Discussion 7 Cultural and Ethical Considerations Software Piracy Considerations

Discussion Topic:

On a global scale, the piracy inflicted on software applications and software services continues to grow. Please write a post that addresses the following points:

What cultural and ethical considerations must be considered in order to reduce software piracy in a country? **Support your response by drawing on authoritative literature or research studies**.

My Post:

To explore the ethical considerations needed to reduce software piracy in a country. It is important to consider cultural, economic, ethical, and governance factors at the same time. A study by Husted (2000), from the 2000s, found that across countries, the piracy rates vary and are associated not only with economic variables, such as income and inequality issues, but also with cultural variables, including individualism. In other words, a country's piracy views are partly shaped by how a society thinks about ownership, social norms, and rule-following, not just by access to pirated software. A 2010 study cautions against using piracy statistics as the only metric; although recurring factors include income per capita, culture, and institutional quality, policymakers and academics must still interpret these numbers carefully (Png, 2010). For example, the Business Software Alliance (BSA) has generally been accepted at face value by policy; however, BSA, around 2002–2003, changed the statistics methodology, effectively changing who was doing the measuring and how the measuring was done. These changes had effects on piracy rates published by BSA; the rates appeared to indicate that global anti-piracy efforts suddenly stopped working effectively around 2003, but this was not the case. Additionally, the global piracy rate was calculated based on 15 specific countries (high-income); this was a skewed estimate, particularly for developing nations, as their software usage was estimated based on their national income per capita, negatively impacting their usage statistic, and not reflecting their actual software usage and therefore their exposure to software piracy.

Based on these insights, culturally and ethically, countries should therefore consider the following:

- Addressing the piracy cultural norms. For example, if software piracy is socially acceptable or it is the norm, everyone does it, the country will experience weak enforcement in practice. Therefore, to address this issue, the country should consider framing a messaging campaign that presents software piracy as an issue of fairness, creative labor, and trust, not merely legal compliance. Research on moral beliefs supports this approach (Siponen et Al., 2012).
- Addressing software affordability and accessibility. For example, if software is unaffordable or inaccessible, piracy becomes a response to access it. Therefore, to address this issue, a country should consider establishing a policy that includes pricing and accessibility sponsorship, such as licensing flexibility, educational discounts, and distribution (WIPO, 2014).
- Addressing trust and fairness in institutions. For example, anti-piracy messaging from governmental institutions works better when citizens believe enforcement is consistent, non-corrupt, and fair (Png, 2010). Therefore, to address this issue, a country should consider implementing transparent and accountable enforcement of software piracy policies that promote fairness and build trust.

While the above represent the primary anti-piracy considerations that a country should consider, a country should also consider public education on intellectual property, collaboration among governments, schools, industry, and society to address the root causes of piracy ethically.

-Alex

References:

Husted, B. W. (2000). The impact of national culture on software piracy. *Journal of Business Ethics, 26*(3), 197–211. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1006250203828

Png, I. P. L. (2010). On the reliability of software piracy statistics. *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications, 9*(5), 365–373. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.elerap.2010.03.004

Siponen, M., Vance, A., & Willison, R. (2012). New insights into the problem of software piracy: The effects of neutralization, shame, and moral beliefs. *Information & Management, 49*(7–8), 334–341. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.im.2012.06.004

WIPO. (2014, February 7). *Advisory Committee on Enforcement (ACE), ninth session: WIPO activities and programs for building respect for IP, focusing on awareness-raising and strategic partnerships (WIPO/ACE/9/11)*. World Intellectual Property Organization https://www.wipo.int/edocs/mdocs/mdocs/en/wipo_ace_9/wipo_ace_9_11.pdf