From the time of independence till date the West Bengal Government has been trying to develop a well organised system of secondary education. After attaining independance in 1947 India was trying to emerge as a selfdependent nation with its sovereign power and a well knit society on the background of a strong economic foot hold. As a nation India realised that a well organised educational system is needed for reaching the standard in every walk of national life. In order to develop a truly modern and national system of education the country set up some significant education commissions and committees and introduced changes following their recommendations. In this process the Government of West Bengal also has been taking several steps from the time of independence. These steps have been welcomed and at the same time severely criticised by the students, teachers, guardians, politicians and the general public at large. The greatest blame was with respect to the changes introduced by the government in different aspects of education such as structure and duration, curriculum, evaluation, teachers' status, teachers' training and appointment of the teachers.

As regards structure of secondary education different patterns were accepted in different times. Upto 1952 when the Board of Secondary Education of West Bengal was established the ten class pattern was in vogue and the terminating point was the Matriculation Examination which was controlled by the University of Calcutta. After the establishment of the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education the duration was ten years but it was ended by the School Final Examination which was controlled by the Board. In 1957 a new pattern of Eleven year Higher Secondary was introduced. The pattern was recommended by the Secondary Education Commission of 1952-53 popularly known
as the Mudalior Commission. In this pattern bifurcation started in class IX. But there were vital weaknesses in the recommendations as well as in the process of implementation. A new commission called the Education commission (1964-66) popularly known as the Kothari commission was set up which introduced a radical change in the structure. It recommended the 10+2+3 pattern. It also emphasised general education upto class X and bifurcation only after that stage. Thus there were experimentations regarding the structure and duration. But too many experiments with regard to structure are not desirable. The structure of 10+2+3 pattern recommended by the Kothari commission was the outcome of a series of experiments in the field. It has been widely accepted that a general education upto class X is a necessity. This education should be liberal in character. It will help in the development of values among the young learners. It will also help to develop their finer qualities.

As regard curriculum excessive emphasis was imposed upon the learning of English language during the British rule and newly independent India. But gradually a new trend of liberal education developed and teaching of Language, Science, History, Geography was emphasised. The trend has been materialised after the introduction of 10+2+3 pattern when a general course of Language, Science, Mathematics, History, and Geography has been included in the curriculum of the secondary level. At present this curriculum is followed in the secondary stage of West Bengal. But in the practical field the students have to labour hard to acquire their proficiency in English Language, Mathematics and Physical Sciences. Sometimes the course is again made more tough by the teachers for their financial interest of private tuition. The students have no time to appreciate other liberal subjects. Moreover a large section of students and their guardians is of opinion that the syllabus of
Mathematics and the Physics part of the subject Physical Science are beyond the conceptual capacity of many students but many of this group are otherwise proficient in all other subjects. The difficulty level of the subjects Mathematics and Physics are mounting enormous pressure of frustration amongst those students. So a rethinking is necessary for modification of the syllabi of Mathematics and Physical Science. Again there is explosion of knowledge every day. So the curriculum of Mathematics and Science should be modified accordingly.

The question of language occupy a very vital position in the secondary curriculum. Language policy in India has never enjoyed the freedom of following its natural course. It is always dominated by political, economic and sectoral considerations. Different commissions offered different language formulas. The Mudaliar Commission gave two language formula, the Kothari Commission suggested a workable three language formula. West Bengal developed her own formula on the basis of the recommendations of the different commissions but never accepted the recommendations in toto. The Left Front Government for the sake of democratisation of secondary education emphasised the policy of minimizing the load of language. Over emphasis on foreign language was the creation of the colonial rulers but the nation is not yet free from it. As a result proper development of vernacular has been neglected. Again the development of an Indian language as the link language of the country could not be materialized. India being a multilingual country should have a common Indian language. It should be a compulsory language for every citizen. Hindi can occupy the position of this Indian language. The popularity of the language is well manifested in the Cinema Houses and the Television serials. It is the most acceptable language to the common people of the country but the reality is denied on political and other considerations. The teaching of
this language has been utterly neglected in the secondary level of West Bengal. The state should seriously think of accommodating the language in the secondary school curriculum. It is a challenge to the state whether Hindi should be included at the cost of Classical language as compulsory subject in classes VII and VIII. English should continue as the international language and as an alternative link language of the country. Moreover, there is a lot of controversies over the class from which English should be introduced. In 1981 the Left Front Government abolished teaching English in the primary classes and emphasised the importance of strong base in vernacular among the children. In the sixth chapter we advanced arguments in favour of the policy. It is psychological, scientific and favourable for developing the skill of acquiring language proficiency. No doubt the decision was at per with the recommendation of the Kothari commission. But the people strongly reacted against the policy. It has also been shown in the chapter VI. Under strong public pressure the government was compelled to change its policy and introduced teaching of English in class III. Even in class II the policy of acquainting the children with the English alphabets has been accepted. But politics apart it should be introduced in class V when the children acquire a strong base in their mother tongue. The children of class IV may be acquainted with English alphabets and monosyllable English words. The Language Formula will be as follows:

| One Language i.e. Mother Tongue in the Primary Classes. |
| Two Languages, Vernacular and English in classes V and VI. |
| Three Languages, Vernacular, English and Hindi in classes VII and VIII. |
| Two Languages, Vernacular and English in classes IX and X. |

Another controversial step the Left Government took is the abolition of teaching of classical language from classes IX and X. It has
been thoroughly discussed in the sixth chapter. Teaching of classical language should be on optional basis. Those who have special interest and aptitude should be given the opportunity of learning the language.

Medium of instruction is a longdrawn controversy in the state. At the very outset of the British educational enterprise in India the controversy of medium of instruction developed. During the whole period from the second half of the 19th century to the third decade of the 20th century English was practically the medium of instruction in this country. With the advent of the Nationalist Movement in India the programme of introducing vernacular as the medium of instruction came up. In 1937 Indian National Congress got limited powers by forming ministry in eleven states. The ministry obtained the opportunity to frame educational policies. Vernacular as the medium of instruction was highly emphasised by such ministry. Moreover Mahatma Gandhi's "Nai Talim" or scheme of Basic Education emphasised education through vernacular. After independence the whole nation was free to choose the medium of instruction at different stages. Different commissions and committees recommended vernacular for all stages but the general mass was not ready for it. To them education was nothing but a passport for entry into the domain of employment. The elite class of the society started sending their children to English medium schools. Even the parents of the first generation learners aspired to send their children to the English medium schools with a view to seeing their children educated at par with the affluent of the society. So the endeavour of the West Bengal Government to vernacularise education at the primary and secondary stage has not been welcomed by the have and the havenots equally. The affluent section thinks that education through vernacular is nothing but diluting the educational standards. The havenots consider that the move of abolishing English as the medium of
instruction at the primary and secondary stages is nothing but a conspiracy to create non-English knowing second grade citizens in the country. The result is tremendous aspiration for entry into English medium schools. Mushroom growth of below standard English medium schools has become inevitable. Even the day labourers and the most downtrodden working class are ready to sacrifice their hard earn bread for educating their children in English medium schools. The nation has failed to establish the truth that vernacular is the only medium through which a child can have his all-round development as a new born baby acquires his or her nourishment from the mother's milk. A day will definitely come when people will realise that education is change of behaviour for the development in all aspects of life and it is not simply the development of English language ability of the children.

Another debated question in the curriculum is the introduction of Work Education, Physical Education and Social Service including School Performance. The question of inclusion of physical education in the school curriculum has been realised by the educationists of all ages and all countries of the world. Right from the beginning of formal education during the Spartan age educationists have realised the need of games, sports and physical education for the growing children. In India the British imperial education system retained it as a co-curricular subject and proper emphasis was not given on it. After independence the Mudaliar Commission and the Kothari Commission highly appreciated the need for introducing physical education at the secondary school level. West Bengal Government on the basis of the recommendations of these commissions introduced physical education as a compulsory subject from classes V to X along with social service including school performance and work education. For Physical Education only 30 marks were allotted. But due to serveral reasons
(discussed in chapter VI) the decision was changed and the subject became an optional one in classes IX and X in 1995. But unless a subject is made compulsory the teaching learning in the subject is neglected. But a subject like physical education, can in no way, be neglected for the adolescent children of class IX and X who are at the prime time of their growth. The best way is to consider physical education as an independent subject without tagging it with any other subject and 100 marks should be allotted for it. Of course school performance and Social Service should be considered as a part and parcel of it. In order to make the subject modern and relevant new thought should be given to revise the syllabus for the subject. An Expert Committee should be formed by the Board for this purpose. The syllabus must have a continuous link with the syllabi of Primary, Higher Secondary and College/University levels.

The inclusion of Work Experience in the school curriculum came as a result of the recommendation of the Kothari Commission. Its main purpose was to relate education to productivity. It was a very well-thought of recommendation particularly in a developing and democratic country like India. West Bengal accepts the decision but in a modified way and introduced Work Education instead of Work Experience. It was an important innovation on the part of the Government. West Bengal was a pioneer in introducing a compulsory paper of hundred marks comprising of Work Education, Physical Education, Social Service including School Performance. But for the lack of proper infrastructure the whole idea became a mockery. So it had to be abandoned as a compulsory subject in classes IX and X in 1995. Thus a great and necessary idea ended in utter frustration. Education must be related to productivity in some form or other. But it is not possible without the proper development of infrastructure. The state authorities
should try hard to reintroduce the subject as a compulsory one after necessary development of proper infrastructure in one hand and avenues of marketability of the products on the other. So long these two are not developed properly the secondary school curriculum should go without the subject.

As regards evaluation the British Imperial system was traditional and narrow in outlook. The system has been inherited by the nation. In the field of evaluation tremendous achievements have been made throughout the world. In India also the process of changes in evaluation started from the early 50's of the 20th century. In West Bengal lots of changes have been introduced. The left Front Govt. took several steps to modernize evaluation system at the school level (the steps have been discussed in chapter VI). But the result is not satisfactory. It is well accepted that continuous evaluation process is far better than a single or a fewer number of examinations. In order to make this process scientific and effective the teachers are the key persons to implement it. In West Bengal success in evaluation could not be achieved because the teachers are not interested to take active part in it rather they are allured to fulfil their economic interest utilizing the responsibility vested upon them with regard to evaluation. This is a very unfortunate situation. The more their improvement of status and financial conditions the more they are becoming interested in earning tax free income through private tuition. As a result the evaluation system in the secondary school of West Bengal is lagging far behind in comparison to the advanced countries of the world. The huge number of students in the classroom and the enormous number of candidates for the final external examination make the evaluation system almost unmanageable. In order to improve the situation the ethical character of the teachers must be restored and they must develop the expertise,
habits and ethics of professionals. In order to combat the number menace the responsibility of the external examination may be shared by the smaller boards rather than a single board for the whole state. Classroom size be strictly controlled. No class should have more than 40 students. For improvement and acquaintance of the teachers with modern evaluation system regular and frequent short training courses, seminars and workshops should be arranged. The State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) and the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education should activate their machinery in this respect.

As regards teachers it is a well established fact that the quality of education depends largely upon the quality of teachers. The Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) was convinced that the most important factor in the contemplated educational reconstruction is the teacher. The Education commission (1964-66) has also echoed this stating that of all the different factors that influence the quality of education and its contribution to national development the quality, competence and character of teachers are undoubtedly the most significant. The National Policy of Education, 1986 also emphasised the importance of the role of teachers. As things stand to day the teacher occupies the central position in the field of education. The schools in India are organised to provide learning only through formal teaching by teachers. As such schooling has become a proxy for education. What is needed in this situation is a professional teacher — a person who knows intuitively how to convert learning in school into real education. So to ensure quality, education in India is to increase the professionalisation of teaching. A profession may perhaps be defined as an occupation based upon specialised study and training, the purpose of which is to supply skilled service or advice to others for a definite fee or salary. It is a vocation in which a professed knowledge of some department of
learning is used in its application to the affairs of others or in the practice of an art founded upon it. Time and again it has been mentioned by different commissions and committees that the efficiency of the teaching profession depends largely on its social status. Steps have been taken to improve this. The present government within its limited financial capacity has been trying hard to improve the socio-economic status of teachers so that the teachers can assume the status of full fledged professionals. But the hard fact is that teachers are making no progress towards becoming professionals. Previously they were supplementing their income through private tuition. As the Left Front Government have been increasing their salary they are becoming more and more inclining to increase their income through private tuition at the cost of professionalism. The government has abolished payment of school tuition fees upto Higher Secondary stage. But the students are forced to pay several times more to the private tutors. There are students who are privately coached by more than six teachers. The time consumed for such private coaching has two way effects. The teachers run parallel classes in their houses and many of them consider the private coaching assignment as their main responsibility. The school teaching to them becomes a leisurely pastime having no accountability. The teachers' organisations are protecting them from this neglect of duties and corrupt practices.

The students who are heavily engaged in attending private coaching classes are becoming more and more interested in private coaching rather than the classes in the school where the drowsy teachers are half hearted in their teaching work. The situation creates class bifurcation among the students. Those who can afford can purchase the best coaching from the best private tutor, and those who cannot get practically nothing from the school classrooms. In order to change the
situation the teachers must be made accountable to their duty. The inspection and supervision of schools should be activated. Sharkers should not be allowed to remain under political protection or the protection of trade union leaders. Above all teaching can not be improved without the improvement of ethical character of the teachers. Much of the urge for professionalism should come from the individual teacher himself. It is a matter of acquiring and adhering to professional values—a sort of self imposed code of conduct. These professional values among teachers can contribute significantly towards teaching effectiveness. The recent researches in education have tried to rate the teachers on professional values like sincerity, attachment, propensity to accept new challenges, propensity to research and professional drive. But they show that the teachers at the secondary stage are deplorably low on attachment, propensity to accept new challenges and propensity to research. But these must be improved. The lack of professional attachment of teachers implies accidental entry into the profession and low level of involvement, enjoyment and satisfaction in teaching. The recently set up School Service Commission should be vigilant in recruiting teachers with professional ethics. The training programme of the teachers should be improved and modernized to create professional teachers. Constant researches should be conducted to develop professionalism among the teachers. The above criticism of the teachers does not, however, apply to all teachers in general. There are still today some teachers who have their expertise in their subjects, have sense of accountability and involvement and a sense of dedication. Unfortunately this category forms a minority. Some may argue that under the present socio-economic system of the country it is too much to expect the desired sense of responsibility, accountability and dedication from the teachers. The argument is not tenable since an
aspirant teacher opts for the profession with full knowledge of the responsibilities, duties and economic aspect of this noble profession. The argument of socio-economic system is a wrong plea and let the upholders of this plea join any other profession which brings more comfort.

Very recently West Bengal Government has issued a circular in which teachers have been made accountable to their duties. Certain duties such as taking classes according to the school Time Table, finishing the course in time, evaluating answer sheets of both school examinations and external examinations like Madhyamik Examination and Higher Secondary Examination have been made compulsory. Preparation of Mark sheets is also within the duties of the teachers. The over emphasis of the participation of teaching and non-teaching staff in the Managing Committee was the creation of the Left Leaders. The participation of the guardians was limited to four only. The government has now realised that this system yielded no desired improvement. So the guardians' representation has been raised from four to six and the Headmasters are now compelled to arrange guardians' meeting at least twice a year. Effective working days in the school have been increased. Inspection of schools should be made more effective. "Task Forces" comprising of inspectors and experienced school teachers should be formed. Such "Task Forces" will inspect teaching learning situation in schools without notice.

The Left Front Government in its process of democratisation of education took several steps to ensure equalisation of educational opportunities. The most significant and bold step taken in this regard was abolition of tuition fees upto Higher Secondary level. Inspite of

acute financial limitations the government did not hesitate to take up such a huge burden. The decision was highly acclaimed by the common people. But this decision has been proved unwise. It has been coming upon the government as such a burden that it has to curtail many of its developmental programmes. The school building can not be repaired, the furniture and fixtures can not be replaced, the laboratories can not be organised for want of fund. There are schools where the students do not get even a football from the school authorities to play with. In order to improve the situation tuition fees, sessional fees and developmental charges should be collected at adequate rates. But in order to help economically weaker sections free studentship can be awarded liberally.

At the secondary level the growing adolescents should be exposed to certain theoretical studies and some practical activities which will help them to develop several skills and values. A growing child of this age must first of all possess a good and harmoniously developed health. As a member of the family he should develop the qualities of a home member. As a member of the society he should be well acquainted with the language, the rights and duties, and the traditions of the society. He should also develop the values of national and social integration and acquire the art of leisure time occupation. Unfortunately the present day secondary education has managed to forget all the above aims of education. It is now fully dominated by examinations. Instead of developing through education the students prepare for examination. The omnipotent demon of examination spoils his childhood and preys upon his most important decisive days of growth during the adolescence. The psychiatrists and the research institutes of applied psychology are strongly of the opinion that rat race created by the present day examination system is the cause of unusual increase of mental problems
of the children. In order to combat the situation restoration of healthy atmosphere is vitally necessary in the teaching learning situation at the secondary stage. Teachers can not deny their responsibility in combating this problem. The training colleges should recast their curriculum and training procedure to properly equip the teachers to combat the problems. The University Departments, the Research Institutes, the Clinical Psychologists and the practicing Psychiartists should come forward to work hand in hand with the teachers in schools and guardians in home to prevent and cure the disorders. But the first step is to check the rat race for success in the examination.

Among all the suggestions and recommendations for the development of secondary education the most important is the development of primary education of the state because it is the vital precondition for the development of secondary education. Unless the quality and quantity of primary education increase, the quality and quantity of secondary education can not be satisfactory. Since independence different developmental programmes for primary education have been adopted. The Left Front Government has exerted its efforts to improve the condition of primary education of the state. The government has emphasised the quantitative expansion of primary education particularly among the weaker section and the first generation learners. It has taken several steps to minimize dropouts and wastage (The steps have been discussed in the chapter VI). But the picture is still gloomy. A vast number of school going children do not get the opportunity of entering primary schools even to day. It is so particularly in the tribal and backward areas. Unless this picture is reversed secondary education can not be improved properly.

Finally the present slogan is "Think Globally and Act Locally". In planning the changes in secondary education of West Bengal the
authorities must keep an eye on the global tendencies of the day. The Left Front Government in West Bengal is trying hard to ensure quantitative development of primary and secondary education in the state. But they will commit a serious blunder if they neglect the international tendency of qualitative improvement of education. In the present age a person who has no knowledge of computer operations and information technology is considered as a computer illiterate person. So the government must plan its educational programme at the secondary level in such a way that education of the pupil may not become obsolete. But the local conditions cannot be ignored. Millions of growing children of this state live below the poverty line. They do not get a square meal in twenty four hours. Child labour is rampant. Young girls are denied the basic human rights. Moreover the government is heavily handicapped by the paucity of fund.

Still then the two ends must meet. Whatever be the financial condition the government can neither halt the process of modernization and qualitative improvement of education nor can it stop the process of quantitative improvement as a part of upgrading the downtrodden. It is only the scientific planning and judicious use of administrative machinery which can help to combat the situation. In spite of heavy expenditure incurred by natural calamities and the limitation imposed by the central government the Left Front Government is striving hard to keep the ball rolling. The efforts of the government can only be fulfilled if all sections of people — the teachers, the non-teaching staff, the students, the guardians, the supervisory and administrative staff, the politicians and the common mass come forward to help teaching learning in the state. It is expected that in the new millennium the dreams of the people of West Bengal and its Government will go ahead with the programmes of progress and prosperity. The historical forces acting behind the present problems will definitely lead the programmes towards happy solution in the future.