



Conflict of Interest

A central University's governing body recently met up to shortlist candidates for the post of Vice Chancellor of the University. The outgoing Vice-Chancellor was also part of the panel. Incidentally, the wife of the Vice Chancellor who is also a member of the governing body was also part of the pool of candidates being considered for the post of Vice Chancellor.

In the given situation, Seven members of the governing body submitted a dissent note, questioning the ethics of the officiating vice-chancellor. The dissenters raised concerns about the morality of acting vice chancellor presiding over a meeting in which his wife was shortlisted for the position of vice-chancellor. The dissent note argues that this situation violates the principle of "Nemo iudex in causa sua" (no one should be a judge in their own case) and constitutes a conflict of interest.

Despite objections raised by two members of the Executive Council, the officiating vice-chancellor ruled in his own favor, justifying that there was no direct conflict because he was not contesting, and he and his wife are independent legal entities. The dissent note emphasizes the importance of adhering to the principle of impartiality and objectivity in the selection process of the vice-chancellor to ensure decisions are made without bias, whether real or perceived.

Is it ethically acceptable for an officiating vice-chancellor to preside over a meeting in which his spouse is a candidate for a prominent position, and how should institutions address potential conflicts of interest to maintain fairness and transparency in decision-making processes?

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