Penala sacked but not silenced academics who also claim to have suffered after falling foul of their local power networks.

Among the stories (which he hopes to collate into another book) is that of Jorge Lirola Delgado, professor of Arabic and Islamic studies at the University of Almeria. He says he was suspended last November for four years and three months after reporting the university rector, Pedro Roque García, to the local chief prosecutor, Antonio Pérez Gallegos, for alleged criminal offences. According to Lirola, the rector then acted as “judge and jury” and found that he had acted with “serious disregard for superiors” and had caused “serious injury to the dignity of the staff or administration” of Almeria.

Lirola also claims to have spent more than 200 hours waiting to be seen by the chief prosecutor, while a legal challenge to his suspension

will not come to court until summer 2013.

In the meantime, he is entitled to neither salary nor unemployment benefit, he says.

“Is this how justice functions in Spain,” he told THE. “Nobody but a judge can alter the decision of a rector, and my case will not be heard until more than two years after the events occurred.”

The university did not respond to a request for comment.

Stories also abound of alleged financial misconduct by senior officials in Spanish universities. One example, reported by Spanish newspapers in February, concerns the former rector of the Complutense University of Madrid, Carlos Berroza Alonso-Martínez. He was accused by his local authority of “grave irregularities” over the construction of houses and the passing of “impossible invoices”, such as one for 57 car journeys to Athens by a researcher and another for 1,700 (£1,130) in wine for a science programme.

See no evil

While coming down hard on those who dare speak out against them, the Spanish university positions are won in a manner of non-meritocratic and unethical practices among members, while coming down hard on those who dare speak out against them.

According to Spanish education analyst José Penala, 98 per cent of Spanish university positions are won by internal candidates selected by their academic colleagues. The flow of personnel between local politics and senior university management means that these professors, in turn, are often in hock to political interests, he claims.

“This means that only the more politically servile get promoted,” he says.

Penala has been subjected by the University of Murcia after he went to court in 2007 to obtain a chair in education that he says had been earmarked for a less-qualified academic who was a friend of Murcia’s rector, José Antonio Cobacho Gómez.

Penala was sacked for alleged absenteeism shortly after the book was published. He is challenging the dismissal in court, but expects the case to drag on for some time.

A Murcia spokesman denies that the disciplinary action had anything to do with the book.

Touching a nerve

Since publishing Corruption in the University, Penala has been contacted by a large number of Spanish academics who claim to have suffered after falling foul of their local power networks.

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