



Mains Practice Question

Q. You are the Vice-Chancellor of a Public University. Recently, the management has decided to increase the hostel and tuition fees substantially. The students are unhappy with the management's decision and are staging a widespread protest in the university campus.

A student from the weaker section came to you and explained his inability to pay the proposed hike in fees due to his weak financial family background. His father is a ragpicker and his mother works as a maid. He informed you about similar conditions of other financially weak students who are unable to pay the hiked fees. He also informed you that one of his friends is planning self-immolation in protest under the influence of some politically motivated students.

With the passing of the day, the protest is growing violent, with several incidents of violence between security forces and students.

Even though you also do not agree with the management's decision, but are under severe pressure from the government to implement the proposed hiked.

In such circumstances, is it right to move forward with the management's decision?

- Identify the moral dilemma faced by you.
- Analyze your role and duties, along with a suitable course of action.

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| Facts of the Case | Stakeholders Involved | Ethical Values |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| Fees hike by management | Management | Professionalism |
| Protests by students | Students | Integrity |
| Poor students' inability to pay fees | Society at large | Courage |
| Possibility of Self-immolation | Government | Empathy |
| Political motivation | Yourself (Vice-Chancellor) | Moral righteousness |
| Violence | | Leadership |
| Pressure from the government | | Efficiency |

Moral Dilemmas Faced

- **Professional ethics v/s Personal ethics:** As the head of a public educational institute, one must stick to being professional and impart the duties assigned in the prescribed manner. On the other hand, being surrounded by students gives a sense of personal responsibility towards furthering their welfare.
- **Official orders v/s Right to Education:** One must adhere to the orders of the superior authority which are government and the management in this case but the plea of people in need of help and their desperate efforts to being heard gives the sense of safeguarding their basic rights such as Right to Education.
- **Duty versus Rights:** Duty to ensure the safety of students and staff versus students' right to

agitate and protest in a democratic space such as university premises.

Roles and Duties

- **Administrative leadership:** Being the VC, a person has to execute the administrative orders with efficiency and with full control of the situation.
- **Upholding the interest of students:** The interests of the students must be kept in mind because they are the backbone of the educational institutes.
- **Answerability:** The official post makes one answerable to the higher officials.
- **Value-protection:** Ensuring the survival of the values and ethics of the education system in the long run and taking appropriate measures to safeguard them.

Course of Action

- **Pacifying the students:** One must try to communicate with the students and pacify them so that the situation does not get out of the hand and there are no casualties.
- **Persuading the management:** Efforts must be made in order to convince the management to not increase the fees or delay the issue for a while or increase to a bare minimum without hurting anyone's interest.
- **Mediation:** After talking to both sides, one must mediate diplomatically to bring all parties on the same page.
- **Focused attention:** One must rapidly shift the focus to more sensitive issues like the student who plans to self-immolate and try to calm down the enraged aspirations

After the issue is subsided, one must not forget to take long term measures to ensure that such situations do not arise in the future and even if they do, there are sufficient measures to tackle it with appropriate means without harming anyone.

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