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Q8

Case study. You are Vice Principal of a degree college in one of the middle-class towns. The principal has recently retired and management is looking for his replacement. There are also feelers that the management may promote you as Principal. In the meantime, during annual examination, the flying squad came from the university caught two students red-handed involving in unfair means. A senior lecturer of the college was personally helping these student in this act. This senior lecturer also happens to be close to the management. One of the students was son of a local politician who was responsible in getting college affiliated to the present reputed university. The second student was son of a local businessman who has donated maximum funds for running of the college. You immediately informed the management regarding this unfortunate incident. The management told you to resolve the issue with flying squad at any cost. They further said that such incident will not only tarnish the image of the college but also the politician and businessman are very important personalities for the functioning of the college. You were also given hint that your further promotion to Principal depends on your capability in resolving this issue with flying squad. In the meantime, you were intimidated by your administrative officer that certain members of the student union are protesting outside the college gate against the senior lecturer and the students involved in this incident and demanding strict action against defaulters. - Discuss the ethical issues involved in the case. - Critically examine the options available with you as Vice Principal. What option will you adopt and why?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · GS IV · 20 marks · Ethics Case Studies

Case Studies on above issues.

Core demand of the question

- You are Vice Principal of a degree college. The Principal has retired; management may promote you. During annual exams the university flying squad catches two students using unfair means. A senior lecturer close to management was helping them. One student is the son of the politician who got the college affiliated; the other is the son of the largest donor. Management tells you to resolve the issue with the flying squad at any cost, and hints that your principalship depends on it. Student union members protest at the gate demanding action
- (a) Ethical issues
- (b) Critically examine the options. What will you adopt and why? Do not bury the case for promotion

Revision summary

Two well-connected students were caught with a senior lecturer's help; management wants the flying squad managed at any cost.

Ethical issues are academic integrity, **conflict of interest**, justice to honest candidates, and the right to protest for fairness.

Burying, a fake internal warning, and a mob leak all fail.

The Vice Principal should keep the report, recuse from promotion bargaining, run university process, and protect peaceful protest.

Empathy does not mean a pass mark.

Introduction

Cheating with a lecturer's help is not a public-relations event. It is an attack on every honest examinee. Burying the flying-squad report for a principal's chair is not a solution. The politician and the donor are conflicts of interest, not vetoes. Protestors asking for fairness are not a riot to be managed with a lie.

Body

Stakeholders

- You as Vice Principal, and your possible promotion.
- The two students, the senior lecturer, and every other candidate in the examination.
- The university flying squad and the affiliating university.
- Management, the politician of affiliation, and the donor.
- Student-union protestors and the town's faith in the degree.
- Parents who paid fees for a real examination.

(a) Ethical issues

- Academic integrity versus a management order to make the catch disappear.
- **Conflict of interest**: your promotion is being traded against the truth of a red-handed case; the politician and donor are private stakes sitting on a public exam.
- Justice to honest students whose ranks will be stolen if these two scripts stand.
- The lecturer's duty to the university; helping unfair means is professional misconduct, not mentoring.
- **Image of the college**: a short scandal is cheaper than a degree that employers later treat as a joke.

- **Right to peaceful protest:** students at the gate are demanding the rule the prospectus promised.
- **Natural justice:** the two students and the lecturer still get a hearing; they do not get a secret amnesty.
- Loyalty to management versus loyalty to the university's examination regulations and to UGC-type norms on unfair means.
- Courage versus a career bargain dressed as "resolving at any cost".
- Empathy for young men under family pressure does not extend to rewriting the flying-squad memo.

(b) Options and the course to adopt

- **Option 1:** Pressure the flying squad, lose the memo, promote the boys, and protect the lecturer.
- **Merit:** principalship may come; donors stay warm.
- **Demerit:** fraud, possible university de-affiliation later, and you are bought. Rejected.
- **Option 2:** Quiet internal "warning" with no university process, and ask protestors to disperse as a favour.
- **Merit:** looks like balance.
- **Demerit:** the official catch is still being buried; the next exam will be a market.
- **Option 3:** Leak names to the town before the university inquiry, to look tough.
- **Merit:** noise.
- **Demerit:** defamation risk, mob humiliation, and a ruined hearing.
- **Option 4:** Recuse from any promotion talk, keep the flying-squad report intact, let university process run against students and lecturer, inform management in writing that you will not bargain, protect protestors' peaceful demand, and offer the two students only the defence the regulations allow.
- **Merit:** the degree remains a degree; your chair, if it comes, is clean.
- **Demerit:** you may not be Principal. That is the price of the post's meaning.
- Adopt Option 4.
- Do not meet the flying squad as management's fixer. Cooperate as the college's honest officer: rooms, CCTV if any, seating plans, the lecturer's presence.
- Send a written report to the Registrar and Controller of Examinations with copies you keep.
- Place the senior lecturer under the college's and university's misconduct procedure; he is not above it because he is close to management.
- Recuse from bargaining about your own promotion while this file is live. Tell management the hint itself is a **conflict of interest**.
- **Student protest:** allow peaceful assembly, no lathi for a fairness demand, no deal that the protest will stop if the memo vanishes.
- **The two students:** suspension from that paper or whatever the university regulations prescribe, after hearing; compassion can mean counselling, not a pass mark.
- If management orders you in writing to kill the case, refuse in writing. A Principal appointed as a reward for exam fraud is not a promotion; it is a captured chair.

Flow diagram

Flying squad red-handed -> Report stands
Report stands -> University process
Report stands -> Lecturer misconduct
Kill memo for promotion -> Captured degree
Peaceful protest -> Demand for fairness

Conclusion

The flying-squad catch must stand. Students and lecturer go through university process. Management pressure and a promised principalship are conflicts to recuse from, not orders to obey. Protestors asking for fairness are allies of the exam, not a problem to be bought off.

Facts & figures

University unfair-means regulations

Affiliating universities prescribe seizure, hearing and penalties for cheating; a college cannot privately compound a flying-squad catch.

Conflict of interest

Promotion, a politician's affiliation role, and a donor's money are private stakes that must be disclosed and set aside, not used as a veto.

UGC and higher-education integrity

A degree is a public signal; exam fraud is a fraud on every employer and every honest student in the batch.

Natural justice

The two students and the lecturer get a hearing; they do not get erasure of the catch.

Right to peaceful protest

Students demanding action against unfair means are exercising a democratic claim; dispersing them as the price of a cover-up is a second wrong.

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