



NIGERIAN JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

**PHILOSOPHY, ARTIFICIAL
INTELLIGENCE, AND DIGITAL
EDUCATION**

VOLUME 35 NO. 1, OCTOBER, 2025

**ISSN: 0794-0114
e-ISSN: 2971-5652**

Published by

PHILOSOPHERS OF EDUCATION ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA (PEAN)
www.peanpapers.com.ng

Formatted & Printed in Nigeria by



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Extent of Students' Awareness and Application of Cecero's Moral Education in the Use of Digital Tools in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the students' awareness and utilization of Cicero's educational theory in the use of digital tools in Awka education zone of Anambra state. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Two research questions were formulated. The population of the study consisted of 4359 SSSII students, with a sample of 872. Data was collected using researcher-developed questionnaire titled: "Extent of Students' Awareness and Application Questionnaire" (ESAAQ). The instrument was validated by experts. The internal reliability coefficient values of 0.71 and 0.70 were calculated using Cronbach Alpha statistics. The data collected were analyzed using mean (\bar{x}) and Standard deviation (SD). The results revealed their awareness of Cicero's theory of prudence and application of Cicero's theory of courage were to high extent (HE) as students make use of digital tools in secondary schools in Awka Education Zone. Finally, recommendations were made. Among others is that government should incorporate Cicero's moral education into secondary school curriculum and be made a pragmatic pedagogy, especially in Awka education zone

Keywords: Students, Awareness, Application, Morality, Cicero's Moral Theory and Digital Tool

Introduction

Education is the process of transmitting worthwhile knowledge to students. Initiating the child into cherished values, attitude, skills and mores in order to have a desirable change in behaviour in the society. It determines the caliber of people that will be produced and the level of development in a nation. This is because education is seen as a potent tool that inculcates and nurtures moral virtue in citizens of nations. The foregoing forms the reason why the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) sees education as an instrument par excellence for effecting not only individual development but national development. Education follows a rigorous systematic and sustained procedure to evoke all round development. Corroborating, Madu (2022) asserts that education can be described as a machine that uses school as raw material to develop affective, cognitive, psychomotor and psycho-productive domains in human beings. From the foregoing, it can be deduced that education is not an all-comers affair; in fact, it does not happen by chance. It demands a rigorous and conscientious preparation and relentless effort for one to unlock the quantum of benefits accruable therein. Moral education which depicts what is good, bad and valuable in the society can help in unlocking these educational benefits. Owan-Eno (2021), believe, that in every genuine educational activity, there is always some meaning and therefore thought that when intellectual activity is disconnected from:

Practical activity is mechanical and routine, morals are blind or arbitrary, and aesthetic appreciation is sentimental and meaningless. We state emphatically that upon its intellectual side, education consists in the formation of wide-awake, careful, thorough habits of morality (p.68).

From Owan-Eno's postulation above, education, in all its activity that is bereft of moral value is simply otiose. Similarly, from time immemorial, education could be seen as a means through which families inculcate morals in their members. This view is shared by Ogbomwan (2018), who posits that families in any society have ways in which they educate their members on morals, principles and norms, so as to regulate their conduct. According to Okafor (2014), moral education stemming from the family could be viewed as the basic necessity underpinning all matters of choice in life and decision-making that is worthwhile in the family and the nation at large. Moral education according to Ryan (2019) aims to help students acquire those virtues or moral habits that allow them to live "good" lives and become productive and contributing members of a socially cohesive community. That is, moral education provides them with basic cultural literacy and introduces them to their cultural traditions while shaping their moral identities. Smith (2011) observed the task of moral education as one that provides students with the intellectual skills that will enable them to make informed and responsible decisions about issues deemed to be of moral importance, especially, as it concerns other people and the society.

In other words, moral education helps to promote in students a sense of deep concern for the well-being of their fellow students and other people in the society. Moral education is charged with two major tasks, one, to nurture children, through socialization and inculcating in them those virtues and values that are believed to make them good and acceptable citizens. The other is to enable students to be nurtured, mature, become informed and reflective about important and controversial moral issues as they relate with others in the larger society, (Fataar & Solomons 2011).

Hence, moral education has as its primary objective, the nurturing in the individual the principle of right and wrong and morally acceptable behaviour. It is in a bid to clarify the concept of morally acceptable behaviour that made Schofield (1976) to explain morality as a behaviour that is acceptable by society. Although, Schofield attempted to defend what is morally acceptable in the society, it is further exposed to the problems of relativism. In other words, Schofield's submission is not a generally accepted view. To save scholars from the problem of relativism, Omoregbe (1993) explains that the concept of moral education is a means to an end:

To perform an action is to use the action as a means to an end: that is, moral education, as an instrument employed for the attainment of a certain objective. If the end aimed at is evil, then, the action as a whole is evil even if the means employed is good for a good means of the society cannot justify an evil end (p.71).

What is the implication of the assertion of Omoregbe? It is that, moral education does not reside on any action but the purpose intended for such action. That is, an action will serve a moral purpose if it is intended to serve for the good of the society irrespective of personal interest or emotions. By implication, moral education is meant to teach secondary school students the purpose of exposure to digital tools, especially at their level.

From all indication, there is no doubt, that moral education has all it takes to produce morally upright individuals in the society. Any form of education, especially, secondary school education that does not instill morality in its students can be likened to a container without content. For Nkokelonye (2005), a morally deficient child can never offer anything good to humanity. Morality pervades all aspect of human lives; it depicts what is “good” and “bad” and valuable in the society. However, it is not easy to come by; educating students in moral education generally, seems to be challenging largely because the subject does not guarantee that students will become morally just persons guided by the principle of the common good. With the tenets of Cicero’s moral theory, such feat could be achieved. Moral theory was advocated and canvassed by early philosophers; the most canvasser of this idea according to Castellano (2011) is Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC). Cicero is a philosopher that was born in Rome on January 3, 106 BC. He was a prolific writer and is known by Ethics and Morality which remarkably influenced many of his philosophical writings, (Castellano, 2011).

Correspondingly, Cicero’s moral theory is based on education of the youth. It is an attempt to help the youth acquire sound moral virtues. This informs Cicero’s argument as reported by Nkokelonye (2005) that, education without a morally good life is a loss to humanity. For Cicero (106-43 BC), only morally cultured teachers can help in imparting moral education in students. With moral virtues inculcated in them, they will serve as sources of ethical and moral reasoning. Cicero believed that human beings were born for moral improvement and uprightness as well as to achieve cardinal virtues he considered as sources of moral integrity. They include Prudence (wisdom), and Courage (a noble and invincible spirit).

Prudence (wisdom), the first among Cicero’s cardinal moral virtues can be seen as discretion in practical affair. As reported by Castellano (2011), it is considered by Cicero as the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it. Castellano further states that prudence has been a discretion in practical affairs is the bedrock of all other virtues postulated by Cicero. In view of the above, Quintilian (1920) states that prudence is the nucleus and power house from where other virtues draw their strength. The prudent man looks where he is going and not circumstances around him.

Cicero joins the other virtue, courage with greatness of spirit. Castellano (2011), reporting Cicero’s view on courage states that it is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. The author also states that courage strengthens an individual’s resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. For Redmond (2009) courage helps in decision-making and will particularly be of great help to secondary school students since they are of a formative stage where decision-making is inevitable for future living. They are among the Gen-Zs who make use of digital tools that have with it many bountiful benefits.

Digital tools, commonly known as Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a trend in the twenty-first century; replete with bountiful benefits. Digital tool is projected by education. Uwaifo (2009), had reported that education unlocks the door of modernization with the aid of digital tools. Some authors believe that digital tools can be seen as a diverse set of technological tools which are used to communicate, create, disseminate, store and manage information, (Madu, 2022, Enemuo & Onwuka, 2006). These tools include computers, the

internet, broadcasting technologies (radio and television), Digital Camera; Artificial intelligence (AI) among others. Digital tools in recent years have been linked with the socio-economic development with the assumption that they can be harnessed for economic growth in modern and developing countries like Nigeria. In the same wake of thought, Castellano (2011) asserts that digital tools facilitate integration into the global information society and ensures a rapid technological advancement. No wonder Digital tools have become a veritable tool in the hands of developing nations to fast track a sustained socio-economic growth and development.

This rapid growth, especially in developing countries like Nigeria, has led digital tools to become a keystone of everyday life, and a tool that has brought about educational and technological advancement. So much that without it, some routine tasks like sending and receiving of calls, messages, mails and other online businesses could be rendered dysfunctional. Confirming the above, Kadiri (2012) states that Digital tools play an increasingly remarkable role in the way secondary school students communicate, learn and live.

Secondary school students can be seen as individuals who have completed their primary education and got admitted to the secondary school. In line with the above assertion, FRN (2014) admitted that secondary school students are individuals who have completed their primary education and are ready to continue with secondary education. According to Eubanks and Eubanks (2000) secondary school students are people between the ages of 10 – 19 years. Abiogu (2014) agrees that secondary school students are characterized by individuals whose interests shift from solitary to group pursuits, vocational interests become more prominent and realistic; who are concerned about social issues and whose strong attitudes toward religious, ethnic, and racial groups begin to emerge before the tertiary stage. Abiogu further asserts that the aim of secondary school students' education is to acquire knowledge and mores.

But the above aims according to Omorogie (2006) are mere academic exercise because the products of today's secondary school system can neither usefully live in the society nor move into higher educational level without their parents' aid in all ramification. The above postulation position could be the reason the present secondary school students cannot think for themselves but rather allow artificial intelligence (AI) to do the thinking for them as it personalizes their learning and provide them access to a wider range of educational material, (Silvio, 2023). Importantly, most secondary school students seem to lack the prudence to choose the right digital tool that will help them in their academic work. In the words of Omorogbe (1993), people who lack the wisdom to make the right choice in life always fall victim of circumstances. The above assertion is typical of most secondary school students, in that they lack the practical reason to choose the channel or movie to watch on television and phone, the App to install, things to download; the site to go to and AI to interact with. In view of the above, Enemuo and Onwuka (2006) state that most secondary school students spend a lot of money on mobile data without putting into consideration what their parents go through in this harsh condition to provide the money and how often their parents recharge their mobile data. More so, lack of prudence among students of secondary schools in the use of digital tools have made them to become obsessed with pornography and other unwholesome activities in digital tools, especially artificial intelligent (AI).

Furthermore, use of digital tools and its concomitant platforms have cost secondary school students the greatness of spirit – courage. Most students of secondary schools nowadays are not courageous enough to stand for what they believe is right; instead, they are tossed to and fro by every freight of digital tools. This is what Quintilian (1920) calls unstable mind which cannot but metamorphose to moral ineptitude. In line with the above, Redmond (2009) posits that most secondary school students no longer persist in the pursuit of the good of using digital tools to access online materials for their academic work; rather they are swayed by digital tools and succumb to peer pressure to go online for frivolities. It is a well-known fact, that most secondary school students, due to use of digital tools no longer apply the virtue of courage of firmness in difficulties in choosing to maintain sanity in what to upload and download online for academic purposes and the like. Hence, they lack the courage to make wise decisions on the right digital tool that will be academically beneficial to them at their level. It has been noted that most secondary school students have lost the courage to say no when it is necessary, especially to things in digital tools that will not benefit them academically. Castellano (2011) states that the implication of not applying the virtue of courage among secondary school students in the use of digital tools is that, undesirable and unpleasant practices now have a pride of place in their lives.

This moral corrosion among secondary school students and its concomitant social problems as a result of the use of digital tools have not only become a source of worry to the state, but have given parents sleepless nights. Therefore, the researcher deems it necessary to use Cicero's moral education to ascertain secondary school students' awareness and use of digital tools in Awka Education Zone of Anambra state. The researcher's choice of use of this concept is premised on the fact that the tenets will reposition our secondary school education and inculcate sound moral virtue in the students of Awka Education Zone and the society at large.

Method

This study used descriptive survey method. The term descriptive survey method implies gathering data that describe events and then organizes, tabulates, depicts and describes the data collected. The area of the study is Awka education zone of Anambra State. Awka education zone is one of the six educational zones in Anambra State, setup for the effective and efficient supervision, management and co-ordination of Post Primary (Secondary) schools - Public and Mission schools (with government partnership).

The population of this study consists of 4359 SSII students in Awka education zone. (Source: Post Primary [Secondary] School Service Commission (PPSSC), Awka, Anambra State, 2019). A sample of 872 SSII students in the zone were used. The sample was drawn from the population using purposive sampling technique. The instrument for the study was questionnaire which was developed by the researcher and validated by three experts. Two lecturers from Philosophy of Education unit, Department of Educational Foundations and a lecturer from Measurement and Evaluation unit, Department of Science Education, all from Faculty of education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. This was done by presenting the purpose of the study, research questions and the copies of the questionnaire to the three experts. The reliability of the instrument was carried out by the researcher using Crombach Alpha. The alpha coefficients got was 0.71 and 0.70 respectively. The questionnaire was personally administered. The collected data was analyzed using mean. The decision rule was that the response with mean score of 2.50 and above was regarded as agreed and any mean score below 2.50 was regarded as disagree

Result

Research Question One

To what extent are students aware of Cicero's virtue of prudence as they make use of digital tools?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviations of respondents on the extent to which students are aware of Cicero's virtue of prudence as they make use of digital tools in Awka Education

S/N	ITEMS	N	SD	MEAN	DECISION
1	I am usually careful about the site I open on line	856	0.70	3.43	High Extent
2	I am discreet in accepting any platform which I am added	856	0.88	3.16	High Extent
3	I am careful about what I download online	856	0.76	3.49	High Extent
4	I am discreet about what I upload on U-tube	856	0.97	3.26	High Extent
5	I can watch any video I find online	856	1.03	2.15	Low Extent
6	it is not any video that pops up on my phone that I open	856	1.03	2.98	High Extent
7	I see every website advertised to be educative	856	1.08	2.52	High Extent
8	I fact-check online posts before I open them	856	1.02	3.03	High Extent
Grand Mean (or Mean of Means)		=		3.00	High Extent

Keys: N = number of respondents, SD = Standard Deviation

Zone

Table 1 reveals the extent to which the secondary school students are aware of Cicero's virtue of prudence in the course of using digital tools. Item 5 with mean score of 2.15 shows a Low Extent based on the response of the respondents with standard deviation of 1.03. Items 1, 2, 3, 4; 6, 7 and 8, which have mean scores of 3.43, 3.16, 3.49, 3.26, 2.98, 2.52 and 3.03 which fall within the limit number of 2.50 – 3.49 set for high extent, with corresponding standard deviation of 0.70, 0.88, 0.76; 0.97, 1.03, 1.08 and 1.02 respectively. Generally, the table disclosed a grand mean of 3.00; this indicates to a high extent that the secondary school students are aware of Cicero's virtue of prudence.

Research Question 2

To what extent do secondary school students make use of virtue of courage as envisioned by Cicero in the course of using digital tools Zone?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of respondents on the extent to which students make use of Cicero's virtue of courage

S/N	ITEMS	N	SD	MEAN	DECISION
17	I maintain my stand on the choice of the site I use	856	0.70	3.45	High Extent
18	I am bold to resist peer pressure to join online scam	856	0.87	3.44	High Extent
19	I reject any online material that is not for academic purpose	856	0.92	2.51	High Extent
20	I am indifferent to material gain like money from the use of digital tools	856	1.03	2.75	High Extent
21	I always refuse to watch pornographic films with my classmates on U-tube	856	1.07	3.24	High Extent
22	I am firm to refuse to download immodest online materials	856	0.99	3.23	High Extent
Grand Mean (or Mean of Means)		=		3.10	High Extent

Keys: N = number of respondents, SD = Standard Deviation

In Table 2, the mean and standard deviation indicate that the response of the respondents falls within the limit number of 2.50 – 3.49 set for high extent with corresponding standard deviation. The grand mean, 3.10 as well validates the extent at which respondents agree to the application of Cicero's virtue of courage as they use digital tools. The inference here is that students make use of virtue of courage as proposed by Marcus Tullius Cicero to a high extent.

Discussion of Results

Extent to which students are aware of Cicero's virtue of prudence as they make use of digital tools

Analysis of research question one showed that respondents agree that only item five of question one which is on watching of any video that they find online is to a low extent while the remaining items are to a high extent aware. The meaning of the above is that students of secondary schools in Awka education zone are aware of Cicero's virtue of prudence as they use digital tools. Castellano (2011) reports that prudence is considered by Cicero as the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern one's true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it. More so, that prudence is discretion in practical affairs. If what Castellano asserted above is anything to go by, why then are digital tools put to bad use so much that they are used to engage in internet fraud of all sheds, including "yahoo" activity and hacking of people's account and over reliance on artificial intelligence (AI) if students are aware of it? Could it be that secondary school students particularly in Awka education zone and Nigeria at large ignore this virtue of prudence as enunciated by Cicero immediately they graduated from secondary school, since from their response they agree to a high extent that they are aware of it? One cannot but doubt such a scenario where these students are to a high extent aware of virtue of prudence and yet, there are cases of misuse of digital tools. This, to an extent implies that some internet frauds are pre-meditated by evil persons.

Extent to which students make use of Cicero's virtue of courage

The findings in this section of research question two showed that students' application of Cicero's virtue of courage is to a high extent. In other words, they make use of Cicero's virtue of courage as they use digital tools. If what Redmond (2009) recorded about courage, as a virtue that helps in decision-making especially among secondary school students at their formative age where decision-making cannot be done away with. How come secondary school students find it difficult to make wise decision in choosing digital tools that will help them in teaching-learning situation? One finds it difficult to believe that secondary school students still grapple with better academic performance even when they claim that they apply courage as proposed by Cicero in using digital tools. Why are they carried away by porn suggestive promptings on their digital tools like mobile phones, laptops and the like if they indeed apply Cicero's virtue of courage?

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher puts forward the following recommendations:

- ❖ The various levels of government, federal, state and local governments should ensure that Cicero's moral education is not only enshrined in secondary school curriculum but made a working pedagogy.
- ❖ Government at all levels; federal, state and local government should make a policy that can uphold the educational tenets of Cicero in all the secondary schools in Nigeria so as to avoid any form of misuse of digital tools among students of secondary schools.
- ❖ The teaching staff members of secondary school should also live by Cicero's moral theory in order to encourage students to model them.
- ❖ Educational planners should not only adopt the Cicero's educational theory but should formulate policies that will regulate the use of digital tools in Nigeria.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it became clear that most of the moral virtues proposed by Cicero to be aware of and applied in the course of using digital tools by secondary school students are observed. As a result, students can be courageous to apply wisdom in their use of digital tools in the course of their academic pursuit, at least at their level in order to avoid pitfalls. They can acquire requisite knowledge that could enable them to compete with the world as regards education and also to bring about development in the country's education industry. In sum, for secondary school students to make good use of digital tools, Cicero's educational tenets must be a guiding principle.

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