

What are the Political Implications of the Acceptable Use Policy?

Jaden Martin

Old Dominion University

CYSE 425W: Cyber Strategy and Policy

Professor Bora Aslan

October 16th, 2024

Politicians often utilize multiple forms of security and policies to create opportunities for themselves as well as benefit their overall ideas and mindsets. One of those policies they may utilize is the Acceptable Use Policy. The more common implications and implementation of the Acceptable Use Policy is through the digital space, where certain laws and rights may be halted or eradicated due to the dimensions of the policy itself.

One example is the way AUP's can restrict certain freedoms, such as freedom of speech or freedom of press. Within the confines of an AUP, guidelines that would tend to prevent harm to the user can do the opposite. Whether this means that a user cannot speak upon an upcoming election due to a politician using that company as a sponsor, or that the organizations AUP's default individuals' speech and opinions to different things. Along with this, policymakers can use AUP's to manage their personnel without focusing on them themselves. Organizations such as schools and businesses excel at implementing AUP's to set boundaries on what may or may not occur in their organization. An example of this is from the American University of Paris Acceptable Use Policy (2023), where it states in their AUP that "Disputes pertaining to freedom of expression will be examined on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the University's documents of faculty, staff and student governance" (p. 1). This sets a guideline exhibiting actions against the freedom of speech from students or faculty, exerting heavy consequences depending on the circumstances involved. Another instance of this is when PayPal had to alter their AUP to combat prior stipulation of anti-free speech (McHenry et al., 2022). They had to address a situation in which a part of the user agreement created a situation in which users that are sending money were also sending messages that were bypassing PayPal security. Their AUP limited what types of sayings and messages were able to be sent, and under their discretion, could make the user be fined a significant amount of money (McHenry et al., 2022).

The safety and health of individuals are prime concern when involved with creating guidelines and procedures in organizations. In particular, students and faculty of schools. Since the recent developments of mobile devices, a prime concern was whether students would be able to keep their mobile devices on their person and to be able to use them during specific times in the school day. This created the problem of student's education falling short due to distractions of the mobile device itself, from things such as social media and mobile games. AUP's have gone into effect restricting the use of mobile devices during the school day, which have seemed to slowly improve the conditions of the school day, with a prime concern being the safety of students in case of an emergency. In particular, "most US schools have acceptable use policies to regulate mobile phone and social media use"(Cramer and Hayes, 2010). The political concerns that arise from this is that policymakers such as the schoolboard or city council lawmakers may not create an AUP with the sole intention of safety and health, but rather reputation and wealth. A balance of power concern is shown through the lower tier schoolboards or parent teacher association's not having enough power to implement policies that would benefit the students more than the organization itself. They have addressed the acceptable use policy as means to set a rulebook for what is suitable for the classroom itself (Cramer and Hayes, 2010). Whether this has benefited or damaged the student's safety is still in question.

References

- American University of Paris. (2023). *Freedom of expression*. AUP. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1051578/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- Cramer, M., & Hayes, G. R. (2010). *Acceptable Use of Technology in Schools: Risks, Policies, and Promises*. IEEE Xplore.
<https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/stamp/stamp.jsp?tp=&arnumber=5445075>
- McHenry, P., McMorris, C., Emmer, T., & Griffith, M. (2022). *Top Financial Services, Energy & Commerce Republicans Seek Answers Regarding PayPal's Anti-Free Speech Policy*. Financial Services Committee.
<https://financialservices.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=408456>