Manufacturing labor in the Central Region of Mexico.  
An estimation by great division

Empleo manufacturero en la Región Centro de México. Una estimación por gran división

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Abstract

The production performance and its effects in the generation of formal employment in the Central region of Mexico are analyzed at the major division level of manufacture. The most dynamic activity divisions of the manufacturing industry are identified and, by estimating a function of employment with panel data for each of the nine major divisions of manufacture, it is reported that the activity divisions: I. Food products, beverages and tobacco, II. Textiles, clothing and leather industry, III. Timber industry and wood products and IX. Other manufacturing industries show high employment income elasticity (0.716, 1.035, 0.781 and 0.94). Furthermore, the divisions that comprise the more technical branches, with greater innovation processes and high levels of export, such as division VIII. Metal products, machinery and equipment, show lower elasticity. © 2017 Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Facultad de Contaduría y Administración. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

JEL classification: C23; E23; L60
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Resumen

Se analiza a nivel de gran división de la manufactura el desempeño de la producción y sus efectos en la generación de empleo formal de la Región Centro de México. Se identifican las divisiones más dinámicas de actividad de la industria manufacturera y, a partir de estimar una función de empleo con datos de panel...
para cada una de las nueve grandes divisiones de la manufactura, se reporta que las divisiones de actividad I. Productos alimenticios, bebidas y tabaco, II. Textiles, prendas de vestir e industria del cuero, III. Industria de la madera y productos de madera y IX. Otras industrias manufactureras presentan una alta elasticidad al ingreso del empleo (0.716, 1.035, 0.781 y 0.94) y que las divisiones que integran las ramas más tecnificadas, con mayores procesos de innovación y altamente exportadoras, como la división VIII. Productos metálicos, maquinaria y equipo, presentan una elasticidad menor.

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Introduction

In the years following the Great Recession of 2008–2009, the difficulty that the economic activity had to reactivate the levels of growth and employment generation in Mexico was made more evident. However, these problems do not refer to recent years, as the difficulty for growth was already made manifest since the 1980s, intensifying with the beginning of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994.

The expectations with the beginning of the NAFTA were optimistic regarding the inaugural qualities. There was confidence that with the free commerce, exports would be strengthened and the long-term sustained increase of the economic activity would be consolidated with effects on the economic growth of the country and on employment. Twenty years after the operations of the NAFTA began, evidence from recent years makes it clear that the balances of free commerce have not been the expected in terms of growth and generation of employment, especially in the manufacturing sector. Everything suggests that this sector, even when it was strongly linked to the export dynamic, has not managed to influence the job creation process in any relevant manner (Dussel Peters, 2003).

Some authors suggest that this fact could be associated to a relatively high manufacture capital intensity and a relatively low absorption of employment, particularly in the more modern and productive sectors of manufacturing (Dussel Peters & Cárdenas, 2007). It could also be associated to the changes that have emerged in the structure of the productive sectors in recent decades, where the service sectors are gaining a greater relevance in contrast to the industrial and agriculture and livestock sectors.

These are important elements because for many years the manufacturing sector has been considered one of the driving forces for economic growth in Mexico, and a sector in which “the impact of trade openness can be directly perceived, given that it is there that the greater number of activities related to trade goods concentrate” (De León, 2013, p. 10). However, since the 1980s the manufacturing industry has shown significant changes in its commercial, productive, investment, and employment structure (see Alcaraz & García, 2006; Arriaga, Leyva, & Estrada, 2005; De León, 2002; Flores & Capdevielle, 2003; Fragoso, 2003; Fujii & Cervantes, 2008) that have not been strongly reflected in the generation of formal employment. Other authors, such as María (2005), argue that the trade openness process has not reflected in a substantial increase in formal employment and better working conditions.

More recent works (Quintana, Andrés-Rosales, & Namkwn, 2013) explain that the development of the Mexican manufacturing sector, while contributing to the productivity of the other sectors, has not been able to operate as a driving force or generate growth trickling effects. This
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