

Etico – UNESCO’s online gateway to corruption in education

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Research on corruption in the education sector is scattered across the internet, concealed behind paywalls and locked in the desk drawers of public officials, making researching the topic unwieldy and time consuming. A new version of [Etico](#) – a database launched in 2014 and updated in September 2017 – sets out to address these challenges by providing a single portal for research on corruption, integrity and education.

Literally meaning ‘ethical’ in Spanish, *Etico* is hosted by UNESCO’s Paris-based International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), and brings together the latest research, open source data, and instruments for promoting the ethical delivery of education. The [aim](#) is to combat corruption in education through knowledge-gathering and analysis, provide capacity building services, and create a site for information exchange. The portal also aligns with three key SDG goals: SDG 4, which promotes improved access to and opportunities for quality education; SDG 16, which calls for the creation of accountable institutions; and SDG 17, which seeks to strengthen global partnerships.

The site also has a more practical orientation: to help identify corruption risks. It features a database of diagnostic tools, including Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PETS), integrity assessments, and indicators on the level of corruption in education systems. It also hosts a reference library of over 650 online publications, reports from fifty countries around the world, and links to analysis from sources such as the World Bank and the OECD. It encourages academics and practitioners to share their research via an online blog, and featured posts include an [analysis](#) of the impact of integrity pledges on student cheating and a tri-annual bulletin on ethics and education corruption developments. It also reportedly [offers](#) an enhanced search function.

Overall, the site is a welcome resource for policy makers and practitioners. It provides an easy-to-navigate site on corruption in the education sector, and is the only resource focusing exclusively on these issues that we are aware of – although there are a number of other education [portals](#) available. It also draws attention to a sometimes under-studied subject. While the economic impact of corruption on society’s most vulnerable is well documented, the effect of corruption on the education sector is less so. This is despite the detrimental impacts corruption can have on education: in some countries, bribery is an unfortunate but [necessary condition](#) for accessing education services; in others, education systems are characterized by ghost-teachers, admissions fraud, and a culture of examination answer-sharing.

But those working on PNG and the Pacific will be disappointed. At the time we reviewed the site there were few references to corruption and education systems in the region, and there did not appear to be any reports exclusively focused on Pacific countries – in part reflecting a lack of research in the region. Of the six resources wholly focused on PNG (under the ‘Country’ filter in the [drop-down menu](#)), three were dead links and two landed on Transparency International’s home page. While it is perhaps unreasonable to expect Etico to monitor the content of third party websites (and the site uses a disclaimer to this effect), it is not unreasonable to expect better use of hyperlinks. (There are browser extensions that can monitor for ‘link rot’).

There were also key resources missing from the site. These are the 2004 National Research Institute (NRI) and World Bank’s Papua New Guinea: Public Expenditure and Service Delivery [Report](#) [PDF] and the NRI and Development Policy Centre’s 2014 Lost Decade? [Report](#) [PDF]. Both feature evaluations of “ghost teachers”, subsidy leakage, and gaps in school level financial information. Before publishing this blog, we contacted Etico to suggest they include these, and to highlight the flaws in the ‘Country’ filter search function. To their credit, they have since removed all incorrect references to PNG under the country filter – although there are now no PNG-specific references at all.

The site is a worthwhile idea, and providing opportunities for researchers and policymakers to become more involved in blogging and resource sharing is a good initiative. But Etico is not yet a 'one stop shop' for all things related to corruption and education, particularly for the Pacific and PNG. While the administrators are looking to [improve the site](#), in its present form, a Google search may be more rewarding.