

Caste as a Determinant of Educational Attainment in India: An Empirical Analysis

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Abstract:

This paper is an attempt to identify the existence of learning outcome gaps if any across castes in India. We analyze it using a representative sample of 14702 children aged 8-11 in 2012 to identify the test score gaps in reading, writing and mathematics between reserved and non-reserved castes and tribes. We use the Z-score methodology to normalize the scores and then regress over caste dummies. The results suggest that there has been a substantial gap between the Scheduled tribes and the general categories. In particular, in the pre primary schooling, Scheduled castes, tribes and other backward classes lose substantial ground relative to general castes. There is suggestive evidence that improved socio economic conditions help in reducing the gap substantially. However, when the sample is divided into geographical boundaries, it is observed that the gap vanishes in urban schools.

Keywords: education quality; test score gap; caste reservation; educational attainment

JEL Codes: I24, I28