Chapter 12

The Development and Assessment of e-Learning Content to Enhance Information Literacy of Parents and Children in Japan

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Seeking a safer Internet environment for minors, the Japanese government enacted a new law in 2008 to promote both protective measures and empowerment activities. "Mobami," one of the e-learning programs developed under the act, is an outcome of a public-private partnership. The program seeks to enhance the mobile literacy and information morals of children and parents. Mobami is a free online interactive program composed of three parts: self-learning materials and quizzes for children, a self-check program for assessing parents' information literacy, and a rulemaking support tool for children and parents. The access data analysis shows that using

events to promote Mobami had a positive effect on expanding its usage. The rule-making data analysis indicates that Mobami is used as a supportive tool for setting basic rules. The linkage and feedback between formal and non-formal learning programs is necessary for the realization of a safer Internet environment.

INTRODUCTION

The 3G Service Usage of Minors in Japan

The penetration rate of third generation (3G) mobile data service in Japan has reached more than 90%, ahead of other counties. Japan also ranked first in the rate of growth of its mobile service market in the early 2000s and is known for the variety of its available services, such as mobile games, social services, and payment services. The institution of an affordable mobile data service with a fixed monthly fee boosted the usage of mobile services by both adults and minors at the early stage of 3G usage in Japan (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2010).

Minors in Japan regard their mobile phones as indispensable for their daily lives. According to a study by the Cabinet Office conducted in 2009, the average penetration rates for cellular phones among minors in elementary, junior high, and high schools were 31.3%, 57.6%, and 96.0%, respectively. Furthermore, the penetration rate of mobile Internet usage among minors using cellular phones was high: 79.6% for elementary school students, 97.6% for junior high school students, and 99.4% for high school students (Cabinet Office, 2009).

Challenges to the Minor's Usage of Mobile Service in Japan

Mobile Internet use by teenagers can also become a hotbed for interpersonal online communication problems such as defamation and "net bullying." Due to a lack of understanding of the public nature of the Internet, some children slander their teachers and friends on forum sites, especially in so-called "underground school" forum sites (Shimoda, 2008).

Additionally, some minors have had online contact with criminals and have even been victimized as a result of such contact. The National Police Agency reported that the number of casualties that had arisen via Internet services such as Social Networking Services (SNSs) and profile-sharing services increased by 43.4% in 2009 compared to the previous year (National Police Agency, 2010, p. 7). Thus, the rapid growth of mobile service and the inadequate social rules for usage have caused trouble for users, and the number of crimes in which minors were involved and victimized increased in the mid-2000s (Akiyoshi, Koyabu, Tanaka, & Yamaguchi, 2008).

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