

# IS THERE A PROBLEM WITH THE 10% QUOTA?

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Rights & Welfare of STs, SCs, and OBCs - Schemes & their Performance, Mechanisms, Laws Institutions and Bodies

In January, the Rajya Sabha [passed the Constitution Amendment Bill](#) guaranteeing **10% quota** in education and employment to economically weaker sections in the general category. Families that earn an annual income of less than 8 lakh and do not possess agricultural land of five acres or above are eligible for the quota. This includes 95% of Indian households. Isn't it strange that in a country which claims to have lifted millions out of poverty, so many households fall in this category? What is more is that these households require reservation, nothing else, to enable them to be socio-economically better off. The Bill has served an unintended purpose, though: Reservation is no more the preserve of the so-called merit-less. The proposed quota has transformed cynics of the reservation policy into champions of it.

Why are parties in Tamil Nadu against 10% quota?

We examine here the empirical foundation of two aspects which are central to the policy but are absent from discussions on it. The first is the rationale underlying the policy that economically weaker sections from the general category remain “excluded from attending the higher education institutions” in India “due to their financial incapacity”. Is that really the case? The second is the fact that the Bill also brings private educational institutions under its ambit. What is the representation of reserved category students in private educational institutions?

We try to answer these two questions by analysing data from the National Institute Ranking Framework (NIRF). The Ministry of Human Resource Development introduced a ranking of higher education institutions in India in 2016. A total of 445 institutions were ranked under the NIRF in 2018. The NIRF data provide the composition of ‘economically backward class’ (EBC) students and ‘socially challenged category’ (Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes/Other Backward Classes) students. The data reveal that of the 16.09 lakh students enrolled in the 445 top institutions in 2016-17, about 28% (4.55 lakh) belonged to the EBC. The share of EBC students was about 30% in private educational institutions. If we consider institutions as the basis of analysis, the facts are self-explanatory. About 66% of the 445 NIRF-ranked higher education institutions had more than 10% of students from the EBC. Interestingly, 68% of private educational institutions also had more than 10% of EBC students. EBC students had already secured about three times the proposed quota of 10% without any reservation in top higher education institutions. This is despite the fact that the income criteria used by most of these institutions vary from 2 lakh to 5.5 lakh annually, which is far less than the proposed eligibility criterion for the reservation quota, which is 8 lakh.

Quotas and a verdict

The share of ‘socially challenged category’ (SCs/ STs/ OBCs) students in these 445 institutions was 38%, only 10 percentage points more than the share of EBC students. Surprisingly, the share of SC/ST/OBC students stood at only 44% in public institutions, which are mandated to implement 49.5% reservation. In private educational institutions ranked by the NIRF, their share was as low as 30%, which was similar to the share of EBC students. Here too, only 19% of private higher educational institutions ranked by the NIRF had more than 49.5% of SC/ST/OBC students. Thus, SC/ST/OBC students remained greatly under-represented, especially in premier private educational institutions. This is despite the fact that the SC/ST/OBC population constitutes about 70% of the total population of India (NSSO, 2011-12).

Our analysis is confined only to the top 445 higher education institutions. However, if the share of EBC students was as high as 28% in these premier institutes, their share would have likely been larger in other higher education institutions which were not ranked by the NIRF. This could be due to a number of reasons, including lower fees. The EBC students have already secured more than 10% share in these institutions without any reservation. Hence, the proposed policy seems to be empirically unfounded. By contrast, what emerges from the NIRF data is the under-representation of the 'socially challenged category' in premier education institutions.

It appears that the government is going to extend reservation for SC/ST/OBC students to private higher education institutions. This would certainly bring the much-needed diversity in premier private higher education institutions in India.

*Sunny Jose and Bheemeshwar Reddy A. teach at the Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani, Hyderabad campus. Views are personal*

Please enter a valid email address.

India-China dialogue has expanded but the two countries are not on the same page on terror

Join our online subscriber community

Experience an advertisement-free site with article recommendations tailored for you

Already a user? [Sign In](#)

To know more about Ad free news reading experience and subscription [Click Here](#)

or Please remove the Ad Blocker

**END**

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

Crack