

## BRIDGING THE GAP: ON DEFICIT IN OBC, SC POSITIONS VACANT AT IIMS

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

A severe deficit in the [number of OBC, SC, ST candidates recruited as faculty in Central institutes of higher education](#) has been revealed by Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal in Parliament, drawing attention once again to the pallid state of reservation in some of India's elite institutions. Some of the striking data show 62% unfilled [vacancies for SC in the IIMs](#) and 90% for OBC in the IISc, while vacant positions are on average about 38% to 52%, taking Central Universities, IISERs, IIT (non-faculty), IGNOU, and Sanskrit Central Universities into account. The data confirm that the trend seen earlier in the IIT system extends to many more institutions, highlighting a serious mismatch between the government's equity-building goals and actual recruitment outcomes. In the case of the IITs, an official committee suggested that the way out would be to exempt these institutions from reservation, as provided for under the Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Teachers' Cadre) Act, 2019, or to dereserve lower faculty positions after a year, if suitable candidates from the beneficiary communities are not found. This cannot obviously be a salutary course for official policy, when the reservation system, envisaged as an improvement on western ideals of affirmative action, is widely seen as the shortest path to equality and equity. What could help bridge the gap is a better understanding of the lacunae in the education system, marked by a sea of deprived public schools and colleges, hyper-commercialised private universities and colleges and islands of elite institutions such as the IIMs.

The failure of the Central higher education institutions to recruit faculty to all the reserved positions is usually attributed to the absence of enough qualified candidates, as the Education Ministry's committee for IITs did. One of the forward-looking remedial measures suggested by the panel was to start government-sponsored preparatory programmes, which would both equip aspiring faculty, and create a pool of research talent. This has merit in the context of management, science and other disciplines, and in the short term, could help qualified individuals overcome the deficiencies of their preparatory years. Such courses would also make these institutions of higher learning more socially responsive, meeting the goal of addressing historical deprivation of communities based on caste. Yet, there are larger questions that need answers, and which continue to be agitated in courts. One of them is whether there should not be even greater attention devoted to the most marginalised within the reserved categories, such as SC, since trickle down quota benefits for them are scarce. The egalitarian answer would be to continue expanding the pie of opportunity in the public realm, through ever greater funding of quality universal education at all levels and aiding the deprived through affirmative action on the road to equality.

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