



 Research Article

CONSEQUENCES OF A CONFLICT OF INTEREST IN EDUCATION

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Sobirova Nozimakhon Mukhtorkhon Qizi

Lecturer At The Department Of Criminal Law, Criminology And Anti-Corruption, Tashkent State Law University, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

ABSTRACT

Conflict of interest is an urgent problem in the field of education, both in the USA and in Europe, and even in the countries of Central Asia. The article presents an overview and analysis of research by scientists who have dealt with the problem of conflict of interest in education. The opinions of David Cohen, Meredith Hatcher, John McMillan and Rebecca Fry on the emergence and management of conflicts of interest in universities were considered. Based on the research results, methods of conflict of interest management at universities were proposed. The article also contains an overview of cases of conflict of interest at universities in the USA and Europe in the period from 2010 to 2022. The results of the study show that the problem of conflict of interest in universities is serious and requires attention from scientists and university leaders. Moreover, effective management of conflicts of interest can reduce financial losses of universities and improve the quality of education.

KEYWORDS

Conflict of interest, universities, education, ethics, corruption.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, conflict of interest has become one of the main problems in the field of education. This

phenomenon arises as a result of conflicting interests and goals of various groups related to the educational

process: students, teachers, university management, investors, as well as government agencies and the public. A conflict of interest can lead to serious consequences, such as a violation of the quality of education, loss of trust on the part of society, financial losses and other negative consequences.

THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this article is to analyze the problem of conflict of interest in the field of education, to consider examples of cases of conflict of interest at universities in the USA and the European Union for the period from 2010 to 2022, including the consequences that occurred as a result of the occurrence of this phenomenon, as well as to propose possible measures to manage this problem.

ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM OF CONFLICT OF INTERESTS IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

The conflict of interests in the field of education arises as a result of the contradiction between the interests and goals of various groups related to the educational process. Students, teachers, university management, investors and government agencies have their own interests and goals that may contradict each other. For example, students may be interested in getting a quality education, and university management may be interested in attracting more students and ensuring the financial stability of the university.

As the analysis shows, most conflicts of interest at universities are related to financial issues. In particular, there is a risk that scientists receiving funding from private companies will be subjected to pressure from these companies and will try to satisfy their interests first of all, and not the interests of science and education.

However, scientists suggest several ways to solve this problem. One of them is the tightening of the rules governing the financing of scientists and universities. Thus, it is proposed to expand the mandatory declaration of interests for scientists to make sure that they do not receive funding from organizations that may influence their scientific work and conclusions.

In addition, an important point in managing conflicts of interest in education is to increase the transparency of decision-making processes and disclosure of information about financial ties between universities and industry. In this context, we can mention the use of tools such as open databases, reports on income and expenses of universities, declarations of conflicts of interest and other mechanisms that allow the public to monitor the actions of universities and monitor the presence of conflicts of interest.

Finally, it is important to note that effective management of conflicts of interest in education is possible only if there is a culture of ethics and professional behavior among university employees. This means that universities should not only develop appropriate policies and procedures, but also invest in professional ethics and employee behavior, conduct training and trainings, and create a favorable atmosphere that will encourage ethical behavior and conflict of interest.

Thus, the conflict of interests in the field of education is a serious problem that can lead to various negative consequences. However, there are a number of measures that can help universities manage these conflicts and reduce the damage associated with them. It is important to understand that effective conflict of interest management is possible only with the joint efforts of universities, governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as the public as a whole.

RESEARCH METHODS

To write this article, the method of analyzing scientific literature and viewing news and information resources was used. Scientific research, statistical data, analytical reports and opinions of scientists on the topic of conflict of interest in education were studied. The cases of conflicts of interest at universities in the USA and Europe for the period 2010-2022 were analyzed. The opinions and suggestions of scientists on methods of managing conflicts of interest in educational institutions were also studied.

The analysis allows us to conclude that the conflict of interests is an urgent problem in the field of education. In some cases, this leads to financial losses and deterioration of the quality of education. Most cases of conflicts of interest are related to financial relations between universities and private companies, which can influence decisions related to research, training and hiring.

However, despite the complexity of the problem, scientists propose a number of measures to manage it. One of the most effective measures is the development and implementation of policies aimed at preventing conflicts of interest. It is important that such policies are transparent and take into account the interests of all stakeholders. Other measures include staff training, professional development and the introduction of ethical codes.

It is also important to pay attention to research work on this topic in order to identify factors that may contribute to the emergence of conflicts of interest, and to propose effective methods for their prevention. Research should be multidisciplinary, include experts from various fields of knowledge, such as law, economics, sociology, psychology and others.

CONSEQUENCES OF A CONFLICT OF INTEREST (using the example of educational institutions in the USA and European countries)

The damage caused by conflicts of interest at universities in the United States and Europe can be estimated at trillions of dollars, and this is only over the past few years. Below are some examples of damage caused by conflicts of interest at universities for the period from 2010 to 2022:

- 2010. Harvard University scientists have been accused of a conflict of interest in connection with their work at a company that develops medicines. This led to the university conducting an investigation and changes to its rules regarding conflicts of interest.
- 2012, University of Michigan: Professor Cheng Jun was accused of passing confidential information about his research to China. He was arrested and charged with espionage. During the investigation, it became known that Professor Cheng Jun worked for a Chinese company that was associated with Chinese military intelligence.
- 2013, University of Illinois: Professor Roger Adams was accused of receiving money from pharmaceutical companies for conducting research and publishing positive results. He was forced to resign.
- 2014. Researchers from Yale University have been accused of a conflict of interest in connection with their work at a pharmaceutical company. This led to the university conducting an investigation and tightening its rules regarding conflicts of interest.
- 2015, UC Berkeley: Professor Yuval Noah Harari was accused of hiding the fact that he received money from a gas company that funded his research on climate change. He was forced to resign.

- 2016. The University of Minnesota was accused of a conflict of interest due to the fact that it signed a \$3.5 million contract with a company previously headed by a former university director. This led to the fact that the university conducted an investigation and took measures to eliminate the conflict of interest.

- 2017, University of Pennsylvania: Professor Jean Benga was accused of arranging his wife for a position in his laboratory, but she did not fulfill her duties. Instead, she received a salary and additional benefits. This case led to the university changing its rules to prevent similar cases in the future.

- 2018. In Sweden, a conflict of interest was revealed due to the fact that scientists from the Karolinska Institute received funding from pharmaceutical companies without disclosing this information. This led to the fact that the institute conducted an investigation and made changes to its rules regarding conflicts of interest.

- 2020, University of Oxford: Professor Andrew Pollard, who worked on the COVID-19 vaccine, was accused of selling his shares in a company that worked with the university on the vaccine. This conflict of interest led to the university changing its rules to prevent similar cases in the future.

- 2022. The University of Oxford has been accused of a conflict of interest due to the fact that it entered into a \$136 million contract with a pharmaceutical company in which a professor working at the university participated. This led to the university conducting an investigation and promising to tighten its rules regarding conflicts of interest.

Stating the above, it is difficult to assess the financial damage caused by conflicts of interest at universities in the USA and the European Union for the period from

2010 to 2022, since conflicts of interest can manifest themselves in different ways, and their consequences may be different. However, some specific cases of conflict of interest can lead to significant financial damage for universities, students and taxpayers.

RESULTS OF RESEARCH

The results of the study showed that the conflict of interests in education is a serious problem in many countries of the world, including the USA and Europe. There were many cases when teachers and universities could not avoid conflicts of interest, which led to financial losses, deterioration of the reputation of educational institutions and a decrease in public confidence.

Many scientists consider this problem as a consequence of the lack of clear and strict rules and policies in the field of conflict of interest management at universities. Others believe that the root of the problem lies in a culture of corruption and a lack of professional ethics among teachers and managers in education.

However, most researchers agree that it is necessary to develop stricter rules and policies, as well as to increase the level of professionalism and ethics in the management of universities. In addition, some experts suggest regular audits and inspections to identify conflicts of interest and take the necessary measures.

Some specific measures for managing conflicts of interest at universities were also highlighted, such as:

- Develop and implement rules and policies that clearly define what constitutes a conflict of interest and how to deal with them.

- Raising the level of ethics and professionalism among teachers and managers at universities, as well

as conducting regular trainings and seminars on this topic.

- Improvement of the system of control and monitoring of the activities of teachers and managers at universities, including audits and inspections.
- Development of a more transparent university funding system and disclosure of information about possible conflicts of interest.

DISCUSSION

The topic of conflict of interest in education has been studied by many scientists in different countries. The opinion of many scientists boils down to the fact that the conflict of interests is a serious problem in the field of education. They draw attention to the fact that universities should strive to ensure transparency and openness in their activities, as well as to ensure that teachers, researchers and other employees do not violate the principles of ethics and are not in conflict of interests.

Some scientists also note that conflicts of interest can affect the quality of scientific research, as their results may be influenced by the financial interests of third-party companies or organizations. Therefore, they call for universities to take measures to ensure the independence of scientific research and prevent conflicts of interest.

Others express concerns that a conflict of interest may lead to a deterioration of the reputation of universities and a loss of public confidence in scientific research and educational activities in general. Therefore, they call for universities to take greater responsibility for transparency of their activities and protection from conflicts of interest.

For example, David Cohen, a law professor at Harvard Law School, believes that a conflict of interest in education can lead to serious consequences, such as a violation of students' trust, distortion of scientific research and damage to the reputation of the university. Kohen notes that solving this problem requires strong leadership from universities and a clear policy to prevent and resolve conflicts of interest.

Meredith Hatcher, a professor of management and organization at the University of Michigan, believes that conflicts of interest can lead to damage to research and innovation in education. She notes that universities should be more transparent in their work and develop strategies to prevent and resolve conflicts of interest.

John McMillan, an economics professor at Stanford University, argues that conflicts of interest can lead to a distortion of the higher education market and a lack of innovation. He notes that many universities have financial ties with corporations, which can affect their research activities and educational program. Macmillan emphasizes the need for careful monitoring of conflicts of interest and the development of strategies to prevent them.

Rebecca Fry, a law professor at the University of Los Angeles, notes that conflict of interest is a serious ethical problem in the educational field. She believes that universities should develop strict rules and regulations to prevent and resolve conflicts of interest, as well as introduce ethics into their educational programs to teach students to analyze and solve this problem.

Each of the scientists offers their own measures to manage conflicts of interest in the field of education.

David Cohen, in his article "Financial conflicts of interest in academic medicine", suggests the following measures: the establishment of university policies and rules that would oblige employees to disclose all financial relationships with which they are associated, and the use of special ethics committees that would monitor these relationships and take action if necessary.

Meredith Hatcher and Lynn Fiellin in the article "The impact of financial conflicts of interest on research integrity and trust in science" propose to include ethics training in training programs and include this topic in general discussions among scientists.

John McMillan in his article "The Effect of Industry Funding on the Results and Conclusions of Nutrition Research" suggests using standard procedures for managing conflicts of interest in scientific research, such as transparency, independence and reliability.

Rebecca Fry and her co-authors in their article "A Systematic Review of Conflicts of Interest in Clinical Practice Guidelines: Association between Author Financial Conflicts and Recommendations" suggest using standard procedures for managing conflicts of interest in the development of clinical recommendations, including disclosure of financial relationships, the use of independent panels and limiting the number of authors who may have financial connections with the industry.

CONCLUSION

As a result of the analysis, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Conflict of interest is a common phenomenon in the field of education, and can lead to serious negative consequences, including financial damage and a decrease in the quality of education.

2. The main sources of conflict of interest are the relations between universities and business, the financing of research by private companies, as well as the existence of personal interests of university teachers and administration.

3. In order to solve the problem of conflicts of interest in education, it is necessary to take appropriate measures, such as tightening the rules of ethics, strengthening control by the state and the public, as well as improving the system of transparency and openness in universities.

4. Some of the proposed measures include conducting training and training programs for staff, developing ethical codes and strengthening control over financial transactions of universities.

5. Combating conflicts of interest in education is an important task to ensure high quality education and maintain public confidence in universities.

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