

THE ROLE OF DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AND DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

The study focused on digital citizenship education and digital citizenship behaviour in Nigeria Tertiary Institutions. Digital Citizenship is important due to the rapid shifting of landscape of internet used. Students use digital tools extensively both in their schools lessons and at their home to enhance learning. So they need a safe behaviour when engaging in digital activities. Students need to understand the social involvement and dignity through responsive use of technology. Educators need to instruct students on how to respect, inform and defend themselves when using digital technologies. The study therefore considered the concept of digital education and citizenship behaviour, it also looked at the need for digital citizenship education in Nigeria Tertiary School and the role of digital citizenship in Nigeria School. The study recommended that there should be awareness and orientation for students and teachers on the need for digital citizenship education. There should be massive computer training for all teachers and students organized by government nationwide through in-service training or workshop and conferences.

Key words: Digital citizenship, Digital citizenship education, Digital citizenship behaviour.

Introduction

The need for a transition in educational effort from knowledge absorption to knowledge consumption and generation is driven by the growing inter connectedness of the world. Education no longer merely aims to prepare students for an effective life in their immediate society but to prepare them for life in a fast changing world driven by technology. The development of information and communication technology over the past few years has had a big impact on various sectors, including education. Technology has impacted education to the extent that teaching and learning can be done everywhere defiling the constraints of time, distance and space thanks to technological innovation. In terms of education, the pre ICT era's limitations on the time and location at which learning could take place for both students and teachers have been broken by increasing access to the internet and better availability of learning resources and technical tools.

Further-more, we are living in a time where people can receive news updates online at the swipe of a finger, social media activism is a way to reach and mobilize large parts of the population and information is constantly being created and is openly accessible by anyone with internet access. In fact, being a part of the community insist on an online presence, specifically through social networking and social media platforms.

Consequently in Nigeria and at the peak of the COVID 19 pandemic Tertiary Institutions School were encouraged to transition to online learning as an alternative to traditional face-to-face learning in a bid to limit physical contact in order to halt the spread of the coronavirus. Online learning is basically driven by the internet with lots of advantages but usually exposes students to the whims and caprices of the online digital space. Although students are digitally saucy, many risk are present in the digital world that they should be

protected from. These risk include sexual exploitation cyber-bulling, phishing, and identity theft, to mention but a few. Therefore, it is necessary for students in tertiary institutions to adequately equip themselves with appropriate digital citizenship behavioural traits that will able them to cope in digital space as they participate in their online learning classes. There should be no assumptions that students in tertiary institutions are fully equipped for online learning. This is because, it is crystal clear that digital immigrants, persons who were raised before the digital age, are the decision makers and the teachers of the digital natives are there might be some unintentional procedural gaps in the entire online teaching and learning processes of individuals who were born during or after the integration of teaching and learning processes of the digital natives. Digital natives are individuals who were born during or after the integration of technology within the classroom, or the “digital age”. The term digital native was originally defined as being born on or after 1990, however, some scholars define individuals born between 1980 and 1990 as the “first generation of digital natives” (Helsper & Eynon, 2009).

The digital natives can be lined to the natives of a country or geographical space who are expected to understand and speak the language of that country to get the full benefits on citizens. As aptly opined by Fomsi (2021) digital natives speak the digital language the language of computers, smart phones, tablets, the internet web 2.0 technologies and online video games, just to mention a few. They are required to follow the recommended code of conduct for that geographical space or region. This code of conduct contains vital information on the acceptable behaviour of the citizens that will enhance the mutual coexistence of all the stakeholders comparatively, looking at the digital world of the internet and online learning, there are vital pieces of information on the ethnics and affordances of the digital space. Such knowledge will help all the navigators in the digital environment to maximally benefit and mutually coexist. This is referred to as digital citizenship.

Concept of Digital Citizenship Education

As our contemporary cultures advanced and make greater use of technology, the idea of digital citizenship has expanded. New definitions of the appropriate use of technology have emerged in response to new uses and abuses of technology. Alberta Education (2012); referred in Jones and Mitchell (2016), defines citizenship as belonging to a social, political, or national community. This definition can help one to better comprehend the idea of digital citizenship. As a result, the concept has the community at its core; in other words, citizenship occurs within a community and entails both rights and obligations. Citizenship has historically be used to describe belonging to a geographic physical limit. Citizenship provides people living in a geographical region with civil, social, political and economic rights. Citizens are expected to obey the laws governing the geographical space they belong to. Citizenship is a legal status and an entity. Digital citizens recognize and value the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of living, learning and working in an interconnected digital world, and they engage in safe, legal and ethical behaviours. A digital citizen refers to a person utilizing information technology in order to engage in society, politics, and government. Haller, Li and Mossberg, (2011) defined digital citizen as those who use a concept which help teachers, technology leaders, and parents talk about what all users should know regarding appropriate technology use.

Digital Citizenship is more than just a teaching tool; it is a way to prepare students/technology users for a society full of technology. Too often we see technology users misuse and abuse technology because they are unaware of what is appropriate. The term “digital citizenship” describes citizenship in the digital sphere several authors have provided definitions of it. Digital citizenship, according to Ribble (2020), is the accepted standard of

conduct for using technology in daily life. Digital citizenship may also be referred to as a norms of behaviour with regard to technology use. According to Zook (2019), it involves using technology, computes, the internet, and other electronic gadgets responsibility to engage society's citizens. It implies that technology users should behave well when interacting online. Digital citizenship is a comprehensive notion that includes safe behaviours when engaging in digital activities. It means healthy technology use, as well as ethical technology use. According to digital Response – Ability (2020), "digital citizenship" is a broad term that encompasses a variety of topics, such as maintaining one's online health, participating in civic and political activities online, maintaining one's online, safety, having effective communication, and media literacy. It includes everything a person needs to know to perform responsibility in a world where technology is pervasive. As a way of understanding the complexity of digital citizenship and the issues of technology use, abuse, and misused, Ribble, (2020). Opined that the idea of digital citizenship came about because people will need to behave responsibly and respectfully as a good citizens since there will be more online activities. Ribble (2020), also asserted that many students utilize technology and might not be aware of certain behaviours that should be encouraged or discouraged. He further proposed the Digital citizenship framework for educators to follow to encourage digital citizenship behaviour in the classroom.

Concept of Digital citizenship Behaviour

Digital citizenship behaviour refers to the standards of proper conduct when using technology (ISTE, 2022). In order to practice forms of social involvement that are respectful of human rights and dignity through responsible use of technology, digital citizenship requires the capacity to engage constructively, critically, and skillfully in the digital environment: To illustrate digital citizenship education in more detail.

Ribble (2020) divided digital behaviour into three categories in order to adequately define digital citizenship behaviour: Treat others with respect, educate yourself and others, and safeguard yourself and others. Maintaining a secured online environment for instruction and learning is the responsibility of both teachers and students (Philips & Lee, 2019). Therefore, educators must understand how to instruct students on how to respect, inform, and defend themselves when using digital technologies. According to Ribble, respecting oneself and others means following digital law, digital etiquette, and access to the internet. Digital commerce, digital communication, and digital literacy are all parts of educating oneself and others. Digital Rights and Responsibilities Digital Health and wellness, and Digital security they are all parts of protecting oneself and other online.

The Need for Digital Citizenship Education in Nigeria Tertiary School

Digital Citizenship Education has become a priority for societies that see technology integration as a major teaching and learning strategy for preparing students to live and work in the 21st century. The concept aims to prepare students, who are new or immature in the digital world in which they live, for a society using technology. According to Ribble and Bailey (2007), the concept of digital citizenship education is gained from an early age. Evolve to suit the needs of young citizens and the social, political and communication worlds they live in (Bennet, wells & Rank, 2009). They. COVID – 19 pandemic that struck various parts of the world had a major impact in the form of changes in various sectors of life, including the education sectors. With the COVID-19 pandemic, learning that was originally always carried out face to face was transitioned online meaning that every young learners must use the internet and other digital tools to continue their learning. Also, the demand for higher education driven by technological innovation is expanding exponentially throughout the world and thousands of

young people in Nigeria seeking higher education E-learning has proved to be a viable option, especially in higher education though it is not a new phenomenon in promoting education in learning has proved to be a viable option, especially in higher education though it is not a new phenomenon in promoting education in some part of the world.

Presently, some schools in Nigeria are using it to promote distance education and lifelong learning. According to Ayodele (2010), many nations of the world have in recent applied the use of e-learning which means the use of wireless electronic technology to deliver and receive knowledge and skills. However, Nigerian tertiary schools can be said to be behind in the adaptation of these technologies as there is evidently an extremely low rate of diffusion of e-learning and as a consequence, a low rate of usage. There is also the concern of students having the analytical abilities they need to analyze, comprehend, and interpret material from the internet, which is extremely harmful. In addition to optimizing learning in the pandemic era, the application of the concept of digital citizenship through online learning is due to the increasing moral degradation in the use of technology.

Given the importance of digital technologies most countries have fashioned out a robust educational policy in their educational system hence they have to prioritize digital technologies. Nigeria is not an exception to this. It is realized by stakeholders or educational policy makers that digital technologies must be incorporated fully into the educational system. This is reflected in the policy on ICT by the Federal Government of Nigeria in their 9-3-4 educational policy which entitled National Implementation Guidelines for ICT in Education is henceforth called (NIGICTIE 2019). It has vision and mission, is to make education universally accessible, empowering, inclusive and enriching. “And the mission is to meet the human capital investment of the nation for attaining and enhancing sustainable socio-economic development, global competitiveness as well as the individual’s ability to survive in a contemporary environment” NIGICTIE, 2019).

The objective of ICT in education are spelled out in the educational policy on ICT these are:

- To facilitate the teaching and learning processes.
- To promote problem – solving, critical thinking and innovative skills.
- To promote lifelong learning and advance knowledge.
- To enhance the various teaching/learning strategies required to meet the need of the population.
- To foster research and development.
- To support effective and efficient education administration.
- To enhance universal access to information
- To widen access to education and the range of instructional options and opportunities for any-where, any-time, any-place and any-path learning.
- To promote the commercialization of ICT in education.
- To develop and support technical infrastructure that maximizes digital creativity, sharing and innovation.

The Role of Digital Citizenship Education in Nigeria schools.

It is the responsibility of educators to guide and teach students how to be digital citizens in the rapid – moving world of the internet. A digital citizen is a person who has the skills and knowledge to use the internet effectively and responsibly and they participate in society Ribble & Park, (2019), students of today need to be prepared for their future, but also for what is currently happening. Teaching students and families about digital citizenship and how to use online tools to impact their communities should be at the forefront for all educators.

Technology has been present in the majority of schools across the country as took to enhance learning and engage students, but the role of technology shifted in 2020 to the COVID-19 pandemic. In May 2020, “48 of 50 state had closed their schools or recommended that all schools in their state be closed (and shifted) from primarily face-to-face, in classroom instruction to digital learning facilitated over the internet from home” Evans J. A. (2020) concluded that virtual communication is the only way to communicate and teach. It is trier than ever that we live in a world open to the endless possibilities of the internet Roquet 2019). What is made possible today through this global connection will only grow and become more encompassing as we step into digital citizen.

Another role of digital citizenship education in tertiary schools in that educators should educate students about digital citizenship education which involves teaching them how to use technology responsibility, safety, and with good behaviour both inside and outside of the classroom. It is the capacity to communicate effectively in ways that respect human rights and the online environment which participating critically, positively, and ethnically in the digital sphere. Digital citizenship play a vital role in Nigeria tertiary schools thereby it ensure the safety of the students online.

- It promote respect in digital interaction.
- It teaches responsibilities in managing personal information and media consumption.

Conclusion

Young people have been reliant on the internet, computers and on digital technologies for learning and communication in recent aims but it seems that policy makers in education rely on parents more than curricula or raising awareness among students regarding the use of technology. Based on the scholarly literature reviewed in this paper, it is significant to merge efforts between tertiary schools and universities to bridge the gap between technologies as a life tool and as an academic proper usage. Thus, this paper sheds light on the education of young learners on the concept of citizenship and how to use technologies appropriately.

Recommendations

In this paper, an overview of digital citizenship education in tertiary schools was the focus and the following suggestions:

- 1 Awareness training and orientation should be periodically organized for students and teachers on the concept of digital citizenship education and the safe use of technology.
- 2 Education policy makers in Nigeria should restructure the existing curricula to include technology – based practices to enhance students’ technological expertise and facilitate the appropriate use of technology as an effective learning tools.
- 3 Massive computer training for all teachers and students should be organized by the government nationwide through in-service training of workshops and conferences.
- 4 Ensure that all educational institutions and establishments are interconnected to create a common platform that will facilitate the sharing of resources and reduce duplication.

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