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Corruption, Bribery, and Extortion Subject Aid

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Description

A short guide to some key resources and readings on the topic of corruption, bribery, and extortion in STEM research and practice.

Body

A bribe is something given or offered to a person or organization in a position of trust to induce such a person to behave in a way inconsistent with that trust. As the philosopher C.E. Harris points out, offering a bribe is not the same as capitulating to extortion (that is, capitulating to a demand under coercion or intimidation). Bribes are paid to obtain something to which one does not have a right, such as a special advantage in awarding a contract. In contrast, extortion is paid to secure something to which one has a right, such as the return of expensive equipment one has legally brought into a country but which a corrupt customs official claims has been "lost". It may be ethically justified to pay extortion in some circumstances, such as delivering medicines to those gravely ill, even though it would be wrong to offer to pay a bribe.

Corruption is a broader concept than either bribery or extortion. When involving human action corruption often involves bribery or extortion, but it needn’t. It does

require dishonest or fraudulent conduct by an entity in a position to benefit from that dishonesty or fraudulent conduct. The conduct may be legal but nonetheless allows illegitimate privilege to the perpetrator or some entity the perpetrator wishes to benefit. In the research and educational systems, corruption may arise in numbers of ways. Grants or contracts involving scientific and engineering research or development may be awarded because of personal, political, or business connections that lie outside of the merits on which those awards should be made. Engineering projects and medical treatments are examples where corruption and bribery can extract a grave toll. The admissions process to education is another arena in which corruption can arise, creating social unrest and incompetence, as well as impaired institutions.

- "Glossary" Online Ethics Center for Engineering 1/31/2006 OEC Accessed under the entry “Bribe”: Thursday, July 28, 2016 www.onlineethics.org/glossary.aspx
- “Political Corruption.” *Wikipedia.* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_corruption. Accessed July 29, 2016.
- “Corruption.” *Wikipedia*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corruption. Accessed July 29, 2016.
- Miller, Seumas, "Corruption", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.) http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2016/entries/corruption/. Accessed July 29, 2016.

Subject Overviews

Evans, Gillian R., and David E. Packham. 2003. "Ethical issues at the university-industry interface: A way forward?" *Science and Engineering Ethics* 9, 1: 3-16.

The contents in this issue about “Corruption of scientific integrity? – The commercialization of academic science” arose from a conference in May 2001. The premise is that the recent combination of business culture and values into universities and research institutions is incompatible with the openness which scientific and all academic pursuit traditionally require. It results in problems over intellectual property and conflict of interest which have even led to corporate sponsors’ suppressing unfavorable results of clinical trials, to the

detriment of patients' health. Although there are those who see the norms of science developing to recognize the importance of instrumental science aiming at specific goals and of knowledge judged by its value in a context of application, none justifies the covert manipulation of results by vested interest. Public awareness of these problems is growing and creating a climate of opinion where they may be addressed. The authors suggest a way forward by the introduction of nationally and internationally-accepted guidelines for industrial collaboration which contain proper protections of the core purposes of universities and of the independence of their research. Some codes suggested for this purpose are discussed. Some universities are moving to adopt such codes of conduct, but the authors argue for strong support from the government through its funding bodies.

Ziman, John. 2002. "The continuing need for disinterested research." *Science and Engineering Ethics* 8, 3: 397-399.

For scientific knowledge to be trustworthy, it needs to be dissociated from material interests. Disinterested research also performs other important non-instrumental roles. In particular, academic science has traditionally provided society with reliable, imaginative public knowledge and independent, self-critical expertise. But this type of science is not compatible with the practice of instrumental research, which is typically proprietary, prosaic, pragmatic and partisan. With ever-increasing dependence on commercial or state funding, all modes of knowledge production are merging into a new, 'post-academic' research culture which is dominated by utilitarian goals. Growing concern about conflicts of interest is thus a symptom of deep-seated malaise in science and medicine.

Ziman, John. 2003. "Non-instrumental roles of science." *Science and Engineering Ethics* 9,1: 17-27

Nowadays, science is treated as an instrument of policy, serving the material interests of government and commerce. Traditionally, however, it also has important non-instrumental social functions, such as the creation of critical scenarios and world pictures, the stimulation of rational attitudes, and the production of enlightened practitioners and independent experts. The transition from academic to 'post-academic' science threatens the performance of these functions, which are inconsistent with strictly instrumental modes of knowledge

production. In particular, expert objectivity is negated by entanglement with political and commercial interests. We cannot go back to the old academic model for science, but need to consider how to maintain its vital non-instrumental roles.

Ambraseys, Nicholas, and Roger Bilham. 2011. "Corruption kills." *Nature* 469, 7329: 153-155.

On the anniversary of Haiti's devastating quake, Nicholas Ambraseys and Roger Bilham calculate that 83% of all deaths from building collapse in earthquakes over the past 30 years occurred in countries that are anomalously corrupt. https://www.nature.com/articles/469153a. Accessed July 29, 2016.

Policy or Guidance

Committee on Anti Corruption (CAC) – http://www.wfeo.org/stc_anticorruption/

The Committee on Anti-Corruption (CAC) is a Standing Committee of the World Federation of Engineering Organizations with the purpose of engaging the worldwide engineering community in the global efforts to fight corruption. Accessed on July 29, 2016.

Bibliography

Laas, Kelly. 2010. OEC Engineering and legal issues bibliography. https://onlineethics.org/cases/engineering-and-legal-issues-bibliography. Accessed October 19, 2016.

This bibliography covers a number of legal issues that arise in engineering. It includes subsections on Animal Subjects, The Bidding Process, Bribery and Extortion, Accessible Design, Environmental Laws, Expert Witnesses, Intellectual Property & Patents, Human Subjects in Research, Product Liability, Public Safety, and Standards.

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