INTRODUCTION
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Primary and secondary education are the backbone of the education system of a country. The future of the rising generation of a country depends to a great extent on the quality of this stage of education. Standard of higher education is again vitally linked with the quality of this stage of education. Throughout the civilized world secondary education has been established as the minimum level of compulsory education. A person with the completion of secondary education can acquire a minimum standard of living. He can communicate with any other person easily. He can perform calculation necessary for day to day life. He acquires scientific attributes and health consciousness. He becomes aware of the rights and duties of a citizen. So for the development of a country or for the advancement of a nation secondary education should attain certain standard. Secondary education in a country should mirror faithfully its concern for the individual, for society, and for the growing fund of knowledge. This concern will, among other things, be related, no doubt, to the political creed of the country, and in the absence of a clearly defined political creed will depend on the individuals who happen to constitute the powers that be. From the point of view of society secondary education is a vital concern because it affects directly the lives of most, and as time goes on of all its young people. It is the minimum that each boy and girl in this country must receive. The moment we take up this stand we assume great responsibilities: it will be not so much as to how this can be done as how best this can be done. Democarcy invests each individual with the possibility that he may be called upon to play a decisive role in the life of his nation.

But it is a matter of regret that education of this stage in India has not been properly developed and so it can not help in building up
the adolescents who will be the future assets of the nation. We are here concerned with the secondary education system of West Bengal only. Being a teacher of a secondary school for about twenty seven years the present researcher feels that secondary education of the state of West Bengal is in turmoil. The only cause behind this is that it has several defects. These defects are creating many of the present day problems of secondary education of West Bengal. This experience of the researcher is not new. All sections of people - educationists, teachers, politicians, common people even the students feel that education of this stage is not functioning well in West Bengal. Teaching learning is in a mess. It can not be denied that the state is not indifferent about the fact. Experiments are rampant. The common feeling is that these experiments are the result of whimsical decision of the authority. Duration of the stage changes again and again. Pattern changes often. As a result curriculum also changes. Sometimes the emphasis on language is tremendous, sometimes the emphasis is shifted on to science. The place of English in the primary and secondary curriculum have not yet been finally decided. The state of classical language as a compulsory subject has not been finalised. Sincere efforts have been taken to uplift the salary and status of the teachers and to reform the examination system. Thus the Government has been experimenting on all aspects of this stage of education. But these experiments are subjected to severe criticism and it is attributed to the blame that all these experiments are for the interest of the government itself and not for the development of the secondary education of the state. But most of these changes are based on the recommendations of different Education Commissions and Committees. Of course some have been taken in the context of the prevailing condition of the state beyond the peripheri of these recommendations. But instead of these efforts the problems are
mounting at a rapid pace. The present study aspires to find out the solution of the problems. It has been clear that to solve the problems, their sources must be diagnosed. All these problems have their past history. India inherited the secondary education system from the British Raj. There was no such stage as secondary in the traditional system of India. So its origin can be traced back to the period of the British rule in India. The Britishers developed the system under the angle of vision of a foreign ruler. In 1947 India earned her independence and it has been striving to develop its own system of education according to its needs and aspirations. A thorough historical study of how the secondary education in India evolves and how it works in the context of new changes will reveal the causes of its defects. The historical forces acting behind these changes must also be identified. The present research ventures to study the changing pattern of secondary education in West Bengal, which results in the earmarking of the causes of the changes, the policy behind them, the justification or otherwise of the changes and definitely the working of the system. The result of the changes is also included within the study. The study has been divided into six chapters.

The first chapter deals with the important stages of the evolution of the modern system of education. It indicates how the old indigenous system of education disappeared gradually and a new system of education, which aimed at the spread of Western knowledge through the medium of English language was firmly established in its place. In this connection a critical appraisal of the British educational policy has been presented. India was the dominated part of a colonial system and the dominator was Britain. The British rulers were not in the country for evangelization or philanthropy or to lighten our darkness. Their aims were economic pillage, political subjugation
and intellectual emasculation, and for this they made use of certain instruments such as land management, stunted industrialization, trade manoeuvres, and the state apparatus with its immense repressive capabilities. They were used for control of the production base, economic plunder, physical subjugation and political domination. But what was required most of all was a servile society and herein lay the significance of Macaulay's Minute placed before Bentinck's Executive Council on February 2, 1835, emphasizing the need of 'interpreters' between colonizers and colonized. This felt need was accepted as the policy by Charles Wood, then secretary of state, whose despatch of 1854 laid down English education "plainly and practically before the higher classes of India".

The enclave character of colonical education became manifest in no time. First, government institutions started functioning in the metropolitan city of Calcutta and the peripheral towns. Education became an urban phenomenon and did not spread into the rural interior. Secondly, apart from spatial limitation the system was socially circumscribed as well. Students were generally from certain propertied and privileged groups. The education system created "institutional props for privilege". Thirdly, education in English was of benefit mainly to the Hindus. Among the Hindus again, the upper castes of Bengal-Brahmins, vaidays and Kayasthas were the principal recipients of education at all levels, thereby further strengthening the stratification of the colonized society. Fourthly, the syllabus for all examinations from Entrance to Masters made clear that the major thrust was on arts education, the only two professional disciplines being law and medicine. Science and Technology, the instruments for modernizing any backward society, were relegated to a relative back bench in the curriculum. Above all, English was the only permissible medium of
instruction. The language in which the privileged received their education was not their own. Thus the authorities created and encouraged a psychological dependence on the metropolitan culture of the rulers, which led to the alienation of the indigenous elite from its grassroots origins. They were desired to be in Gramscian terminology, 'non popular'. The method of teaching in the classroom also perpetuated another variance of alienation. Devoid of much human conduct between the teacher and the taught, the system was geared to what might be called a domination-submission relationship, its effects were manifest in certain behavioural and attitudinal patterns. Colonial classroom teaching was characteristically narrative; the teacher was the narrator and the students received and mechanically crammed and narrated content. The students were used to being the passive 'repositories' and the teachers were the gleeful 'depositors'. No wonder than that such a method of teaching only generated mental servitude, for the liberation of the creative impulse of students was never intended.

The second chapter deals with the defects of the imperial system of education. The British East India company came to India for trade and commerce. In order to safeguard their commercial interest they interfered in the administrative set up of the country. To begin with they were not interested in the education of the country. But gradually they realised that for consolidation of their administrative and commercial interest they must create a class of people who would serve their administrative and commercial interest and only with these considerations they developed a system of education in India. So the system became full of defects. Under such circumstances no national system of education was possible. However, a section of nationalist Indians strived to develop a national system of education. After achieving independence in 1947 India first got the opportunity of
developing its national system of education independently. But the national system of education can not be developed without understanding traditions, needs and aspirations of the nation. So the needs of the country on the basis of the prevailing objective conditions have been identified in this chapter.

The third chapter deals with education as envisaged by the constitution of India. India aspired to develop as a Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic. Education has been considered to be a means to reach the goal of establishing such a state. Here the process of formation of the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education has also been discussed. The main causes of its formation, the constitution of the Board - its strength and weaknesses, its aims and objectives have been dealt with.

The fourth chapter deals with the recommendations of the Mudaliar Commission (1952-53). In this connection the background of setting up of such a commission has been explained. The aims and objectives of the secondary education as envisaged by the commission have also been discussed. The West Bengal Government introduced the pattern of secondary education offered by the commission in 1957 and it continued upto 1973. Defects of this new system has also been pointed out in this chapter.

The fifth chapter is concerned with the recommendations of the Kothari Commision (1964-66). This commission suggested an all India pattern of general education upto class X. It was against the principle of introducing diversification of courses before class XI. The commission strongly emphasised the introduction of the elements of Work Experience and Social Service. As a part of literacy and numeracy it suggested the teaching of well formulated language and science courses
upto secondary level. To which extent West Bengal adopted and deviated from the recommendations of the commission are the points of discussion in this chapter.

In 1977 the Left Front Government came to power in West Bengal. The Left parties were committed to democratisation of education. As a process of democratisation of secondary education the Government took several far reaching steps. Such steps created turmoils. Several issues developed. The important issues are abolition of classical language as a compulsory subject in class IX and X, abolition of English from primary section, introduction of new method of teaching English, abolition of Examination from primary section and its effect on Secondary Education, abolition of Work Education and Physical Education as a compulsory subject in class IX and X, abolition of the scope of reemployment of teachers after 60 years of age etc. 6th chapter deals with these problems and issues and suggests some remedial steps.

For all the acrimony it has generated, the debate over the West Bengal Left Front Government's education policy demands an answer to a crucial question: given the standard of classroom teaching, does education really achieve the cherished end by merely retaining the vernacular as the medium of instruction? Actually, the question of medium of instruction and retention of English at the primary stage has been much debated. A growing number of educationists, politicians and policy-makers in the country seem to hold controversial views on this problem and it is difficult to provide an easy solution to it. Language is the most important tool for the acquisition, transmission and dissemination of knowledge in the sphere of education. And learning takes place with maximum effectiveness when it is conducted through the language best understood by the learner. Obviously, no language
can compete with the mother tongue in satisfying this criterion and hence it is generally felt that the mother tongue should be the medium of instruction at all stages. The mother tongue as an ideal medium of instruction from the point of view of the students' comprehension is a proposition which is undisputed and irrefutable. At the same time, a language like English is essential not only for maintaining and developing international contacts, so indispensable in a shrinking world, but also for providing what has been picturesquely described as a 'window' on the world, which is advancing by leaps and bounds in the fields of science and technology. It is to be admitted that English will have a position by its own intrinsic worth. Here in Bengal, Bengali is a rich and well developed language. Thus the change of medium from English to the mother tongue would be a move in the right direction. But, retention of English at the primary stage involves various considerations. We propose to address ourselves to those relevant questions and issues.