality by providing for his physical, intellectual, social, emotional, aesthetic, moral and spiritual needs.
3. To prepare the children for good citizenship, to develop in them love for their country, its traditions and its culture and to inspire them with a sense of service and loyalty.
4. To develop the spirit of international understanding and universal brotherhood in children.

**Problems of Primary Education**

In India, like many other developing countries, we find that a large number of children are first-generation learners and the usual teaching-learning materials, which have been designed for urban children or for the third or fourth generation learners, are simply irrelevant. Again, our country is facing the problem of retaining children in the school system, and yet there is no ready solution for this and allied problems.

It is a painful fact that out of around twenty one crore children in India, only five or six crores complete elementary education, and a very large number of others drop out at earlier stages of primary education. (Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2009-10). There is huge wastage and stagnation at the primary stage. A
dropout can be defined as a child who enrolls in school but fails to complete the relevant level of the educational cycle. At the primary level, it means that the dropout fails to reach the final grade, usually grade V or VI.

A repeater may or may not become a dropout, but there is a high possibility that he or she will. The dropout may or may not re-enter the school later, but there is more possibility that he or she will remain lost to the educational system afterwards. Both represent wastage. Whereas the repeater may stay on and eventually repeat the primary stage, the dropout is very frequently lost to the system and may fail to retain even the wastages of academic skills gained earlier.

The number of school dropouts in India is not less. In a study in 2010, Reddy and Sinha have stated that out of more than 27 million children in India, who joined in Class I in 1993, only 10 million of them reached Class X, which is only about 37% of those who entered the school system and in more than half of the total states, only 30% of children reached Class X. With the implementation of RTE, of course, there has been a gradual decline in the annual average dropout rate from 9.1% in 2009-2010 to 6.9% in 2010-11.

However, there has been more children dropout in 2010-11 as compared to 2009-2010 in 10 out of the 30 states where RTE has been notified, including progressive states like Tamil Nadu and Gujarat that had increased dropout ratio from 0.1% to 1.2% and 3.9% to 4.3% respectively in 2009-10 and 2010-11

### Dropout rates of students at primary stage in first decade of Twenty First century 1999-2000 to 2009-10

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage of Drop out at Primary Level (I-V)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999-00</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006-07*</td>
<td>28.71</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009-10**</td>
<td>30.25</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Selected Educational Statistics from 1999-00 to 2005-06, Ministry of Human Resource Development, GOI, *DISE report. 2006-07 **Combined dropout rate for India after consideration for all states and UTs. Source: Abstract of Selected Educational Statistics 2009-10; Ministry of Human Resources Development; GOI)

**Universalization of Primary Education**

Education is the basic requirement for success of democracy and progress of the country. Universalization of primary education is a provision to provide free educational opportunities to all the children of the society irrespective of caste, creed and sex. There are three main components of universalization of primary education- universalization of Provision, universalization of Enrolment and universalization of Retention.

Article 45 of the Indian Constitution directed that "The state shall endeavour to provide within a period of ten years from - the commencement of this constitution for free and compulsory education for all the children until they complete the age of fourteen years. Since independence many steps have been taken and different commissions and committees have given suggestions to achieve universalization of Primary Education

**Efforts for UEE (Universalization of Elementary Education) before Independence**

Compulsory provision of Universal Primary Education is an extremely modern concept. No solid efforts had been made till the beginning of the 20th century. The earliest attempt during British Rule for enforcing compulsory primary education was undertaken by William Adam in 1838. A strong consciousness for the need of
compulsory Primary Education in India was affected by the enactment of the Compulsory Education Act in 1870 in England.

In 1906 a committee was appointed in Bombay province and it arrived at a conclusion that compulsory education was not proper and people were not prepared for it. The great son of India, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, was the ablest advocate of compulsory primary education. He moved a resolution in 1910 in the central legislature and again introduced a non-official Bill in 1919. The Bill had wide and popular support, but it was defeated. Vithal Bhai Patel, being inspired by Gokhale's efforts, brought a bill in the provincial legislature of Bombay and it became Bombay Primary Education Act. 1918.

**Efforts for UEE after independence**

With the advent of complete independence in 1947, the advocate of Universal Primary Education had to speak to their Indian administrators and officers. The education of the school going children of the country now became the responsibility of the people. In 1950 the provision of Universal Primary Education was incorporated in the Article 45 of the Constitution of India. "The state shall endeavour to provide within a period of 10 years from the commencement of the Constitution free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years." The provision of Universalization of Primary education was scheduled to be achieved by 1960.

An insistent demand was made that government should fix an early deadline for its fulfilment and should prepare a concrete programme of action for the purpose. Government decided to achieve the goal of universalization of all children on a time-bound programme as recommended by the Conference of State Education Ministers in 1977. Accordingly, a working group on universalization of elementary education was set up by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Planning Commission to prepare a time-bound programme during the medium term plan (1978-83).

Even in the eighties, there was a loud cry for universalization of elementary education all over India. In 1986 the National Policy of Education was introduced to make a better education system and also to achieve the goal of universalization of
elementary education. According to the policy "It shall be ensured that free and compulsory education of satisfactory quality is provided to all the children up to 14 years of age before we enter the twenty first century".

The District Primary Education Program (DPEP) has been launched by the Government of India (GOI) in 1994 with the objectives of providing primary school access for all children, reducing overall dropout rates and gaps in enrolments, and increasing learning achievements across gender and social groups. Consequent to several efforts, India has made enormous progress in terms of institutions, teachers, and students in elementary education through Operation Blackboard (OB), Non Formal Education (NFE), Teacher Education (TE), Mahila Samakhya (MS) and National Program of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (MDM).

The Government is fully committed to the goal of UEE. For promotion of UEE and social justice, the Parliament of India has passed the Constitution (86th Amendment) Act, notified on 13th December 2002, making free and compulsory elementary education a Fundamental Right for all the children in the age group of 6-14 years. It is known as Right to Education (Article 21A). According to this article “The state shall endeavor to provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age six to fourteen years in such a manner as the state may by law determine”

Also the government of India has amended the Article 45, which gives provision for early childhood care and education below the age of six years. Government of India has also introduced a new fundamental duty (Article 51 A (k)), which is entitled as, “it shall be the duty of every citizen of India who is a parent or guardian to provide opportunities for education to his child or, as the case may be, ward between the age of six and fourteen years”.

India has made great strides in strengthening its primary education system. The District Information System for Education (DISE) reported in 2012 that 95% of the India's rural populations are within one kilometre of primary schools. The 2011 Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), which tracks trends in rural education, indicated that enrolment rates among primary-school-aged children were about 93%, with little difference in gender.
The 2011 ASER states that only 48.2% of the students in the fifth grade could read at the second grade level. The number of students completing their primary education with inadequate numeric and literacy skills is startling. However, the other side reveals that out of the 200 million children in the age group of 6 - 14 years, 59 million children are not attending school, out of which 35 million are girls and 24 million are boys.

Despite all these expansions in statistics related to enrolment and growth rate in enrolment of primary stage students, there are still some problems relating to drop-out rate, low levels of learning achievement and low participation of girls, tribe’s and other disadvantaged groups. Coupled with it are various systemic issues like inadequate school infrastructure, poorly functioning schools, high teacher absenteeism, large number of teacher vacancies, poor quality of education and inadequate funds.

So, in order to overcome these problems and for the universalization of elementary education, government of India has launched the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan program.

**Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)**

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is a historic stride towards achieving the long cherished goal of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) through a time bound integrated approach, in partnership with the state. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has been introduced during the Ninth Plan (1997-2002) and got implemented in 2001 to universalize elementary education. SSA, which promises to change the face of the elementary education sector of the country, aimed to provide useful and quality elementary education to all the children in the 6 -14 age group by 2010.

The SSA is an effort to recognize the need for improving the performance of the school system and to provide community owned quality elementary education in mission mode. It also envisages bridging of gender and social gaps.

**Main Features of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan**

1. A program with a clear time frame for universal elementary education.
2. A response to the demand for qualitative basic education all over the country.

3. An opportunity for promoting social justice through basic education.

4. An effort to effectively involve the Panchayati Raj Institutions, School Management Committees, Village and Urban Slum level Education Committees, Parents' Teachers' Associations, Mother Teacher Associations, Tribal Autonomous Councils and other grass root level structures in the management of elementary schools.

5. An expression of political will for universal elementary education across the country.

6. A partnership between the Central, State and the local government.

7. An opportunity for States to develop their own vision of elementary education

**Objectives of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan**

- All the children in schools, Education Guarantee Centre, Alternate School, 'Back to School' camp by 2003

- All the children complete five years of primary schooling by 2007

- All the children complete eight years of schooling by 2010

- Focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life

- Bridge all gender and social category gaps at primary stage by 2007 and at elementary education level by 2010
Structure for Implementation

The Central and State governments will together implement the SSA in partnership with the local governments and the community. To signify the national priority for elementary education, a National Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Mission has been established with the Prime Minister as the Chairperson and the Union Minister of Human Resource Development as the Vice Chairperson. States have requested to establish State level Implementation Society for DEE under the Chairmanship of Chief Minister Education Minister.

Major central interventions and their integration with Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

There have been several innovative schemes in the sector of elementary education following the National Policy on Education in 1986 such as Operation Blackboard, Teacher Education, Non Formal Education, Mahila Samakhya, National Program for Nutritional Support for Primary Education (Mid day meal), State Specific Education Projects in Bihar, Rajasthan, UP and Andhra Pradesh and DPEP in 248 districts of 18 States. It is proposed to integrate these in the fold of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in the following manner:

1. Operation Blackboard

Operation Blackboard aimed to improve physical infrastructure of education whereby school space was expanded and more teachers were provided.

2. Strengthening of Teacher Education

The revised scheme of Teacher Education provides for a memorandum of understanding with the states in order to ensure that they receive prior attention of state governments, especially with regard to filling up of vacancies through a rigorous selection criteria.

3. National Program of Nutritional Support for Primary Education (Mid Day Meal)

Evaluation of the National Program of Nutritional Support for Primary Education (Mid day meal) indicates that the supply of food grains leads to improvement in student attendance while raising their nutritional standard.
4. Mahila Samakhya

Evaluation studies on the Mahila Samakhya approach indicate the progress made in empowerment of women. Though the scheme of Mahila Samakhya will retain its distinct identity at the state and the district level, it will provide support for the planning and implementation of SSA in districts implementing Mahila Samakhya.

5. Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternative and Innovative Education (AIE)

Efforts to provide for a diversity of interventions have been made in the revised scheme that has been approved recently such as setting up of Education Guarantee Schools, Alternative Schooling facilities, Balika Skiksha Shivir, 'Back to School' camps, etc.

6. District Primary Education Program (DPEP)

DPEP districts indicate that decentralized planning and implementation facilitate community involvement in the process of school management. DPEP has met with varied degree of success in different states. Some have availed of DPEP benefits and have improved their elementary education sector.

7. Lok Jumbish Project (LJP)

Under the LJP, evaluation studies indicate the positive impact of micro planning and school mapping in which the community is involved. There are specific interventions for girls education through Balika Shiksha Shivirs and Sahaj Shiksha Kendras.

8. Janshala (GOI-UN) Program

Janshala Government of India-United Nations (GOI-UN) Program is a collaborative effort of Government of India and five United Nations agencies to provide program support to the ongoing efforts towards achieving UEE.
Mid Day Meal Program

The Mid day meal program is a multi-faceted program of the Government of India that, among other things, seeks to address issues of food security, lack of nutrition and access to education. It involves provision for free lunch on working days for children in primary and upper primary classes in schools, Government Aided, local Bodies, Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternate Innovative Education (AIE) Centers, Madarsa and Maqtabs supported the schools run by Ministry of Labor under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and National Child Labor Project (NCLP).

Objectives of mid day meal program

The objectives of the mid day meal program are:

1. To improve the nutritional status of children in classes I – VIII in Government, Local Body and Government aided schools, and EGS and AIE centers.
2. To encourage poor children, belonging to disadvantaged sections, to attend school more regularly and help them concentrate on classroom activities.
3. To provide nutritional support to the children of primary stage in drought-affected areas during summer vacation.

With a view to enhance enrolment, retention, attendance, and simultaneously improving nutritional levels among children, the National Program of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NSPE) was launched as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme on 15th August 1995, initially in 2408 blocks of the country. By the year 1997-98 the NP-NSPE was introduced in all blocks of the country. It further extended in 2002 to cover not only children in classes’ I-V of government, government aided and local body schools, but also children studying in EGS and AIE centers. Central Assistance under the scheme consisted of free supply of food grains @ 100 grams per child per school day, and subsidy for transportation of food grains up to a maximum of Rs 50 per quintal.

In September 2004 the scheme was revised to provide cooked mid day meal with 300 calories and 8-12 grams of protein to all the children studying in classes I – V in government and government aided schools and EGS/ AIE center’s. In addition to the free supply of food grains, the revised scheme provided Central Assistance for
(a) Cooking cost @ Re 1 per child per school day.

(b) Transport subsidy rose from the earlier maximum of Rs 50 per quintal to Rs. 100 per quintal for special category states, and Rs 75 per quintal for other states.

(c) Management, monitoring and evaluation costs @ 2% of the cost of food grains, transport subsidy and cooking assistance.

In July 2006 the scheme was further revised to provide assistance for cooking cost at the rate of Rs 1.80 per child/school day for States in the North Eastern Region (NER), provided the NER states contribute Rs 0.20 per child/school day and Rs 1.50 per child/ school day.

In October 2007, the scheme was further revised to cover children in upper primary (classes VI to VIII) initially in 3479 Educationally Backwards Blocks (EBBs). Around 1.7 crore upper primary children were expected to be included by this expansion of the scheme. In the 2007 /08 Union Budget, the scheme was extended to the upper primary (6th to 8th standard) level as well. The program was extended to all areas across the country from 2008-09.

The project has received significant funding from the government - the 11th Five Year plan had an outlay of Rs 48,000 crore while the budgetary allocation for 2012/13 was Rs 11,937 crore. Today, nearly 72 per cent of students at the primary and upper primary level are covered by the program nationally. In states such as Kerala and Goa, the coverage is close to 100 per cent. However, implementation is still a challenge in some states. Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu, are some of the states where coverage is lower than the national average.

However, some indication of its success can be gleaned from the Planning Commission’s Approach Paper for the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-17). "For the age group 6 to 14 years in the entire rural India, the percentage of the children who are not enrolled in schools has dropped from 6.6 per cent in 2005 to 3.5 per cent in 2010," notes the paper. "The proportion of girls in the age group 11 to 14 years who were out of school has also declined from 11.2 per cent in 2005 to 5.9 per cent in 2010."

**Historical Background of Educational Status in Uttar Pradesh**
Uttar Pradesh is the most populous state of the country accounting for 16.4 per cent of the country’s population. It is also the fourth largest state in geographical area covering 9.0 per cent of the country’s geographical area, encompassing 240,928 square kilometers and comprising of 83 districts, 901 development blocks and 112,804 inhabited villages. The density of population in the state is 828 people per square kilometers as against 382 for the country.

The history of education in the state of Uttar Pradesh is full of glory. Sanskrit-based education comprising the learning of Vedic-to-Gupta periods, coupled with the later Pali corpus of knowledge and a vast store of ancient-to-medieval learning in Persian/Arabic languages, had formed the edifice of Hindu-Buddhist-Muslim education, until the rise of British power. After independence, the state of U.P. has continued to make investment over the years in all the sectors of education and has achieved significant success in overcoming general educational backwardness and illiteracy.

In order to make the population literate, many steps have been taken by the government to involve public participation, with the help of NGOs and other organisations. There are some special programmes, also like the World Bank aided DPEP. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER 2012) reveals that with 57 per cent literacy rate and 34 million school-going children, the state has turned its hurdles into benchmarks, ensuring that 93 per cent of children are enrolled in the schools. Today the state has 122,000 schools, 300,000 teachers and 100,000 para-teachers to take care of the needs of the students at primary and upper primary levels.

Presently, there are 866,361 primary schools, 8,459 higher secondary schools, 758-degree colleges and 26 universities in the State. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has been the main catalyst in recent years in spearheading this metamorphosis in education in the state. UNICEF supports SSA to ensure all the children have access to quality education and complete a full course of elementary schooling. More than 25,000 out-of-school children have benefited from the “accelerated learning” approaches, which have allowed them to catch-up with their peers in formal schools.
Universalization of Elementary Education in Uttar Pradesh

Management

U.P. Education for All Project Board (UPEFAPB) year has evolved a management structure with a high degree of flexibility in administrative functioning. In a vast state like Uttar Pradesh with regional variations, the emphasis has been on conceptuality, local needs and decentralized planning.

Expanding Access

In order to make schools accessible and within the reach of children, the State revised the previous norms and reduced the distance to 1 km for primary and 3 km for upper primary schools to be opened.

Increase in enrolment

According to the provincial data available under District Information System for Education (DISE 2011-12), in Uttar Pradesh, the Gross Enrolment Ratio at primary level was 105.17% in 2010-11. The net enrolment ratio of primary level was 94.18% (2010-11).

Village Education Committee

One of the major components of SSA is promoting the retention of children in the school. For this, the emphasis has been on giving pre-eminence to people’s involvement, including association of non-governmental agencies and voluntary efforts, inducting more women in the planning and management of education.

Promoting Girls’ Education

National Program of Education for Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL) launched in 2003 initiated the opening of Child Care Center to relieve girls from sibling care and distribute free uniforms among them.
Strategy for bringing out - of- school children

Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) is one such scheme, which envisages opening of centers for class 1 and 2 in habitations, with no primary school within a radius of 1 km and 30 children in the age group of 6 to 11 yrs.

Education of Children with special needs (CWSN)

The National commitment of providing free education to all children of the age group of 6-14 years will remain a distant dream unless children with special needs are included into the umbrella of education. Early detection and integration of such children, medical and functional assessment, supply of aids and appliances, special-teacher training programs etc are conducted in collaboration with various NGOs and Handicapped Welfare Department.

Quality Improvement

Improving the quality of elementary education is central to the SSA and teacher pupil ratio has a significant bearing on quality of education. To bring the teacher pupil- ratio of 1:44 to that of National level of 1:30 (DISE 2011-12), recruitment of teachers is being done in the state.

Mid Day Meal Program (Uttar Pradesh)

The State Government launched cooked mid day meal program for nourishment of the children in primary schools. It aims to provide minimum 300 calories and 8-12 gram protein to each child for at least 200 days in a year. The program administered by Mid Day Meal (MDM) cells is set up at State, Commissioner, and District levels and Village Education Committee (VEC) at village level.

Monitoring arrangements of the mid day meal program in Uttar Pradesh

The management of the mid day meal program at the centre, state, district, block and village levels has clearly stated in the guidelines issued by the government of Uttar Pradesh to oversee the implementation of the program. According to it, a State Steering Committee has been constituted under the chair of Principal Secretary, Education. This body is represented by the officers of the Panchayat Raj, Planning, Finance and Urban development, Food and Civil Supplies and Primary Education Departments.
The state government has designated the District collector as a Nodal Officer to ensure the effective implementation of the scheme. He heads the District Steering Committee, represented by district level officers of Education, Panchayat Raj and Food and Civil Supplies Departments.

At the village level, a committee has been constituted under the chair of gram pradhan. Two male and two female guardians are also designated as members of this committee by the state government. Besides, the Headmaster of the concerned primary school is also designated as a member.

The main responsibility of the implementation of the scheme at the village level has been entrusted to village pradhan. The norms of inspection of the program at the school have laid down in such a manner as to ensure the inspection of every school at least once a month. In order to achieve the objective a cooked mid day meal with nutritional contents, is to be provided to all the children studying in I to V classes. The scheme of providing cooked mid day meal was initiated in Uttar Pradesh since September 2004.

1.2 Rationale of the Study

The present study is limited to the district Raebareli of Uttar Pradesh. This district is located in the heart land of famous Awadh region which was the part ancient Koshala kingdom. This town has close proximity to present state capital Lucknow which is just 82 KM. As per provisional data of 2011 census, Raebareli had population of 3,404,004 of which male and female were 1,753,344 and 1,650,660 respectively. There was a change of 18.51 percent in the population as compared to census of 2001. As per 2011 census, 90.95% population of Raebareli districts lives in rural areas of villages.

The total Raebareli district population living in rural areas is 3,096,097 of which males and females are 1,593,143 and 1,502,954 respectively. The initial provisional data released by census India 2011, shows that the density of Raebareli district for 2011 is 739 people per km². The Sex Ratio in Raebareli stood at 941 per 1000 male. The Average literacy rate of Raebareli in 2011 was 69.04 with male and female literacy rate being 79.39 and 58.06 respectively.
Climate

Raebareli has a warm subtropical climate with very cold and dry winters from December to Mid February and dry, hot summers from April to Mid June. The rainy season is from mid-June to mid-September when it gets an average rainfall of 1200 mm mostly from the south-west monsoon winds. During extreme winter the maximum temperature is around 12 degrees Celsius and the minimum is in the 3 to 4 degrees Celsius range. Fog is quite common from late December to late January. Summers can be quite hot with temperatures rising to the 40 to 45 degree Celsius range.

In Raebareli district there are total 21 blocks which cover up all the rural and urban area of entire district. The blocks which cover up the area of district are- Rahi, Amawa, Deeh, Bahadurpur, Harchandpur, Bachrawa, Shivgarh, Maharajganj, Tioli, Singhpur, Chatoh, Dalmau, Satav, Rohina, Unchahar, Jagatpur, Sareni, Lalganj, Khiro, Salon and Goura.

In all these blocks there are some major blocks which cover many primary schools, in which mid day meal program has been run. The major blocks are Rahi (100 Schools), Amawa (104), Harchandpur (82), Bachrawa (83), Tioli (89) and Dalmau (97 Schools).

Background and Political Importance of Raebareli district

The district of Raebareli was created by the British in 1858, and was named after its headquarters town. In the early 20th century, the town was an important centre of trade, and Muslin and Cotton weaving. Its population was 15,880 in 1901. The city and the district became famous as a political bastion of the Nehru-Gandhi Nationalist family. After independence, Raebareli constituency was won by Jawaharlal Nehru's son-in-law Feroze Gandhi in 1952 and again re-elected in 1957. After Feroze Gandhi’s death in 1960, the constituency was won in 1967 by Indira Gandhi, who went on to become the first woman Prime Minister of India. In 2004, 2006 and 2009 the constituency was won by Sonia Gandhi, President of Indian National Congress Party and Chairperson of UPA (United Progressive Alliance).

At present, Raebareli is still a major pillar for Congress party, that’s why this district plays a distinctive role in Indian politics. With the support of major influenced
politicians, all the major schemes and programs which are introduced by the central
government are also influenced and would be implemented in the district with full
enthusiasm and eagerness. That’s why mid day meal program has also been
implemented in all the blocks of the district in the year 2005-06.

Mid day meal helps the poor families that are engulfed in poverty, hunger and
starvation striving hard to have one square meal a day, cannot even think of sending
their children to schools. It is a fact that there are many programs for enhancing
enrolment and retention of primary stage learners like free distribution of uniforms,
bicycles, books, scholarships by central and state government but hunger, we feel
sometimes, is the worst tribulation of being poor. Not knowing where the next meal is
coming from day after day is a fear not many of us reading this have experienced.
However, unfortunately millions do everyday. For parents, nothing brings them down
to their knees like a hungry child at home, which refuse to drink water repeatedly for
breakfast, for lunch and for dinner.

The main reason behind school drop out from primary section is, large,
dysfunctional and poor families having problems in providing adequate food to their
children and sometimes introduce them to some vocations to supplement their
income. (Source: UNICEF report on, early school dropout: causes and possible ways
to prevent it, 2009)

That is why mid day meal scheme has been launched by the central
government based on the philosophy that "when children have to sit in the class with
empty stomachs, they cannot focus on learning”. The objective of this scheme has
been to boost universalization of primary education and to influence the nutrition of
students in primary classes. Mid Day Meal scheme in many states including Punjab,
West Bengal, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, and others covers only 12 percent or less of
the children attending government primary schools. Recent giant leap towards
achieving quality education in the state of Uttar Pradesh the centrally sponsored
program –‘Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan’ (SSA) was launched in 2001. The program
covered all the 75 districts of Uttar Pradesh aiming at all the children of 6-11 years to
complete 5 years of schooling by 2007 and all the children of 11-14 years to complete
8 years of elementary schooling by 2010.
The objectives and potential benefits of the mid day meal program are three-fold: increased enrolment, attendance and retention; improved child nutrition; and social equity (Dreze and Goyal, 2003; Khera, 2006).

**Enrolment, Attendance and Retention**

The first objective of the mid day meal program is to increase enrolment and daily class participation by entitling all enrolled children to a hot, cooked nutritious meal at the school. Sai and Sharma (2008) examined school-level data to find that in Khurda district of Orissa, the gender gap in enrolment decreased considerably between 1995-96 and 2000-01, when cooked meals were provided to the students rather than dry rations. More specifically, during this period the average annual growth rate in enrolment of the girls was 3.86%, while that for the boys stood at 3.71%.

Dreze and Goyal (2003) acknowledged that there may be factors other than mid day meal at play when they compare school enrolment across nine districts each in Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, and Rajasthan. However, the period they consider falls immediately after the MDM was introduce and they find that enrolment in Class I increased significantly between July 2001 and July 2012 by 14.5%; in particular for girls, it rose by 19%. More rigorously using econometric techniques (rather than just descriptive school data), Afridi (2011) found that the introduction of the mid day meal raised the average monthly attendance of girls in Class 1 by 10 percentage points, significantly closing the gender gap.

**Improved child nutrition**

The second major objective of the mid day meal program is improved child nutrition and the elimination of ‘classroom hunger’ (Dreze and Goyal, 2003; Singh et al, 2012). According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, (FAO), “nutritional well-being is recognized both as a primary objective of the development and an important input into the social and economic development process.”

A wide range of the literature documents how under- and malnutrition can have severe negative impacts on a child’s physical well-being, continuing well into adulthood (Black et al., 2008; Alderman et al., 2003, Svedberg, 2000; and Gaiha, Jha & Kulkarni 2010). In particular, using longitudinal data from Pakistan, Alderman et
al. (1997) shows that with better nutrition among pre-school children, not only does school enrolment rise but more importantly, there are greater productivity gains than would’ve been expected otherwise.

In the context of the mid day meal program in India, Afridi (2010) has attempted to quantify the improvement in daily nutrient intake of children availing the meals in Madhya Pradesh to find that it increased from 49% to 100%. In particular, she found that “per school day the scheme improved nutritional intakes by reducing the daily protein deficiency of a primary school student by 100%, the calorie deficiency by almost 30% and the daily iron deficiency by nearly 10%. In the short-run, therefore, the program can have a substantial effect on reducing hunger at school and protein-energy malnutrition” of children availing the scheme.

Even more recently in Andhra Pradesh, using longitudinal data from the “Young India” project, Singh et al. (2012) finds that the mid day meal acts as a safety net for children in the drought-stricken areas. They find that the negative health impacts of a drought, as nutritional intake falls, are in fact significantly compensated by the mid day meal, which is mandated to be served even on non-school days in drought-prone areas. In particular, the authors find that in the younger of two cohorts studied, children who were not affected by drought gained an additional 0.069 standard deviations in weight-for-age indicator; in contrast, those who were affected by drought gained an additional 0.169 standard deviations.

Thus, it can be seen that the mid day meal has immense potential to increase the nutritional intake of beneficiaries; but of course, the impact of the scheme is highly dependent on the quantity and quality of the meals served, which still varies greatly from state to state (Khera, 2006).

Highlighting the importance of mid day meal program, Saxena (2004) claimed that it has lowered the widespread incidence of malnutrition, primarily among children of poor families and increased their access to education. School feeding Program is a direct approach to improve the nutritional status of the children who are in the stage of rapid development requiring special nutritional requirement (Mishra, 2002, Dogra and Dogra, 2003).
According to Gangadharan, (2006) in poor countries like India, school feeding programs serve as an incentive for parents to enroll their children. They ensure higher attendance and reduce dropout rates. Kameshwari’s (2007) study reflects that mid day meal has brought a sharp increase in school enrolment and attendance rates across all the states.

With the findings of above research studies, it shows that mid day meal program has very positive impact on enrolment and retention of primary stage learners. This program increases the possibility of retaining children in school for a longer period during day and thereby increasing the learning opportunities for them. It is also a fact that both enrolment and retention of students at primary level are linked up with multitude of other variables like access to schools, mindset of parents, social and cultural environment but this mid day meal program only focuses on positive increase of enrolment and retention of primary stage learners. This program has created a very congenial atmosphere for education, health growth and overall well-being of the poor and needy children. In addition, different studies have proved this fact also.

The need for the present study also arises as a result of a proposal made by National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi for documentation of the best practices in the implementation and impact of the mid day meal program. Also it would be very interesting to observe that in a district which has political influence and has control on Indian politics, what are the position of programs and schemes which are implemented by Indian government?

In addition, the researcher wanted to observe that is there any increment in the enrolment status of elementary students of the district or not? After every in-depth research about mid day meal program, which has been implemented in the district, the following questions arouse in the mind of the researcher:-

Is there any increment on enrolment and retention status of the students at primary level?

Is there any increment on enrolment and retention status of urban and rural students (boys and girls) at primary level?
What are the perception of parents, teachers & students about the mid day meal program?

To find the answers of the above written questions the researcher selected the following problem.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Enrolment and Retention of Primary Stage learners with reference to Mid Day Meal Program running in Rahi Block of Raebareli District (2005-2010)