



Original Article

International Journal of Educational Research and Technology

P-ISSN 0976-4089; E-ISSN 2277-1557

IJERT: Volume 4 [3]September 2013: 47-55

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ISO 9001: 2008 Certified Organization

Website: www.soeagra.com/ijert/ijert.htm

Growing Regional Disparities in India's Development

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"India occupies two worlds simultaneously. In the first, economic reform and Social changes have begun to take hold and growth has had an impact on people's lives. On the other, citizens appear almost completely left behind by public services, employment opportunities and brighter prospects. Bridging the gap between these two India is perhaps the greatest challenge facing the country today."

-Michael Carter, Country Director for India World Bank

Received 10/07/2013 Accepted 09/08/2013

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Nature has created difference among people, among regions and among situations. These differences are known as natural differences and are taken generally as granted. The conditions of these natural differences are also called as constraints. However, man has always made efforts to minimise these constraints to advance on the path of development. On the other hand the differences created by man on account of social, economic, political, religious and cultural aspects are called not as differences but inequalities or disparities. These disparities are called respectively as social, economic, political, religious and cultural disparities.

Among all the economic disparities are critical in nature and are the issues of great concern in the modern world. Economic disparities help other disparities be widened. Therefore, if economic disparities are mitigated, other disparities are automatically narrowed. An economic disparity can be defined as a condition in which a person or persons though legally having equal rights is or are but for economic reasons deprived to some extent from available opportunities of fulfilling economic, social, political, cultural and/or religious needs.

In many countries, especially the developing ones, the economic disparities have become widened on account of improper development plans and attained such a high level that not only the economic growth is being badly hit but social and cultural fabric also has become under tremendous pressure. In every economy the people have become divided into two separate groups – the poor group and the prosperous group. The poor mass comprises the substantial majority of the world population and there has become a big gulf between poor and prosperous or rich people regarding wealth, wage, education and income. Therefore, at present the economic disparities mean deprivation or privation of a large mass and are thence taken as great evil and a challenge to the public welfare through economic development or growth.

The present study attempts to examine the following issues, which are very relevant in the context of greater balanced regional development of the districts of Tamil Nadu state. The first and foremost issue pertains to some fundamental questions such as what is disparity. What is development? How do we identify disparity? What are the types of disparity? What are the causes and measures to overcome disparity? What are the suggestions to reduce disparities?

The term, development or disparity, is highly subjective. There are numerous definitions giving interpretations of these two terms. Development or disparity may relate any field – social, political, physical, psychological and moral. In economics, these two terms used with reference to availability of per capita real income, employment opportunities, infrastructure facilities, amenities and

services. These two terms interpreted as an increase or decrease in the material well-being of the population inhabiting a particular area. This material well-being is assumed as reflected in the present study by either an increase or decrease in the levels of development in the major sectors of the economy.

Development has been appropriately conceptualized as a process, which improves quality of life. Economic Planning has been used in the country as an instrument for bringing about uniform regional development because one of the major objective of the developmental programs has been a progressive reduction in regional disparities in pace of development. The process of development involves a significant change in the economic activities over different regions along with a change in the structure of the economy.

The different regions of the country endowed with different natural resources and usually have different historical, sociological and political backgrounds. Because of this, it is very seldom that the different regions of a country are all at the same level of economic development at any point of time. Further, as a country develops economically, the different regions of the country may or may not share the benefits of this economic development equally.

The term "region" needs to be clarified for this study. Here, region is defined as a large area of land that is different from other areas of land because of some geographical, cultural or economic characteristics. The term "region" can be confusing because it can refer to different kinds of land area depending on the criteria used.

Uneven regional development results in numerous complications such as wastage of resources increase in public costs, social justice, deceleration of economic growth, threat to national integration and possibility. There is an urgent need to tackle these problems; otherwise, they will aggravate the imbalances in the economy. Political, economic, social and ethical considerations also call for measures to attain greater parity in the levels of development. Many experts in the field of regional economics and development economics have graphically narrated the adverse consequences of persisting disparities in various studies.

Harvey Armstrong and Jim Taylor contend that sever regional differences in levels of employment and dangerous for social cohesion. Co-existence of backward regions along with developed ones with lower purchasing power in former makes inflation worse than it otherwise would be. According to them, national employment and output could be substantially enhanced if regional unemployment disparities are reduced. When such disparities reduced with more geographic distribution of demand for labour, inflationary pressures would be less severe. There will be optimum utilization of social overhead capital.

As pointed out by Friedman & Alonso², reduction in regional disparities would pave way for greater national integration, increase in economic growth and political stability. On the contrary, if the disparities are widening, a sense of unfairness and injustice may kindle regional and parochial movements, as seen in many countries. Reduction in income disparities is also in line with noble goal of social justice. There is a general agreement that there should be greater equality in the living standards of people residing in different parts of the country.

Reduction in disparities is also crucial to accelerate the growth of economy as a whole. This is particularly relevant in the under- developed economies. Myrdal³ and Williamson⁴ in their studies have highlighted the fact that regional disparities are more prominent in under- developed economies than in the developed ones. Moreover, national income can be increased only when the resources and potentialities in backward regions are used productive activities.

Disparity and development are two sides of a coin. In the literature, disparities have been measured in terms of economic backwardness across the states or districts in a state. It is also evident that the economic backwardness has been measured by either sector-specific or composite indices, which often cover more than one sector.

The first group of literature measures disparities by developing an Aggregate Composite Index of Development by taking different sectors into account, these sectors may be agriculture, industry, banking, power, education, health and sanitation, transport and communication and so on.

Rao (1977) has used the principal component approach by taking 24 indicators representing the sectors of agriculture, industry, banking and education for the identification of backward regions and to examine the trends in regional disparities in India. Dasgupta (1971) has considered 24 indicators and applied the principal component analysis to classify the districts in India with respect

to their levels of development. In order to identify developed less developed and underdeveloped regions of Rajasthan state, Kulkarni (1977) has applied 8 indicators representing urbanization, population, education and occupational distribution. Mallikarjun (2002) has sought to measure the magnitude of intra-regional disparities in economic development of Andhra Pradesh with the help of 50 indicators representing various sectors of the economy.

But can we accept the economic backwardness across regions as a true representative of disparity? If not, how can "disparity" are defined? Three definitions based on three situations relating to differential growth of per capita income.

In the first situation, the disparities exist at the initial period and accentuate at the end of the period as growth of income in urban areas is rapid as compared to the rural areas.

The second definition suggests that the disparities were wider at the beginning, but the gap closes as the income of rural dwellers grow at a rapid rate while those of urban dwellers decline.

In the third situation, the disparities widen as the incomes of rural dwellers are more or less constant while those of urban dwellers increase.

The three definitions, though reflect rural urban divide, may evoke different responses from policy makers and lead to different consequences of policies in response to disparities. Lesser the disparity, the greater will be the chances of development; and, the greater the disparity, the less will be the chances that development takes place. In our country, disparities are higher between the rich and the poor.

Disparity is divided into four types. They are,

- Global Disparity
- Interstate Disparity (Disparity between States)
- Intrastate Disparity (Disparity within States)
- Rural-Urban Disparity

Global Disparity: The term global disparity describes the disparities that exist between the nations. Each country is at a different level of development, which causes disparity between countries. Some countries have been endowed with resources in abundance, while there are countries that are extremely poor in resources

Interstate Disparity: Like global disparities, there are also exist disparities between the states in India. Inter -state disparities or regional disparities or regional imbalances refers to a situation where a per capita income, standard of living, consumption situation, industrial and agriculture development are not uniform in different parts of a given region. Backwardness of state could be the result of either the regional diversity or disparity.

Intra-state Disparity: Intrastate disparity refers to disparity within the state. Intra-regional disparities in development can be identified through macro indicators of development, allocation of resources, quality of governance, agrarian structure, income and consumption patterns and estimates of poverty.

Rural-urban disparity: Rural-urban disparity has been prevalent in India for ages. Rural areas are considered backward areas in terms of availability of basic infrastructure - roads, electricity, water and sanitation facilities, schools and hospitals, etc. In contrast, these facilities are mostly available in urban areas. It is because of the absence of such facilities that rural areas lag behind urban areas in terms of the basic indicators of development - poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, etc.,.

ECONOMIC DISPARITIES

As regards to India, the history of economic disparities goes back to the British rule. The British government in India developed those regions which were important for them on economic and administrative grounds while rest of the regions were left neglected. At the time of independence India was characterized by different types of disparities. Through the planned economic development since 1951 India has though succeeded in mitigating a few types of socio-cultural disparities to some extent but the economic disparities became more widened instead of being mitigated during the plan period. The ratio of the minimum and the maximum income and wealth stands risen even above the level of one to hundred fifty (1: 150) in India.

Types of Economic Disparities in India:

Despite various remedial measures taken by the government through its fiscal policy and by the central bank (the Reserve Bank of India) through its monetary policy Indian economy is still fascinated in different inextricable and interwoven types of economic disparities as given below.

1. Income and Wealth Disparity:

Income distribution sufficiently unequal even in the pre-independence period but it became more unequal during the plan period after independence. 50% of the total national income goes to the hands of only 20% of the total population and rest 80% of the total population has to depend on the remaining 50% part of total national income. As regards to the distribution of wealth upper 10% of the households own 57% of the total built-up property whence only 43% of the total built-up property is distributed among 90% of the households. Similarly, 72% of the total farming families are marginal farmers and own only 10% of the total agricultural land while 28% of the farming families possess 73% of the total land. The lower strata poor majority is trapped in the problem of arranging bellyful bread while the upper strata rich minority is lacking the heads of expenditure to cover their large incomes.

2. Education Disparity:

In remote rural areas there is widespread poverty and approximately 80% of the families are living in acute privation. In the upper strata of these families family income is too low to pay either for education in the low standard rural institutes or for good quality education in the well equipped urban institutes. Moreover, in the lower strata of these families a child becomes earning hand by working as child labour at the age of seven or eight years. The sentiments and feelings about education or future welfare of the child droop before the agony of unsatisfied basic needs due to privation. Therefore, a child in these terribly poor families is proved an asset rather than liability, in its stead. Therefore, in widespread remote areas children either have no access to education or they get substandard education in the government aided and under-equipped rural institutes affiliated to state level boards or un-reputed university. On the other hand, the children of rural and urban prosperous minority are getting good quality education in well equipped urban institutes being either university or affiliated to C. B. S. E. Or I. C. S. E. or some reputed university.

3. Regional Development Disparity:

A considerable number of socially and economically sound and effective elites had already emerged in cities and urban towns during the British period. After independence these elites either entered into the government or supported their men to win election and thereby enter into the government. This made them interfere in the formulation and execution of development plans, on one hand, and in the fixation of priorities, on the other. Thereby Indian development plans became urban oriented and concentrating on rich minority. Therefore, great many portion of the fruits of planned economic development remained centred towards and around the urban cities, towns and those rural regions where natural resources are abundantly available. Thus rural regions devoid of natural resources lagged far behind in the run of economic development and thence remained either undeveloped or insignificantly developed in comparison to the urban and the naturally resourced regions.

4. Sectoral Development Disparity:

Instead of starting from the very beginning and covering the right locus of economic development India, being enticed and allured by the surprisingly fascinating fruits of heavy industrialisation, started its efforts but having longed for being developed and grabbing fruits thereof in a haste. Thus India lost sequences in its development path. Thus agriculture, the spine of Indian economy, was ignored. Thereby agricultural development and the development of agriculture based small and cottage industries lagged far behind the development of heavy industries. Thus the village industries were shattered and the villages were ruined on account of the acute shortage of energetic workforce, service centers, infrastructure, intellectuals etc. emerged there due to the rural-urban migration.

In this way the industrial sector became more developed than the agriculture sector and heavy industry sector became more developed than the small and cottage industry sector. Moreover, during industrial development both the private and the public sector were aimed at to be developed simultaneously for healthy competition to save the general public from being exploited by the profit motivated private producers. But the corruption prevailing in public sector and the manipulations by the private producers the public sector industries sustained heavy losses whereby a large number of these industries became auctioned to private hands and that too under some political

strategies. The remaining ones also are running with old technology without renovation. Thus the private sector became more developed and flourished in comparison to the public sector.

5. Technology Disparity:

The multinational companies and the heavy industries of private sector are running with modern technology and earning large abnormal profits while almost all small and cottage industries along with the industries of the public sector are running either with normal profits or even loss. A number of public sector industries with loss are still running only because of some political strategy of the government or the public pressure. Similarly a large number of small and cottage industries are running without profit only because the family workforce working therein is getting salary. The technology used in all of these with loss or without profit industries is traditional, old, obsolete or rather discarded too while that of the heavy abnormal profit earning MNC's and private heavy industries is modern and rather latest technology.

6. Credit Disparity:

The (central and state) governments in their fiscal policies and RBI (Reserve Bank of India) in its credit control have been talking quite loudly about subsidies, rural credit, agricultural credit, small and cottage industrial finance and credit to poor mass. The statistics also show quite big amounts. But the story of resultant effects remained different. The great many part of the subsidies was grabbed by undeserving socio-economic and political elites on the basis of false poverty documents and fake small or cottage industrial units. Thus the actually needy persons and small or cottage industrial units went on sustaining the lack of subsidy and credit facilities. In case of subsidies the prevailing corruption and the target based policy rather helped the malpractice get impetus. Moreover, the prevailing corruption and target based policy along with the profit motivated nature of the commercial banks strengthened the malpractice in case of credit distribution. Furthermore, the actually needy poor people and the small or cottage industrial units were not having enough assets to be pledged, wherever it was required, against loan. This factor also prevented them to avail the available credit facility. On the other hand, heavy industrial units, business houses and socio-economic and political elites were above these constraints and therefore went on enjoying not only the share of subsidies and credit assigned to them but also a sufficiently large portion of the share assigned to poor mass and the small or cottage industrial units.

How can be identified various types of disparities

After evolving an exact concept of a disparity and different types of a disparity the next step is to adopt method for proper identification of disparities. For many decades, "*growth with equity and social justice*" has remained on the development agenda of developing countries. The development Planners in the latter half of the twentieth century realized that all types of disparities have to be reduced to the minimum in shortest possible period.

The experience of development planning also shows that growth does not necessarily lead to more equitable distribution of resources. Similarly, Increase in participation rates may result in perpetuation or even widening of disparities between various social and economic groups.

Generally, the administrative levels considered for identification and measurement of disparities. The advantage with this approach is that with administrative monitoring, the decisions regarding the nature of inventions and allocations of resources become easy. The other side of approach is that within the administrative boundaries, the units of observation may be internally heterogeneous. In such situations, the averages would hide more and reveal less.

REASONS FOR DISPARITY

Once disparities are identified classified, the next step is to find out the root causes of disparity. The factors that are responsible for the relative regional disparity are many. Some of the root causes of disparity are as follows:

➤ Political Cause: -

On account of the politics of defections, the debacles or falls of governments and vote politics the (central and state) governments became politically weak. Therefore the priority of the government became to please the rich minority so that it may run. To mitigate resentment and dissatisfaction among the general mass it had to play pseudo role of and on to remedy the poor mass through various unsuccessful employment and poor welfare programmes. Therefore, the rich minority and the areas or regions relating to the rich minority became rather developed by getting

larger portion of the total fruits of development move of the country. Moreover, the regions or communities relating to educated and politically aware people also got greater share in economic development on account of their greater political pressure on the government.

➤ Administrative Cause: -

The persons in administrators group either belong to the prosperous group of the society or come under pressure of politicians and socio-economic elites to direct the development benefits discriminatingly towards these politicians and elites. The elites and politicians not only pressurised in free but even enticed and allured the administration personnel by bribing them whereby corruption emerged in government departments. This corruption initially starting from these high leveled administrators later on percolated downward even to the lowest segment of the society and thus became the present condition of general corruption in India. Moreover, to show high performance and good work these administrators also supported the investment and the development projects in more developed areas to obtain early returns.

➤ Unequal Distribution of Natural Resources: -

The distribution of natural resources is not equal among the different parts and the different regions of the country. The industrialisation thence became brought about fast in the regions and the parts rich in natural resources. This resulted into faster development of education and employment level in those regions and parts in comparison to that in the regions and parts lacking in the availability of natural resources

➤ Caste System: -

Indian mass especially Hindus are divided into different castes under a caste system based on the strong social stratification. Despite considerable efforts have been made by the government and non-government organisations for social reforms to root out the malign traditions and social evils like untouchability, the curses of the strong stratification of the society, but the people of lower segment (castes) of the society in many parts, especially the remote ones, are still prevented from equal rights to education, employment, profession and facilities. This makes them economically weak. They are prevented forcibly by the people of upper segments (castes) even from casting votes in the general elections. Oh God! Kindly help the societies in these though limited at present regions desist from so slapping on the face of humanity.

There is a gap between the people belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and the rest of the population with respect to the availability of basic civic amenities, such as electricity, housing, water supply, and toilet facilities. Access to, and benefits from the public health system are uneven between the general population and those who belong to the SC/ST categories. The resources allocated for the welfare of the SCs and STs are not in proportion to their needs. The policies and programmes specifically formulated for these categories of population have not effectively implemented. Thus, discrimination against the SC and ST population continues, even later than six decades of independence.

The attitude of people, in general, reflects their preference for urban living compared to life in the rural areas. Serving the village population is a difficult proposition for doctors, teachers and other civil servants. Since life is more comfortable in urban areas, people have a liking for things that are urban. Most people consider the development of cities and towns as a higher priority compared to development of villages. The attitude of people towards the girls has always been one of indifference. A girl considered a liability, as her marriage, in India, is an expensive affair, carrying with it the unlawful tradition of dowry. Girls are not sent to school by many families beyond a certain age as they are supposed to manage household chores, and are also supposed to take care of their younger siblings. Girls are discriminated against in matters of food, clothes, schooling, and provision of basic health services. This is the general attitude of people towards the girls. This attitude and preference leads to disparities.

Certain states are endowed with abundant natural resources, which has have placed them at a preferred level compared to others. However, there are states extremely rich in mineral resources like Jharkhand, or extremely rich in forest resources like Chhattisgarh, but they have not been able to make optimal use of their resources, because of the government's neglect, or because of poor of capital formation. Some states receive more attention in the form of repeated investment from private companies since they see a lot of growth potential in these states. Since the government's control, liberalization, has markedly declined, private sector investments largely governed by

market forces are coming up in a big way in some states. This will further increase interstate disparity.

Thus, numerous historical, natural, economic, demographic and institutional factors are behind the problem of inter-regional and intra-regional disparities. In this context, it is necessary to point out for the sake of conceptual clarity the distinction between two vital issues, regional diversity and regional disparity. The former is the result of natural factors whereas the latter is the result of human factors. Both the factors are responsible in their own ways for different levels of development of regions across the given space. Once these factors are identified and we get a clear idea of the disparity in some regions, we can proceed to tackle the next problem pertaining to the measurement of development of development or disparity in given region.

HOW IT CAN BE REMOVED

In the field of development economics, the concept of development has evaded precise definition. Development in the narrow sense implies material improvement and in broad sense, it can be understood as changes in institutions, attitudes and better quality of life. This concept identified with per capita income, resource utilization, stages of economic growth and levels of welfare. All these connotations represent directly or indirectly an improvement in material facets. Before analyzing the issue of regional inequality it is necessary to clarify what is understood by the term *inequality*. To begin with, it should be admitted that inequality, as a not self-defining concept, is an awkward word. Then, it is no wonder that inequality is generally defined in a negative way; as "*inequality obviously suggests a departure from some idea of equality*". Although the term equality may have different meanings, in this paper it is considered in its simplest sense that two or more quantities are the same. While initially devised to address inequality issues between individuals, most of the indicators can easily be adapted to dealing with per capita income inequality among regions. As there is no accepted best measure of income inequality, in this section we review the most commonly used inequality indicators. Keeping all these aspects in mind, measures that can be taken to overcome disparities.

If disparity is to be removed, there needs to be a transformation in the attitudes of people. People who consider factors like class, caste, gender, age, etc., important for development are actually creating hindrances in development by perpetuating disparity. It is very important for the people to realize that factors like these create serious bottlenecks in the development process, and are factors that affect certain sections of society. If development is to take place, it is important that all sections of society participate in the development process, and reap the fruits of development.

It is important for the government and the private sector to realise that disparity can be removed only if greater attention is given to areas which are backward, which means more investments need to be made in backward regions by private companies, and increased allocations need to be made by the government in backward regions. It is also important to formulate special policies and programmes for the backward regions, like the ones that presently exists for the North- Eastern region. These investments may not give adequate returns initially, but may, in the long run remove disparities.

Good governance is an art. Governance means managing the affairs of a country, a state, or even a block, or, a village. Good governance refers to effective planning, management and monitoring of activities in order to bring about effective improvement in the affairs of the country, or, a state, and making equitable distribution of the gains of development. It also refers to providing equal access to basic services to all sections of the population, and equal opportunities for individual growth. Thus, the better the governance, the less would be the disparity.

Transparency is essential to check disparity and to ensure that development takes place. Transparency could be ensured if people have access to information. This is possible through the provision of information about various legislations to citizens, such as the Right to Information Act, legal literacy, etc. Since people are not aware of their right to information, they are not able to acquire knowledge about the system's failure within an organization, and to raise their voice against non-functioning systems within an organization. The more the transparency in an organization, the greater would be the growth of the organization. If all organizations in a country, for example, have adequate systems in place, there would be no disparity.

It is very important that people's participation is ensured at all stages of development, and at all levels, right from the top level to the grassroots level. When people are participating in the development process, it is in their interest to ensure that all sections of the society benefit equally from the process. If only a small section of the population benefits from the development process, it means that over a period of time disparity would crop up.

It is also important to ensure that people are made accountable for the nonfunctioning of systems within the government. This can be done if people are involved at every stage of development, right from the stage of planning a programme, to its execution, monitoring and evaluation. It is important for the people to realize that programmes are meant for people and that they need to be executed, and monitored by them. The concept of ownership of a programme, or scheme should vest with the people, and only then would they feel accountable. Measurement of disparities is as important as their identification. Many countries have started collecting data on census as well as on a sample basis, which is useful for them to measure disparities and to reduce this problem in their countries.

Rural	100	139.11	7.78	3.15	0.01
Urban	100	143.52	8.93		

Table 1 reveals that the mean score of Levels of Aspiration of Rural and Urban Elementary school children on Scholastic Achievement are 139.11 and 143.52 with S.D 7.78 and 8.93 respectively. The t-value is 3.15 which is significant at 0.01 level. Thus the null hypothesis "There is no significant difference between Levels of Aspiration of Rural and Urban Elementary school children on Scholastic Achievement" is rejected. Thus there exists a significant difference between Levels of Aspiration of Rural and Urban Elementary school children on Scholastic Achievement.

Table 2: Levels of Aspiration of Private and Government Elementary School Students on Scholastic Achievement

Variables(Levels of Aspiration)	N	M	S.D	t-Value	Level of significance
Private	100	119.37	8.01	4.36	0.01
Government	100	127.40	9.85		

Table 2 reveals that the mean score of Levels of Aspiration of Private and Government Elementary school children on Scholastic Achievement are 119.37 and 127.40 with S.D 8.01 and 9.85 respectively. The t-value is 4.36 which is significant at 0.01 level. Thus the null hypothesis "There is no significant difference between Levels of Aspiration of Private and Government Elementary school children on Scholastic Achievement" is rejected. Thus there exists a significant difference between Levels of Aspiration of Private and Government Elementary school children on Scholastic Achievement.

Table 3: Levels of Aspiration of Male and Female Elementary School Students on Scholastic Achievement

Variables(Levels of Aspiration)	N	M	S.D	t-value	Level of significance
Male	100	79.64	9.80	6.25	0.01
Female	100	90.27	8.64		

Table 3 reveals that the mean score of Levels of Aspiration of Male and Female Elementary school children on Scholastic Achievement are 79.64 and 90.27 with S.D 9.80 and 8.64 respectively. The t-value is 6.25 which is significant at 0.01 level. Thus the null hypothesis "There is no significant difference between Levels of Aspiration of Male and Female Elementary school children on Scholastic Achievement" is rejected. Thus there exists a significant difference between Levels of Aspiration of Male and Female Elementary school children on Scholastic Achievement.

CONCLUSIONS

- ❖ The study shows a significant positive correlation between levels of Aspiration and Scholastic Achievement which indicate that the higher the Level of Aspiration higher the Scholastic achievement.
- ❖ The mean high Levels of Aspiration of Elementary School Children is significantly higher than that of low Levels of Aspiration of Elementary School Children on Scholastic Achievement.
- ❖ The mean Levels of Aspiration scores of urban elementary School children is higher than that of rural Elementary School children on Scholastic Children.
- ❖ The mean Levels of Aspiration scores of Private elementary School children is higher than that of Government Elementary School children on Scholastic Children.
- ❖ The mean Levels of Aspiration scores of Male elementary School children is higher than that of Female Elementary School children on Scholastic Children.

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Citation of This Article

K. Rajalakshmi. Growing Regional Disparities in India's Development. Int. J. Educat. Res. Technol. Vol 4 [3] September 2013 : 47-55