Chapter 24
The Protection Policy for Youth Online in Japan

Nagayuki Saito
Ochanomizu University, Japan

Madoka Aragaki
Business Breakthrough University, Japan

ABSTRACT

The OECD committee adopted the Recommendation on the Protection of Children Online in February 2012. It recommended establishing an appropriate online environmental policy for children based on actual data. Arising from the international movement, the Internet Literacy Assessment Indicator for Students (ILAS) and its tests were developed; this tool aims to ensure safe and secure internet use among 15-year-old students. This chapter analyzes national research data from ILAS to explore the relationship between students' backgrounds and online literacy. The results have revealed several political challenges, including the need for policies on educational awareness in low literacy areas, regional literacy differences, and the need to support children in learning to avoid risk.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Internet use among young people has been associated to various social problems in many different countries. Examples include miscommunication by text, billing fraud, access to illegal content, and contact with ill-intentioned people. Especially in Japan, the use of smartphones has spread very rapidly among teenagers and young adults since 2012, generating tremendous changes in their online environment. These changes have triggered the abovementioned problems.

To tackle these problems, "the Act on the Development of an Environment that Provides Safe and Secure Internet Use for Young People" (Act No. 79 of 2008) was enforced in April 2009 in Japan. Because Article 3 defines the skills needed to use the Internet efficiently, it is important to empower teenagers and young people to develop risk management skills by using Internet effectively.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7492-7.ch024

For this reason, it is crucial to optimize educational policy to meet the needs of young people. Doing so will require criteria on which to review the current policy. It is also important to evaluate the Internet literacy of teenagers and young people, and to reform educational policy and its implementation to reflect the results of this assessment.

This study aims to develop ILAS, the Internet Literacy Assessment Indicator for Students, making it a more effective and visible tool for developing young people's coping skills, reducing their online risks, and enabling them to use the Internet more safely. This indicator will be evidence based and designed to optimize educational policy; it can play an important role as a decision-making system for designing effective educational policy.

BACKGROUND

Review of Evidence Based Policy Making

OECD (2012a) advised all stakeholders to reduce online risks and provide a safer Internet environment. This recommendation obliges every stakeholder to provide a safer online environment for teenagers and young people. To provide effective protection, it is important to implement a youth protection policy at every level of government, as well as in the private sector and educational organizations. Without clear role definitions, it will be difficult to implement a concrete protection policy.

The most effective way to solve these problems is to think about each problem separately, clarifying the political tasks each sector should deal with. One tactic that can help to achieve this is to adopt an Evidence Based Policy (EBP).

An EBP is an approach derived from Evidence Based Medicine; it was proposed by Gordon Guyatt at Manchester University in Canada (Tsutani 2000). EBP is used in areas such as social policy, educational policy, and welfare policy (Sowaki 2010). The OECD (2007) has argued that EBP-based policy making enables people and organizations to choose clear and simple evidence from among many options. EBP has been widely adopted in various policy areas for evidence based policy making.

Nishimura (2005) pointed out that evidence should be based on "objective and politically neutral statistical indicators." Such evidence would gain public understanding and help to establish trust between government and society (OECD 2004). In addition, the OECD (2012) has emphasized the need to set indicators as metrics of the evidence, allowing people to visualize the actual condition of each political area.

From these discussions, it seems clear that EBM can be effective in supporting rational decision making for effective educational policy implementation. One key measure to promote the policy will involve establishing an indicator to evaluate the evidence.

Review of the Indicators Adopted in Each Educational Policy Area

In reviewing previous studies related to EBP, this section will focus on studies carried out at the level of government. Examples include the "Flash Eurobarometer" implemented for EU member countries and the "Fact-finding Survey on Young People's Online Usage Environment" carried out by the Japanese Cabinet Office. In addition, this study will clarify the differences between these earlier studies and ILAS, touching on the social and academic impact of this study.