

Discussion - Internet in Education

Describe one or two of the pitfalls of Internet use in education. Give your reasons as to why you believe these are pitfalls and explain how a teacher can help students overcome these identified pitfalls.

During my research to answer this discussion question, I found a statement made by Gourley (2007) in which he considered using the Internet as one of the most dangerous daily activities a person can do. Initially, I chuckled for what I thought it was an exaggerated statement since there are other activities that we often do that are more dangerous than using the Internet. After thorough reflection, I realized the relative truth of his statement when recollecting one of my greatest concerns when using this tool: my privacy. According to Jones (2003), "The Internet has become a window into our inner lives, a tool for both private market and public authorities to find out more about us" (para. 12). In other words, it is most likely that someone has already invaded our privacy when using the Internet.

Hofstetter (2006) stated that the names of many Internet users are probably listed at switchboard.com or people.yahoo.com without their knowledge. Vara (2008) reported how Facebook, Google Inc., and Sears Holdings Corp. released information (without consent) to their members' friends and acquaintances of their online activities such as online purchases or articles they read. Steffenhagen (2008) mentioned the case of a school principal that was suspended from his duties and was publicly embarrassed after a parent gained access to his private and personal website, which contained nude pictures from a vacation trip that he was only sharing with family and friends. Giffen, (2008) reported a story of a police officer who followed a teen around simulating to be a stalker and teaching a lesson to the teen of how dangerous is posting personal information in social network sites (e.g. My Space, Facebook, etc.). I had the unfortunate experience that one of my students gained unauthorized access to my personal website and changed its content from math topics to sexual defamations. Currently, I am constantly receiving spam e-mails and online ads that are advertising online college degrees from different institutions, which I have inferred this is a consequence of my frequent use of the Internet for educational purposes. In other words, my online habits or activities have been recorded by spywares, cookies or web bugs, which Hofstetter (2006) pointed out to be threatening ways of invading Internet users' privacy.

Roblyer (2006) stated that the Internet is reflecting every aspect of our society. As we educate our children and students to confront the difficulties and dangers that they will face in society, we need to do similarly with the Internet. Parents and teachers need to create awareness of why is important to protect our privacy and to provide information of ways to protect against those who try to invade it. What we do in our private and personal moments is nobody business.

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