

Some Aspects of Regional Disparity in Industrialisation in West Bengal : An Analytical Study

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Recent studies on 'Regional Disparities in Industrial Development' have some weaknesses in the sense that most of them stressed the quantitative aspects of the problem of disparity (using the techniques like Co-efficient of Variation, Gini Co-efficient, Principal Component Analysis so and so forth) to the utter disregard of the social and economic aspects of the problem. The present paper, which deals with the industrial scenario of West Bengal, attempts to absolve this defect by addressing itself to the social and economic reasonings behind such problem/problems and tries to pin-point the factors responsible for industrial disparity in the State.

I. Introduction

The role of 'industrialisation' in the economic development of a country is well known; however, in India, it has been observed that industrialisation gets concentrated in some states leading to the evolution of large scale disparities among them; even in the so-called developed states - the major economic and industrial activities are seen to be concentrated in few pockets (the example being West Bengal and Maharashtra), thereby creating disparities in the levels of industrial development among different regions/districts within such states. The present study pertains to West Bengal and its districts are treated as 'separate regions' for studying inter-regional disparities in 'industrial employment' (which can be taken as an indicator of the 'level of industrialisation' of a district) during the period 1970-1985. ^{1/} The study contains five Sections; while Section II deals with inter-temporal and inter-spatial pattern of industrialisation in West Bengal, Section III contains an analytical framework to ascertain the factors responsible for regional variation in industrialisation in West Bengal. In Section IV, the said analytical framework is subjected to empirical testing, while Section V contains summary and conclusion.

The heavy concentration of industrial units in some of the districts of West Bengal has augmented the problem of regional disparities in industrialisation which is clearly manifested from the fact that in the year 1971, the amount of employment (average daily employment in registered working factories, excluding defence factories) in districts like 24-Parganas (3,97,298), Howrah (1,52,211), Hooghly (85,008) and Burdwan (87,886) is far higher compared to other districts viz., Birbhum (4,567), Bankura (3,252), Midnapore (16,228), Nadia (5,562), Murshidabad (1,330), Malda (586) and Cooch-behar (566); the corresponding figures for the year 1985 also exhibit almost similar trends though there has been increases in employment in most of the districts over the period 1971-1985; e.g., in the year 1985 industrial