I have been fairly familiar with the education landscape due to a variety of reasons. As a young child, my first memories of a school are of 'Shishukalyan' at Jamshedpur - in today’s Jharkhand. I remember hopping in and out of over seven schools across different states of India, from Bihar to Gujarat to Maharashtra to Punjab. Later my father took up an assignment in Africa, which led to my being home schooled for nearly two years as I completed my London University A-levels. I completed my Bachelors and Masters degree in Physics and Nuclear Physics from the University of Madras. My experience in each of these institutions has been truly ‘educating’. This has built a strong foundation for my edifice of ‘life’ and seeded a fascination for education and the difference that it could make.

I was fortunate that on joining the IAS, I happened to do work in the field of Education in most of my assignments, whether it was as an Assistant Collector or a DDO or the Commissioner, Schools. Similarly, ICT was another area that I happened to work in. In fact, my M. Sc. project was related to writing a ‘device driver’ for the now almost ‘extinct’ floppy disk drive. My stint as a scientist at the Nuclear Science Centre at Delhi saw me work on the data acquisition and analysis systems. More recently, about ten years ago, as the founder MD of Gujarat Informatics Limited, I was a part of the team that put together the e-Governance framework for the state. As the Collector, Panchmahals, a simple citizen centric e-governance project called Mahiti Shakti was rolled out; this won several awards and recognition, nationally and internationally. I may not be exaggerating if I say that my ‘research’ had started from day one of this period of my life.
It was around this time that I decided to register with the M.S. University of Baroda for working towards a Ph.D. Prof. Mayank Dholakia accepted me as his student and I began my work in right earnest.

After two years in Gandhinagar, I was invited to work in the PMO as a Director in the National Advisory Council. I was a part of the team that drafted the RTI Act and such other historic legislations. In 2004, I went to study at the London School of Economics and Political Sciences. During that period too, my background work continued and I would be in regular touch with Mayankbhai. Unfortunately, he became very ill and in the summer of 2006, as I was getting ready to leave for doing my Masters in Public Administration from Harvard University, I spoke to him to take his blessings before I left. He advised me at length and even discussed about possible courses that I could take at the Kennedy School of Government which helped me acquire a world view on education. Little did I realise then that this would be my last conversation with him. On my return to Gujarat in October 2007, I distinctly recall the lump in my throat when I was told that he was no longer with us. I was rather disturbed, disenfranchised and did not really feel like pursuing the research in those circumstances. Some months later, I learnt that Mayankbhai had requested Prof. Kiran Joshi, his colleague in the Faculty of Management Studies, the MS University of Baroda, to guide me in my research work about a week before his sad demise. On hearing this, I felt that this research thesis could and in fact, should be a humble, homage paid to Prof. Mayank Dholakia. It is in that spirit of homage to late Prof. Mayankbhai Dholakia, that I started this work again.

I wish to place on record my gratitude for the guidance that I have had from my present guide, Prof. Kirankumar M Joshi, Dean of the Faculty of Management Studies, who apart from being my guide, has been a friend and philosopher, helping me find my way. Apart from his academic
achievements, he has been intimately associated with various change management efforts in the power sector of the state. He has been involved at every stage of this work and his proactive approach has been of great help in completing this work.

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Most of the ideas and thoughts articulated in this thesis are based on my study and work as a practitioner. A great deal of encouragement has been received for the various ideas and initiatives from team Gujarat.

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It is with an attitude of gratitude that I thank each and every one them and all those who have helped me directly/indirectly and may have not been named here, from the bottom of my heart, for helping me put this all together.

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At this stage in my life, this work would have been impossible had it not been for the tremendous support and inspiration I have had from my husband, Ravi and our wonderful children, Adit and Krupa. I consider myself very fortunate that my parents-in-law, Sh. N. Gopalan and Smt. Jyothi Gopalan have been very encouraging in all such endeavours.

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