

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Certain Aspects of Combating Corruption in The Field of Education

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Abstract

This article examines the issues of implementing anti-corruption measures in educational institutions, as well as their significance in combating corruption. In particular, based on an analysis of the current legislation in the field of anti-corruption, the implementation of these measures in educational institutions under the relevant ministries of the republic is studied. Based on the analysis of the activities of educational institutions, anti-corruption measures have been examined. Due to the existence of appropriate oversight, special attention is paid to the importance of implementing each anti-corruption measure. In addition, the article highlights other measures that contribute to minimizing corruption factors in the activities of educational institutions.

KEY WORDS

Combating corruption, state, law, corruption, conflict of interest, measures, ministry, organization, decision, charter, educational institution, ethics.

INTRODUCTION

The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Combating Corruption," recognizing "the implementation of measures to prevent corruption in all spheres of state and public life" as one of the main directions of state policy in the field of combating corruption, also includes the prevention of offenses related to corruption in the field of education [1].

It is no exaggeration to note that in our country, along with other spheres, significant results have been achieved in combating corruption in the education system.

Some authors divide corruption in the education system into two levels - lower and higher. At the same time, the lowest level of corruption manifestation is understood as the process of education (admission to an educational institution, entrance examinations, taking interim and final examinations and tests, subsequent employment, etc.), the highest level is related to the system of accreditation, licensing of educational

institutions of any ownership, allocation of budget funds for financing the education system as a whole and specific educational institutions in particular [2]. Without questioning the proposed position, we believe it is also necessary to determine the average level of corruption that can occur in educational institutions, namely in the field of recruitment, verification of counterparties, public procurement, incentivizing employees, including the teaching staff, etc. Certainly, these corruption risks in one form or another also affect the educational process. Thus, the untimely payment of wages, the lack of material incentives in accordance with the legislation, undoubtedly contribute to the receipt of bribes from students.

Currently, in accordance with the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Education," preschool education and upbringing, general secondary and specialized secondary

education, vocational education, higher education, postgraduate education, retraining and advanced training of personnel, and extracurricular education are carried out in organizations of the education system (universities, academies, institutes, higher schools, academic lyceums, technical schools, etc.) [3].

Certainly, ensuring basic principles in the field of education and the right to education is directly related to the absence of corruption risks in this area. In this regard, based on international standards (ISO 37001:2016 "Anti-bribery management systems"), the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Combating Corruption" and other regulatory legal acts, tasks have been defined for the implementation of internal anti-corruption policies in educational institutions.

As a result, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Ministry of Sports of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Ministry of Preschool and School Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan (hereinafter referred to as the relevant ministries) have developed an anti-corruption policy, a conflict of interest management regulation, a code of ethics for employees, and other documents in the field of anti-corruption, implemented an internal (compliance) control system, and implemented anti-corruption measures, ensuring their implementation in subordinate educational institutions.

In particular, the Anti-Corruption Policy, being one of the main anti-corruption documents, is aimed at raising the level of anti-corruption culture among the teaching staff and employees, reflects adherence to high ethical standards, intolerance to corruption offenses and their prevention, and defines the main requirements and principles for preventing and suppressing corruption offenses.

An important anti-corruption measure is the posting on official websites of leaders' appeals regarding intolerance towards corruption, which reflects the educational institution's position on this issue. Thus, the appeals emphasize that all employees, regardless of their position and work experience, are obliged to comply with the organization's anti-corruption policy while performing their official duties, strictly adhere to its principles and requirements, and are prohibited from participating in any corrupt actions. Employees are obliged to inform their supervisor and the relevant anti-corruption unit of the ministry about any attempts to incite corruption offenses, as well as about any known facts of such offenses committed by other

employees. It also emphasizes the obligation to notify the immediate supervisor or responsible person about potential conflicts of interest.

It is known that in recent years, significant changes and additions have been made to national legislation, and new laws have been adopted. This, in turn, required the revision and updating of the anti-corruption policy of educational institutions (hereinafter referred to as the Policy), the provisions on conflicts of interest, the code of ethics of employees, as well as other documents providing for anti-corruption measures.

In particular, due to the adoption of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Conflict of Interest" and on the basis of relevant orders, the provisions on conflict of interest in the relevant ministries were revised [4]. Based on the requirements of this provision, employees, when performing their official duties, are obliged to prioritize the interests of citizens and the state over personal gain, to make decisions conscientiously and objectively, and to disclose information about potential and real conflicts of interest. It should be noted that the introduction of a KPI (Key Performance Indicators) system, which motivates employees to achieve the strategic goals of the educational institution, has had a positive impact on ensuring the interests of the educational institution.

In accordance with the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated July 6, 2021, No. PP-5177, a procedure for hiring based on an open competition with real-time testing via the Internet has been introduced in all educational institutions [5]. This, in turn, contributed to attracting qualified and experienced personnel. In particular, the heads of personnel services are carefully studying the documents of candidates, including information about close relatives, in order to comply with the requirements of Article 121 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which prohibits the joint service of relatives in state organizations. Candidates' questionnaire data are also being thoroughly studied to prevent localism and protectionism. In addition, employees are required to submit declarations on the presence or absence of a conflict of interest every year by January 15.

In order to prevent corruption risks and conflicts of interest in procurement, based on the requirements of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Public Procurement" [6], as well as the Regulation "On the Procedure for Organizing and Conducting Procedures Related to the Implementation of

Public Procurement," approved by the resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan [7], it is strictly established that the management and employees of the economic, accounting, and planning and finance departments of an educational institution are obliged to carry out their activities on the basis of the regulations for organizing and conducting procurement procedures, the regulations on the procurement commission, the instructions for checking participants in procurement procedures within the framework of public procurement, and other relevant documents. In particular, in order to prevent corruption risks from counterparties, the practice of including additional anti-corruption conditions in economic contracts has been introduced, which are advisory in nature for application by economic entities when concluding contracts [8].

As is known, the openness and transparency of the organization's activities play an important role in combating corruption. In this regard, in accordance with the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Openness of the Activities of State Authorities and Administration," information on the activities of educational institutions, including information on the procedure for admission to study, conducted tenders, and public procurement, is regularly published on official websites, which is also an effective mechanism for preventing corruption [9].

Based on the "Standard Rules of Ethics for State Civil Servants" approved by a resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers [10], as well as orders of relevant ministries, the rules of ethics for employees of educational institutions (code) have been revised and brought to the attention of all employees. This allowed for a significant reduction in violations of official ethics norms, which could subsequently escalate into corrupt actions. In addition, the introduction of electronic turnstiles at the entrance to educational institutions to monitor the arrival and departure time of employees also showed a positive effect.

To assess the effectiveness of the ongoing anti-corruption work, generalized reports are submitted annually to the anti-corruption departments of the relevant ministries in accordance with the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated January 12, 2022 No. PQ-81 [11], which undoubtedly also contributes to increasing the responsibility of educational institutions.

In preventing corruption, it is also important to identify and assess corruption risks in educational institutions, which is

carried out on the basis of the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Measures to Improve the Mechanisms for Eliminating Corruption Risks in the Sphere of Public Administration and Expanding Public Participation in this Sphere" [12] and the instructions of the relevant ministry. Specifically, based on a special methodology, corruption risks are identified and assessed annually, mandatorily until March 1st, which are included in the educational institution's corruption risk map, after which measures to eliminate them are developed [13]. The developed measures to eliminate corruption risks are reflected in the educational institution's anti-corruption program, indicating the implementation mechanism, deadlines, and responsible executors. Further, information is generated for the Electronic Register of Corruption-Risk Relations (E-anticor.uz) administered by the Anti-Corruption Agency of the Republic of Uzbekistan. In particular, based on the results of the rating assessment of the effectiveness of anti-corruption activities of bodies and institutions, including educational institutions, the Ministry of Justice ranked 19th among 102 state bodies and organizations and received a "good" rating.

It is fairly noted that the spread of corrupt practices in educational institutions contributes to a decrease in the quality of training specialists, their qualifications, the ability to create intellectual and innovative products, as well as the deformation of the legal consciousness of students, the formation of attitudes towards unlawful behavior, tolerance for various manifestations of corruption [14]. Therefore, along with the above measures, digitalization of university application processes, conducting entrance exams by the Agency for Assessment of Knowledge and Qualifications under the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation of the Republic of Uzbekistan, automated selection of tickets (questions) and audio and video recording, as well as the presence of several commission members at the exams play an important role in preventing corruption. The installation of video surveillance cameras in classrooms is also significant.

In order to form an intolerant attitude towards corruption among the teaching staff and employees of educational institutions, in accordance with the above-mentioned decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated July 6, 2021 No. PP-5177, based on the principle of "the vaccine of honesty," a system of regular training in special courses on combating corruption, conflicts of interest, and official ethics has been introduced. Thus, during the training sessions, the

teaching staff and employees of educational institutions improve their knowledge of the concept of corruption, corruption offenses and their essence, forms of manifestation of conflicts of interest, measures for their prevention, detection and settlement, as well as the legal consequences of allowing corruption and conflicts of interest and failure to report them, study the types of service ethics norms and the consequences of their non-compliance. Furthermore, in accordance with the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Measures to Implement a System of Continuous Improvement of the Knowledge of the Population and Civil Servants in the Field of Anti-Corruption," it has been established that candidates hired for the first time in educational institutions must undergo special training courses on the "Virtual Anti-Corruption Academy" electronic platform organized by the Anti-Corruption Agency of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Prosecutor General's Office [15].

Corruption risk reports are also important for preventing corruption. In this regard, contact information for reporting corruption facts (telephones, email, Telegram bot) has been posted on the official websites of all educational institutions.

Certainly, the anti-corruption measures being implemented in educational institutions meet modern requirements and serve the effective implementation of state policy in the field of combating corruption.

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