CHAPTER VIII
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

8.1 Summary

8.1.1 The main issues that concern understanding occupational structures of the small towns are that they display the processes and levels of development of the specific towns as well the broader patterns of urbanisation. The three towns under the current study, Serchhip, Thenzawl and North Vanlaiphai are located in extremely remote areas of the Indian State of Mizoram, in the far north-eastern corner of the country, the State itself being land-locked, isolated and grossly underdeveloped. The State lagged behind in human resource development (though the literacy level in the state is the second highest in the country) and other economic infrastructures because of inaccessibility, small size of population and largely constituting of hilly terrain. The occupational structure of these three towns is largely influenced by significant lack of economic opportunities, technical know-how and accessibility to modern amenities like public establishments and roads and communication infrastructure.

Under the given circumstances as stated and based on fieldworks conducted during the current study the following observations could be made:

i. From the general distribution of occupations, larger towns have high proportion of office work-based occupations (e.g. teachers, accountants, lawyers, salespersons, market-related workers, clerks, etc.) and market-oriented occupations (market sales persons, vendors and hawkers, etc.). These occupations decline in direct proportion to the size of town, i.e. the smaller is the town the less are persons in the above
occupations and more in primary (elementary) occupations or those associated with agriculture or agro-based occupations.

ii. Further it appears that larger towns possess greater potentialities occupational change, because of having a bigger economy and diversified too, proving increasing opportunities in occupations like in professional, technical and associated professional areas and market-related occupations and other higher levels of occupations.

iii. Serchhip town, the largest among all the three towns and the district HQ, has higher proportion of diversified occupations in comparison to the other two towns (Thenzawl and N.Vanlaiphai). Serchhip records motor vehicle drivers (3.43%), market sales persons (3.25%), lecturer/teaching professionals (2.79%), primary teaching professionals (3.57%), other teaching professionals (4.23%) and street vendors (4.36%).

iv. Thenzawl town has high proportion of persons in occupations like hired/casual workers (13.13%), cultivators (12.46%) handicraft in textile workers (3.37%), clerks (4.38), and subsistence animal husbandry occupations (11.78%).

v. N.Vanlaiphai town, the smallest of the three, has a high proportion of occupations in market-oriented cropping (21.05%), subsistence animal farming (9.57%), (32% in Primary activities), office clerks (3.35%), casual/hired workers (8.61%) and plant and machine operators (3.35%).

vi. Serchhip town has the most diversified occupational profile among the three towns. As shown in diversification index, of the 100 percent diversification index, 74.46 percent of the total households are found in Serchhip town, 59.81 percent in Thenzawl town and 55.38 percent in N.Vanlaiphai towns.
8.1.2 The second issue at hand is urban economic system of the three towns. Occupational structure manifests the level of economic development and the intensity of the urbanisation process. Successive urban growth stimulates growth of public establishments and private enterprises that generate diversification of occupations. In regards to the expansion of public establishments and private enterprises in generating occupational changes, economic changes and urban development, the study concludes as follows:

i. The growth of urban population relates the expansion and the growth of the urban market, increased population being consumers of goods and services and a larger population requires expanded public services and amenities and therefore, would require expansion of public establishments. The expansion and growth of such public establishments and private enterprises generate growth of professionals, technicians and associate professionals and clerical occupations. However, the impacts of the growth of public and private establishments are relatively less to generate changes in occupations of senior officers and managers etc. The capacity of employments in the public establishments and private enterprises comprises of approximately one-third of total employment in teaching professionals, accountants and technician (professionals) and one-fifth in clerical occupations. As far as the employment generation is concern, most of the occupations like senior officers and clerical occupations belong to public administrations, whereas more than two-thirds of professional occupations belong to educational services, which are partly public and partly private institutions.

ii. The creation of employment opportunities through the expansion of public establishments is one of the important objectives of Indian planning, especially in smaller states and backward areas where industrial employment are quite limited and
therefore limited scope of expansion of private enterprises. The growth of private enterprises has significantly affected occupational changes among salespersons and shop-related work, vehicle drivers etc., largely in unorganised sectors of the economy. While analysing capabilities of private enterprises, it is found that only a few of the private enterprises like educational institutions and undertakings employ hired-workers. The capacity of employment generation of private enterprises is limited because of the overall market size and also due to the limited access to capital. The high cost of operation, lack of adequate number of clients and inadequacy of governmental aid to private enterprises discourage the development of private enterprises. An ideal enterprise in small towns is characterised by less capital deployment and low cost of operation, more number of clients with higher profits. The private enterprises are characterised by preponderance of merchandise shops, animal farming, and household and cottage industries.

8.1.3 The third issue is the examination of pattern of occupational change and its intensity and its significance on the economy of the town itself:

i. The changing pattern of occupations displays that the elementary occupations and skilled agriculture and fisheries occupations are the most dynamic occupations of all the three towns under the study. Over a period of time persons from elementary occupations have shifted mostly to skilled agriculture and fisheries occupational groups. Persons who were in skilled agriculture and fisheries occupations changed their occupations to shop and market sales works, technical and associated professions. There were little changes in occupations of professionals (office workers), senior government officers and managers, since most of such occupations sit at the apex of the economic pyramid. This is to argue also that occupational changes may take place
in consonance with earning and income benefits accruing to the individuals; if there are no economic rewards, occupational changes are less likely to occur.

ii. The study of inter-generational occupational changes reveals that children do not generally pursue their parental occupations (59.45 percent at Serchhip town, 32.47 percent at Thenzawl town and 18.37 percent at N.Vanlaiphai town). More than half of the change is due to preference of the younger generation for better-paying occupations as compared to the traditional occupations of their parental generation. Further it appears that in larger towns like Serchhip, younger generation gives more preference to newer occupations due to the fact that the larger towns provide opportunity for a more diversified occupational structure which provides those opportunities.

iii. Intra-generational occupation changes indicate heads of the households change occupations to the extent of 34.77 percent in Serchhip, 39.25 percent in Thenzawl and 55.38 percent in N.Vanlaiphai. It appears that in bigger towns the older generation has less incentive to change their occupations as compared to those in smaller towns. It is possible that migrants from villages into larger towns may find opportunity in their own skills, whereas in smaller towns they may be forced to change occupations because of the limitation of smaller economies of the towns. Some respondents cite reasons like low income leading to occupational changes (35.51 percent at Serchhip town, 30.00 percent at Thenzawl and 25.00 percent at N.Vanlaiphai). Reasons like new job-opportunities also stimulate occupational change (29.91 percent at Serchhip town, 16.67 percent at Thenzawl and 37.50 percent at N.Vanlaiphai). Government policies like NLUP, MIP, introduction of special packages and agriculture market liberalisation also stimulate significant changes in occupations.

iv. Within the last 20 years, there was a significant change in elementary occupations and skilled agriculture and fisheries occupations in these three towns. At Serchhip town,
the greatest change is in elementary occupations (-342.84 percent, the faster the town grows, necessarily there will be a shift in occupations from primary related to tertiary related jobs), succeeded by skilled agriculture and fisheries occupations (-4.14 percent); craft and related-trade (75.10 percent), plant and machine operations (66.67 percent) and clerical occupations (65.39 percent). Persons in skilled agriculture and fisheries occupations, plant and machine operators have increased significantly at Thenzawl and N.Vanlaiphai towns; elementary occupations, shop and market salespersons have decreased at the same time.

v. Occupational changes were accompanied by the growth of income, because elementary occupations and skilled agriculture and fisheries occupations (low paid occupations) have decreased in proportion over the time. Such shifts in occupations from primary (elementary) occupations to skilled professional and other higher order occupations might have resulted in increases of the total output/ income in Serchhip town.

8.2 Conclusion

i. The study of occupational structures of the three towns indicates that small towns in Mizoram are dominated by agriculture and allied occupations and services. The main source of domestic production is from the service sector. In developed countries, manufactures and industrial activities consist at least 20 percent of the total occupations that could maintain the consistency of the economy. The study reveals that the occupational structure of these towns are significantly less in manufacturing and construction related occupations. On the whole, the occupational structure consists of high proportion of workers in low average output in primary occupations and relative high income from tertiary occupations. It also signifies a situation of low level of occupational diversification, which implies that occupational structure of
small towns is incapable to maintain and generate sustainable development without any significant increase in manufacturing or service activities often referred to as the Urban Economic Base. Only government sector occupations and the service economy around these may not provide a long term potential for growth in the small towns. It indicates that high degree of urbanisation without firm foundation of economy brings about inconsistencies in the urban economy. However, due to the pattern of occupational changes and its consequence on the output, these towns lean on a progressive economy because low income occupations shift into relatively higher income occupations.

ii. The study of urban economic system and growth of population exhibit that urban problems like scarcity of land, social and economic disparity and unemployment are high in these three towns, which have essentially agro-based economies. The average (agricultural) land holding size is 3.18 acres per household. Nearly two-thirds of the total workers are engaged in agriculture and allied occupations (market-oriented cropping, fisheries, subsistence cropping, market gardening, cultivators etc.) with low income (due to low per capita productivity in agriculture, which is quite underdeveloped in Mizoram). Some workers holding high educational qualifications are involved in low income occupations due to lack of adequate work opportunities which small towns do not offer.

iii. Urbanisation does not bring about increase in per capita income since public establishments and private enterprises provide occupational opportunities for only a small proportion of the town population. Urbanisation might have resulted in growth of educated youth in the small towns under study, who do not find suitable work opportunities in the highly restrictive economic environment of the towns leading to

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3 Most of the households in these small towns happen to own farm lands in surrounding areas.
increase in unemployment; nearly three-fourth of the total workers belongs to under-
matric educational qualification. A large proportion of occupations, i.e. in agriculture
and allied occupations yield low incomes. Factors of occupational changes like shift
from low income occupations, searching better paying occupations, government
policies (NLUP, MIP, and agriculture market liberalisation) provide better
opportunities to agriculture and allied occupation workers. Whereas a rapid economic
change ushers in new occupational opportunities, at the same time new occupations
yield higher incomes, which feeds back on the economic changes through a multiplier
process. Some of the urban economic and social problems are solved through
occupational changes (shifts) since it minimises economic and social disparity and
unemployment through creation of new occupational opportunities.

Overall, the study brings to focus an entirely uncharted territory, i.e. the internal
dynamics of the economy small towns, with little growth momentum. The study of
occupations and occupational changes bring to focus how people negotiate their lives in
the limited economies of small towns with little propensity to expand, except the natural
growth of population, since in-migration stream is weak and often the expansion of the
specific town merely incorporates the rural habitations in the fringes of these towns
without any change in the economic life of the people. In the North East region the small
towns (Class VI: population less than 5000) abound; out of 245 towns enumerated during
2001 census in the 7 states of the region, 46 were Class VI towns, nearly 20% of all the
towns. Similarly, the Class V towns (5001-10,000) have little growth potential. In
Mizoram of the 16 towns, 14 belong to class V or VI towns, though notionally, Mizoram
has one of the highest levels of urbanisation in the country and nearly half of the
population live in town and cities!