

Strategies for Mainstreaming Education for Sustainability into the Nigerian Social Studies Teacher Education Programme

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Abstract

This paper supports the advocacy for a sustainable future and discusses the strategies that could be adopted in order to make Social Studies, an integrated social science subject in the Nigerian school curricula which is saddled with the responsibility of promoting informed citizenry to educate for sustainability. Issues surrounding the prospect of using Social Studies to teach the rudiments of Education for Sustainability are discussed after having examined the strength, weakness, opportunities and strength of Social Studies, especially at the level of teacher education. The study concluded that the threat to Social Studies which are enormous may need to be quickly addressed so that teacher education institutions may have clear-cut directions on how to mainstream the learning content of Education for Sustainability into the subject and consequently prepare preservice teachers that are critical and holistic in their thinking to handle a more robust holistic Social Studies in the primary and secondary schools in Nigeria.

Keywords: strategies for mainstreaming; education for sustainability; nigerian social studies; teacher education programme

1. Introduction

1.1 Background Information

The need seems to have arisen to constructively criticise modern (and post-modern) institutions and ideas. There is also the need to accommodate recent advances in knowledge; and to promote sustainability as a frame of mind (Huckle2006). According to Huckle, because the schools are in the best position to take up these tasks, initial teacher education apparently has a very significant role to play : by way of improving the quality of teaching and learning, through building on existing good practice, and new forms of pedagogy. The emergence of Education for Sustainability(EfS) as a field of study may therefore likely provide an avenue to achieving these laudable aims – probably because of the concepts it advocates and supports; and may be as a result of various strategies by which the concepts are meant to be transmitted to the target recipients.

EfS being an emerging area, is however yet to transcend cultures and school curricula of many nations, but there are encouraging indications that it is “taking place in many fields, which are reflecting the diversity, integration and holistic approaches demanded by sustainability” (Sterling, 2008: p.22); hence there is a need to have an understanding of how Education for Sustainability is conceived, so that justifications could be made for why the initial teacher training programme of Nigerian Social Studies Teacher Education programme could incorporate EfS in content and strategies for direct teaching. A way of doing this is to examine the strength, weakness, opportunities and threats associated with using Social Studies as the carrier-subject of the learning content and user of the teaching strategies of sustainability education. Apart from this, a mainstreaming strategy that could be devoted to it in the teacher education programme should be such that provides answers to the questions on where Nigeria is currently (where are we?), where is Nigeria going (Where are we going?), how could Nigeria get to the desired destination (How do we get there?), who are the participants in the journey to the desired destination? (Who needs to be involved?), and what would be the evidence of having arrived at a desired destination (How do we know that we’ve got there?). A template that provides likely answers to all these questions from the point of view of Nigeria nationhood, and from the point of view of a Social Studies expert with bias for sustainability could make justifications for why Social Studies should be an ideal carrier-subject of the subject-matter of education for

sustainability especially at the teacher education level. There is therefore the need to provide some insight into all these.

1.2 Objectives of the Paper

In order to provide some insight into how to mainstream sustainability issues into the Nigerian Social Studies teacher education programme, this paper has been guided by objectives which seek to

- i. provide a broad overview of Education for Sustainability;
- ii. discuss the likely strategy for mainstreaming EfS into the Nigerian Social Studies teacher education programme;
- iii. conduct a SWOT analysis of usability of Nigeria Social Studies to mainstreaming Education for Sustainability;
- iv. suggest a strategic model for mainstreaming EfS into the Nigerian Social Studies Teacher Education Programme; and
- v. explain the rationale for the suggested strategies.

2. A Broad Overview of Education for Sustainability

Parker (2008) remarks that Education for Sustainability is a broader concept, more open to contestation and debate. According to Parker, EfS is conceived as Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in some context: even though ESD is criticized to have a conception of a western model of development. Some other conceptions are regarded as adjectives of EfS. But to this author, they are “pronouns” of EfS (e.g. citizenship, peace, health, political, human rights, multicultural, future, development or environmental education), which may present them to seem to be educating for social change as they echo a shift of concern and perception about a holistic realisation of interdependence of issues around sustainability (Sterling, 2008). The New Zealand Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (2004) simply buttresses this assertion by saying that

Education for sustainability could only be thought of as a more contemporary way of taking many of the principles of environmental education, and extending them to communicate in a way that is relevant to the twenty-first century (p.19)

Sterling (2005) explains that the discipline of EfS even though a young and immature field which is beset by labels, is not fixed or contested; has arisen as a necessary response to perceived needs over a period of time, and as a response to the planetary crisis of environment and development. According to him, EfS is also a field that differs from context to context be it in West or South as the case may be; and that it has emerged as a recognition of the limits of other labels such as Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) which could be seen as a confluence of Development Education (DE) and Environmental Education (EE); and which could be criticized as outer-directed and instrumentally-oriented, as it educates “for becoming” rather educating “for being”.

However, by whatever context it may be viewed, EfS possesses unique characteristics that make it poised to educate people for change far better than other adjectives (or pronouns) by which it may be labelled. Nonetheless, EfS may be explained in the context of its two “key words” – “Education” and “Sustainability”. The author’s own opinion is that education may be explained as a formal or informal way of influencing people’s way of life, so that they could be useful to themselves and the society they live; and the opinion is influenced by the clarification that UNESCO (2006) makes of formal and informal education. UNESCO describes formal education as a systematic instruction, teaching and training by professional teachers and consisting the application of pedagogy and the development of curricula; while informal education is a lifelong process of acquisition of attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experiences through the influences of family and neighbours, work and play, the marketplace, the library, and the mass media.

On the other hand, “sustainability is a relatively new word; yet it represents an important shift in social and environmental thinking in addition to proactive efforts that millions of people around the world are participating in” (Howe, 2009, Online). Howe explains that the United Nations World Commission on Environment promotes the concept of sustainability while advocating that “sustainable development” should be a central guiding principle of the United Nations, Governments and private institutions, organizations and enterprises – bearing in mind that sustainable development seeks to “meet the needs of the present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987: p.43). Howe’s personal opinion is that “sustainability reflects ... that our current choices have a direct impact on the future of the planet”. Our current impact may thus mean our unsustainable ways of life which manifest in dominant forms of economic production which could not even meet the needs of the present generation, and yet damaging the conditions of production on which they

depend (Huckle, 2008. P.4): through excessive carbon footprint (from industries and transportation, and advanced technology), pollution of various sorts, bad agricultural practices, unrestrained mining, war and conflicts, to mention but few.

The implication of the above (in author's opinion), is that the future generations are being prepared for a doom; while the present may think they are developing and enjoying. The fear expressed here may pose a challenge of "preaching" the message of sustainability, which explains that there is a need to enhance quality of life and well-being for human kind; and to promote an achievement of satisfying lives for all, while staying within the bounds of nature (Chambers et al, 2000). This same direction of thought might have influenced the Biothinking International (referred to by Chambers et al (2000) in LSBU's EfS Unit 1 Reader) to propose that sustainability should have six component parts that may be abbreviated as, " 'Six Ss' to save the World" as (1) (S)caling the economy within the capacity of the biosphere (2) using the (S)olar power to propel human processes; (3) 'Rec(s)ycling' wastes and reducing pollution; (4) (S)haring resources equitably – not hoarding; (5) providing environment that is (S)afe for all living organisms; and (6) having (safe) (S)ex (to keep living on).

Following from the above explanations on the two key words forming "education for sustainability" EfS may be conceived in my own opinion, as a process by which the knowledge, awareness and understanding provided within and outside the classroom could assist in modifying the behaviour of people in reference to careful handling of life supporting elements in the environment. Sterling (1992) seems to have a detailed opinion that may justify my own assertions. According to him education for sustainability is perceived as a subject that enables people's understanding. It increases awareness and develops competence, and attitudes and values in respect of the interdependence of all life on the planet earth because it allows vivid explanation of the repercussions of the economic, political, social, cultural, technological and environmental forces that are likely to foster or impede sustainable development. To Sterling, the purpose of EfS is to enable people to participate actively in effective decision making in respect of sustainable development at local, national and global levels.

Moreover, sustainability is viewed to have three basic components which relate to one another to deliver quality of life – environment, society and economy (Chambers et al, 2000). Any explanation in tune with this assertion agrees with Sterling's notion of strong sustainability. According to Sterling (2005), a sustainability that ensures that economy and society subsume into the environment is strong; while that which sees economy, society and environment intersecting is a weak one. Sterling suggests that sustainability could not happen even when any two of these components are taken together without the three subsuming together. In the same vein, sustainability could not be discussed in isolation of any of the trio of environment, society and environment – "sustainability of each depends on the sustainability of the others and the whole. It is like a three-legged stool. Take one leg away and the stool collapses"(p.26); Sterling asserts.

This line of thought reflects that each of economy, environment and society is a system on its own; and the point at which these three melt lies sustainability. This reflects the holism and concept of systemic thinking that EfS experts such as Huckle, Sterling, and the London South Bank University Sustainability team are advocating. Sustainability advocates efficient use of materials, less consumption and equity which promote a healthy system. Extending this line of thought further justifies the integrated and systemic nature of sustainability as the entire process is seen to be greater than the sum of its parts. An organisation (Sustainable Measure, 2016) states that a single indicator cannot be used to measure sustainability. Sustainable Measure quotes from Hazel Henderson "Paradigms of Progress" (No date) that "trying to run a complex society on a single indicator like the Gross National Product (economy) is like trying to fly a 747 with only one gauge on the instrument panel" and that one could better imagine a medical doctor, who does not do more than checking only the blood pressure when examining a patient. A very relevant figure with an explanation is provided by Sustainable Measure and shown below as Figure 1.

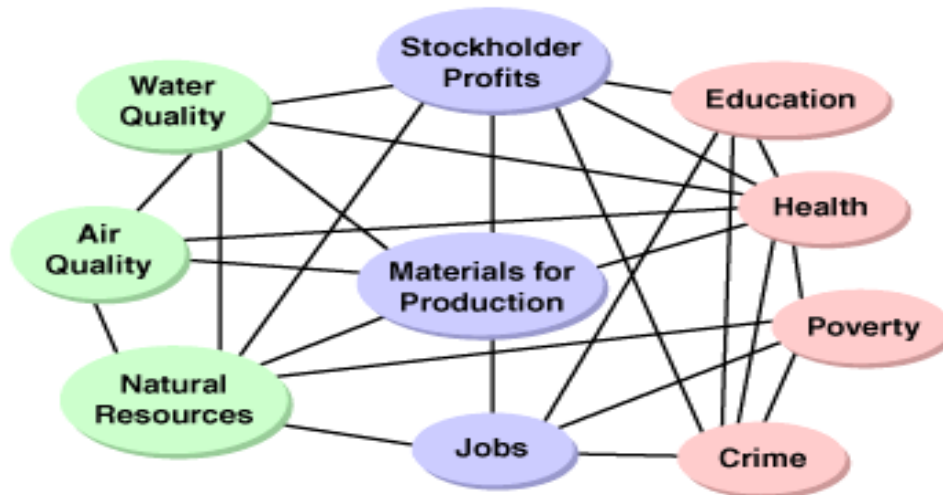


Figure 1. Chart showing the interrelationship between environment, economy and society

Source: Sustainable Measure (2016)

This diagram indicates that “Communities are a web of interactions among the environment, the economy and society”. An explanation from Sustainable Measure is also quoted below:

the natural resource base provides the materials for production on which jobs and stockholder profits depend. Jobs affect the poverty rate and the poverty rate is related to crime. Air quality, water quality and materials used for production have an effect on health. They may also have an effect on stockholder profits: if a process requires clean water as an input, cleaning up poor quality water prior to processing is an extra expense, which reduces profits. Likewise, health problems, whether due to general air quality problems or exposure to toxic materials, have an effect on worker productivity and contribute to the rising costs of health insurance. (Therefore) Sustainability requires this type of integrated view of the world - it requires multidimensional indicators that show the links among a community's economy, environment, and society(Online)

Bearing in mind this principle of sustainability, education for sustainability seems to have unique approaches by which its content is designed. Broadly viewed, (in the author's opinion) there is no limit to the content of EfS as long as what is taught takes cognisance of the web of interactions among environment, society and economy. But the following subject matters may fall in as concepts for inclusion into the EfS curriculum - Social justice and ecosystem health; Disparities in wealth and power; consumption patterns; Community lives and surrounding urban and rural environment; Conservation and development; Technology and Trade; International relationship; Regional self-reliance; Material and energy efficiency; Poverty reduction; Sustainable livelihoods; Food security; Human development and human societies; Resources utilisation; Population control; Sectoral analysis (Business, State and Civil Society); Good governance; Value system; Community involvement and participation etc (London South Bank University, 2008). Any subject that teaches any of these subject-matter could be regarded to be sustainability focused. In addition, it is not ordinarily the subject that carries the learning content, but the problem that such subject seeks to solve (United Nations, 2014). Hence, if well taught with EfS strategies and approaches, each of these and many other concepts are likely to achieve the purposes or aims and objectives of EfS which are to meet the most pressing environmental, societal, and economic needs of a community; inculcating knowledge about basic environmental, societal, and economic issues; stimulation of development of required skills and values directed towards solving environmental, societal, and economic problems, all with the view to promoting sustainable livelihood in the community (McKeon, 2000)

EfS is however deemed to be easily taught at a mutually agreed time between the teacher and the students; and with the socially critical instructional strategy that does differentiation among learners and uses time based on negotiation between community, teachers and students (Fien, 1993). EfS is considered to be functional because it develops not only the basic academic skills in people, but also socialises them. It trains people to be socially controllable, and to behave orderly; prepares people for work, and maintains a level of consensus in the society (Bartlett, Burton & Peim, 2004).

Further, as a unique field of practice that has emerged regardless of context of geographical location, EfS aims at transforming the society using education as a tool; and that is why it is trying to give direction to substantive educational change. Such educational change according to Grunsell and Wade (2000) does not ordinarily deal with curriculum renewal, which is a matter of updating materials and keeping pace with development of knowledge and techniques of teaching; but involves curriculum innovation which affects the premises of teaching aims and values, and the consequent thinking about classroom practices. Thus, with the idea of “strong sustainability” in mind, it is the opinion of the author that affecting the premises of teaching aims and values, and consequent classroom practices may pose the challenge of understanding some levels of change that cut across conformative, reformatory and transformative learning. In other words, there are three orders in thinking about how to influence change in learning (Sterling, 2005). Sterling explains that the first order seeks effectiveness/efficiency and doing things better. The second order seeks to examine and change action; and can be labelled “doing better things”. The third order seeks better change as it sees things differently. In this perspective, change in the process of classroom practices may involve an examination of what currently operates and how EfS could be accommodated in it; or whether it deserves a reformation to still have the new element (of EfS) playing a significant impact on existing rules of practice; or to have a complete transformation: so that the old identity of the existing course or programme would be substituted for a seemingly better one.

In the light of the above, the context of classroom practice may need to examine what could be accommodated, reformed or transformed through an integrated curriculum that promotes participative learning, and rooted in systemic thinking to reflect learning content that emphasizes positive ecological living systems. In order to achieve the above, EfS posits that certain questions have to be answered. The questions are “where are we”, (seeking to understand the prevailing or dominant educational values and purposes) “where are we going”(determining the basis for a changed educational culture or paradigm, echoing and supporting change towards sustainability in wider society), “how do we get there”(identifying which effective strategy to use - strategy must be participative, and adaptive rather than top-down and fixed), “who needs to be involved”(determining who are the stakeholders), and “how do we know we’ve got there?” (putting measures in place to determine success of programme). On the whole, EfS works within a stated overall goal, a list of specific objectives, identified programme or activity areas and recognitions of tasks to be performed, with a view to achieving substantive change in an organisation or a system (Sterling, 2005).

3. A Likely Strategy for Mainstreaming EfS into the Nigerian Social Studies Teacher Education Programme

Having had a broad overview and to some extent an understanding of the approach to Education for Sustainability, the vision and value of the author is that the Nigerian Social Studies Teacher Education programme reflects systemic thinking about positive ecological living; and the subject itself be outrightly transformed in the final analysis; if not to carry the label Education for Sustainability, becomes “Social and Sustainability Studies” or retains the current name (Social Studies), but with a reformed curriculum which contains all the messages of EfS and operates in the thinking process of constructive/transformational approach to teaching and learning.

In order to achieve this, there is a need to conduct a Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis of the current programme to have an insight into the current status of the programme. From the author’s own SWOT analysis of the current Social Studies programme in Nigeria, fundamental issues on the current status of Social Studies have emerged and they are explained as provided in the Table 1 below.

Table 1. SWOT analysis of usability of Nigeria Social Studies to mainstreaming education for sustainability

| STRENGTHS | WEAKNESSES |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Compulsory subject at primary and Junior secondary schools 2. Recognised by the National Policy on Education as a compulsory subject 3. Has an objective that looks somewhat identical with national philosophy of Nigerian education 4. Not involving (with unidentifiable) mathematical/statistical concept to pose problem for any learner 5. Can be learnt relatively easily 6. Discusses virtual daily experiences of learner 7. Has close link with people's culture 8. Internationally recognised as a discipline that studies human beings operating in the multifaceted environment 9. Runs an integrated curriculum 10. Offered as a teacher education course | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lacks implementation of its objectives as subject for citizenship education 2. Lacks standardised textbooks, and relies on foreign texts with foreign perspectives of human society and environment and poorly written textbooks written by non-Social Studies experts 3. Subject association seems not very push-full enough to support and champion its advancement 4. Has an existing upper secondary school curriculum but rendered redundant; hence it is not offered as upper secondary school subject 5. Certification is limited to Junior Secondary School because it is not offered beyond that level as a school subject 6. Lacks uniform curriculum at teacher education level 7. Has less number of professors and lecturers with full expertise in the subject 8. Poor research network to advance its frontier as a knowledge-based learning area |
| OPPORTUNITIES | THREATS |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can be utilised to teach about national unity and progress 2. May be taught as a compulsory subject at Senior Secondary level if accorded an appropriate recommendation 3. May serve as a perfect substitute or match for other social science subjects 4. Can educate for sustainability if well transformed 5. Carries concept that can be reviewed to accommodate other concepts supporting ecological living 6. May be amenable to some of the methods that are often used in EfS | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. May not be allowed to thrive as a compulsory national subject by curriculum builders who do not have background in it 2. Current state criticized as being too theoretical to educate for sustainability 3. Too much emphasis on science and technological advancement that places less emphasis on value education may not allow it to be seen as a subject necessary for nation building 4. Other social science subjects (Geography, Economic, Political Science, Commerce etc) experts may not allow the implementation of its senior secondary school curriculum, because of the 'shallow thinking' that it may put them out of business 5. May not be adequately funded for teaching, textbook production and research as a result of its insignificant recognition 6. The extraction of civic education content from its curriculum may technically phase it out, if care is not taken 7. The lumping of the subject under the compound name, Religion and National Values may overshadow its recognition as a subject meant to prepare students for the social science subjects at a higher level and as well as a citizenship education subject 8. May be substituted with Civic Education on the long run if an unreasonable reform is done |

Arising from the analysis in Table 1, there is the need to have a strategy that will answer the various questions that are raised in reference to EfS strategy development vis-a-vis the Nigerian Social Studies Teacher Education programme. An example is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. A strategic model for mainstreaming EfS into the Nigerian Social Studies teacher education programme

| | Where are we? | Where are we going? | How do we get there? | Who needs to be involved? | How do we know that we've got there? |
|--|---|--|---|---|---|
| Point of view as a nation | Currently operating an economy that enriches few and impoverishes many people and promotes ecological imbalance | To have a nation full of bright opportunities for all citizens while striking equilibrium between economy, society and environment | Review education curriculum to empower citizens with systemic thinking skills, values and sound decision-making skills | Ministries of Education, Youth Sports and Culture, Finance, Environment, professional and corporate bodies | Successful workforce and sound citizenship demonstrating love for ecological livelihood |
| Point of view as Social Studies expert with bias for sustainability | Currently running a capacity building (teacher education) programme with a myriad of pedagogical weaknesses and policy threats that may render Social Studies un-useful to educate for sustainability | To have a very sound Social Studies curriculum rich in content and methodology to teach for change | Employ constructive and participative adaptive strategies to facilitative skill acquisition in educating for sustainability among pre-service teaching undergraduates of Social Studies | Academics (Professors and Lecturers) of Social Studies Education with bias for change (and) probably the Social Studies Association of Nigeria as a professional body | Success of implementation evident in pre-service teachers' demonstration at teaching practice exercise and coursework grades. Tracking and follow-up of Social Studies graduates in their schools of practice through action research |

4. Rationale for the above Strategies

In Nigeria, "a top-down" strategy for national development is presented in the form of a policy document called National Policy on Education (NPE). The National Policy derives its motives from the overall national goals. In this document, the overall goals of the nation are listed and education has been recognised as an instrument par excellence for attaining the objectives. The five national objectives of Nigeria are, to have a free and democratic nation; a great and dynamic economy; a united, strong and self-reliant nation; a just and egalitarian society; a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens (NPE,2004: p.3)

One of the subjects listed as compulsory at the first two levels of education in Nigeria to pursue this course is Social Studies. Social Studies is an interdisciplinary subject which "seeks to develop in the learners" intellectual capacity and ability, self-confidence, self-expression, self-realization, initiatives, reflective thinking, and resourcefulness for the socio-political order" (Ojedokun, 2012: p.1618). Approach to Social Studies is similar around the globe. According to Brand *et al.* (1980) the concern of Social Studies is on "how children learn what they are supposed to learn" and not "what they are supposed to learn": because the former provokes more thinking; and hence makes children to be more critical of their environment. This approach may seem to be promoting what

Fien (1993) calls critical thinking. Hence, in the author's own opinion, Social Studies may be one of the adjectives of EfS, even though faced with its own myriad of problems.

However, having existed in Nigeria as a school subject for about four decades, its impact seems not so much felt; and if the SWOT table above is anything to go by, the right type of attitudes to justify the subject in terms of critical, reflective and systemic thinking and sound decision making on the part of current generation of young and middle-aged people are not evident. For instance, noticeable lavish spending on "parties" with attendant travels (putting pressure on roads generating traffic noise and smoke); pollution of party venues (school field especially) with solid waste (like used polythene and paper wraps) and defecating around venues, overuse of water; cooking with firewood (putting pressure on the forest and contributing to the problem of desertification); DJ open-air loud-noise making with electrical and electronic gadgets; getting drunk and quarrelling to the point of being injured (putting pressure on medical and health services through avoidable accidents before and after party); doing unsafe mating (sexual intercourse) (making themselves vulnerable to sexually transmitted infection and disease, unwanted pregnancy and complicated abortion) or safe-mating with wrong disposal of contraceptives such as condom would have been minimised to a greater extent if Social Studies had made a significant impact.

Similarly, the phenomenon of kidnapping and demand of ransom for the release of the kidnapped across the country (reducing national income and creating insecurity of life and property) would not have happened if leaders are playing their roles effectively; and have not capitalised on occupation of positions of authority to embezzle money and make wealth at the expense of the electorate, who having suffered for long now choose to do oil-bunkering and pipeline vandalization to seek their daily bread. In the process, they spill oil, they cause fire outbreak which destroy the habitat of human and non-human beings and cause health hazard which require extra budgetary spending on the part of government. The same fear is also expressed in relation to the military spending associated with the need to combat terrorism, the consequence of which may be insufficient capital to execute development projects; and hence government go borrowing from international finance companies which put stringent condition that will later increase poverty. All these would not have happened if the subject, Social Studies, has been given its required prominence.

This systemic analogy could simply explain where Nigeria is, and justify why she has to strike an equilibrium between economy, society and environment ; and think about how to review education curriculum to empower citizens with systemic thinking skills, values and sound decision-making skills; and involve her various ministries and parastatal, and also include representative of private and corporate bodies. University faculties and research centres of whom are teacher-education departments and institutes may also be invited to provide guidance. By this she may have a successful workforce and sound citizens who could demonstrate love for ecological livelihood. However, this will be a top-down approach; and may be limited to policy provision alone in terms of broad curricula which are then left to the mercies of teachers in the classroom to implement.

The theoretical analysis of curricular provisions especially of subjects taught in schools and colleges lie with academic faculties in the University. This may explain why they have to be consulted by the Ministry of Education to provide technical assistance at the curriculum development phase. It is also very important that teachers who will finally implement the curriculum must be trained about theories underlining their subjects of focus in terms of content and teaching methods. The department of Social Studies in the faculties of education at the University fit into this status. They are therefore challenged to handle the mainstreaming of EfS into the Social Studies curriculum so that the current curriculum could reflect EfS thinking and methods.

Similarly, the current curriculum of Social Studies, being an integrated one therefore requires a critical review by the University for re-accreditation by the National University Commission, before the lower levels schools' curricula could be reviewed. In this context there can be bottom-up approach to change. Such review of Social Studies teacher education curriculum should reflect genuine systemic thinking. Some of the concepts to be reviewed for integration or reintegration are "world studies" (Hicks & Steiner, 1989; Hicks, 1995), "globalisation" (Pike & Selby, 1987), "what we consume" (Huckle, 1988, 1992), "cultural studies, citizenship education" (Gilbert, 1995; Steiner, 1996) etc. which are apparently there but are taught in the context of their topical headlines and not blending facts that "bond" environment, society and economy together. In this perspective, teacher educators should prepare to reform the curriculum of Social Studies at the University level by "building in" sustainability ideas into the existing course units so that the course can educate for sustainability.

By and large, since the concern of Social Studies is on "how" children learn what they are supposed to learn and not "what" they are learning per se (Brand et al, 1980), there seems to be an agreement of purpose between Education for Sustainability and Social Studies. Thus EfS can creep in through this avenue. Fien (1993) provides a typology that reflects that effective communication of EfS makes the teacher a project organiser and resource

person who negotiates projects in a collaborative and critical manner. According to Fien, the student is seen as a co-learner, who interacts with socially significant others to collaboratively execute social actions. In the same context, the teacher/student relationship is cordial. Learners are involved in the mutual learning process. The teacher only needs to act as a coordinator. The mode of classroom control is democratic. The teacher and the learners share power and responsibilities. The knowledge that is imparted is socially constructed. It integrates mental and manual aspect of knowledge which is emancipatory; and employs the social constructivist interactionist theory which emphasizes that the learner constructs social reality and further reconstructs knowledge through historical and political processes. If this ideas are to guide curricular review in the Social Studies teacher education institutions, proper attention will also have to be given to the training in the methods of teaching the learning content of Social Studies, so as to prepare teachers who will be able to effectively handle the teaching of the subject in the school.

Lastly, a reliable evidence suggests that a new compound subject curriculum has been introduced to the school curriculum in Nigeria. The name of the subject is “Religion and National Values”, which has five subjects (Social Studies, Civic Education, Security Education, Islamic Religious Knowledge and Christian Religious Knowledge) in a single curriculum package. In fact, interactions with Social Studies teacher trainers and members of the Social Studies Association of Nigeria suggest that they are not well disposed to this new arrangement which will reduce the recognition given to their darling subject. While they believe that the curriculum, “Religion and National Values”, will not last, they are also not leaving any stone unturned to create necessary awareness so that the strength of the subject could be enhanced by way of additional recognition; get the government attention on the national implications on the reduction of the learning content of Social Studies in the new arrangement; and address the recognition given to Civic Education and Security Education which are considered as components of Social Studies. Their arguments are that the designer of the Religion and National Value curriculum who recognises that fact security issues are component part of Social Studies and who having declared publicly that Social Studies teachers will teach Civic Education does not need to introduce any issue as emerging again as long as its content is clearly spelt in an existing curriculum. In this context, no new value is national other than that which Social Studies as a subject teaches and that religion issues even though could be exclusively taught in separate subjects such as the Islamic Religious Knowledge and Christian Religious Knowledge are also integral concepts taught as “Man and His Religion” in both teacher training and in the schools. All these threats are provoking national discourse if the substances of sustainability which are advocated for review in this paper will not go into extinction in the name of the introduction of a new curricular idea.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has exposed issues surrounding the prospect of using Social Studies to teach the rudiments of Education for Sustainability. Having examined the strength, weakness, opportunities and strength of Social Studies, especially at the level of teacher education, it may therefore be concluded that the threat to Social Studies which are enormous may need to be quickly addressed before so that teacher education institutions may have clear-cut directions on how to mainstream the learning content of EfS into the subject and consequently prepare preservice teachers that are critical and holistic in their thinking to handle a more robust holistic Social Studies in the primary and secondary schools in Nigeria. The subject’s association, Social Studies Association of Nigeria, may also have to be more proactive in the subject’s curriculum review and positive projection of the image of the subject so as to avoid the ugly scenario that may make their darling subject that is currently being threatened with extinction not to go into the oblivion.

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