

1. You are posted as the secretary of the education department in a state. The state government has just launched a scheme for awarding scholarships to meritorious students to pursue higher education abroad. The undergraduate students having exceptional academic record would be awarded hundred percent tuition fees and living expenses at a university abroad. You are heading a committee of bureaucrats and academicians that will shortlist the candidate's after scrutinizing their academic performance. While going through the list of candidates you realise that one of the candidates applying for the scholarship happens to be the daughter of your best friend. Her academic credentials are really good and there are high chances of her getting this scholarship.

Do you see a conflict of interest here? Discuss. Is there a way to address this conflict? If yes, what are the alternatives available? Examine.

**Approach:**

To solve these kind of case studies, it is necessary to adopt a stakeholder's approach. As an ethical dilemma is presented where qualities of objectivity, non-partisanship of an officer are tested with her interpersonal relations. After adopting this approach candidate needs to enlist available options and then choose the best available option.

**Introduction:**

Stakeholders in the case

- Me as a secretary of education department
- Other students applying for the scholarship
- Reputation of education department
- Society at large

Dilemmas:

- Duty towards job Vs. Interpersonal relations
- Merit Vs. Interpersonal relations
- Objectivity, Non-partisanship Vs. Partisanship
- Conflict of interest

While talking about conflict of interest John F Kennedy said 'the basis of effective government is public confidence and that confidence is endangered when ethical standards falter or appear to falter'. Conflict of interest refers to conflicts between one's professional responsibilities as a public servant or as a member of an organization and one's private interests as an individual. It is one of the most obvious ethical dilemma.

**Body:**

In this case, there is a conflict of interest between neutrality, non-partisanship, objectivity (selecting only the deserving students) and Interpersonal relations (not selecting daughter of best friend, if the case maybe).

Options available before me:

Option 1- Rescue myself from committee

Pros

- Conflict of interest will be resolved.
- Objectivity in selecting candidates will be maintained.
- Department's reputation as being objective will be upheld.
- No impact on personal relationship if friend's daughter is not selected.

Cons

- Do not know the credentials and value system of successor.
- Might impact the working of committee as well as result in delays.
- Lead to escapism, as many situations will have some conflict of interest.

This option seems to be a good move as Jessica Savitch an American television presenter said Never refuse an assignment except when there is conflict of interest, a potential of danger to you and your family, or you hold a potential biased attitude about a subject under the focus.

Option 2: Continue as head of the committee

Pros

- Selection might get completed within given timeframe.
- Duty towards job will be completed

Cons

- May blot department's image of being partial.
- Impact personal image in department, might be seen as partial.
- Impact on personal relation if daughter of the friend is not selected.

Option 3: Continue heading the committee. However, make the conflict known to the members ask them to be impartial and keep the selection process transparent.

Pros

- Upholds department's image as being neutral and transparent.
- Increase personal reputation of being impartial and objective.
- Students will not feel that the board is biased.
- Not impact the personal relations as well.

**Conclusion:**

In this way, duty can be discharged without an impact on personal relations. As Buddha advises that SamyakMarg is the best way out of a dilemma, moreover the

principle of golden mean also says that wisdom lies in choosing between two extremes. As every other situation can have same kind of conflict of interest and one must choose a middle path.



**2. Abhishek, an IAS officer, is heading the IT Committee constituted for improving the services being provided by the State Transportation Department by leveraging information technology solutions. In the deliberations of the committee, it was concluded that a special purpose vehicle headed by an independent CEO, preferably from the private sector having experience in IT projects would best suit the needs of upgrading the services offered by the department. However, hitherto the department was headed and manned only by civil servants. The very idea of a CEO coming from the private sector and heading the most important division of the department is meeting stiff resistance from within the department.**

**How can Abhishek deal with this problem? Is this a typical problem with all the government departments? Critically analyse.**

**Approach:**

In this kind of case study rather than adapting a stakeholders approach it is necessary to adopt a solution oriented approach. You can introduce by briefing about the resistance to change or attitude of public servants towards change. In the main body part give clear and straightforward solutions to the problems/issues given in question.

**Introduction:**

While describing the benefits of change Charles Kettering an American inventor has said that "The world hates change, yet it is the only thing that has brought progress". Resistance to change is a natural reaction, especially in government sector. Change is uncomfortable and proposes new ways of thinking and doing in system. However, People don't fear change, though, they fear the unknown.

**Body:**

The present case showcases the transportation department employee's resistance to change and accept the much needed alternative of involving private sector participation which has been suggested by IT committee headed by IAS officer Abhishek.

Approach to solve the problem:

- Stephen King an American Author said that 'Resistance to change is proportional to how much the future might be altered by any given act'. In this context telling the staff about the benefits of having a specialist as a head of team and convincing the staff of no major changes in the work culture of the department and ensuring that their job security is maintained even after the new CEO's arrival.
- Informing the employees about the reasons and process for intended changes. It will tend to reduce fear and increase duty towards job, positivity among employees. Here, the new person's role as an expert can be highlighted which will bring enthusiasm and energy within department.
- Facilitating effective communication, besides getting actively involved in the change efforts, can result in reducing stiffness in the department. In fact,

employee participation is the greatest factor in reducing tensions due to new recommendations.

- Ensuring transparency: Maintaining the transparency by circulating the committee recommendations within the department and conveying the urgent need to implement the said recommendations for overall improvement of the department as the department needs to be flexible with the demand of time.
- Generalist Vs. Expert: It is necessary to highlight the lack of available expertise in the domain of existing officer cadre and the need to bring in private participation for the same as India has a developed IT industry which would provide much needed expertise for the government department's functioning.
- Altering the rigid attitude: Convincing the employees that the technological assimilation and modern work culture in the department would be difficult to achieve if the same attitude and practices are continued without due appraisal and study on their effectiveness.
- Achieving the objective: Implementing the committee's recommendation after the above due deliberations would help in achieving the goal of attaining a public services department serving the public effectively.

Whether problem is typical with all the government departments:

- Such a phenomenon is usually adjoined as a typical problem to all government departments as such an entry undermines the career progression avenues of existing civil servants and also hampers the employment opportunities of young aspirants looking to enter the famed civil services for a fulfilling career thus leading to resistance against it.
- The exposure and sensitivity to the country's complex socio-political milieu and to the needs of the common man, which widespread field experience provides to government servants, may not be available in the private sector since the private sector does not have the same width and depth of exposure to this type of field experience.
- Existing government servants also fear the issue of conflict of interest when it comes to entrants from the private sector which could jeopardise the functioning of the government.
- At the same time, the experience of domain level experts in Planning Commission and NITI Aayog as well as former Governors of RBI (Bimal Jalan and Raguram Rajan), Sam Pitroda (Head of many technology missions), etc. shows that many government departments can be receptive to this change.
- Further, there is growing realisation that the administrative problems at the implementation level (district, tehsil, panchayat) require intervention of specialists with domain expertise and not generalist who head the department in the capacity of Secretary. For instance, Chaavi Rajawat who earlier worked in the private sector chose to contest elections in her village and became a Sarpanch. She became an actor of change in her village as she implemented rainwater harvesting schemes, led people centric governance etc.

- The private sector can help catalyze the career civil servants to specialise in their chosen field. This will infuse much needed competition at the senior levels of management in the bureaucracy which is non-existent at present.
- Many other aspects of the issue also need to be considered too where the reservation aspect becomes important as neglect on this aspect may raise multiple questions which are of legal, political and social nature. Which will also question the appointments on the ground of 'quid pro quo', nepotism or favouritism.

**Conclusion:**

Private entry into government services is not a new idea but it has not been followed as an institutionalized practice earlier. It is expected that private entry in government will catalyze the rule bound bureaucracy to become the agents of change; a role which the founding fathers, like Sardar Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru, had envisaged for the civil services. This should be the ideal for Abhishek as an IAS while dealing with the present scenario i.e. to fulfil the ideals of founding fathers.

