Preservice Teachers' Challenges in Teacher-Becoming and Teaching Social Education: A Sociocultural Perspective

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Abstract:

This study explores the challenges preservice teachers encounter (a) in their teacher-becoming trajectory, and (b) with the implementation of social education contents in Nigeria. Understanding these is important for effective social education reforms. Narrative and observation methods were used for the study. The study drew on (a) the stories of 37 social education preservice (SEP) teachers about their teacher-becoming trajectory and teaching practice exercise, and (b) a three-year observation of 110 SEP teachers' teaching practicum fieldworks in 12 schools to realize its objectives. Findings show professional harassment and a lack of standard learning materials as challenges social education preservice teachers encounter in their teacher-becoming. On teaching practicum, SEP teachers noted some benefits (e.g., exposure to different worldviews and nurturing of the younger generation) derived from teaching practicum; they emphasized stress, anxiety, and students' misbehaviors as challenges. SEP teachers had challenges with teaching contemporary social contents: They were oblivious of how their classroom discussions impact global issues, disregarded the sociocultural relevance of their instruction, and reproduced social issues, including political and gender problems, through their classroom practices. Guided by a sociocultural theory perspective, the study concludes with a discussion of social educators' knowledge and competency skill needs in a changing world.

Keywords: social education, preservice teachers, teacher-becoming, teaching practice, sociocultural theory

Introduction

In contemporary society, social education programs focus on preparing social education teachers to teach or practice from decolonial and critical global perspectives and empower learners for active and justice-oriented citizenship important for sustainable development. Teacher education curricular have generally been reformed across the globe to include contents (e.g., global issues such as gender, racism, conflicts, human rights, peace, equality, and political participation) and practices reflecting these dynamic complex goals (Obiagu, 2022; Tibbitts & Fernekes, 2011). Following these reforms, social education research has so far investigated teachers' understanding and consciousness about global issues in their classroom practices (Lastrapes & Negishi, 2011-2012; Stevens & Martell, 2018; Ukpokodu, 2002). Little evidence exists on how teachers or preservice teachers implement contemporary social education contents, especially the strengths and limitations of their teaching of the contents. It is important to make sense of this and draw on findings to inform policies around the teaching practice of contemporary topics. Related to this is the need to understand the experiences of social science trainee teachers, which could either promote or hamper their preparation and readiness to effectively implement these complex and dynamic goals associated with contemporary topics of social science education disciplines.

No study exists on the challenges social science education preservice teachers encounter in their journey (on-campus and with clinical placement) of becoming a social educator. Yet these are important factors to explore in contexts where the teaching profession is underrated. Understanding these factors is important for effective social education teacher training practices, including the implementation of the reforms introduced into social science education programs and identification of areas needing reforms or improvements. Therefore, the specific purposes of this study are to explore (a) the challenges preservice teachers encounter in their teacher-becoming trajectory, and (b) the challenges preservice teachers encounter with implementing contemporary social education contents. While this study is focused on Nigeria, its findings could offer insights into social education practices in countries with similar dynamics such as sociopolitical problems, low teaching workforce, and high teacher attrition.

Previous Research on the Challenges of Preservice Teachers in Teacher-Becoming and Teaching Practice

Understanding challenges encountered by preservice teachers in teaching practice as well as in their overall teacher-becoming trajectory is important for teacher-education reforms and more

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effective practice. The outcome of the study exploring this issue might reveal training needs and gaps in teacher education programs. Few studies have explored the challenges preservice teachers encounter during teaching practice. These studies point to a theory-practice gap as the main challenge faced by preservice teachers in almost all contexts (Foncha et al., 2015; Hamdan, 2015). Other studies found that preservice teachers (during teaching practice) and new teachers experience a range of challenges such as poor time management, deficiency in content knowledge, short length of the teaching practice period, disregard by teachers in the field school, and difficulties in applying innovative methods (Boakye & Ampiah, 2017; Foncha et al., 2015; Hourani, 2013; Mahmood & Iqbal, 2018; Okobia et al., 2013). These findings are general to all subjects and not peculiar to any specific subject. The present study is focused on preservice social education teachers with particular attention paid to challenges that may be peculiar to the practice of social education and challenges that could apply to preservice teachers of other programs.

The reviewed studies are also limited to the challenges preservice teachers face during a teaching practice exercise. Less attention has been placed on the challenges preservice teachers face in their teacher-becoming trajectory. The negative or poor representation of teaching by the media and society requires education researchers to begin looking into the challenges preservice teachers face in their teacher-becoming trajectory if the need to increase teacher recruitment is to be met. Exploring this is particularly important to strengthen educational intervention programs that may be provided for preservice teachers who choose to teach on grounds of fallback career, social influences, and mercenary motivations, since it is most likely that uncovered challenges may hinder the effectiveness of intervention programs and serve to reinforce, consolidate, and promote amotivation and poor professional teaching identity among preservice teachers. This study additionally covers this gap.

Theoretical Framework

This study's theoretical lens is sociocultural theory developed by Lev Vygotsky (1978). The theory holds that individuals' cognitive functioning and psychological development are influenced or shaped by their experiences that result from their interactions within a social and cultural context composed of people, objects, tools, and activities. People form their beliefs, cognition, and behavior from the resulting experiences of their interactions with the social and cultural environment. These social relations, from which experiences develop, are mediated by cultural tools and artefacts such as language, signs, symbols, diagrams, maps, works of art, and various systems for counting (Vygotsky, 1981). For teacher-practice research, sociocultural theory is

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particularly relevant because teachers as a community of practice are viewed uniquely and ascribed some identity by the society in which they practice; the ascribed identity may influence their practice of and commitment to teaching. Also, a sociocultural context could influence teachers' worldview and classroom diction and communication style. Sociocultural contexts and needs heavily inform social education contents and practices.

From these perspectives, and as this study did not set out to test an existing theory, relying on sociocultural theory for making sense of the findings of this study was helpful. This theory allows one to assess what sociocultural dimensions (local, national, or global) are emphasized by teachers as well as whether teachers are open to sociocultural changes, that is, whether their practices are relevant to the sociocultural needs of the society or whether they deconstruct or reproduce social issues through their classroom practices. For this study, specifically, this theory helped understand how sociocultural factors undergird the challenges with teacher-becoming and teaching practicum reported by preservice teachers and the challenges with teaching social education contents, especially social issues, observed by their teaching practicum supervisor.

Method

This study centers qualitative research, specifically narrative and observation methods based on the principle of reflective practice. Narrative research focuses on how individuals experience the world and assign meaning to their experiences via the stories they tell (Moen, 2006) while reflective practice involves a practitioner analyzing their practice to identify purpose and areas of strength, weaknesses, and improvements that could be useful for self and others (Leitch & Day, 2000; Thompson & Pascal, 2012). Existing studies (Leitch & Day, 2000) portray reflective practice as an integrative aspect of action research. However, beyond research, reflective practice can be engaged in as part of educators' professional practice, especially as "a self-aware, self-reflexive teaching population, capable of producing the highest quality learning situations for pupils, is a laudable and necessary aim in a world characterized by social transformation, increasing economic competition and personnel turbulence" (Leitch & Day, 2000, p. 186).

Against this backdrop, this study considers narrative research, premised on reflective practice, as appropriate since the paper is based on reflections on the narrative and observation data collected in the course of the author's professional practice: supervision of a Nigerian university's social science education undergraduate preservice teachers' teaching practicum [TP]. Relying on narrative and observation data for this research provides room for capturing unique voices and experiences. Using the collected data, I explore social science education preservice teachers'

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encountered challenges in their teaching trajectory and problems with implementing contemporary social education contents. Specifically, the following research questions are addressed in the study:

1. What are the challenges encountered by SSE preservice teachers in their teaching trajectory?

2. What are preservice teachers' challenges with teaching practice fieldwork?

3. What are preservice teachers' challenges with teaching social education contents?

Sample

In all, the sample of the study comprised 110 social science education preservice teachers (comprising 40, 53, and 17 preservice teachers supervised by the author in 2018, 2019, and 2020, respectively). Narrative data were collected from 37 out of the 40 (22 females and 18 males; see Table 1 for participant profile) preservice teachers supervised by the author in four schools during the 2018–2019 session, with their informed consent. Observation data were drawn from the author's professional reports and field notes on her preservice teachers' practice in three sessions: 2018–2019 (40 students distributed or attached to four schools), 2019–2020 (53 students distributed or attached to six schools), and 2020–2021 (17 students distributed or attached to two schools). The 2018–2019 and 2019–2020 teaching practice exercises took place from September to November of each session while the 2020–2021 session's teaching practice took place from March to April 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Consent was received from the department to use the reports and field notes for this research.

Table 1

Profile of Narrative Study Sample – Preservice Teachers for 2018–2019 Session

SN	Gender	Specific Course Program	Program Level	School	Subject Taught	Class Taught
Preservice Teacher [PT] 1	Male (M)	–	300	1	Government	SSS3
PT 2	M	–	300	1	Civic Edu	SSS2
PT 3	M	–	400	1	Government	

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PT 4	M	–	400	1	Government	SSS2
PT 5	Female (F)	–	400	1	Social Studies	JSS3
PT 6	M	–	400	1	Civic Edu	SSS3
PT 7	F	–	300	1	Economics	SSS3
PT 8	F	–	400	1	Economics	SSS2
PT 9	F	–	300	2	CRS*	SSS1
PT 10	F	–	400	2	Economics	SSS1
PT 11	F	–	300	2	Economics	SSS2
PT 12	F	–	300	2	Civic Edu	SSS1
PT 13	M	–	300	2	Social Studies	JSS2
PT 14	M	–	400	2	Government	SSS2
PT 15	F	–	400	2	Civic Edu	JSS2
PT 16	M	–	300	2	Civic Edu	JSS2
PT 17	M	–	300	2	Government	SSS1
PT 18	M	–	300	3	Civic Edu	SSS1
PT 19	M	–	300	3	Civic Edu	SSS3
PT 20	F	–	300	3	Civic Edu	JSS1
PT 21	M	–	400	3	Government	SSS3
PT 22	F	–	300	3	Social Studies	JSS2
PT 23	F	–	400	3	Civic Edu	JSS3
PT 24	M	–	400	3	Government	SSS1

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PT 25	F	–	400	3	Social Studies	JSS1
PT 26	F	–	300	3	Economics	SSS1
PT 27	F	–	400	4	Government	SSS2
PT 28	M	–	300	4	Social Studies	JSS2
PT 29	F	–	400	4	Economics	SSS2
PT 30	F	–	300	4	Economics	SSS1
PT 31	M	–	300	4	Civic Edu	JSS2
PT 32	F	–	400	4	Civic Edu	JSS1
PT 33	F	–	300	4	Government	SSS1
PT 34	F	–	300	4	Social Studies	JSS3
PT 35	F	–	400	4	Social Studies	JSS2
PT 36	F	–	400	4	Social studies	JSS1
PT 37	M	–	300	1	Civic Edu	SSS1

Note: *CRS denotes Christian Religious Studies. Specific course programs (Education/Economics: 8 students; Education/ Political Science: 12 students; Education/Social Studies: 13 students; and Guidance & Counselling: 4 students; the only Education/Geography student in the group did not participate) of the students are removed to further conceal the identities of the participants.

Procedure for Narrative Data Collection

Narrative data were collected using the "supervisee's teaching program motivations, experiences, and practice inquiry template" developed by the author for a pre-teaching interactive conference where certain information is elicited from TP supervisees (e.g., stories of their teaching trajectory or teacher-becoming) on any day prior to their actual instructional and

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classroom practice supervisions. The inquiry template helped the supervisor identify her students' needs and improve her practice concerning meaningfully impacting the professional growth of her students. The inquiry template comprises of the following five questions:

- Tell us your motivation for choosing the program you are studying;

- Tell us the challenges you have so far encountered in your journey in this program;

- Tell us what you enjoy about teaching;

- Share with us your difficulties in your teaching practice exercise;

- Where do you see yourself in the future? Do you intend to teach after graduation?

Through these questions, the supervisor allows herself into her students' minds and explores ways of helping them improve their practice. She also uses the forum to create opportunities for preservice "teachers to map and understand the patterns of their lived experience, both in their personal and professional lives, so that they may better understand their current purposes and practices" (Leitch & Day, 2000, p. 188). Preservice teachers were informed that participation in the pre-teaching conference does not carry any reward and will not influence their TP assessment, that the conference is aimed at understanding their idiosyncrasies and challenges with teaching, and that their stories will be used for research purposes in the future. They were informed of their right to choose not to share their stories: Three elected not to share their stories while 37 shared their stories. These data were used with the approval of the department and in answering all research questions.

The Nature of Field Notes From Which Observational Data Were Drawn

In Nigeria, most education departments, faculties, and colleges have a standardized teaching practice manual and assessment form containing (a) qualities of emphasis, and (b) sections where supervisors enter scores, make comments on students' performance on each assessed quality, and note their observations on the areas of weaknesses, strengths, and need for improvement for each assessed student. Lecturers can also make individual-specific and general comments on separate pages; this is mainly important for use during a debriefing session with students after supervision. Reports on the qualities measured via the teaching manual provide rich data for understanding the strengths and challenges preservice teachers face implementing contemporary social education contents. For this study, the observational data obtained from the supervisor's reports on the teaching practice exercise of social education preservice students

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– comprising students of Economics Education program, Geography Education program, Political Science Education program, and Social Studies Education program – were used to further investigate preservice teachers' challenges. The data were used with the approval of the department.
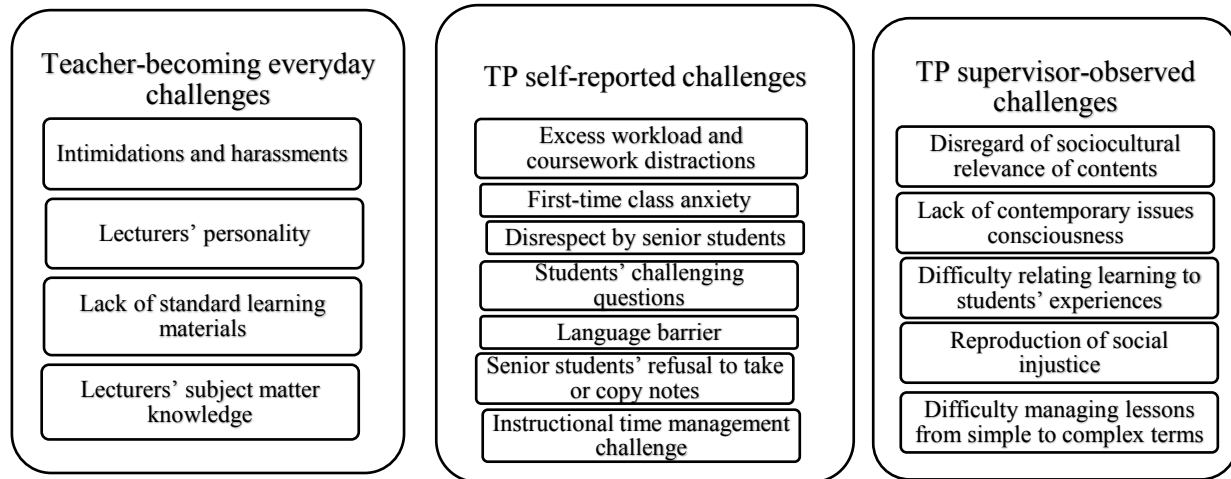
Data Analysis

The collected narrative data on each study participant and the researcher's handwritten observational notes and reports on students were thematically analyzed using the analytical coding method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to identify themes. The narratives and observational reports of individual participants (for narratives) or supervisees (for observations) were compared for similar and divergent views or contents and discussion themes are formulated from them. These themes are presented in this paper as subheads under the examined factors: general on-campus challenges (teacher-becoming trajectory challenges); preservice teachers' self-reported challenges with teaching practice exercise; supervisor-observed challenges of social education preservice teachers in teaching (challenges with teaching contemporary social education contents). The generated themes were harmonized and interpreted. A peer researcher reviewed the themes to ensure that they adequately represent the information contained in the field reports and notes.

Results

The results show that social science education preservice teachers encounter some challenges that teacher-educators could contribute to solving; the challenges are connected to sociocultural experiences. The challenges SSE preservice teachers face are discussed below under three subheadings (as illustrated in Figure 1): teacher-becoming everyday challenges (general on-campus challenges), teaching-practice related self-reported challenges, and teaching-practice supervisor-observed challenges.

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Figure 1

Social Education Preservice Teachers' Challenges

Teacher-becoming everyday challenges
- Intimidations and harassments
- Lecturers' personality
- Lack of standard learning materials
- Lecturers' subject matter knowledge

TP self-reported challenges
- Excess workload and coursework distractions
- First-time class anxiety
- Disrespect by senior students
- Students' challenging questions
- Language barrier
- Senior students' refusal to take or copy notes
- Instructional time management challenge

TP supervisor-observed challenges
- Disregard of sociocultural relevance of contents
- Lack of contemporary issues consciousness
- Difficulty relating learning to students' experiences
- Reproduction of social injustice
- Difficulty managing lessons from simple to complex terms

Teacher-Becoming Everyday Challenges

The sources of the challenges they encounter in their everyday teacher-becoming as highlighted in their stories include friends and family, fellow students from non-educational departments, lecturers (especially those of non-educational departments), and course materials. These encountered challenges are their course lecturers' personalities, lecturers' knowledge of the subject matter, lack of quality and standard study materials, and intimidation and harassment by friends and family, students, and lecturers from other faculties and sometimes lecturers from the education faculty.

Social education preservice teachers note that most of their education lecturers lack current and relevant knowledge of the courses they teach; lack teacher voice; care less if their students learn and use outdated materials; some of the lecturers destroy their students' enthusiasm about teaching; many of the lecturers discourage critical thinking among students; and some violate the professional esteem of their students. They said that their "lecturers tell them that teachers are poor and education is cheap"; they were further discouraged by their lecturers' lack of innovative ideas, use of outdated materials, teaching of "everyday stuff" and "everyday practices of denying them opportunities to think critically" (PTs 14 and 24).

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Beyond dissatisfaction with the program materials and lecturers' personalities, student-teachers question the impact of education research, as seen in the statement below:

> I don't understand what our lecturers do. We do not have standard textbooks in our department. They will say they are doing research … like the one you are doing now. You see them share questionnaires with us to fill in for them. They use the paper they write with the questionnaire... [journal articles] to seek promotion. They will not teach. … I don't understand why they waste time writing things that are not useful to the society… (PT21)

Results also show that students encounter harassment, verbal abuse and intimidation from students and lecturers of other faculties, and they consider this a challenge in their teacher-becoming. They said that lecturers from outside the education faculty indict them as "unintelligent and caution us not to write like primary school students in their classes"; students from other faculties ridicule them and label them "lousy and unwise" (PTs 14, 10, 8, and 26). Their defense mechanism to these professional harassments include to "deny their discipline and identify with their minor courses (non-education programs)"; remind their bullies that "the future of their children is in our hands"; argue that their "interest is to be an academic" (PTs 8, 10, and 26). Their defense mechanisms indicate that preservice teachers in Nigeria suffer low professional esteem induced by their harassment by professional Others, and they grapple with strategies to deal with their esteem, with some overcoming the low professional self-esteem and some still apologetically defensive of their career choice.

Preservice Teachers' Self-Reported Challenges with Teaching Practice Exercise

Social education preservice teachers note their teaching placement method to be challenging to them. Faculties of Education in Nigerian universities adopt the disintegrated placement method involving two teaching attachments (the first in the penultimate year and the second in the final year) of 6–8 weeks each and usually in the first term. The teaching practice placement usually encroaches on their first semester lectures. This contrasts with the block-placement method, adopted by Colleges of Education in Nigeria, involving 3–8 months of non-interrupted placement in schools, which affords students the privilege of choosing their placement location and focusing solely on their TP. In their words, "combining TP with our coursework is very stressful; we wish our faculty to do like colleges of education" (PTs 21 and 5).

First-time class teaching anxiety was also noted in their stories. Some were worried about writing on the chalkboard due to their bad handwriting, some experienced pressure and anxiety about teaching students (PTs 18, 3, and 12), and some even shivered out of fear.

Difficulty in effectively managing their instructional time was also noted as a challenge by preservice teachers. PT27 said, "My time is hardly enough to cover my contents. Before I could finish, my students will tell me that my time is up. Government is voluminous."

Students' challenging and difficult questions were complained of by one preservice teacher. PT8 narrates:

> I love my students. They understand me, but sometimes they ask challenging questions. For example, when I taught them "development of petroleum and oil exploration in Nigeria," I mentioned the first British company that got licensed for oil exploration in Nigeria. They refused and insisted that I tell them the name of the person. They said it can't be a company, that there must be a human being. ... I didn't know what to do. I had to divert their minds to the fact that we didn't know what oil was but White men did.

The above story reveals that preservice teachers address challenging questions asked by their students through *avoidance and distractive methods*. Beyond this, it reveals inadequate practical knowledge (e.g., legal aspects) of their instructional contents and a lack of skills (e.g., recommending it as a reading task for both the instructor and students to be briefly discussed in another class) for managing unpredicted challenging questions. A deeper analysis reveals a lack of training or consciousness in higher-order cognitive questions and a misconception that a teacher must know everything or what they do not know stands to be incorrect.

Students' disrespectful behaviors towards preservice teachers were noted. This complaint was common among female preservice teachers in senior classes. They said that "students did not greet them on their first day of placement but were stubborn and noisy" (PTs 12 and 7).

Refusal of senior students to copy or take notes was noted by the majority of the preservice teachers attached to senior classes (14 out of the 25). This indicates that senior students no longer find factual knowledge interesting and want engaging and challenging tasks. Consider PT8's statement, which her colleagues unanimously agreed to, below:

> Our problem is that the students don't like writing notes. They will always say they have the contents in their textbooks. We don't even copy from textbooks; we get [contents] from online, too. Our head and supervising teachers complain about that, too.

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Language barriers were a problem to preservice teachers of ethnic or cultural backgrounds different from the context of their placement schools. PT23 said,

> My first teaching practice was not too bad because I had addressed a large audience [before]. I had challenges with language. I am not Igbo [an ethnic identity]. I can't speak Igbo [language], but students reply with Igbo [language]. That was a challenge. I told the head teacher, who goes back to repeat what I teach.

Some other students complained of experiencing the same issue. This indicates a problem with the education in a context where students taught in English (the language of instruction at upper primary and secondary school levels in Nigeria) could not communicate in English. The learning difficulty of some students was identified as a challenge by some preservice teachers.

Supervisor-Observed Challenges of Social Education Preservice (SEP) Teachers with Teaching Social Education

In this section, drawing on three years of observations of social education preservice teachers teaching practice exercise, I document the challenges social preservice teachers face with the implementation of classroom instruction. They had areas of strength, but this paper focuses on their weaknesses. The observed challenges are discussed below.

SEP Teachers Disregard the Sociocultural Relevance of Their Instructional Contents

Findings show that preservice teachers neglect the relevance of their instruction to their sociocultural environment. Sociocultural relevance of instruction can be found in answers to questions like: What is it about my context that this content can help promote or disrupt? How do I approach the content to realize the anticipated promotion or disruption? Why do my students need to learn this content? How will learning it shape or benefit them? None of the preservice teachers raised any of these concerns in their lesson notes, lesson plans, or classroom instruction. They focused mainly on inculcating factual and superficial knowledge of concepts. For example, PT38 (Group 2018), who taught "Tools of Economic Analysis (Tables, Charts, and Graphs)," neither defined it nor related it to students' experiences, nor did he challenge his students to understand how its knowledge and skills could impact administrative decisions or are important for effective leadership and development planning.

Another preservice teacher (PT25; Female; JSS 1; Group 2018), who taught the social studies topic "Cultural Similarities and Differences," failed to disrupt the perception of her students about why they learn culture similarities and differences; despite that, some of her students said

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that they learn culture differences to understand bad cultures and avoid people with such cultures or travelling to such places. The preservice teacher missed drawing on the opportunity presented by the concept of "bad cultures" and the idea of avoiding them (discrimination) to address issues of cultural and ethnic intolerance common in Nigeria and preparing students for agency in transforming obnoxious and "unjust" cultures.

SEP Teachers Do Not Show Consciousness of Contemporary Issues but Reproduce Them in Their Classroom Instruction and Discussions

This challenge interconnects with poor knowledge of the subject matter and disregard of sociocultural context, which also involves pressing social problems in a given context. Preservice teachers were observed to not consider the implications of classroom discussions on global issues such as gender inequality, cultural intolerance, poor governance, and citizenship. Instead, they affirm and reproduce contemporary social problems through presenting injustice as an immutable social reality or failing to challenge students' misconceptions or beliefs that threaten social education goals, especially justice and human rights promotion, albeit unintentionally and unconsciously. The following instance provides a clear picture of how poor leadership and passive citizenship as well as human rights violations are reproduced in the classroom: PT1a (Male; SS2; Group 2019), who taught the government topic "Separation of Power," while explaining veto power of the executive arm of the government, stated, "…the say of the executive is final and veto power once evoked is final. It cannot be challenged." To illustrate his point, he told his students that "President Buhari or even the governor has the power to sack a worker working in Nigeria or his State and the person cannot do anything about it. In fact, Gburugburu [the governor's nickname] can wake up today and decide to use his veto power. He can sack a teacher or principal and the person cannot do anything about it." Surprisingly, the students laughed and failed to challenge the position until the supervisor interjected. While the preservice teacher was being corrected, he raised a defense that he was teaching reality and not ideals.

While the above instance seems to point more to a lack of adequate knowledge of the subject matter, the supervisee's defense also indicates a lack of preservice teachers' consciousness of the social educator's role in disrupting the unwanted status quo and injustice through challenging them in the classroom and empowering citizens who would disrupt social problems using their present or future position or status as leaders or citizens. This finding is similar to that found among in-service Nigerian teachers who avoid and excuse sociopolitical questions in their multicultural classes (Salmon-Letelier, 2019).

The following is another example where a preservice teacher presented corruption and abuse of the rule of law as Nigeria's norms. PT1b (Female; SS1; Group 2020), teaching the government topic "The Rule of Law," explained, "Rule of law is the supremacy of the law over everybody in a political system. This is not the practice in Nigeria because in Nigeria today, if you are rich you can do what you want. But let's not go into that." Explaining impartiality as a basic principle of the rule of law, she illustrated,

> Let us use Nne and Ugo as example. Nne stole ₦10,000 and she is from a rich home; Ugo stole ₦10 but is from a poor home. The rule of law is that they should be judged impartially and punished for their crimes, hence Nne should receive higher punishment because she stole a higher amount. But you know this is Nigeria; the judge will be bribed by the rich home and Nne will go free while Ugo will be imprisoned. It may even be that Ugo stole to not go hungry that day. This is impartiality.

Evident in the above lesson is the preservice teacher's resignation of faith and hope in Nigeria's justice institution and system and doubt about the need for the topic "The Rule of Law" in the Nigerian context. Instead of drawing on the topic to empower learners to be agents of the rule of law, she disempowered them further by presenting the issue of abuse of the rule of law as an immutable "social norm." How do we prepare social education teachers to share and promote socio-political hope in contexts where they themselves lack hope?

How gender issues are reproduced in classroom instruction, aside from traditional practices such as denying girls headship of schools and stereotyping school activities such as sweeping, was observed. Some snapshots of these practices are presented below. PT9 (Female; SS1; Group 2018), who taught the CRS topic "The Value of Virginity Before and After Marriage," emphasized virginity as the virtue of a woman, just as is traditionally conceived, and further gave instance to justify the value and importance of virginity:

> I have seen a woman who married as a virgin. Because of her virginity, her husband showed appreciation to her family by buying her parents an SUV. The woman, because she married as a virgin, will be respected by her husband's family and society.

While nothing is wrong in teaching children and individuals to abstain from having pre- or extramarital sexual affairs, objectifying or materializing the importance of abstinence is wrong. Even though this is taught within the context of religious studies, it is also worrisome when virginity is taught as the virtue of women and not that of men, especially in a context where research has shown extramarital affairs of husbands to be high and the highest cause of HIV

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among married women (van Klinken & Chitando, 2015). PT2a (Female; JSS2; Group 2019), teaching the social studies topic "Readiness for Marriage," explained to her students:

> The man is the head and breadwinner of the family. But women of this generation are encouraged to empower themselves and have something doing. This is because there may be times when the man will not have money. When that happens, the family will depend on her own money to survive until the man regains himself.

The above position indicates the treatment of women's economic empowerment as a family's alternative and the presentation of the woman as a person whose life decisions are dependent on the fate and prospects of a man, thereby minimizing the agency and independence of women. The objectification of women and belittling of women's efforts are also strong factors behind increasing hegemonic masculinity and violence against women. PT2b (Female; JSS3; Group 2020), teaching the CRS topic "The Family," emphasized the division of roles and behaviors as stipulated in Colossians 3:18-22. She then admonished the women:

> Many women these days do not submit to their husbands. They disobey their husbands. This Bible instruction is not kept. Broken homes produce vagabonds. To achieve a healthy family, everybody should play their roles and perform their duties. Wives cook, children wash, and husbands break firewood, as shown in this chart.

When asked what submission means, she answered, "Submission means to lower yourself; don't raise your shoulder above your husband. Your husband is your superior and has authority over you." While the male students were happily laughing, a female student asked, "What if the father is a drunkard and the wife takes up the responsibilities of the husband, is it disrespectful?" The teacher answered, "It is not a deviation on the part of the woman because the man is irresponsible."

Just like the first instance, the view championed in the second instance is capable of reproducing gender and domestic violence since the teacher failed to disrupt the ugly understanding of the term "submission" held by many Nigerians. It is either that preservice teachers lack knowledge of how these factors interconnect or lack critical consciousness of how these contemporary issues are reproduced through classroom discussions.

SEP Teachers Had Challenges Managing Instruction From Simple to Complex Terms

This challenge was most common among Economics Education preservice students who taught statistical components of economics. For example, PT29 (Group 2018), who taught "Theory of

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Revenue," skipped explaining the principles of revenue, how each type of revenue was ideologically arrived at, and simple mathematical solutions, jumping to teaching the solving of high-level statistical problems he lifted from West African Examination economics questions, which he said was informed by his interest in helping students do well in their exams. This cognitively driven approach, however, left students confused and begging for repetition of concluded sessions.

SEP Teachers Had Challenges Implementing the Continuity Principle of Learning

Taught topics were mostly linked to previous topics only by asking students what the last topic they learned was. Preservice teachers fail to establish a connection between the new content and the previously taught content. This can be explained by the structure of curriculum organizing that does not flow chronologically and by preservice teachers' inability to be creative in connecting ideas and ensuring continuity of learning (i.e., connecting the present topic to the previous topic).

SEP Teachers Had Challenges in Selecting Contextualized and Critical Instructional Materials

While preservice teachers are creative in improvising relevant instructional materials for implementing their instruction, they had challenges contextualizing their learning materials. The adoption of learning materials, especially in civics and social studies classes, served to reproduce stereotypes. For example, PT15 (Female; JSS2; Group 2018), who taught "Contentment," used a chart depicting a White family happily sitting around their dining table as an illustration of contentment. This is in a world where happiness, comfort, and contentment are represented as White, with hardship, materialism, and sorrow represented as African or Black. This is also in a context where all students are Black. PT2b (refer above), who taught "Family," used a chart depicting the wife cooking, the father axing wood, and children washing. This occurred in a world where gender equality is a goal, and gender-based violence, now a health crisis, is sustained by gender stereotypes.

SEP Teachers' Subject Matter Knowledge and Language-Related Challenges

Although preservice teachers are not expected to have deep content knowledge since they are still trainees, they exhibited very limited and poor knowledge of the contents they teach. This happened even in situations where they teach the courses they are studying. (Refer to PT1a and other referenced preservice teachers above for illustrations.) Another example is PT13, who taught "Drug Abuse" and used a very limited definition of drug abuse as "intake of drugs or

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substance without doctor's prescription." Language-related issues can be found in his explanation of consequences of drug abuse where he stated that "drug abuse makes someone to feel *somehow*" without providing an explanation of what the "*somehow*" means.

Discussion

This study explores social education preservice (SEP) teachers' challenges in social education teacher-becoming trajectories and challenges with teaching practice and teaching social education contents. Each challenge is individually discussed below.

Social Education Preservice Teachers' Challenges in Teacher-Becoming Trajectory

The result shows that social education preservice teachers face harassment from professional Others and are dissatisfied with their lecturers' subject matter knowledge and the learning materials they use as well as question the impact of (social) education research.

Substandard Learning Materials

Many social education preservice teachers think that their education-related course materials and evaluations are too elementary and do not challenge them to think critically or be creative. Their higher education expectations are not met with materials that sometimes emphasize their pre-higher education contents, though in a more detailed manner. They worry also that their education lecturers are unwilling to embrace change and development. This threatens their interest to continue with the profession and further suggests that this generation of preservice teachers is yearning for practical, critical, and transformative knowledge and lessons. The elementary nature of their course materials could be blamed on Nigeria's institutional weaknesses including poor educational research funding. It may not be that education lecturers are unwilling to embrace change and development. It is more likely that they do not access research funding for conducting impact research and do not access opportunities for professional training to keep up with recent development in the field. It could also be explained by the lack of incentives for these lecturers to engage in individual professional development and impact-oriented research. Another cause might be that teacher-educators themselves lack intrinsic and altruistic motivations for choosing their career path, which invariably affects their commitment to the profession. All these are explainable by the sociocultural status of teaching in Nigeria, which is generally dissatisfactory.

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Lecturers' Preoccupation With "Non-Impact and Irrelevant" Research

Students reported dissatisfaction with their lecturers' neglect of teaching and preoccupation with research that they do not feel impacts their programs or society. This is not just the frustration of students but of many research participants across Africa (see Andrews & Bawa, 2019). However, the problem can be explained from a sociocultural perspective; research is more valued in Nigerian higher institutions due to the need to increase African global recognition. It has been found, by Englund et al. (2018) in the Swedish context, that departments emphasizing greater research and intellectual visibility and competitive edge, rather than improving students' learning, undervalue teaching. In my research's context, lecturers devote more time to research than teaching, to the detriment of students. Even though some Nigerian universities adopt students' assessment of lecturers' expertise and behaviors, and lecturers' engagement in research, administrative, and community services as promotion measures, greater emphasis is placed on research. This scenario could explain social education lecturers' neglect of teaching and preoccupation with "publish-or-perish" research, albeit without considering the impact the research will have on their students' learning and in their area of expertise or society. This problem hinders effective curriculum reform since superficial teaching of concepts runs the risk of not identifying curriculum gaps and challenges that need to be addressed.

Professional Harassment

The finding that social preservice teachers are professionally harassed, verbally abused, and bullied by their schoolmates and lecturers can be explained from a sociocultural perspective. There is a poor social representation of the teaching profession and program in Nigeria (Egwu, 2015).

Social Education Preservice Teachers' Challenges with Teaching Practice Fieldwork

While preservice teachers noted deriving some benefits (knowledge increment, nurturing the younger generation, broadening social networks, and exposure to different worldviews) from teaching practice, this study focused on the challenges and difficulties they encountered. They are discussed below.

Anxiety

The study found anxiety about first-time class during teaching practice among preservice teachers. Sources of their anxieties include lack of confidence about handwriting, fear of poor ratings from their students, lack of confidence about their English proficiency, and uncertainty

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about their teaching and classroom management abilities. This is not dissimilar to previous findings (Danner, 2014; Han & Tulgar, 2019). The anxiety was mainly experienced during the first teaching practice experience, indicating that lack of exposure to microteaching could be a contributing factor.

Students' Challenging Questions

It is also found that students' challenging and difficult questions are among the challenges encountered by some preservice teachers. SEP teachers reported tackling this challenge through *avoidance or distraction*, drawing the attention of students away from contentious questions and to other discussions outside the raised question. There appears to be no study explaining how teachers receive students' difficult questions. Studies have, however, investigated the application of lower-order and higher-order questions by teachers or students in school (Khan & Inamullah, 2011; Renaud & Murray, 2007). While studies find higher education and schools to be grounds where critical thinking skills are developed through applying higher-order questionings (Renaud & Murray, 2007), this study found that the lectures, assessments, and learning materials available to preservice teachers in Nigeria are dominated by lower-order cognitive activities. And this could explain preservice teachers' unpreparedness to manage difficult and challenging questions, which are usually of a higher-order thinking level. Social education teacher training programs in Nigeria hardly apply higher-order thinking questions because of the misleading assumption that their students are intellectually weak and, hence, will not be able to cope with such questions. This affects students' questioning and feedback strategies in actual teaching.

Students' Misbehavior

It is noted that classroom "behavior problems appear to be the most difficult task for both experienced and newly qualified teachers" (Atici, 2007, p. 15). The findings of this study illustrate that preservice teachers feel the same way. Classroom misbehaviors encountered by preservice teachers in this study, especially female preservice teachers, include disrespect of preservice teachers, making noise while the teacher is still talking, playing while teaching is ongoing, and refusing to write or take notes. Female teachers mostly reported disruptive behaviors such as noise-making and disrespect. This finding is consistent with Chaplain's (2008) study, which shows that female trainee teachers reported students' disruptive and aggressive behaviors as a challenge. Preservice teachers managed these challenges differently: some threatened to report misbehaving students to head teachers or the School Head for disciplinary action, some threatened using students' notes as continuous assessment, some ignored their noise and hoped

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that they will get better with time, and some called on an in-service teacher to calm the class for them.

Decline in Note-Taking and Copying Among Students

This is a challenge to social education preservice teachers. They reported that their students, especially those in senior classes, do not copy or take notes during instruction. The importance of note-taking, including improving critical thinking, comprehension, and academic performance, as evidenced by literature (Chang & Ku, 2015; Chen, 2013), makes this problem worthy of attention. What could explain students' habit of not writing notes? Evans, Pellam, and Grudberg (1995) found that the quality of note-taking relates to the quality of instruction and that unorganized and non-detailed instruction affected students' note-taking exercise. This suggests that the quality of instruction presented by preservice teachers could be a contributory factor to students' attitude of not taking notes during or after instruction. As shown in this study, preservice teachers draw their notes mainly from prescribed textbooks and Google but fail to provide students with original or new ideas that could motivate them to take notes. The contributions of technological advancement should not be ignored. Increased access of students to technological devices that make it easier to access similar contents online, take snapshots of their peers' notes and some recommended learning materials, and record instruction could be a contributory factor to this challenge.

Stress

Preservice teachers reported much stress resulting from their teaching practice exercise. Stress is a reoccurring issue with teaching practice across contexts (Caires, Almeida, & Vieira, 2012). However, the majority of this study's participants attributed their teaching stress not to content development or implementation but to the combination of their teaching practice with their semester course work and, sometimes, project writing; the reluctance of field schools to accept and provide them with full support or integrate them into their school activities or management; and their financial commitments to the practicum, especially concerning transportation costs and the cost of procurement of teaching materials. They feel that teaching itself is an easy job.

Social Education Preservice Teachers' Challenges With Teaching Social Education, Especially Contemporary Social Issues

Challenges that preservice teachers face with teaching social education revealed in this study include disregard of sociocultural relevance of instruction, lack of contemporary issues

consciousness, and difficulty managing instruction from simple to complex. These factors are individually discussed below.

Disregard for the Sociocultural Relevance of Instruction

Social preservice teachers do not consider the socio-cultural implications or needs of their instruction but approach instruction from a quantitative perspective (test scores). They were found to reproduce social problems that their contents seek to address and to present crude and dictatorial solutions (e.g., violence and human rights violations) to everyday problems (e.g., conflicts) as societal ideals instead of disrupting social issues alongside the dictatorial approaches to solving them. They failed to identify and pay attention to perspectives and statements shared in the classroom that enable social issues such as dictatorial leadership, ethnic and cultural intolerance, and gender issues. This finding is similar to that of Salmon-Letelier (2019), which shows that Nigerian teachers avoid challenging social issues, such as corruption and conflict, beyond surface-level definitions and lists. Lack of consideration of the sociocultural relevance of topics leads to a disconnection between classroom instruction and learners' and society's needs; it results in the treatment of topics, with potential to address social issues, from a cognitive and market-driven approach devoid of sociocultural, behavioral, and affective gains. The outcome of this is ineffective learning since students are left ill-equipped to impact their sociocultural contexts, including family, community, and cultural and religious backgrounds, that influence their worldviews.

This challenge is, in part, the consequence of a social education curriculum organization that does not state the sociocultural relevance of its emphasized contents. Although the curriculum highlights the objectives of the contents, these objectives are mainly cognitive-oriented and do not practically relate to students' experiences or societal needs. Poor teacher training can also be blamed for this problem. For example, it is argued that Nigerian social science education teacher training programs are inefficient and do not emphasize the ideological and pedagogical uniqueness of social education that distinguishes them from core social science disciplines (Obiagu, 2019, p. 13).

Difficulty Managing Instruction from Simple to Complex

It was observed that social preservice teachers who taught statistical components of social education were largely unable to present their instruction from simple to complex terms. Due to great interest in students' academic performance, simple problems were skipped in statistical topics in favor of complex problems drawn from past external exam questions. This approach

was counterproductive as students struggled to understand instruction and lost track of the lesson. Statistical components were found to be treated from a mathematical perspective, despite the leadership problems that embroil African countries. Poor leadership problems raise the demand for economic educators in Nigeria to take economic contents, like revenue and income, beyond personal levels and connect them to policymaking and economic planning. Social education (economics) preservice teachers' challenge to effectively handle statistical components of economics from a social perspective can be explained by the non-emphasis of statistical pedagogy in economics education programs. This leaves many economics educators disempowered to effectively implement the statistical contents of the subject.

Lack of Contemporary Issues Consciousness and the Reproduction of Global Issues

Related to the disregard of the sociocultural relevance of instruction is the lack of contemporary issues consciousness among social education preservice teachers. Although this study did not explicitly explore students' cultural, gender, and leadership issues consciousness in their classroom practices, this study's findings featured preservice teachers as not culturally, gender, or leadership-responsive and conscious. Results suggest that social education preservice teachers lack consciousness of the implications of their instruction and classroom discussions on contemporary social issues such as gender violence, poor leadership, social and interpersonal conflicts, and cultural intolerance. The students who taught gender-related topics largely reproduced existing gender stereotypes through their classroom practices and failed to draw on gender-related contents to disrupt gender stereotypes and beliefs that undergird gender violence or to challenge their students to question them.

Powerful opportunities to empower learners to question and challenge cultural stereotypes and abuse of rule of law and violations of human rights by political office holders were also ignored by preservice teachers. This is similar to the findings of a study that found in-service Nigerian teachers to dominate the teaching of social topics, which have the potential for opening deep, complex discussions that could challenge and reshape the status quo, with bulleted lists and simple definitions (Salmon-Letelier, 2019). A similar situation where preservice social education teachers failed to show an integration of global perspectives in their teaching is documented in the United States (Ukpokodu, 2020).

Preservice teachers' challenge of not engaging with classroom discussions that facilitate social problems illustrates their lack of awareness of how systemic social and structural issues are related to or sustained by the contents they teach and their approach to the contents. Unlike the

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United States, a country that shares similar multicultural characteristics as Nigeria, where social education teacher programs now emphasize the implications of elections, multicultural diversity, racism, and gender on classroom practices and the controversies, including academic and intellectual debates, surrounding these and similar issues (Gay, 2002; Stevens & Martell, 2018; Ukpokudu, 2002), Nigeria's SSE programs and intellectuals are yet to begin discussing, debating, or considering how these issues are approached and addressed in educational and school policies, curricula, textbooks, and classroom practices, and how the adopted educational approaches and practices reproduce or disrupt social problems. Instead, social education research in Nigeria is dominated by experimentation of teaching methods, blaming of social problems for the non-realization of social education goals, exploring curriculum for inclusion of social issues contents, and exploring teachers' and students' awareness of social issues. The study's findings point to the question of what knowledge and competency skills social education teachers need to be efficient and effective in a changing world.

Conclusion

This study explored Nigerian social education preservice (SEP) teachers' challenges in teacher-becoming and with teaching social education contents. Knowledge of these is important for reforming social education to meet its sustainable development goals. Findings of the study revealed that SEP teachers encounter stress, dissatisfactions with their program, and professional harassments and intimidations in their teacher-becoming trajectory. SEP teachers were also found to disregard the sociocultural relevance of their classroom instruction and to reproduce social structures and global issues through their classroom practices. These findings suggest socioemotional, sustainable development knowledge and capacity building needs for both teacher educators and preservice social educators.

Recommendations

There is a need to train teacher-educators and empower them with professional self-esteem. This will inhibit their tendency of discouraging and verbally abusing their students' intellectual abilities and prospects. It will equip them with a sense of purpose to professionalize their discipline and produce a generation of powerful educators that will challenge, through their practices and agency, the ugly narratives about Nigerian teachers today. Teacher-educators should be able to give their students hope, comfort and support, and build resilience in them in the face of the professional harassment and neglect they encounter in society.

Professional development opportunities, especially training on social education research skills, should be provided for social education teacher-educators. This is to prepare them to conduct impact research that will benefit their students as well as equip them with what is required to produce standard study materials for preservice teacher training.

Social education programs should further target empowering teachers with consciousness of how local, national, and global social problems are enabled, reproduced, or disrupted through classroom practices. Social educators require knowledge of the interconnectedness between education systems and practices and the sociopolitical realities of their immediate and global contexts. The current emphasis of these programs on knowledge of values, citizenship duties, human rights, and other contemporary issues is not enough for social educators' efficiency and effectiveness in today's changing world. To be relevant in today's society, social education teacher training programs should emphasize what it is about social education praxis (contents, theory, and practice) that threatens the realization of their goals. Debates on how social education policies, curriculum, and practices obstruct or promote sustainable development goals should be emphasized for teachers to develop meaningful knowledge of how social education is deeply connected to sociocultural and sociopolitical contexts. Importantly, it should be the task of social education teacher training departments to decipher how instruction could be presented to make individuals understand social problems as their concerns and to help preservice teachers overcome their mistrust and loss of faith in Nigeria (or their pessimistic attitude towards Nigeria's development plans) that hamper their effective implementation of social contents.

Since knowledge is not enough and activism is the hallmark of contemporary social education programs, consciousness of how social education practices impact global issues is not the only needed competency skill for social teachers. Social education programs should additionally emphasize teacher agency, create supportive learning (formal and non-formal) opportunities that empower students for activism, and engage student-teachers in service-learning. These opportunities will prepare teachers for vigilance in their classroom practices/discussions and constant recognition of their agency in promoting social education goals: peace, justice, active citizenship, and gender equality.

It is important to equip teachers with higher-order questioning skills in Nigeria. A suggestion would be to apply this type of questioning in teacher education classroom discussions and assessment. Teaching it in a curriculum course that is generally offered at the faculty level is not enough. It should be practiced in everyday school activities for it to be meaningful to students.

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Future studies should expressly explore, using qualitative methods, social education teachers' gender, culture, and leadership issue consciousness in their classroom practices.

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