CURRICULUM
Formal education at any level is to be organised both in terms of structure and function. The organisational activities are to be formed for the purpose of betterment in which curriculum act as important parameters. Primary Education constitutes a fullfledged curriculum with the coverage of five classes, classes I-V. It is true that for each stage or class there are specific contents but the total curriculum is the body of knowledge and information from different areas. Curriculum should be formulated in terms of the prevailing need and at the same time care should be taken so that the resources may be taken into consideration. It is erroneous to hold the view, as it is usually thought of, that curriculum is meant only for the students. But at the same time it is meant also for the teachers who teach within the frame work of curriculum. Curriculum in one way or the other, informally or formally, is present with the inception of educational training for teachers. The basic need of the population has not been changed with time but it has been accentuated in different directions. In such process the basic criteria cannot be kept aside.

In this historical framework on curriculum of Primary Education in Bengal the basic needs were primarily reading and writing, concerned with a specific language and the script thereof (Census, 1971). In Bengal (now in West Bengal), Bengali is the most prevalent language in Primary level. The other sector comprises the elementary concept of number and the treatment of the same in the area of basic Arithmetic. These two areas were taken care of and not much deviation has taken
place. The additional elements which came later constitute elementary History, Geography and Science. Similar trend is followed even today. It may be pointed out that none of these three subjects is taught in a meaningful form and the evidences for the same are not available within the prescribed text book and the teaching aids. History has turned to be the names of emperors or kings - their empires and conquests. The other aspects concerned with culture, economy, society etc. have not been included in proper form. Situation with Geography is not altogether different containing names and descriptions of cities and towns, lakes and rivers, hills and mountains. With regard to elementary Science, the relevant and necessary part of science have mostly been excluded. In fact without the concept of science only examples and illustrations are presented. Thereby the scientific principles are lost. In relatively recent times the curriculum in the name of integration, has caused unnecessary pressure on students. It may be pointed out that in English medium Primary schools where English is the official language, attention is paid on English conditions as mentioned in the names of persons, habitats, birds and beasts, flowers and fruits. Even scenes like the daily life of western countries are included in such texts. There is seldom any chance of witnessing those things in the local condition and distorted imagination prevail very much. Very strikingly, earlier in ordinary Primary schools English was taught in which the content part was based on Indian condition. In case of Bengal in such books of Bengali authors, the content part was based on the situation of Bengal only. Variation is observed in similar books of other states as of present Tamilnadu. During the
pre-independent period, English as a language used to be taught as a second language although Bengali had been the medium of instruction. This perhaps affected the state of conversation in English among the same population.

Earlier, for ordinary schools, there were large number of books on different subjects in different classes. Much later, after independence, the State Government made attempts to introduce specific prescribed books for Bengali and later for Arithmetic. Such imposition was intended for bringing uniformity in the content part of it. For the same restrictions were imposed on the new contents and the contributors. Since the constitution of free India declared Primary Education free and universal large number of Primary schools came into being under the fold of the state Government, directly or indirectly. This has resulted in providing better security for the Primary teachers with regard to the salary scale involving relatively better financial condition. On the other hand lack of proper planning and hasty decisions with regard to the curricular changes and unnecessary formalities brought about an appreciable set back and erosion in Primary Education. The above view point, vide hypothesis given, has been tested in the present case with a comparative assessment with the presentday curriculum and the curriculum prior to that in Primary Education.

Here the methodological aspect requires to be emphasised. The structural order of Primary classes has not undergone any change. At the Primary level there are five classes, Classes I-V. Prescribed curriculum of the 'new' current Primary Education is available. Despite all efforts pre-1981 'old' curriculum of Primary Education could not be made available. The prescribed 'new' curriculum appear
to be somewhat brief and abstract. In view of the above constraints, the comprehensive design of the 'old' curriculum has been reconstructed from the text books.* Books of all the five classes I-V both of 'old' and 'new' curriculum have been collected. All the books have been arranged in a system with vertical columns as classes and horizontal rows as subjects.

Later a detailed analysis of the content part of each subject for each class has been made. Such analysis has been designed in a two-fold manner. As mentioned earlier, the contents of subjects laid in the text books have been scanned, putting stress on materials, ideas, expression and so also the pictorial aids. Later comparisons have been made between 'old' and 'new' curriculum on the basis of class level and the subject matter. The other point of consideration includes the continuity of specific subjects along different classes.

Earlier when old curriculum was in vogue text books for different subjects and classes used to be multiple in number. That being an open system there were many authors and publishers (Searle 1985). As a result some amount of competition as well as divergences prevailed among the authors and their writings. With regard to 'new' curriculum all the prescribed books of all the classes are published by Directorate of Education, Government of West Bengal. Nowhere author's name is printed. Such questions naturally arise - how these

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*Explorations were made not only in schools but also in office of the respective Directorate of the State Government. But from nowhere a copy of the curriculum was restored. Old teachers of Primary schools pointed out that they were never concerned with the curriculum. In fact they simply followed the tradition. For such a condition points related to scope and aim of the curriculum, vis-a-vis instruction to teachers and time coverage are totally devoid of.
books, rather the contents have been selected and organised? Who are the persons in the background? It is true that with Bengali text book prose or poetry selection may be made from the works of great men like Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Rabindranath Tagore and even scholars of later times. But such formulations are not possible with other subjects like Arithmetic, History, Geography, Science etc.

With regard to curriculum and prescribed books of Primary sections of Missionary schools, the situation is different. The Primary sections of such schools do not always follow the curriculum for Primary Education as prescribed by the Directorate of Education, Government of West Bengal. They tend to follow their own system. The books used by the students of these schools are not the books which have been brought out by the Education Directorate or the Government. In fact these books are different and mostly in English. In all Missionary schools the medium of instruction is English and the same is followed in majority of the Private schools. The rest under this category are Bengali medium schools teaching English. The curriculum based on text books have been formulated and the content have been compared between the Private and Missionary schools. Comparative assessments have been made not only between Missionary and Private schools but also between Government and Government aided schools too. In addition to the curriculum proper and the prescribed text books, data have also been collected on time coverage of each subject for each class on weekly basis. The computed results on these subjects may be of importance indicating the priority of the subject vis-a-vis the magnitude of content part and the time allotted.
Curriculum implies the content part of total education in different levels which practically equates with syllabus. Jenkins and Shipman (1976) clearly shares the same opinion. In addition to the same, curriculum also includes the detailed schedule of works to be carried out by the students and the role of teachers in the same situation. Without going into further generalisation on curriculum, the 'new' curriculum on Primary Education in West Bengal has been discussed here with a view to presenting the background.

After independence, in 1950, the curriculum on Primary Education was formulated by the Government of West Bengal. This continued for about a quarter of a century. Later, the Government of West Bengal felt the need to modify the curriculum. The basic reason for the same has not been specifically pointed out. On the contrary it is stated that the new syllabus has been formulated for the purpose of making it more realistic and life-oriented. These generalised version has never been clarified. In view of the same, for about five years, between 1974 and 1979, exploratory actions were undertaken. The details of the same, with the inclusion of methods and techniques, and the results thereof have not been stated anywhere. As a matter of fact, thought process and activities of a few persons gave rise to the formulation of a crucial decision, connected with the curriculum for Primary Education. Such action may be considered as an imposition violating the rules of democracy.
In introducing the new curriculum on Primary Education, certain points have been highlighted. The major focus was laid on its child centric orientation, appropriate with the modern times along with the demand of the altered social life. The proper work in framing the curriculum started in 1977 with the active participation from expert in Primary Education, renowned educationalists, teacher representatives from Primary and Secondary schools, representative from Primary and Secondary teachers of training colleges, Primary teachers' Association, teacher training association for Primary teachers and so on. But the minimum representations from guardians and others who are interested and experienced in the same sector have been conspicuously excluded. It is not known why no consultation was made with Departments of Education in different universities in West Bengal. It is supposed that the curriculum of developing countries has been consulted. In this context it deserves mention that policy, planning and research work of developing countries is essential (Benavot etc. 1989). That too, was, neglected.

In the introduction, it has been pointed out that for the first time people who are involved with Primary Education have been included in the committee covering a period of two years. The curriculum was finalised. Attention was drawn on the holistic development of the child in response to the social development. Special care was proposed to be given to children of the weaker section to satisfy their educational needs. In furtherance, approval was made so that the final
curriculum of Primary Education might be introduced and applied in all the Primary schools of the state of West Bengal. In almost all actions of similar nature, experiments are essential for the purpose of finding out the validity. The curriculum committee should have worked along this line in a few representative schools. The curriculum for Primary Education is one irrespective of any sections of population. Special attention to weaker section may give rise to more problems than solutions. In other levels of formal education as Secondary, Higher Secondary etc. there is hardly any special provision for any community. This particular issue is to be worked out so that the special provisions may be identified and the impact of the same may be assessed.

With regard to the special characters of the curriculum, the following points were given due attention:

(a) The modern thought process and the curriculum had been taken care of so that this might lead to the all round development of personality.

(b) The report of Kothari Commission was given due weightage.

(c) Primary Education was viewed from the end of its life-oriented and applied form. The experience part formed an important issue. The changed and modified curriculum, it was claimed, would turn education applicable, need based and relevant to the environment.

(d) The curriculum was guided by the viewpoint of producing good citizen with production and creative endowments. For this purpose
emphasis had been laid on curiosity, observations and creativity.

(e) Each part of the curriculum included annexure for teachers training.

It was also indicated that on the basis of scrutiny, the previous syllabus essentially required some form of fundamental change with a view to having further inputs from different sources, for which information were sought to be acquired through different Primary Teachers organizations, NCERT, Population Education Cell of Family Welfare organization, other experts and even public opinion. As the resultant an ideally productive and creative curriculum would come into operation from 1980.

The curriculum itself contained detailed indications related to knowledge, skill, habit, mental makeup etc. The major constituents of curriculum included Vernacular, Arithmetic and Environmental Studies. Without going into the great details of the curriculum which is primarily of descriptions and discussion without the practical operational modalities, data based scrutiny had been carried out. The major composition of the layout included the following points:

i) Curriculum in general, with aims and objectives, exhibiting theoretical or even hypothetical bias.

ii) The curriculum seeking to be more specific in terms with the inclusion of different subjects.

iii) A synthesis on the text books prescribed.

iv. In addition to the above points, any other comments would also
be incorporated.

v. The major objective was laid on two fundamental changes related to abolition of examination, giving rise to automatic promotion, and exclusion of English from the curriculum.

From the curriculum it is conspicuous that there is hardly any correlation between its theoretical formulation vis-a-vis practical experiences through operation. The latter appears to be completely lacking and as a result the curriculum itself is neither meaningful nor useful. Throughout the curriculum high sounding jargons like 'productivity', 'creativity', 'first hand experience', 'mental development' of children and many such application-oriented terms have been used in vain. There is hardly any scope to carry out the same through operational mechanics. Compared to this the earlier curriculum of Primary Education was self explanatory in which aims and objectives had not been discussed as isolated entities but the content part used to indicate the relevant points of utility.

It has already been pointed out that the major subjects are Vernacular, Arithmetic and Nature Studies. From a comparative study based on text books, class routine and efficacy of the teachers, a good deal of contradictions appear to be present. Primary Education in West Bengal is a five tier system from class I to V. At the earlier stage comprising classes I and II there are only two subjects Vernacular and Mathemetics. At the next stage comprising classes III and IV there is an addition of subjects as Nature Study, History
and Geography, all in a single module. Class V is the ultimate level and the major subjects to be studied are Vernacular, Mathematics, Nature Study and instead of combined History and Geography there are separate entities of both the subjects. In addition to the same there are subject contents of Drawing and General knowledge. There is no explanation as to why in classes I and II the curriculum includes only Vernacular and Mathematics. No justification is available as to why a subject like Nature Study with which the children remain so directly related is left out. Again, why such a deficiency which could be made up to a great extent with the inclusion of materials creating pupils' interest in Nature Study was not taken care of also remained unanswered. Only in fulfilment of this condition, the introduction of Nature Study even at a later stage could be better justified. Furthermore the content prescribed for Nature Study in the new curriculum betrays an overbias for physics at the cost of other branches of science recreating thereby some kind of an imbalance. Again, in cases of History and Geography, considered earlier as a single unit, lacked an universal approach of unification and it is really difficult to justify the segregation that sets in from class III and becomes more marked in classes IV and V. In case of History and Geography no rationale is given with regard to their inclusion or exclusion.

With regard to the context part of the curriculum, specially with History and Geography, the selection criteria has never been explained. The major drawback of the curriculum is unequal stress
and strain on part of the students throughout Primary Education. It is less at other levels with greater emphasis on Vernacular and Mathematics and later the quantum of stress has judiciously been increased with the inclusion of additional subjects. Both General Knowledge and Drawing should have been introduced at the earlier level, may be in their nascent form. This might have enhanced the quality of the syllabus and it would have been proximal not only to the teachers and students but also to the concerned guardians at large. At this juncture exclusion of English may be taken as an important viewpoint in a country like India, with multiethnic and multi lingual populations, the minimum requirement should be the inclusion of one common language. Inclusion of English is perhaps the best to begin with which is required in the international arena of higher education. This specific issue is to be taken with greater care because the endeavour for making Hindi as the National language has not achieved the minimum success. With Hindi, the opposition is very strong in South Indian States. Even today English is the common parlance, besides, the local languages in different states.

According to the introductory part of the pointed curriculum a number of issues have been highlighted in categorised form. These are : a) Knowledge based - on the basis of personal experiences information and cause effect relationship are to be understood on Nature. Personal experiences have also been taken into consideration for the purpose of making exposure with social work, specially on the works of social development vis-a-vis the reasons for
reluctant attitude of human groups who are disinterested in labour utilisation. It has also been suggested to acquire information on the social dynamics of the nation and the world. Personal and social hygiene have also been taken into account. Besides the above ideological concept, operation oriented points have also been included. These are: increase of vocabularies of necessity in mother tongue and proper communication through the same language. The other point indicates the number and understanding of the concept in Arithmatic.

(b) Skill and habit based - following the principle of hygiene the skill and habit are to be acquired for the movement of different parts of the body. Habit is to be acquired for personal and social hygiene based application. Acquaintance with life style made for social welfare and coordination. To develop the habit for making a balance with emotional sector of life. Ability to observe the natural and social episodes through scientific observations. To express the ideas through mother tongue both verbally and in written form. Acquisition of skill for the application of the principles of Arithmetics. To be habituated for leading a disciplined personal life on the basis of acquired knowledge, the capacity is to acquire for solution of problems to take part in production oriented activities. To acquire skill for various creative activities.

(c) Outlook and mentality to frame the mentality on natural and social episodes from scientific perspectives with the development of curiosity and logical mentality. To understand the contribution of labourers in the progress of human civilisation. To pay respect
on production and welfare oriented labour of all types. Elevation of patriotic feeling with the aid of humanitarian principles. Respectful attitude for democratic and humanitarian value system. Emancipation of art and aesthetics.

In dealing with the curriculum the total set has been divided into four units namely - sports and physical education, production oriented and creative works, works based on direct experiences and, works based on the curriculum.

The last unit, that is works based on the curriculum has been further divided into three units namely Mother tongue, Arithmetic and Nature Study.

The time schedule for class I to V has been framed in the scheme of time distribution. The table has been included here. (Table 40)

Further there are details on work schedule which is given below:

Class I and II in a week of five days covering three hours eachday and one day for two hours (total 17 hours per week ) classes III, IV and V four hours for five days and two hours on one day in a week (total 22 hours in a week ). Till 1989, the school session was from January to December in each year. The admission time may be extended from January to March in village and town situation respectively. Since 1990, it has been changed and now the session starts in May and ends in April. Admission in Primary schools may be extended, of course in exceptional cases for one or two months.
About working days approval has been made for 228 days excluding vacation and Sundays. Out of the 228 days there must be 200 effective teaching days following the curriculum.

Evaluation: After the completion of Primary Education there will be no external examination. Upto class IV, no students will be disallowed for promotion. In cases of overall evaluation any student may be detained for one more year in class V. With regard to the basis of determination of number of teachers it is suggested that in a Primary school for one unit class there will be one teacher for 40 students. If the number of students is more than 40 then two teachers are to be engaged.

Suggestion has also been included for teachers training specially the teachers who are already employed. Such training will be helpful for the induction of the new curriculum. About prescribed books there should be two books for classes I and II, one for Vernacular and the other for Arithmetic. In addition to the same in other classes there will be prescribed books for natural and social environment.
Table 40 class routine showing the time schedule, subject and class distribution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Class I</th>
<th>Class II</th>
<th>Class III</th>
<th>Class IV</th>
<th>Class V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health and hygiene and sports and games (daily)</td>
<td>40 min.</td>
<td>40 min.</td>
<td>40 min.</td>
<td>40 min.</td>
<td>(22)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(18.2)</td>
<td>(18.2)</td>
<td>(26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productive and creative activity (5 days)</td>
<td>30 min.</td>
<td>30 min.</td>
<td>40 min.</td>
<td>40 min.</td>
<td>40 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(16)</td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>(15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated life and work on Environmental observation (5 days)</td>
<td>30 min.</td>
<td>30 min.</td>
<td>45 min.</td>
<td>45 min.</td>
<td>45 min.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(16)</td>
<td>(17)</td>
<td>(17)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Language and literature (daily)                  | 40 min. | 40 min. | 40 min. | 40 min. | (language)
|                       |         |          | (22)     | (22)     | (language) |
|                       |         |          | (18.2)   | (18.2)   | (18.2)  |
| Mathematics (daily)                                | 40 min. | 40 min. | 40 min. | 40 min. | 40 min. |
|                       |         |          | (22)     | (22)     | (22)    |
| Nature Study (3 days)                              | -       | -        | 30 min. | 30 min. | 30 min. |
|                       |         |          | (60)     | (8)      | (8)     |
| Social environment study (2 days)                  | -       | -        | 30 min. | 30 min. | 30 min. |
|                       |         |          | (5.3)    | (5.3)    | (5.3)   |
|                       | 180     | 180      | 265      | 265      | 265     |
|                       | (98)    | (98)     | (99.9)   | (99.9)   | (99.9)  |

* Daily means 6 days in a week.

About other auxiliary arrangement suggestions have been put forward to have the following: (1) Regular health examination and
arrangement for necessary treatment. (2) Arrangement for food during day time (3) Programme for children welfare. (4) Construction of school building, furniture and minimum educational aids.

For the purpose of pre-Primary education, it has also been suggested that for pre-Primary education each Primary school in West Bengal, there will be an 'infant' class. In such classes only children of 5+ years of age will be admitted. For such additional class there must be provision for an additional teacher.

For the purpose of proper operation of the proposed curriculum and syllabus it is necessary to have a detailed educational guide book.

Curriculum proper: The curriculum of Primary Education includes seven different topical areas. These are: (a) sports and physical education, (b) creative and productive works, (c) works based on direct experiences, (d) Mother tongue - Bengali, (e) Arithmetic, (f) introduction to environment - History and Geography and (g) introduction to environment in the area of Nature Study.

With regard to sports and physical education, the content part is practically huge and suggestion has been made to include this as daily works, even with a duration between 15-30 mins. has also been proposed. The whole issue appears to be meaningless because the minimum space for Sports and Physical Education is lacking. There is no extra teacher for the same. As a matter of fact the whole curriculum is only set in within the theoretical frame of curriculum.
without the operational aspects. Prior to formulation of curriculum, attention should be paid on the hindrances, mentioned above. Even after so many years since its inception in 1981, so far minimum evaluation on the application part of curriculum has not been attempted. It would have been better to exclude this part of the curriculum for the purpose of safety on part of the Government and obligation on part of the teachers would have been excluded. The next issue is concerned with creative and productive work. Nowhere the creative issue was considered. Moreso creative aspect can seldom be taught. It is more spontaneous than training oriented. In the curriculum the creative works include drawing, clay modelling, paper work, works with leaves and toy making. It is ridiculous to observe that indication has been given for drawing on sand bait with stick or finger and to do the same on the ground and floor with the help of piece of brick and charcoal. Indication has also been included to carry on art work with coloured chalks. For water colour, the suggestion is to prepare the brush with the stem of date palm and such other materials. The team members did not have the idea that in many schools there is not sufficient number of black boards. At the same time the underestimation is of considerable extent as revealed from the suggestion. For the preparation of painting brush on stem, in recent times the painting brush is quite cheap and on the other hand it is difficult to get the part of the plant which is to be taken out. Many such contradictions are met with in other forms of creative art already mentioned. The experts who formulated the curriculum were devoid of the idea that the prescribed creative
works can duly be taught by an expert teacher. A teacher involved in varied forms of works may only lead to a big chaos than proper training. It is to be noted that even in better schools, as Missionary and Private, which are maintaining a standard, have not included the curriculum content of such a high order as given in the curriculum of Primary Education. Teachers in those 'better' schools are sufficiently trained for carrying out the class on art work, never considered as creative works. The production based work has again turned to be a big fun. The work part includes gardening, thread making and weaving, book binding, bamboo and wood work, manufacturing of paper, programme on household work and needle work. In this context, the same contradictions prevail. For gardening and allied works, the required land for such purpose is not available. For carrying out other works, minimum essential materials are not supplied with. There is also no adequate exposure to sports and physical work. No training is given on the curriculum related to productivity. So many assorted issues are never included in Missionary and Private schools. Students of these schools are provided with the scope to carry out similar works in limited form and organized manner. Such attempts are never taken care of in the curriculum of Primary Education. Detailed criticism in furtherance has been intentionally restricted.

The specific part of the curriculum is considered in very few areas in which Mother tongue/Bengali is one. In the content part, there are a number of forces as oral, with the inclusion of 'to
'listen' and 'to speak'. Then comes, reading and hearing, finally writing. This is more or less common to all the classes. Do these contents indicate any speciality? Rather with the inclusion of such unnecessary or least necessary issues, proper attention could not be paid on the important aspect of the curriculum.

The next area is Arithmetic. In this sector, there are surfeit of necessity but those have not been given due attention. Application of science in the area of production, application of theories of general science, action against superstition, activities related to social welfare, action against black marketeers, all such issues are totally irrelevant in the context of Arithmetic.

The basic contents include number, principle, introduction to time etc. have been given some importance. In the curriculum prior to class IV no detailing has been made on the context. For classes IV and V some principles and rules have been included.

In case of introduction to curriculum there are two major areas, namely History and Geography, and Nature Study. The initial part of the content appears to be interesting which starts from the introduction of the child along with the home, class etc. but the same tempo could not be maintained in the later part. Content part for the rest of the curriculum appears to be unassorted and disjointed. The Nature Study is relatively better though the similarities in the composition of the content appears to be conspicuous. In the subjects concerned with 'introduction to environment', the standard
is relatively higher than the previous syllabus. Simultaneously, inclusion of other subjects does not make any sense either for progress in the curriculum or exposure of the students to the surrounding. Later in proper context the comparative assessment between the 'new' syllabus and the 'old' syllabus has been discussed.

The comparative study between 'old' and 'new' syllabi has been conducted with the application of two discrete methods. One, with the help of the syllabus proper and more specially with the consideration of text books for classes I-V. The other method comprises an extended process. Informants of two groups went through 'old' and 'new' syllabus, respectively were interviewed on certain basic points and a good deal of the questions asked were provided with structured answers. With the discussion on curriculum, the methodology, data and results of two sets have been included here.

About text books, there was a considerable diversity with old books covering all subjects and different class levels. The text books were devoted to different subjects and in the basic level of class I there were three major subjects namely, Vernacular Bengali, Arithmetic and English. This pattern is followed in the next class and both the number of text books and subjects made an increase. Two text books for Vernacular, two for English, two for Arithmetic and in addition there was the inclusion of basic Science in broad terms with the incorporation of Hygiene and Geography. In class III, the set pattern was further modified and here too similar increase of text books and subjects were introduced. The Vernacular consists
of three or four books concerned with text both of prose and poetry, grammar, rapid reading and in cases a book on essay and composition. Arithmetic as a subject made a growth in qualitative terms without quantitative increase of text books. English as a subject went through further development in technicalities concerned with grammar, informalities with stock of words and literature through different pieces of prose and poetry. In addition there are books on stories like Aesop's Fables.

Instead of considering a single module of Science and Nature Studies its inception came into existence in three different subjects namely Science including Hygiene, Geography and History. The basic structure and function of the syllabus of class III level was further modified both qualitatively and quantitatively in class IV. In this level the number of periods in schools was minimum five hours. The fullfledged form of Primary Education is mainly in class V. Here the syllabus covers a wide spectrum both of subjects and contents. The complications in Arithmetic was introduced in the earlier level of class IV and in class V such intricacy was further accentuated to a great extent. The same principle was also followed with other subjects. In Vernacular there are pieces both prose and poetry of renowned scholars. The most spectacular part is the selection of the pieces meant for the appropriate mental level of students, the content of Vernacular, as in other subjects was not made unnecessarily extensive. On the contrary, diverse expositions were taken into account with the inclusion of grammer and composition,
essay, rapid reading etc. Similar operation was made with other subjects, namely, History, Geography, Science and Hygiene.

The curriculum was a framework in structured form and the functional result largely depend on the operational mechanics. In general the teaching principles and methods were of appreciable standard. Teachers were experienced, sincere so also the institutional administration was planned and rigid. In teaching there was a feedback mechanism through working exercise both in schools and at home. The feedback was continued in furtherance through examinations at regular intervals. The system of examination was of great necessity for the students. It helped generating encouragement and evolutionary development.

In the 'old' course curriculum, there were other important points. Students knew their teachers which is obvious and natural. At the same time all the teachers were provided with all the basic information about all the students of the respective schools, thereby a relationship was markedly present between the two groups. In addition, there was an extended relationship between the teachers and the guardians. In the 'old' syllabus, the programming was continuous without any interruption and through time covering different class levels, there was an accelerated development of the course content both in qualitative and quantitative terms. From class I to V, there was no separate entity of any class. The evolution was of telescopic nature, that is the base of a class level is set on the terminal part of the preceding level. This particular rule was followed
even in class V and the ultimate contents and subjects were closely related to the basic syllabus and curriculum content of class VI.

The 'old' syllabus was continued for a long period of time and it was almost compulsively terminated in 1980-81. Through time various changes have taken place as population, number of literates, school going children, awareness towards education etc. There is hardly any disagreement on the issue related to diversity in educational system, even in Primary level, in rural and urban areas. In connection with the present work, focus is laid on urban complex as on Calcutta. In generalised way it may be said that the dropouts among middle and upper class families in relatively better schools in Calcutta is least. With the introduction of a number of changes as exclusion of English from Primary curriculum, abolition of examination etc., the rate of drop-outs has been increased to an appreciable extent. This feature is never observed in Missionary, Private and Government schools because of the composition of the students based on family background. Dropouts are not absolutely absent in Government aided schools and it is more frequent in CMC schools. This particular problem is provided with two bearing. First, the socio-economic and cultural background of the families to which the students belong and secondly, the relationship between students and teachers not within the school but even outside the school premises.

One of the basic issues concerned with curriculum is English as a subject. Perhaps from the very inception of Primary Education,
with special reference to this part of the country, English is one of the major components of the curriculum. This may be accounted for as a contribution of the British. The exclusion of English as a subject in all levels of formal education may be considered as an imposed action. In the formal structural and functional perspectives, without English, higher education is impossible. Till independence, English may be considered as compulsive, though the scope to justify the same is hardly possible. The most striking feature is the continuation of English without minimum interruption even after more than three decades during post-independent period (Damle, 1968). During this period, specially on the onset of post-independent period, some modifications were introduced in the curriculum.

The overall change of curriculum of Primary Education in 1981 appears to be beyond explanation. A number of issues have been introduced with the replacement of already existing curriculum. Necessary discussions on those issues have been incorporated in appropriate context of the present text. Appropriate comments have been included here with the curriculum.

The severe change was carried out with the exclusion of English from all levels of Primary Education. Any genuine and basic tenets have not been presented to justify such course of action. The Committee which formulated the 'new' curriculum of Primary Education are in favour of excluding English with a view to concentrating the stress on the Mother Tongue. Perhaps in a logical way it has been advocated that learning of Mother Tongue with utmost
concentration would be helpful for learning other languages. The concept is a highly debatable one requiring proper rationale supported by authentic data. Mother tongue, Bengali, in the present case, is learned by all the Bengalis, irrespective of any differences, through informal oral tradition. This denies any scope for the Bengali pupils to learn any other language at this stage other than Bengali. In view of this, special care should have been taken for English.

Compared to other subjects, language is least complicated. But it required a long drawn time coverage for training and practice. In all possible ways, it has been observed that language is learned conveniently and quickly by the children than the adults because the former group does not have the inhibition factor. Exclusion of English from Primary level is practically a drastic change in the traditional form of education.

Discontinuation of learning English at the Primary stage has automatically shifted this responsibility to be undertaken at the next post-Primary stage being initiated from the early Secondary stage of education, that is from class VI. For such delayed action English as a subject does not change. Completion of Secondary level of education is an important landmark not only for individuals but also for raising the educational standard of the nation. Upto this level, covering a period of ten years, from Class I to X, English was taught through continuous stages and a final product, with a good deal of variations was achieved. The same product can seldom be expected with minimization of 50% of time coverage, keeping it limited within class VI to X. The total suspension of imparting
lessons in English at the Primary level turned to be a stumbling block to the students in course of their education in furtherance. Hardly any change was made in the curriculum of Secondary education including the components of each class from VI to X. Even at the level of Higher Secondary education, the weightage of English was never altered, rather a trend of increased importance is markedly found. The complication is further accentuated at the post-Higher Secondary level, both in general and professional streams of education. From the above critical discussion it appears that in course of effecting change in the curriculum of Primary Education, curriculum needs and requirements of post-Primary levels were not taken into due consideration.

Curriculum of any sort should be an integrated unit so that the uniformity in standard may be maintained. Ambiguities, and complications, are observed in the 'new' curriculum of Primary Education in West Bengal. It is strictly adhered to in Government, Government aided and CMC schools. These schools follow the 'new' curriculum with the total exclusion of English as a subject from the routine. On the contrary, English is practically the foremost component in Missionary and Private schools. Such schools do not teach English merely as a subject but English language is used as the medium of instruction and, except the Vernacular, all other subjects are taught in English and the text books are all in English language. Though the exclusion of English at the Primary stage in West Bengal was never squarely challenged by the guardians in any
formal explicit form, it so happened that as a mark of critical protest, an increasing number of relatively educated guardians made attempts for compensations by making alternative arrangements for their wards to undergo an informal training in English either by guardians themselves or through private tutors. For quite sometime the teachers were rather late to react and respond to this highly subtle and significant change in the Primary curriculum but later they had a feeling for the students and started teaching English in schools with their own prescribed text books on English.

On the basis of a thorough study of text books at the Primary level of education in different types of schools, it is observed that the standard of English is very high in case of the students of Missionary and Private schools compared to other types of schools. The problem is found to be further aggravated at the time of the pupils' transition from Primary to Secondary level. On the basis of the exposition and training, the students of Missionary and Private schools are doing better in the admissions tests compared to their counterparts of other schools. This has adversely affected the chance and scope of students belonging to Government and Government aided Primary schools for securing admission in relatively better schools in pursuing the Secondary level of education.

The detailed information, materials and data, reveal that the 'new' curriculum of Primary Education is not really a product of any proper planning even in respect of its operational mechanics. But now, within about a decade, the negative impact of the 'new'
From the above noted discussion on curriculum for Primary Education in West Bengal it appears that the formulation of new curriculum is hasty, unscientific and unrealistic. In the process of the building up of the curriculum, hardly any attention was paid to basic aims and objectives. In view of the almost total negative aspect of the 'new' curriculum, under consideration, a few suggestions are incorporated here. The present prescription is practical and both useful and meaningful.

Prior to the fullfledged formulation of the curriculum the basic aims and objectives are to be scanned properly. This may be understood with a question - why Primary Education? Education is not to be associated always with literacy. Education is meant for sustenance and socio-economic survival may be made without the
aid or literacy. But in such circumstance the system and process of communication turn to be very much restricted both for transmission and reception of the messages. This major constraint can easily be ruled out to a great extent with the inclusion of literacy programme. One of the basic needs of Primary Education is conversion of the students at large into literates. This will spontaneously serve the purpose of acquiring the knowledge of 3R's i.e. Reading, Writing, Arithmetic. The prime usefulness of literacy is seldom taken care of. Simply with literacy, the formal education of a student can be continued even in informal forms. Examples of this nature are not always absent.

In the geo-cultural territory of West Bengal, Bengali is the mother tongue. Knowledge in Bengali vocabulary and speech is automatically taught from the social environment (Alexander and Kumaran, 1992). For learning Bengali language, the minimum necessity is on the knowledge and operational mechanics of reading and writing Bengali, the local language. It may be proposed that in Bengal, Bengali language should be the sole issue in Primary Education. This was, perhaps, apprehended by the committee on 'new' curriculum for Primary Education. Such proposal would have been accepted if Primary Education would have been the only form of education without extension in furtherance of Secondary, Higher Secondary and Higher education. Secondly in a country like India, obviously with the inclusion of West Bengal, education as a tradition has been influenced to a large extent with the impact and influence of the English system of education. The same system was modified in India in
accordance with the prevailing situation and the need. For a very wide time spectrum of 300 years, the presence of English, both as the ruler and the dominant class, spread and penetration of English were intense and acute. At the same time English as a language has a wider global coverage. English has a special place in India not only because it has enjoyed an important place in many other countries but also Indians have had contact with that language for nearly 150 years now ... we have already built up a tradition for it" (Shukla, 1973). International communications are only possible through English in majority of the cases. India is provided with a very special character related to ethnic elements and languages. Majority of the states of India have their respective local languages. Again when so many living languages are present it is not only difficult but practically impossible to limit the choice within any single language which is to be learnt. English for long used to serve the purposes of the common language of communication. In a number of states, English is still retained as one of the major languages. In Higher education there is cosmopolitan character and English serves best this purpose as a language of prime medium. Impact of English appears to be conspicuous from large number of English words often used both in formal and informal conversations. Majority of the books in higher education are in English. English is yet of most frequent usages in our daily life with special emphasis on the written part. Even today, after a lapse of about five decades of post-independent period and so also after almost a decade since the Primary new curriculum was introduced, English as a form of
language is observed almost everywhere as with books, signboards, posters, pamphlets and handbills. In addition to the same, the Government and non-Government reports, records and other forms of communication are expressed through English. In such a background of hard reality sudden exclusion of English from the Primary Education curriculum is not only more emotional than rational but is also of disastrous consequences. The committee ought to have been properly aware of all necessary information related to these issues before the finalisation of the curriculum.

The content part of the curriculum with the enrichment and expansion in subject area and the composition part are justifiable and logical. But in revising the curriculum no where it has been mentioned why the content of the earlier curriculum has been totally dropped. The attitude of the Committee and its members is hard to locate and to identify the motivation behind the same. For obvious reasons, this point has not been attempted to explore further. From the facts and figures already dealt with in the present chapter, the incoherent complexities underlying the entire process can hardly be ruled out.

In drawing out a curriculum, information need to be culled from the representative sections of the society on which the education system rests. In West Bengal there are marked diversities with regard to ethnic composition of the population, economic condition, rural-urban dichotomy and many such distinguishing factors of differences. Neither it is possible nor there is any justification for
formulating the curriculum for different sections of students. The curriculum requires to be common and open to all. This commonness is intended for strengthening the overall communication system in a standardised manner not only for the people of West Bengal but for Indian population at large.

With a view to formulating a standardised curriculum, herein for Primary Education in West Bengal, two major issues are to be taken into consideration. One deals with the aims and objectives and the other is related to operational practices. Earlier the aims and objectives have been dealt with. The second issue in the realm of operation is to be scanned properly. The framework of such principles and actions have been described here in specific terms.

To start with, comprehensive information are to be pulled from the curricula which were in existence, including the present one which is followed (Central Institute of Education, 1969). Those information will present the viewpoint, the curriculum proper and the critical estimation. After all curriculum is revised for the purpose of betterment through modification. It is never followed otherwise. Besides the curriculum proper, other information, dealing with text books, including teaching aids, students population vis-a-vis the ratio between students and teachers, number of schools with their distribution and typology are to be taken care of. In addition to the same figures on dropouts and successful candidates in different classes are to be examined. All these exercises will be helpful for the purpose of not only the evaluation of the
curriculum but also its justification in the form of implementation. These basic background data will reveal the exact condition of Primary Education in detailed reality. At the same time, the negative points can be identified. It is necessary to improve upon the positive characters and to rectify the opposite traits.

Curriculum for any sector of education must be provided with standardisation and it should not be too high, rather within the reach of the common people at large. Provisions within the curriculum are to be made in such a way that an awareness for Primary Education is generated, specially in the area and among the population where the system is below the level of consciousness. It is true that in a vast area like West Bengal the diversities can never be eliminated. The curriculum is to be framed with special emphasis on downtrodden and unaware population. Within the system there must be some mechanics of adjustment so that the framing is based on the average plain. In addition booster dosages are to be there for further elevation, both of weaker sections living in rural areas and privileged groups living in urban complexes. In other words, it may be added that the curriculum should be a two tier unit. The first one for generalised education and the other one for special cases, as for educational nourishment and to fulfill the curiosity and inquisitiveness in furtherance.

Within the above noted structure of curriculum prime emphasis is to be laid for generalised text books and subsidiary interest should not be withdrawn from specific instances. Publication of text
books and other reading and educational materials should not come out from single source like the State Government. Instead of the same approval may be given to other text books published at par with the framework of the curriculum. In the present circumstance, the range of probability will be higher and it is quite likely that the breakthrough may occur. Free text books and educational materials are to be supplied to all children including the large section of poor and deprived ones. But free supply of the same to affluent class of children simply means wastage of public excheques. The validity of these steps may be estimated with the aid of evaluation programmes. The result of such programmes will yield the strategic view point according to which changes are to be made. After all no programme can be absolutely static albeit, the dynamic character is never uniform in all places and times and even among all population groups. This can hardly be explained why even the most minimum evaluation of the 'new' curriculum has not yet been attempted or why there is no such proposal even for the future. Does it mean that the curriculum prepared is full proof which needs no modifications or it is simply for the sake of replacing the old "by new curriculum" which is beyond the parameter of qualitative assessment. This specific query may only be resolved through an objective investigation centering round 'new' curriculum of Primary Education in West Bengal. Preliminary attempts for evaluation have already been made by the Education Commission (Mitra, 1992). Similar evaluation is to be enforced only focussing Primary Education, with the inclusion of main components. It will be more rational and realistic.