

Internet Ethics and Education in Japan

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Plan

- Backgrounds:
 - A brief history of “Internet and schools” in Japan
 - Ethical issues related to computers and network chronologically reviewed
- Problems:
 - What has to be taught in school about the Internet?
 - Is the Internet ethically different from the real world?
- Tentative answers and current perspectives:
 - Professional ethics in higher and vocational education
 - No “Internet Ethics”
 - Information ethics as consumer education
 - Deeper impacts of Internet on schools

A brief history of “Internet” in Japan(1)

- From mid-1980s
 - Experimental networks among universities and laboratories
 - Mixed cultures: UNIX and Internet
- Through mid-1990s
 - Most universities connected cooperatively and through a centrally funded network
 - Primary and secondary schools experimentally connected by way of university networks
 - No awareness of the Internet in the society

A brief history of “Internet” in Japan(2)

- From 1996
 - The Internet “Big Bang” in 1996 under the influence of the US’s NII
 - First came “digital library,” then e-commerce
 - “All schools connected to Internet”
 - Shift of leadership from academic to commercial
- Now
 - Homes more connected than schools
 - Cellular phones more used than Internet
 - Cellular phones and Internet are one

**Sea Change over 10 years
from technology to humans and values**

Ethical Issues reviewed chronologically

- 1980s
 - Professional ethics in computer industry
 - Intellectual property rights of “programs”
 - Data protection
- After 1990s
 - “Internet Ethics”
 - Do’s and don’ts / Good and evil on the Internet
 - Unauthorized access / “hacker” ethics
 - “Indecent content” on the Web (CDA, Filtering, ...)
 - Anonymity in communication
 - Privacy, Security, Biometric identification
 - Intellectual property rights of “data”

So what are problems in school?

- Internet has changed and will change
 - how to teach the conventional subjects
 - more advanced methods of presentation available
 - methods of search for information (from books to the Web)
 - what to teach besides the conventional subjects
 - how to use the Internet
 - how to behave on the Internet
- Colleges and schools had to know
 - the new methods
 - the new subjects

How new is the Internet?

- When introducing Internet to colleges and schools
 - the “how to use” part was easy, even easier now
 - the “how to behave” part was not easy
 - “Netiquette”: how to use the limited resources on the net, how to avoid nuisances on the net, what are acceptable behaviors, **BUT These are NOT ETHICS!**
 - Indeed, the resources increased dramatically. Annoyance is culture dependent (letter writing).
 - These are just Do’s and Don’ts, disciplinary corrections at best
 - So, nothing to teach?

If “netiquette” is no ethics, what is to be taught as ethics?

- Is obligation/duty different on the net than in the real world?
 - NO. The concept of obligation remains the same, Only some “acts” are yet to define in terms of value (unauthorized access as opposed to trespass, indecency as opposed to obscenity, filtering as censure)
- The “anonymous” nature of Internet communication
 - Really anonymous? trust without facing each other
 - Anonymity is necessary for democracy

What we see is confusion over

- the nature of the acts newly discovered and defined
- reallocation of the concepts which have been used, which will still have to be used but which we are not sure how to apply to currently emerging events
- to what extent colleges and schools are responsible for the students' acts and their consequences on the net
- and in general what humans are like in knowledge society from value point of view

So people generally agree now

- that teaching professional ethics is important for ICT engineers in higher education institutions,
- that there is no urgent need to introduce special moral codes for the activities on the net,
- but that teaching information ethics as consumer education is urgently called for, but more importantly
- that **2 deeper problems** are there to think about the coming knowledge society

Information ethics

as consumer education

- Students should be learn to decide for themselves about what will be new in future as impacts of IT technology on human society
- Students must be able to try to protect their rights on their own (cf. the case of biometric identification and IC card registration)
- For these goals, students must be taught what it is like to be a “wise consumer” in the IT society
- No more do’s and don’s but **KNOWLEDGE and the sense of balance and tradeoff**

Deeper Problem 1

- Cellular phone situation in Japanese schools
 - more than 80% of high school students live with phones, through which in turn to live on the net
 - more than half of typically provincial junior high school students owns phones
- Neither mail nor WWW will not be new soon
- Consequently
 - Ethics must be first taught at home rather than in school
 - What is school expected to teach students, then?

Even deeper problem 2

- Irony is
 - Connecting schools to Internet for promotion of education might be now resulting in reconsideration of “modern” school system in Japan
 - “home situation” is more advanced than “school situation” at least in the field of ICT
 - No place for school in knowledge society!?!?
- So no conclusion but just questions
 - So we are doing research: JSPS-supported 5-year information ethics project and MEXT-supported 5-year project on social aspects of information security etc.