CHAPTER – 1

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. OVERVIEW:

Education Scenario in West Bengal is in news always for reasons which are highly unacceptable to the culture and belief of the education sector of West Bengal. West Bengal is always considered as the cradle of Indian renaissance and national freedom movement. It is also considered as a land of intellectual awakening.

West Bengal is in fact the home, of four Nobel Laureates like Ronald Ross, Rabindranath Tagore, Mother Theresa and Amartya Sen and great scientists like Jagdish Chandra Bose. Bengal is credited for being the first to establish a University and Medical College based on western concepts. West Bengal is considered as the land of poet-philosopher Rabindranath Tagore, the land of great saint Swami Vivekananda, Bengal has a rare beauty steeped in culture and scholasticism where the past still looms over the present with the legacy still lingering on.
It is common knowledge that the province of Bengal, undivided till 1947, and then the state of West Bengal, has played a leading role in the country in spreading education at all levels, beginning with mass education and culminating in higher, professional and specialised education.

West Bengal’s academic atmosphere is very much ideal for any types of intellectual pursuits and scientific quest. West Bengal is popular for its original ideas. But it is really unfortunate that this is vanishing very fast. We are now frequently hearing the stories of talents moving to other states, interference of political parties, mediocrity regimes, also standards going down, disrepair and deterioration of laboratories and classrooms as well as huge financial crisis in the education sector. Among all states the rank of Bengal with respect to the overall literacy rate, gross enrolment ratio, drop-out rates etc are dropping down quite vigorously. (Sarkar, 2004).

Very recently there are frequent recurrences of student’s confrontation in educational institutes of West Bengal. Students have become quite disrespectful to teachers and do not hesitate to insult or injure them. To all this we can say that today’s education in Bengal is suffocating. It lacks fresh thinking as to how to rejuvenate the sagging morale and spirit of the teaching community, students and their worried parents.

The past three decades has visualized the whole process of bagging an academic job and getting promotion through the standard ladder had lots of procedural deficiencies. The college and school service commissions were created to bridge
the 'trust deficit', still there are rising huge questions on the selection of experts and the subjective basis of selection of candidates. There are practically no standard criteria to determine placement and transfer of teachers from one school or college to the other school or college. A teacher is not independent in his academic life as transparency is completely lacking in the system. Many individuals who are striving for becoming a teacher in this sector are focusing more on influences and patronage of those who play important role in this process rather than their talents.

It is quite evident that based on the teacher’s devotion to their work and the students sow the seeds of the adequate attitude and respect of students towards their teachers as well as education system as a whole. Knowing the process of the selection of teachers, one can very much suspect the degree of such devotion to teaching of the present teaching community. In recent periods, students are not only confronting each other over filing of election papers but are also directly heckling the teachers-in-charge. This shows an extreme form of disrespect and hatred toward today’s teachers. The future development of Bengal depends largely on the quality and quantity of the students. Bengal should in fact bring out provisions to disengage students from such harmful activities and for good human capital.
The definitions of the key word used in the title of the topic are given in the following sub-sections.

1.2. **Definitions:**

1.2.1. **White Collar Employee:**

Novelist Upton Sinclair is credited for coining the term white collar. He used the term white collar to refer to any sort of clerical or administrative work. The term was used as early as 1911 and in 1923 it was used in Wall Street Journal. ‘White collar’ dress is generally worn by individuals whose job doesn’t require strenuous physical labor. Sinclair’s version also refers to the dress code. In 19th and 20th centuries male office workers wore shirts with white collars. Usually people who did white collar jobs were salaried employees where as blue collar people received hourly wages. The most popular white collar jobs are Doctor, Manager, Lawyer, Professor, Teacher, CEO etc. (Berger, 2013).

Employees doing White collar jobs usually perform their duties in an office setting. They are highly skilled and formally trained professionals. Accountants, bankers, attorneys and real estate agents also belong to the white collar employees, provide professional services to clients. The other white collar professions include engineers and architects, service providers to businesses, corporations and government agencies. People should possess formal education to be eligible to do white-collar jobs. The minimum qualification for any white-collar employees should be least a high school pass out. The most adequate qualifications are bachelors, masters or professional degrees. Since the education
level is very important for and entry level position also, so people in the white-collar professions generally get high salaries. (Scott, 2015)

Teachers are considered white collar workers. They obtain a formal education in college, and then take positions in elementary or secondary education after graduation. Teachers are involved in teaching children a variety of subjects such as math, science and history. Most teachers that work in high schools often specialize in a specific subject area like English. (Suttle, 1999)

The communities of teachers, researchers and administrators of the education sector have been considered as white collar professions.

1.2.2. OCCUPATIONAL HAZARD:

As per the Collins dictionary occupational hazard is something unpleasant that you may suffer or experience as a result of doing your job or hobby. The Ontario Ministry of labour, claims that occupational illness, normally develops over a period of time because of workplace conditions. Under the occupational health and safety act, the condition that results from exposure in a workplace to a physical, chemical or biological agent to the extent that it affects the normal physiological mechanisms and the worker’s health is impaired is called as occupational illness.

Occupational hazards can be categorized into various types like physical, chemical, biological, mechanical and psychological. For the purpose of research main focus is given on the physical and psychological hazards which creates
exhaustion, injury, lack of job satisfaction, insecurity, poor interpersonal relation, work pressure, ambiguity, aggressiveness, anxiety, depression etc. in employees and changes their behavior.

1.2.3. **EDUCATION SECTOR:**

Form of learning in which the knowledge, skills, and habits of a group of people are passing on from one generation to the next through teaching, training, or research is called an education. Education is an independent industry which challenges orthodox thinking.

Education sector has seen a host of reforms and improved financial outlays in recent years that could possibly transform the country into a knowledge haven. In the overall development of the country human resource is increasingly gaining significance, hence the key focus of the current decade should be development of education infrastructure. In this scenario, infrastructure investment in the education sector is likely to see a considerable increase in the current decade.

In global education industry India is holding an important place. The country has more than 1.4 million schools with over 227 million students enrolled and more than 36,000 higher education institutes. India is credited to hold the largest higher education systems in the world. (INDIA BRAND EQUITY FOUNDATION, 2015)
1.2.4. **Coping Strategies:**

Coping is basically defined as the cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resource of the person (Isil, 2015). Coping strategies refer to both the behavioral and psychological efforts employed by people to master, tolerate, reduce, or minimize stressful events (Taylor, 1998). An effective coping strategy is that which can reduce immediate stress, prevent any long-term consequences. Long term consequences can be of the type which influences on psychical well-being of an individual or develops illness in an individual. The effectiveness of a given coping strategy may differ among the individual who is employing it, individual who observes it or individual who evaluates it. (Snyder, Coping: The psycgology of what works, 1999). Coping strategies are traditionally divided into dichotomous categories. The most well-known coping models are the transactional model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and the approach-avoidance
model (Roth & Cohen, 1986). Transactional model defines coping as problem-focused and emotion-focused. Approach-avoidance model describes coping strategies of the type of either approach or avoidance category. The most important aspect in both these models is individual’s consideration as to whether they have the resources for a solution to the given situation. In the approach-avoidance model, the individual considers whether they have the resources for coping with the situation and subsequently chooses either the approach mode which focuses on a direct solution to the problem, or the avoidance mode (Roth & Cohen, 1986).

1.3. RESEARCH MOTIVATION:

We all are aware that every occupation has its own perils and dangers and occupations in education sector is no exception. But the hazards in the education sector especially in teaching profession are quite peculiar in nature as few are overt and few are covert. The overt hazards are those which are quite visible like disease transmission, physical injury due to violence, voice problem etc. The covert hazards are more of psychological than physical. Also the hazards are mostly of cumulative character than immediate. The effect of these hazards is very slow in developing and takes a time period to make them felt. Since they do not impact immediately hence most of the time they are imperceptible.

Being a teacher has rewards that no other jobs can boast. Due to these rewards there is a frequent migration of personnel to teaching profession from other jobs.
Teachers take the pleasure of helping their students to discover their skills and ability, which will in turn take the students to the peak of success. But this joy of teaching comes with the hazards. Data collected by the U.S. Bureau of Labour statistics have found out that there were 169 fatalities in the year 2010 among employees belonging to teaching sector. (Morgan, 2016).

Research and discussion on occupational hazards in India started from 1965-66 by the establishment of National Institute of occupational Health (1966) and Industrial Toxicology research centre (1965) and is rapidly increasing. A considerable number of articles have been written on the topic of occupational hazard in agricultural sector, chemical sector, coal sector etc. Very few have focused on the education sector. The current research is aimed to identify the factors affecting the coping strategies adapted by the employees of the education sector to cope with the occupational hazards. Initially qualitative study is done to identify the factors affecting the coping strategy. Then based on these factors questionnaire is designed to establish the hypothesis.

The Research questions for this research are:-

RQ1: What are the hazards faced by the employees working in the education sector?

RQ2: What could be the sources for these hazards?

RQ3: How do these hazards impact the employees?

RQ4: Which sources are more instrumental in creating occupational hazards?
RQ5: What coping strategies are adopted by the employees facing the hazards in the educational sector?

RQ6: What are the factors that influence the employees to adopt the coping strategies?

1.4. **Purpose of the Study:**

The education system as practiced in India has given rise to a number of issues, the major one being the problems faced by the employees engaged in imparting the education to the student community of India. However, the policy makers and the researchers have neglected this field. The Government policies are tailored to enhance the education of children both in primary education as well as the higher education system. But very few of the policies focus on the employees involved in imparting this education as a whole. These employees or academicians are basically the teachers of schools or institutes, professors of colleges and universities, researchers, administrators and head of the educational Institutions. Therefore, the issues of academicians have always been a neglected field in India.

The numbers of academicians working in the country are numerous. However, the problems of academicians have hardly been the focus of empirical studies. Hence, here an attempt is made to study the occupational hazards, its impacts, sources of these hazards and coping strategies used by academicians. The present
investigation is an introductory study to analyse the occupational hazards, its sources and the coping strategies adopted by the academicians of West Bengal.

Hence the aim of the study is: To analyse the impact of occupational hazards, sources of occupational hazards, and coping strategies of occupational hazards among the academicians of West Bengal.