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## REGIONAL DISPARITY IN EDUCATIONAL SECTOR: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN JALPAIGURI AND KOLKATA DISTRICT OF WEST BENGAL

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### Abstract

The prime objective of development is the well being of the people in economic, social and cultural spheres. The fundamental elements of human development are long and vigorous life, proper education, and decent quality of living. But interestingly despite slowly rising standard of Indian people, its society and economy are being challenged by regional disparity almost in every corner of the country. Still a lot of people of our country are away from the holy touch of education. There is inter and intra state imbalance in the field of literacy particularly education, enrolment of school going children, drop out ratio, pupil-teacher ratio and distribution of formal and informal type of educational centers. The paper highlights a comparative study regarding the nature of disparity in educational sphere between two districts of West Bengal with development strategies.

**Key Words:** Regional Disparity, Jalpaighuri, Wes Bengal.

### Introduction

'Disparity' means 'Inequality' which refers to imbalanced distribution of some aspects over which ethical question of right or wrong arises. As moral question is raised for poverty, education, distribution of infrastructure, unemployment etc., uneven distribution of those elements in space time lattice can be treated as disparity. Spatial variation of resource and economic activities of people are distributed unevenly throughout the World. This uneven distribution has made a few nations powerful and self-sufficient and there are also lot of countries which are underdeveloped in the field of education, per capita income, social well being, and other socio economic infrastructures. Thus inter and intra regional disparity originate. Of late, this inequality is not only confined amidst economic sphere of development but its root has also entered into society, education, culture and infrastructure.

It is ever known that 'Education has no limit' and the role of education in the development processes is indescribable. The principle of 'Each one teach one' and 'Sarva Siksha Abhijan' or Education for all help us to understand how does knowledge expedite and upgrade the index of civilization and make people socially well being. But interestingly several states in India have been suffering from crisis of proper educational plinth. The districts of West Bengal, an Indian state, highlight the severe disparity in term of educational development particularly in the field of higher education which is the focal theme of this paper.

### Objectives

The major objectives of the study are –

1. To highlight the inter district disparity in terms of existing educational infrastructure.
2. To improve human condition and to expand people's choice in educational sphere.
3. To ensure part of indicators of social well being of people.
4. To highlight the requirement to form healthy society and reduce regional imbalance.

### Disparity and Development

The development of an area is never identical as the resource base varies place to place. Therefore, to formulate of a development plan of any region, it is essential to make a critical estimation of present scenario, on the basis of available and potentials resources, nature of local needs and problems. In

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this field priorities should be assigned to different socio-economic activities and the trends of development. Owing to the disparity in the levels of socio-economic development and provision of various facilities among the sub-regions, it is required to carry out inter-district disparity analysis for initiating the developmental programme within a region.

### The Area of Study

Two districts have been selected to identify the nature of disparity in level of existing educational set up. These two districts are Kolkata and Jalpaiguri of West Bengal. The district of Kolkata has been chosen due to its known high level of development from almost all respect. On the other hand, Jalpaiguri district is located in the extreme northern part of West Bengal with known backwardness from almost all spheres with its tribal endowed pockets.

### Salient Features of Kolkata and Jalpaiguri District

Salient Features	Kolkata District	Jalpaiguri District
Total Population	4,57,2876	3,40,3204
Population density	24718 per sq. Kms.	547 per sq. Kms.
Average annual Temperature	11-41 °c	17-35 °c
Average annual Rainfall	150-200 m.m.	275 -325 m.m.
Total area	185 sq. Kms.	6227 sq. Kms.
Total no of P.S.	48	16

Source: District Statistical Handbooks, 2005-06

### Educational Sphere of Kolkata and Jalpaiguri District: A Comparative Analysis

The entire study has been done based on the data of 2005-06 and a few indicators of educational disparity have been chosen for this study. This comparative analysis of selected educational indicators of two districts reveals the acute disparity existing between the two places in the field of education.

#### 1. School Education

#### Comparative Analysis in the Field of Primary School Education

Table 1:

District	No. of Institution	No. of student	No. of Teacher
Jalpaiguri	2002	357662	7067
Kolkata	1581	254427	7337
District	Institution:Student	Teacher:Student	Institution:Teacher
Jalpaiguri	1: 179	1:51	1:4
Kolkata	1:161	1:35	1:5

Source : District StatisticalHandbook.2005-06

Primary school education is a fundamental right in India, and is one of the important Millennium Development Goals. The Government of India recognizes education as a critical input for the development of human capital, jobs for its people, and economic growth for the country. It is found from the table-1 that in case of primary education, despite having large area and population, Jalpaiguri district has not sufficient number of primary school as compared to Kolkata district. Although it has (2002 – 1581) = 421 more school than Kolkata, but the student pressure is maximum here. About (357662 – 254427) = 103235 more students are in the Jalpaiguri district. The ratio of between school and student is also higher, about 1:179 as compared to Kolkata, 1:161. In addition, the ratio between teacher and student is also higher (1:51) in comparison to kolkata (1:35). Moreover the ratio between school and teacher in Jalpaiguri district is lower (1:4) as compared to kolkata (1:5). This overall picture reveals retreating trend of primary education in Jalpaiguri district if compared with Kolkata.

#### Comparative Analysis in the Field of Middler School Education

Table 2:

District	No. of Institution	No. of student	No. of Teacher
Jalpaiguri	69	33231	450
Kolkata	72	18877	598
District	Institution:Student	Teacher:Student	Institution:Teacher
Jalpaiguri	1:482	1:74	1:7
Kolkata	1:262	1:32	1:8

Source: District StatisticalHandbook, 2005-06

Here also, it is noticed that in case of middle school education Jalpaiguri district has (72 – 69) =3 more school than Kolkata and has (33231 – 18877) =14354 more students (table-2). The ratio of between school and student is 1:482 and the ratio of between teacher and student is 1:74 which are also enough higher as compared to Kolkata (1: 32). In addition, the number of teacher in Jalpaiguri is lesser than the Kolkata district. Therefore, trend of education in Jalpaiguri district is downtrodden.

### Comparative Analysis in the of High School Education

Table.3:

District	No. of Institution	No. of student	No. of Teacher
Jalpaiguri	165	171045	2204
Kolkata	420	463203	5996
District	Institution:Student	Teacher:Student	Institution:Teacher
Jalpaiguri	1:1037	1:78	1:13
Kolkata	1:1103	1:77	1:14

Source : District Statistical Handbook, 2005-06

Here we find in case of Jalpaiguri District the Institution –Student ratio is comparatively slightly lower in comparison to Kolkata. But while calculating the ratio between Teacher and student it is found that a teacher has to serve 78 students in case of Jalpaiguri town where it is 77 in case of Kolkata district (table-3). In addition Kolkata occupies at an advantageous position in the field of Institution – Teacher ratio also.

### Comparative Analysis in the Field of Higher Secondary Education

Table 4:

District	No. of Institution	No. of student	No. of Teacher
Jalpaiguri	115	165595	2574
Kolkata	345	276528	10127
District	Institution:Student	Teacher:Student	Institution:Teacher
Jalpaiguri	1:1440	1:64	1:22
Kolkata	1:802	1:27	1:29

Source: District Statistical Handbook, 2005-06

There is marked differences in the status of education in higher secondary level (table-4). The data reveals that the district of Jalpaiguri has been suffering from tremendous pressure of students as compared to Kolkata. That is why, Education in this level is very much unsystematic, and all the three attributes e.g. *Institution: Student*, *Teacher: Student* and *Institution: Student* are much more detrimental in case of Jalpaiguri district if compared with Kolkata.

## 2. General College Education

### Comparative Analysis in the Field of General College Level Education

Table.5

District	No. of Institution	No. of student	No. of Teacher
Jalpaiguri	12	16861	177
Kolkata	67	105959	4007
District	Institution:Student	Teacher:Student	Institution:Teacher
Jalpaiguri	1:1405	1:95	1:15
Kolkata	1:1581	1:26	1:60

Source : District Statistical Handbook,2005-06

The comparative study of General College level education in Jalpaiguri and Kolkata district is quite interesting and reveals that there are strong differences in the field of number of college, student-teacher ratio, institution-teacher ratio and so on. It is evident that Jalpaiguri has a fewer college, students and teachers as compared to Kolkata (table-5). Empirical study reveals that there is Push and Pull Factors working in case of higher education as the colleges of the district of Jalpaiguri do not have variety of subjects, proper infrastructure and have comparatively higher socio-political problems. In addition, the quality and trend of teaching due to proper infrastructure is enough higher in Kolkata as compared to the Jalpaiguri District.

### 3. University Education

#### Comparative Analysis in the Field of University Level Education

The district of Jalpaiguri has been facing the severe problem due to complete absence of General University, only North Bengal University is located in Siliguri in Darjeeling district. Most of the students, despite having 1<sup>st</sup> class honours degree can not get chance there due to inadequate capacity of the University. A lot of students have to go take admission each year at Kanpur or at Open Universities or elsewhere to take postgraduate degree by paying a huge amount of money. But interestingly, students of Kolkata do not suffer such crisis as there is universities like Calcutta, Rabindra Bharati, Jadavpur, Kalyani, Burdwan which are in the vicinity of the Kolkata district. In addition, in the era of diversification of subjects, universities of Kolkata provide a lot of specialized courses which are not available in Jalpaiguri district, even in the University of North Bengal.

### 4. Professional and Technical Education

#### Comparative Analysis in the Field of Professional and Technical Education

Table 6:

District	No. of Institution	No. of student	No. of Teachers
Jalpaiguri	35	7488	226
Kolkata	169	35833	4489
District	Institution:Student	Teacher;Student	Institution:Teacher
Jalpaiguri	1:214	1:33	1:6
Kolkata	1:212	1:8	1:27

Source: District Statistical Handbook, 2005-06

Professional and technical education, the demand of which has been increasing day by day lies also far below from the expected level in case of Jalpaiguri district. Generally professional and technical education includes Engineering colleges, vocational education centers, Polytechnics, ITI, PTTI, Nursing Training schools, Management Colleges, Medical Colleges, B.Ed. Colleges, Music Colleges, Research institutes and so on. Jalpaiguri district is very much poor in this field. The number of such institutes is only 35 where it is 169 in Kolkata district (table-6). The institution and student ratio in the said two districts are almost same but the student- teacher ratio and institution teacher ratio, both are excellent in Kolkata. On the other hand, most of the technical and professional education is confined amidst PTTI and B.Ed. colleges only in case of Jalpaiguri district. The number of other institutes like Engineering college, Management college, Music college, Art college, Research institute etc. are completely absent in Jalpaiguri whereas Kolkata has been dominating in this field from quite a long time with diversified courses for which students can make choice regarding their education and future.

### 5. Special and Non-formal Education

#### Comparative Analysis in the Field of Special and Non-Formal and Non-Formal Education

Table 7:

District	No. of Institution	No. of student	No. of Teachers
Jalpaiguri	3820	330994	6070
Kolkata	1388	14279	1925
District	Institution:Student	Teacher;Student	Institution:Teacher
Jalpaiguri	1:87	1:55	1:2
Kolkata	1:10	1:7	1:1

Source: District Statistical Handbook, 2005-06

Special or non formal type of education generally comprises *Sishu Siksha Kendra, Adult high school, Open University, Sanskrit tols, Institute for blind, physically and mentally handicapped, Anganwadi, Social Welfare homes, Shramik Vidyapith* etc. In case of Jalpaiguri district, this sort of institutions are more than Kolkata, but when the Institution – Student, Teacher-Student and Institution-Teacher is considered, Kolkata ranks better position (table.7).

#### Major Findings

1. Despite small in area, Kolkata district is self sufficient in term of educational infrastructure.

2. In case of Primary Education, Kolkata ranks a little bit better position due to its metropolitan position and urban character.
3. Jalpaiguri district has been suffering from students' pressure in secondary and higher secondary level as compared to number of school and teachers but in Kolkata this figure is within expected level.
4. In case of college education Kolkata pulls a lot of students from outside due to its specialised courses which are not available in the district of Jalpaiguri.
5. In case of University education, Kolkata is also self dependent as there are more universities which can meet the demand of its students but the district of Jalpaiguri is still quite far away in this field.
6. Jalpaiguri has to face challenges from lack of professional , technical , special and non-formal education which are also almost available in Kolkata

Therefore, after analyzing the entire picture, it is keen that Jalpaiguri district is neglected from educational point of view. Here students have not options to choose their career rather their choice is confined amidst limited corner. Only, brilliant and elite or economically strong students can achieve their targets and for that they have to go Kolkata , almost thousand kms. away from their native district.

### **Suggestive Measures**

The aforesaid discussion regarding the comparative study of educational pattern in Kolkata and Jalpaiguri district vividly presents the inter district disparity in this field. It is also true that the rate of endeavour of the Govt. is below the expectation when the status of available educational infrastructure is considered. However a few development strategies are given below to reduce the regional disparity, not only for the said two districts, but to minimize overall disparity in educational field.

1. Rapid population growth from every corner should be checked and education has to be compulsory up to a level for all through the implementation of law.
2. The quality of education from grass root level should be improved.
3. The ratio of student and school, student and teacher and teacher and school should be consistent.
4. Considering the high demand for university education, a university must be set up and almost all subject should be taught there.
5. The number of technical and professional schools, centers for special education etc. are almost absent in North Bengal particularly in Jalpaiguri district. Therefore, attention should be given for establishment of such educational institution.
6. Political influence and pressure should be stopped or controlled to bring transparency in the education system and for qualitative improvement of education.
7. The level of education in the entire state should be analyzed from micro level and from broad spectrum of education point of view.

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