Departmentalising Reservations in Teacher Recruitment

What is the issue?

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- University Grants Commission (UGC) has recently decided to implement reservation for teaching positions by treating ‘individual departments’ as units.
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- This is socially regressive as this approach is expected to substantially reduce the number of SC, ST and OBC intake.
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How did the decision evolve?

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- UGC has recently decided to implement reservation “department wise” instead of considering the university as a whole.
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- Union HRD ministry has approved UGC’s decision and has claimed that the new intake formula was based on the directives of the Allahabad High court.
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- But it has been contested by some, who claim that this would reduce the number of SC, ST and OBC candidate intake substantially.
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- Notably, despite the tardy implementation, reservations in education and jobs are the ones that have proven effective in uplifting the depressed classes.
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- Also, it is a reality that if reservations are absent, even eligible candidates from these groups would be discriminated against on castist grounds.
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What is the category-wise breakdown of teaching staff?

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- As per the UGC’s annual report for 2016-17, there were a total of 14.7 lakh teachers in colleges (89%) and university departments (9%).
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- The report gives the category-wise teaching positions of SCs, STs and the OBCs in the 30 central and 82 state public universities.
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- Of the total 31,446 teaching positions in these universities that are currently filled, the combined total of SCs, STs and OBCs were 9,130.
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- This is merely 29.03% of the positions as against their combined reservation of 49.5% that is granted to these groups in the central list.
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- More importantly, of the 9,130 people - 7,308 (80%) were assistant professors, 1,193 (13%) associate professors and barely 629 (7%) were of professors.
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- While these figures are only for universities and category wise break-up for colleges has not been given, the trend can’t be very different there either.
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- The Rajeev Gandhi National Fellowship, which was implemented in 2005, saw the grant of 2000 fellowship annually to SCs and STs doing MPhil and PhDs.
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- While at least 15,000 such fellows would’ve successfully graduated, the current recruitment scenario for universities gives them little hope for securing a job.
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What are the issues with the new policy?

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- If vacancies are this high when universities are treated as a whole, then departmentalisation of reservations would only exacerbate this.
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- Further, departmentalisation would mean more impediments for the reserved in promotions, and consequently curtail career progression.
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- Hence, the new rules for departmental reservation are only going to worsen this situation, which hence needs immediate correction.
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- Also, Privatisation in education is reducing the share of the reserved staffers

as there is lesser compliance with reservation policies in private institutions.
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Source: The Indian Express

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