CHANGE AND PROGRESS OF SCHOOL EDUCATION IN WEST BENGAL AFTER INDEPENDENCE WITH REFERENCE TO SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ECONOMICAL CONTEXT

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Modern Education was inspired in India especially in Bengal by the European during 17th century. It was the British company who had started modern education for the children of company employers. It was also a fact that the British missionaries came over to India for preaching religion among the people for which they had to provide education to the natives. Thus it appears that, the British missionaries were the pioneer of introducing of modern School education in Bengal. The history of school education has a long bearing with this. Subsequently the British Government took over the partial responsibility of the education for the masses of Bengal. Lot of commission and Committee had been constituted for this purpose. If we start with Admas report and end with the Sergent report we will find that there were various policies debut with regard to children. Significantly mention can be made with reference to the in production of compulsory primary education in India.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale moved a legitimate build for the purpose of introduction of the universal compulsory primary education in India in

which he agreed that if the children in England can have the facility for universal education why under the same British rule, the Indian children should not be provided the same facility in India. This argument paves the way to locate the social and economical discrepancies among the citizen of the British India.

In spite of the colonial attitude of the British the school education had made a successful endeavor in British India. Some of the efforts were made by the British and some of the initiatives were taking by the nationalist for the spread of education in India prior to Indian independence. Therefore a modern system of education in general and school education in particular had been evolved in the country. Bengal was the pioneer for accepting and establishing the British education in the province and they make forward in comparison to other presidencies in India so far school education is concerned.

Even after Indian independence, the Bengal tried to continue that effort but it had its British hangover on the education system. No such effort has been made to keep up the sprite of national movement so far educationists concerns as it was the bounding for Indian people to go with the British system of education during the colonial period. But since independence that bounding was not there. Even then the school education system could not come out from that hangover. Independence

has given to develop our own system of education that is related with the development of the state but hardily that planning has been made compressive education and socio-economic development of the state of West Bengal.

Statement of the Problem and Objectives of the Study:

Lots of researches have been carried out with regard to school education in West Bengal since independence but hardly any research has been taken up to find out the answer of the above issues. Thus the present study entitled: "**Change and Progress of School Education in West Bengal after Independence with Reference to Socio-Political and Economical Context"** has been taken up with the following objectives:

- To Study the recommendations of various Committees and Commissions with regard to the change of School Education in West Bengal since independence.
- To Study the progress of School Education in West Bengal
- To find out the change and progress during the period from 1947-1976 in West Bengal.
- To find out the change and progress during the period from 1977-2009 in West Bengal.
- To examine how far this change and progress are in tune with the national change and progress.

Operational Definition of the Terms Used:

School Education: Since the rise of the human society there exist agencies for educating the people. Human being are said to be rational

being. But there exists individual differences amongst them. They can do anything for their personal ends. So the human societies have been facing many serious social challenges since their rise. And many sane persons also have been educating the people to be sane social human beings, from the very beginning. In the beginning some epistemic, knowledgeable persons used to make the common people aware about the social evils and educate them through religious discourses, for making the whole society sane. They used to arrange common gatherings for such social education in the beginning, which in the long – run were designated as specific school. Such schools were found in India, China, and Greece. This types of schools were run for the common good without any material inclinations. In India, in beginning such schools were arranged at Rishi Ashramas which in the long-run took the shape of Gurukulas. Gurukulas like Vallabhi, Ujjain, Taxila, were such schools. Main aim of such schools was life moulding of the young individuals. There was no state control over these schools or ashrams. These were purely run by the society.

The school is the soul of every educational system for any kind of education. A student has to undergo school education for any higher education first, and then he seeks admission in an institute of higher learning. So the school education is the based for all types of higher education and for living a saneful social life. In the present industrial age the institution of school is a common feature in all societies. If we peep into the history of development of education, we will find that institution of school was always in every society and in every culture and civilization. The purpose of the school in olden days was different than the present day school. It was designed to educate and prepare the individuals for saneful living. As such, schools were established to promote particular philosophical or religious line as (a) Platonic school

and Aristotelian school in Greece, (b) Sufi schools in Islam, (c) Vaishnite school, Buddhist Mathas and Ashramas in India. The aims of these schools were quite different from the present schools. The present day school is an instrument for implementing the formal education designed by those who are in power. Whereas the old days schools were independent in doing their activities for the common good. The present day school is affected by social change. It is, therefore, necessary to do a deep study and analysis of the functioning of the present school in imparting school education. For this, it is necessary to go into the etymology, genesis analysis of its functioning present social climate and its effects on school education.

Earlier, the education was not a state responsibility. It was the enterprise of the society, be it managed by a temple or a church or mosque or community. Legal validity vested to the school by the state made the school drifted from the society. The society lost its say in educating their children. The school education management went to the hands of bureaucrats who decided what to teach and what not to teach. The main aim of school education became only to teach 3Rs and preparing the students for annual examination.

Therefore, it can be safely assumed that the institution of 'school education' could not provide education for life which was done by old Indian education. It only prepares the youths for annual examinations. The best youth is one who could secure highest marks in examination. And present best school is one who's mostly all students pass with good marks in the examination. The presents, community, the school, the media and society try to give heat to this trend as we read in newspapers daily. As such, it can be said that our school can only prepare our youths for white collar jobs and nothing else beyond this. There is no place for the enculturation of the students in school education curriculum. So

called public schools openly acculturate our youths to western culture. The school dress of these schools is an open signal to cultural diffusion and acculturation. In the present technological age cultural diffusion cannot be stopped. To achieve only material gains, has only become the prime aim of present day social life. The present day school education is based on this motto. Non-sociability, self - centeredness', social alienation is a common feature of the present day social life and our school education is helpless in this regard. In this present study school education refers from Std – 1 to XII Std.

Change: Change is something *that* presses us out of our comfort zone. It is destiny-filtered, heart grown, faith built. Change is inequitable; not a respecter of persons. Change is for the better or for the worst, depending on where you view it. Change has an adjustment period which varies on the individual. It is uncomfortable, for changing from one state to the next upsets our control over outcomes. Change has a ripping effect on those who won't let go. Flex is the key. Even a roller coaster ride can be fun if you know when to lean and create new balance within the change. Change is needed when all the props and practices of the past no longer work. Change is not comforted by the statement 'just hang in there' but with the statement 'you can make it'. We don't grow in retreat, but through endurance. Change isn't fixed by crying, worrying, or mental tread milling. Change is won by victors not victims; and that choice is ours.

Change is awkward -- at first. Change is a muscle that develops to abundantly enjoy the dynamics of the life set before us. Change calls own strength beyond anyone of us. Change pushes you to do your personal best. Change draws out those poised for a new way. Change isn't for chickens. Change does have casualties of those defeated. Change will

cause us to churn or to learn. Change changes the speed of time. Time is so slow for the reluctant, and yet it is a whirlwind for those who embrace it. Change is more fun to do than to be done to. Change seeks a better place at the end and is complete when you realize you are different.

Change is measured by its impact on all who are connected to it. Change is charged when you are dissatisfied with where you are. Change doesn't look for a resting-place; just the next launching point. Change is only a waste to those who don't learn from it. Change happens in the heart before it is proclaimed by our works. Change chaps those moving slower than the change itself. If you can change before you have to change, there will be less pain. Change can flow or jerk, depending on our resistance to it. Change uses the power invested in the unseen to reinvent what is seen. Change is like driving in a fog – you can't see very far, but you can make the whole trip that way.

Progress: We perceive certain things as progress depending on the aims and goals that we set. As such, all progress is always contingent and local – if our aim is to live longer as individuals, there has been some progress in the last hundred years, say. If our aim is to preserve as much wildlife as possible, there hasn't been. The notion of progress is imbued with the hopes and dreams of the human race – a yearning for or belief in making things "better" – which in itself is a characteristic of how our species evolved to better chances of survival.

Humans often mistake complexity for progress. Human beings may be some of the most complex beings that evolution has come up with, and so far that complexity seems to have been quite successful if our goal is one of survival. However, if we succeed in destroying our habitat and ourselves, that complexity will not be much of a progress at all.

Delimitations of the Study:

The study is delimited to the following points.

1. The study is delimited to report of committees and commissions in the field of school education in West Bengal after independence.
2. The study is delimited to Recommendations of Various Education Committees & Commissions about School Education in West Bengal.
3. The study is delimited to change and progress of school education in West Bengal after independence.
4. The study is delimited to find out the change and progress during the period from 1947-2009 in West Bengal.

SOURCES OF DATA:

The investigator collected data taken from secondary source. After studies of various Books, Articles, Journals, Reports and Internet the researcher has analyzed the information and interpreted for result. In present study the researcher has used documentary survey technique. Documentary survey is used to find significant the recommendation various commissions and committees in West Bengal.

Major Finding of the Study:

- It is appeared that the Education Commission, 1954 recommended that, Secondary Education should be the responsibility of the State. The future set-up of school education should be changed. English and Bengali will be the two compulsory languages throughout the

Secondary & Higher Secondary School course. Hindi will be compulsory for classes VI to VIII. The medium of instruction in the High School will be the regional language whereas for higher secondary schools English would be the medium of instruction.

- Whereas the Primary Education Syllabus Committee 1974-19 recommended that, English should be abolished from the primary level of education up to Class - V.
- While the Education Commission 1992 recommended to improve the infrastructure facilities of the school and to provide other basic facilities. The supply of free books at the beginning of each academic year should be ensured in primary schools. No primary school teacher should be engaged in any other occupation, profession or economic activity. The District Primary Education Council should organize district-level intensive training. The system of school inspection should be revived and restructured. Arrangements may be made to supply primary school children with a modest meal. The ultimate objective of school education in the State is to implement the Directive Principle of State Policy concerning elementary education, and to universalise facilities, universalise enrolment and universalise retention. For affecting any radical departure in secondary school education, the passive method of instruction has to be replaced. The syllabi for secondary

education should be so redrawn. A major shift in the outlay on secondary education should occur in favour of institutions in the rural areas. The Board of Secondary Education and the Council of Higher Secondary Education should immediately undertake a joint review of their curricula and syllabi. The minimum pass marks in the secondary examinations should be raised in stages to 40 per cent for each individual subject and 50 per cent in aggregate. Social service should be an integral aspect of school education. The teaching of English in government and government-aided institutions may commence from Class V. The manual of instruction for teachers for teaching English should be suitably revised and translated into Bengali, Hindi, Urdu and Nepali so that teachers whose acquaintance with English is at the ordinary level can comprehend its contents more easily. The State government should initiate a time bound-programme to conduct all administrative work at the headquarters as well as in the districts only in Bengali. The State government may set up a committee of specialists to formulate curricula for vocational and technical education courses.

- Although one man committee on English in Primary Education, West Bengal 1998 also recommended reintroducing the teaching of

English from Class III in Government and Government – aided primary schools from next academic year that is 1999.

- Whereas the School Education Committee 2001opinion, only one language, the mother tongue or regional language should be taught upto class IV. Preparation should be made for result –oriented of English as the compulsory second language from class V. Decision in this respect should await the result of the survey suggested by Prof. Sarkar's Committee. Time-bound research programme should be undertaken for designing appropriate syllabus, developing standard teaching materials and effective teaching methods, followed by extensive teacher orientation. Special attention should be given to improvement of competency in mother tongue. A compulsory third language, to be selected from out of a list approved by W.B.B.S.E should be taught in class VI to VIII. Decision on all academic programmes should invariably be taken by the respective Board or Council. School should celebrate or observe secular occasions or festivals. For improving standard of teaching, efforts should be made to bring about even distribution of students in all the schools. A uniform method of admission to class I should be followed by all schools. Comprehensive and coordinated arrangement should be made for regular teacher

education. School session should commence on 1st June and end on 31st May.

- After independence a Modern and Scientific Curriculum was introduced at the primary level of education where emphasis was given on Gandiji's basic education system. In West Bengal also a new curriculum was introduced in 1981. Based on the recommendations of Prof. Himangshu Bimal Majumdar Committee 1978, this new curriculum claims an innovative approach. In its bid to seek a total development of child, it kept in mind all the requirements for reaching this goal. With a view to making education life skill oriented and to making it realistic and practical, Co-scholastic subjects such as (a) Direct Experience-based works, (b) Creative and Productive works had been included as the basis of the curriculum. Emphasis was laid on Games, Sports and Physical Education, formation of scientific attitude and promotion of inquisitiveness and power of observation. The system of Continuous & Comprehensive Evaluation along with the policy of No-Detention up to class IV was introduced. For the implementation of this curriculum, the Directorate of School Education took the initiative to develop the instructional materials such as text-books and some Guide-books. In West Bengal also SCERT, took up the initiative to prepare the text-books and the

Guide-books. The manuscripts were then handed over to the Department of School Education for publication and distribution. With the introduction of the Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) and the Policy of No Detention as per the new Curriculum it became an imperative on the part of the Government to impart training in all these respects to all the educational functionaries both at the State and District levels and then to the Primary teachers as well. It was the SCERT that took the initiative to impart necessary orientation in all these respects. A three-tier and time bound Orientation Programme could however, be undertaken in 1994 – 1995.

- The history of West Bengal before independence was a history of colonial exploitation. Bengal was the first area to be colonized in India by the British. Therefore, it also faced the worst of colonial exploitation. According to Prof. Amiya Bagchi, "the external drain from Bengal could be put at about 3 to 4 percent of the gross domestic material product." This huge drain of wealth from Bengal was at the cost of the peasants of the state. The feudal landlords and their other parasitic agents (born as a result of the Permanent Settlement) squeezed the peasantry of the state to extract the tribute to be paid to the colonial Government. In the process there was

hardly any expenditure on investment in agriculture and the agrarian sector entered into a deep crisis.

- The state also witnessed an absolute decline in the food-grain production per capita in the fifty-year period preceding the Indian independence. Immediately before independence, the state witnessed one of the worst famines in history where more than 3 million people died, their poverty and utter helplessness captured in all its gory details in the haunting short stories of Manik Bandyopadhyay. With India gaining independence, this situation while improving to some extent did not change fundamentally. This was because of a number of factors. Firstly, the grip of the parasitic landlords, *jotdars* and moneylenders in the village economy did not decline. These sections became active supporters of the Congress party. The institutional factors resulting in the agrarian crisis in West Bengal did not change drastically. As a result, the state continued to face food shortage leading to the historic food movement in 1957. Secondly, with partition the biggest industry of Bengal, jute, suffered a huge setback. This was because jute was mainly cultivated in East Bengal while the factories were in West Bengal. With partition, the source of raw materials for the jute industries in West Bengal was cut off, leading to a crisis in this industry. The other major industry of tea also

suffered set back because the communication channels through the erstwhile East Bengal suffered as a result of partition. Thirdly, there was a huge influx of refugees into the state as a result of the partition. According to one estimate there were more than 3.5 million refugees from East Pakistan in the year 1951 itself. Additionally, the freight equalization policy adversely affected the industries in West Bengal. All this essentially meant that the economy of West Bengal was reeling under tremendous crisis both in the agrarian sector as well as the industrial sector. The resulting unemployment and a sense of frustration created a social crisis in the state. It was but natural that the people of the state rose up against the ruling regime which instead of doing anything to solve the crisis was hell bent on perpetuating it since its class interests remained with that of the *jotdars* and landlords who were mainly responsible for precipitating the crisis in the first place. Without having any answer to the massive democratic movement taking shape in the state the Government resorted to semi-fascist terror to exterminate the CPI (M) and left forces from the state, which were at the forefront of the people's movement demanding a better life. However, the intensity of the democratic movement with the people determined to defeat the agents of stagnation and semi-fascist terror, resulted in the formation of the first Left Front

Government under the leadership of Com. Jyoti Basu in the year 1977.

- With the Left Front Government coming to power in the state, there was a significant turnaround in the performance of the West Bengal economy. The Growth rate of West Bengal's income was 4.9 during the period 1971 to 2006. (Source: West Bengal Development Report, 2010, Planning Commission, Government of India.).
- From the above source it is clear that the West Bengal economy has increased its growth rate in each period starting from 1971. The growth rate was lowest before the Left Front Government came to power (1971-1980). With the Left Front coming to power however, there has been a significant increase in the overall growth rate of the economy. Moreover, it is also the case that the West Bengal economy recorded the highest growth rate amongst all the states in India in the period 1993-94 to 2002-03. That is 8.55 when India's growth in economy was 6.87. It is remarkable that a state which was deeply in crisis a few decades back could improve itself to such an extent so as to record the highest growth rate in the country at a time when neo-liberal reforms were introduced leading to a situation where growth rates of majority of the states actually declined.

- This economical growth also affected the field of education. The basic indicator of educational attainment is the literacy rate. West Bengal's performance in improving the literacy rate has been notable although the state has not reached full literacy. However, it is also the case that West Bengal's literacy rate is higher than the national average. Literacy rate in West Bengal in 2001 was 68.64 when India’s literacy rate was 64.84.
- One of the significant issues about education in West Bengal is the reality that a majority of the children go to Government schools. In 2009, 85.4% of the school going children attended Government run schools. This has happened primarily because of the fact that the Government has increased the number of schools in the various districts of West Bengal very significantly. The number of primary schools in West Bengal increased from 40911 in 2000-01 to 42624 in 2008. As a result of the significant increase in number of schools in West Bengal, the gender gap has also considerably come down. At the primary level the sex ratio in enrollment in West Bengal was 97.6% and in upper primary section the sex ratio was 100.8% for the year 2007-08.
- The condition of school education in West Bengal has witnessed a significant improvement over the years. Prof. Amartya Sen, on the basis of the findings of the report on education in West Bengal

conducted by the Pratichi Trust notes the following points: "First, there is not only a higher rate of student enrolment, but also a significantly larger average attendance of enrolled students (75 per cent both for primary schools and SSKs - up from 58 and 64per cent respectively).

- "Second, even though the problem of absentee teachers remains, there is in fact a noticeable fall in the percentage of absentee teachers on the randomly chosen day of our visit (14 per cent in primary schools, down from 20 per cent, and 8 per cent in SSKs, down from 15 per cent). There is also some increase in the number of teachers per school.
- "Third, the level of parent satisfaction with the performance of teachers has also gone up (from 52 per cent to 64 per cent for primary schools and from 70 per cent to 75 percent for SSKs), even though it is still far from perfect. Parents' satisfaction with the progress of children is up significantly (from 42 per cent to 71 per cent for primary schools and from 49 per cent to 73 per cent for SSKs).
- "Fourth, we were really depressed with the 2001-02 results of independent testing of students' achievements, for example, the fact that 30 per cent of the students in classes III and IV could not even write their own names. There has been considerable

improvement in this area, and the proportion of students who could not write their names is now down from 30 per cent to just 5 per cent (that proportion should of course be zero per cent, but it would be silly not to see the progress that is observed).

- "Fifth, midday meals are now being served in most primary schools and SSKs, and there are clear indications of the benefits of that initiative both in educational and nutritional terms. Indeed, even the increased attendance of students in schools partly reflects the attraction of the school meals, even though the effort of the teachers' unions, particularly in reducing teacher absenteeism, has also greatly helped, in many regions.
- "Sixth, parent-teacher meetings are now much more in use, mostly in the form of mother-teacher committees, even though we still have specific suggestions for improving their reach."
- In other words, it is indeed the case that there has been a notable improvement in the school education system in West Bengal in the recent period. These gains should be consolidated while striving to ensure even better education and educational facilities to all the children of the state.

Conclusions of the Study:

It is evident from the analysis and interpretation and also from the findings of the study that lots of changes have been made in West Bengal with a special reference to school education. More than ten committees and commissions were constituted bring quality school education in the state. It appears from the study that every committee and commission has recommended for bringing change and modification of school education. But so far the implementation is concerned all the recommendations were not applied due to certain socio-political and economic constraints. But some significant steps were taken by government of West Bengal so far school education is concern. The whole of primary and secondary education was made provicialization by the Government of India. That is a bold step taken by Government of West Bengal in India first. All these recommendations were not viable to implement. Lots of problems have been taken place in withdrawing English as a subject at the primary level. Whatsoever, English was withdrawn from the primary level but subsequently due to the resistance of the masses it was reintroduced. Similarly, the New Education Policy 1986 was not adopted at the initial stage because the government was not in a position to adopt all the recommendations made by the policy. Of course, later on with the financial cooperation of the central government the policies were implemented. During 90's the economical scenario of the whole world was changed a lot. Therefore, the government has no other alternative but

to cope-up with the globalization of the economy and education. Hence, gradually the changes were adopted.

Sometimes the ideological or philosophical perspective of the state government and central government made a midway for the progress of education. Although the school education is the concern of the state but so far as the constitutional commitment was concerned, education as a whole came under the concurrent list. Therefore, an integrated approach for the development of school education is essential and for which the government of India has launched lots of programmes such as- SSA, RUSA, e.t.c. Now the government of West Bengal is also trying its level best to cope-up with the national and international system and standard so that the human resource which are developed during this stage could get the opportunity compete the national and international stage in near future.

Suggestions for the Further Research:

The researcher while conducting the present study find that some of the important areas are there in the field of school education which were not taken into the consideration in the present study due to lack of time and finance. Therefore, in future following studies can be conducted in the field of school education:

1. To study the problem of implementation of recommendation of various committees and commissions.

2. To study the financial feasibility taken up by the government of West Bengal so far as provincialization of school education is concerned.
3. To study the curriculum of school education.
4. To study the syllabus and text books of school education.
5. To study the evaluation system of school education.
6. To study the teacher education programme adopted along with the change in the school education.