DATA PRIVACY AWARENESS AMONG TEACHERS: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

by:
CLARENCE S. ESTELLA
Teacher I, Alasasin Elementary School

The Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 restructured the Philippine educational system by extending basic education to twelve years, aiming to produce graduates equipped with essential competencies, skills, and values for lifelong learning and employability. In line with global standards, the Department of Education emphasized the development of information, media, and technology skills, along with communication, innovation, and life skills, through learner-centered pedagogical approaches such as constructivist, inquiry-based, reflective, collaborative, differentiated, and integrative strategies (Aminian, 2021).

Winthrop Yu (2023) draws attention to the expanding privacy concerns in the digital age, as companies collect and utilize people's data without their express agreement, frequently without the individuals' knowledge. Unexpected uses of this data could impact career prospects and financial stability. Media and social media are essential for protecting personal information since inappropriate posting can permanently damage the reputations and private lives of data subjects. International data protection standards are adhered to, and the National Privacy Commission oversees the implementation of the Data Privacy Act of 2012. The Internet has transformed many areas, offering opportunities for education and learning, but also highlighting the potential for misuse and neglect of student data.

Due to these modifications, the role of teachers has altered to accommodate the needs of learners of the 21st century. Just as Elgharnah and Ozdamli (2020) state, teachers have indeed become technology experts, facilitators, collaborators, and lifelong learners.

Consequently, this transformation was more pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic, when education transitioned from physical classrooms to virtual platforms at a rapid pace. It is worth noting that online classes have enabled different and new ways of instruction delivery, such as video conferencing, simulations, interactive databases, and digital collaboration; however, they have also surfaced some major cybersecurity issues. A report by Kaspersky highlights the threats that online learning environments face. Such threats comprised riskware, adware, and Trojans, which reflected the vulnerabilities of online learning environments.

In such a situation, it became essential for teachers to be aware of the security of data and the risks associated with cybercrime. The Data Privacy Act of 2012 was enacted to ensure the right to privacy and communication, while also promoting innovation and accountability in the handling of personal data. However, there are findings that teacher awareness regarding data privacy issues is minimal, as the occurrence of legal threats is often overlooked in traditional teaching contexts (Scoular, 2020). This misunderstanding of the problem may lead to unintentional acts of violation and, consequently, to lawsuits that put schools at risk of institutional liability.

There is no doubt that raising the level of data privacy among teachers is the right approach in both policy and practice. The policies must only go as far as setting compliance with the Data Privacy Act as a key mandate and also incorporating training programs aimed at increasing teachers' understanding of online security, risk management, and the responsible use of digital platforms. The public's awareness of the four key aspects of security, sources of information, vulnerability management, and the use of safe software can help achieve the goal of safer and more responsible online interaction. Finally, the Philippine education system is deeply involved in technology and e-learning; hence, teachers must be adequately prepared with a strong data privacy outlook, which is necessary to protect students, support institutional professionalism, and ensure that education remains secure in the digital era.

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