

The Correlation between the Strength of Acceptable Use Policies and Internet Abuse in the Pennsylvania School Systems

Work In Progress

Albert Fundaburk¹

Business Education/Business Information Systems, Bloomsburg University

Bloomsburg, PA 17815

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¹ afundabr@bloomu.edu

As computers became more prevalent in the classroom, schools recognized the need for a written document that defined the ground rules for computer use by both students and teachers. These written documents became known as “Acceptable Use Policy” or AUP. Historically, AUPs regulates user behavior and defines certain logistical and mechanical needs. According to Reilly (2002) “We need to set policy so that “things” out on the Web that are supportive of a school’s educational goals are identified and utilized to their maximum” (Reilly, 2000). For the most part the rules of behavior for using the Internet are no different then the basic rules of school behavior, calling someone a jerk by email is no different than calling this same person a jerk using a hand written note. Reilly (2002) also notes that AUPs are meant to convey the idea that the computer systems and the network are to be used for school work. It is when not used for school work that the chances for abuse increase (Reilly, 2000).

To be successful schools must have in place a policy that protect against access through such computers to visual depictions that are; obscene; child pornography; or harmful to minors: and is enforcing the operation of such technology protection measure during any use of such computers by minors. Wolinsky (2002) recommends school AUPs include the following criteria to be considered strong acceptable use policies:

- 1) Define the purpose of your computer network for “educational use.”
- 2) Include disclaimers to limit district liability.
- 3) Define district responsibilities.
- 4) Explain discipline procedures.

- 5) Describe the process of supervision, monitoring, search and seizure, and retention of records.
- 6) Explain how the Internet is used in the school under the rights of free speech and copyright.
- 7) Include a description of your Internet filter.
- 8) Define e-mail policies and procedures and other direct electronic communication.
- 9) Include statements about plagiarism, copyright infringement and respect for privacy of others.
- 10) Define systems security and resource limits.
- 11) Include how your school will protect student confidentiality and privacy(Wolinsky, 2002).

Keng, Fiona, and Limei (2002) surveyed three groups of organizations; educational institutions, Internet Service Providers (ISPs), and non-ISPs to determine guidelines on acceptable use policies and abuses. They have compiled a list of eight definitions of types of internet abuse that are applicable to educational institutions: 1) general e-mail abuse, 2) unauthorized usage and access, 3) copyright infringement/plagiarism, 4) newsgroup posting, 5) transmission of confidential data, 6) pornography, 7) hacking, and 8) non-work related download/upload (Keng, 2002). This research will perform a rigorous review of Pennsylvania school systems and provide an answer to the following questions:

- 1) Do the schools in Pennsylvania have an acceptable use policy that meets the requirements of CIPA?
- 2) Is there a relationship between Pennsylvania school systems acceptable use policies and internet abuse?

Methodology

This research will perform a rigorous review of Pennsylvania school systems and provide an answer to the following questions:

- 1) Do the schools in Pennsylvania have an acceptable use policy that meets the requirements of CIPA?
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This question will be answered by a survey of (#) Pennsylvania schools technology professionals. Using empirical methods the goal of this research was to determine if Pennsylvania schools have a viable AUP meeting the requirements of CIPA, and the relationship between these AUPs and Internet abuse based on Kengs (2002) eight definitions.

Data collection will be accomplished by using sampling survey research. Two surveys will be developed. The survey for acceptable use policies questions will be developed from Wolensky (2002); 1) Does your AUP define the purpose of your computer network for “educational use”; 2) Does your AUP include disclaimers to limit

district liability; 3) Does your AUP define district responsibilities; 4) Does your AUP explain discipline procedures; 5) Does your AUP describe the process of supervision, monitoring, search and seizure, and retention of records; 6) Does your AUP explain how the Internet is used in the school under the rights of free speech and copyright; 7) Does your AUP include a description of your Internet filter; 8) Does your AUP define e-mail policies and procedures and other direct electronic communication; 10) Does your AUP include statements about plagiarism, copyright infringement and respect for privacy of others; 11) Does your AUP define systems security and resource limits: and 12) Does your AUP include how your school will protect student confidentiality and privacy.

These questions relating to the AUP criteria will use a four point verbal frequency scale as follows: 1) fully, 2) somewhat, 3) don't know, and 4) not at all. The following points were assigned to the scale to facilitate statistical analysis: fully (4 points), somewhat (3 points), don't know (2 points), and not at all (1 point).

The second survey will use data relating to Internet abuse as defined by Keng (2002); 1) our school has encountered general e-mail abuse during the past school year; 2) our school has encountered unauthorized usage and access during the past school year; 3) our school has encountered copyright infringement/plagiarism during the past school year; 4) our school has encountered newsgroup posting during the past school year; 5) our school has encountered transmission of confidential data during the past school year; 6) our school has encountered pornography during the past school year; 7) our school has encountered hacking during the past school year; 8) our school has encountered copyright non-school related download/upload during the past school year; and 9) our school has encountered non-school use of the Internet during the past school year.

These questions relating to the Internet abuse will use a six point interval frequency scale as follows: 1) Over 100 occurrences; 2) 75 to 99 occurrences; 3) 50 to 74 occurrences 4) 25 to 49 occurrences; 5) 0 to 24 occurrences; and 6) don't know . The following points were assigned to the scale to facilitate statistical analysis: Over 100 occurrences (6 points), 75 to 99 occurrences (5 points), 50 to 74 occurrences (4 points), 25 to 49 occurrences (3 point), 0 to 24 occurrences (2 points), and don't know (1 point).

The pilot surveys will be analyzed to identify errors in form or presentation, or identify shortcomings within the questions. Upon finishing the survey, the committee members will be interviewed individually to ascertain their reaction and comments.

Validity will be evaluated by using a panel of 18 experts, drawn randomly from the population of school information technology professionals, who are considered to have knowledge of school AUPs by virtue of their job position.

In the reliability phase the survey will be distributed to a random sample of the population and tested for split-half reliability. The instrument will be deemed to be reliable based on the split-halves method. Using Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to perform the split-halves computation the following results were noted:

The survey will be made available on a secure Web server using forms developed using Microsoft FrontPage®. The responses from these forms were sent to a database on the Web server. Responses will be tracked using randomly assigned Personal Identification Numbers (PINs). At the conclusion of data collection all references relating

PINs to e-mail addresses were deleted in compliance with Bloomsburg University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements.

The results of this research should answer the questions: 1) Do the schools in Pennsylvania have an acceptable use policy that meets the requirements of CIPA? And 2) Is there a relationship between Pennsylvania school systems acceptable use policies and internet abuse?

Reference List

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