

TRINBAGONIAN TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON ESD

PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON EDUCATION FOR  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By

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# TRINBAGONIAN TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON ESD

## Abstract

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is not common parlance in Trinidad and Tobago Primary Schools. Simply put, ESD is an approach to education that transforms our relationship with our environment; our economy and our society through developing knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that encourages sustainability practices in schools, our communities, the country, and in our own consciousness. Part of UNESCO's "reorientation of education" was meant to develop ESD values, knowledge, and competencies to reflect sustainability in schools. However, Trinidad and Tobago primary school teachers are encouraged by officials of the Ministry of Education to incorporate sustainability within classroom practices without ESD curriculum or training and, therefore, there is a risk of ESD being reduced simply to concepts, and thus, being implemented poorly, inconsistently, or not at all. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to inquire into Trinidad and Tobago primary school teachers' perspectives of ESD, how they understood ESD, engaged students in ESD, and the challenges they faced as they attempt to do so. In this study, interviews were conducted with six Trinidad and Tobago's primary school teachers and one reforestation educator to elicit their perspectives on curricula and sustainability in a post-colonial era. The results highlighted three main ideas: that the postcolonial residue impedes national sustainable development; the importance of healthy community relationships and partnerships in becoming a sustainable nation; and the potential of ESD to encourage the development of a sustainable, locally relevant, culturally appropriate, and child-centred education in a post-colonial context. This study will contribute to a gap in the literature regarding Trinbagonian teachers' perspectives on ESD in the hopes of informing decision making in Trinidad and Tobago, as well as in the greater Caribbean.

Acknowledgments

I give thanks to the balance of creation, His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie 1<sup>st</sup> and Her Imperial Highness Empress Asfaw, for their guiding light on this journey. To my ancestors who supported and paved the way for me, I am honoured by your presence and blessings. I thank you.

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*“Any who may wish to profit himself alone from the knowledge given him, rather than serve others through the knowledge he has gained from learning, is betraying knowledge and rendering it worthless.”* (H.I.M. Emperor Haile Selassie I)

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## Dedication

To the primary school teachers and students of Trinidad and Tobago, you are valued and your experiences matter.

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**Primary School Teachers' Perspectives on Education for Sustainable Development in  
Trinidad and Tobago**

The Democratic Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is situated at the extreme southern end of the Caribbean archipelago. The Caribbean is a basin of multiple ethnicities and religions with the majority of the Caribbean's population originating from countries other than the Caribbean. The Caribbean is challenged with what Lavia (2006) identifies as, "issues of identity and representation" (p. 258). While Trinidad and Tobago is popular for its multicultural population of an estimated 1.3 million people (General information: Trinidad & Tobago government online connect, n.d.), Lavia (2006) noted that the Caribbean is "a region of transplanted peoples in which translation, as a process of postcoloniality, has produced unique ways of being and seeing the world" (p. 258). Trinidad and Tobago, a former British colony, gained its independence in 1962. Since then the Democratic Republic of Trinidad and Tobago has made changes to its education system; a system which, on one hand, bears the responsibility of providing the nation's students with knowledge, skills and opportunities; while on the other, is charged with producing democratic and nationalistic attitudes in its citizenry.

Several revisions to the primary school curriculum are one of the ways in which Trinidad and Tobago has exercised its independence in governance. These revisions range and include new subjects being included in the curriculum, removing subjects that were no longer useful, changing from Common Entrance to the Secondary Entrance Assessment, providing additional content, and recommending strategies in subject areas. These revisions, however, did not disturb the foundation upon which the education system exists. While education was practiced in its indigenous forms in precolonial days, the colonial education system was the first experience of formal schooling in Trinidad and Tobago along with other colonized Caribbean islands (Alleyne, 1998). The colonial education system is the foundation

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for formalized education in Trinidad and Tobago and it is this foundation upon which curriculum revisions are continuously underway. Yet, much of the former colonial, educational, systemic practices were retained and are evident in the operations at the Ministry of Education of Trinidad and Tobago (MOETT) and in classroom practices today.

Presently, the vision of the Ministry of Education of Trinidad and Tobago (MOETT) is for the education system to be a “high achieving, people centred, proactive organisation capable of harnessing and releasing the innate dynamism, innovativeness and intellect of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner, intent on building human resource capacity in pursuit of national sustainable development” (Draft Education Policy paper 2017-2022, p. 16). It is uncertain how the former colonial education system’s framework affects this vision for national sustainable development but one can imagine that to realize such a vision the MOETT would have to assess and ascertain if its policies and systems are reflective of our colonial past and should this be the case, verify if it serves its current purpose of national sustainable development as expressed in the vision of the Ministry.

Considering that the MOETT’s vision is to satisfy the sustainable development of society, then the government’s philosophy of education and its purpose should reflect the values inherent in education for sustainable development in its policies, support systems, curriculum, and teacher education. There are 17 sustainable development goals (SDG) identified by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2017) which specify issues such as poverty, climate change, quality education, and other areas that require sustainability practices for the wellbeing of the planet, economy, and people. However, the overarching goals of ESD reiterated by UNESCO (2017) proclaim that:

ESD empowers everyone to make informed decisions in favour of environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society for present and future generations. It aims to provide the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to achieve

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progress on the sustainable development challenges captured in the SDGs. It also helps develop competencies that are relevant to a variety of different SDGs.

(UNESCO, 2019, Sustainable Development Goals, Resources for Educators, para 2)

Additionally, UNESCO is clear in its mandate to make use of its SDGs resources and objectives in ways that are culturally appropriate and locally relevant to students. While the goals reflect certain global issues, they vary in the extent of applicability and relevance from place to place. For example, the SDG “Clean Water and Sanitation” may not be an issue experienced by some countries; instead gender inequality may need more attention.

The historical context of Trinidad and Tobago as a colonized state and its colonial education system play their roles in the culture of these two islands, thus affecting what is culturally appropriate for ESD for the nation. Establishing what is culturally appropriate in a postcolonial country is sensitive because knowledge and culture are imparted through education. Lavia (2006) reminds us that, “educational practice in the Caribbean has been shaped by the relationship between the region and the metropolitan centre and the way in which this relationship has been resisted and mediated” (p. 284). An education system that has not been critically examined to identify traces of colonial residue might undermine its own efforts of educational reform by perpetuating a colonial culture, and thus, obstruct the present ambitions of the education ministry for national sustainable development.

There must be some mutual understanding of what constitutes national sustainable development among Trinidad and Tobago’s education stakeholders in light of UNESCO’s SDG. Mere curriculum revision would not suffice if educators themselves are not trained with this vision in mind and if the education system itself does not reflect SDGs. The MOETT does not clearly define sustainable development in the draft papers, nor does it articulate sustainable development in regards to its relationship with primary education. One must then ask, what does “national sustainable development” mean for Trinidad and

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Tobago's education system? What does sustainability mean in relation to our education system? How do teachers understand and enact practices that support education for sustainable development? Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is not a popular concept among primary educators in the nation. It is therefore a concern that primary school educators are encouraged by the Minister of Education to incorporate sustainability within classroom practices without ESD curriculum or training. Furthermore, ESD must reflect cultural appropriateness and relevance both temporally and spatially, which provides flexibility and a level of freedom for policy makers and curriculum developers in Trinidad and Tobago to establish a suitable ESD curriculum and system that would support the MOETT's vision of a national sustainable development. And yet, even after the Decade of ESD from 2005 to 2014, with the revisions made to the curriculum, there is no consensus among the education stakeholders in Trinidad and Tobago regarding ESD implementation or a shared understanding of national sustainable development.

A re-visitation of the fundamental questions regarding Trinidad and Tobago's education system is essential to understanding these revisions and the vision of the MOETT. What is education, and what is it for in light of sustainability in Trinidad and Tobago? What does it mean to be a post-colonial country aspiring for national sustainable development and how is it reflected in the curriculum? In exploring these questions, education stakeholders can then reposition themselves to incorporate and achieve the MOETT's mission of producing a society that reflects the values of sustainable development.

### **My Interest in this Study**

My interest in this study is two-fold. As an educator, I consider it my solemn duty to ensure that I am providing students with high quality educational experiences to assist in self-discovery, making meaningful connections, and developing awareness, skills, and talents that are useful to them in their everyday lives and for achieving their future goals. As the world

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continues to evolve, research in education provides us with deeper insights about global issues and educational possibilities, and how education can be of service to us in our country's aspirations and endeavours. As a Trinbagonian researcher, I wanted to understand how primary school teachers various understand ESD and if the curriculum stimulated their understanding of ESD in their pedagogy or if it was limited by the curriculum and encouraged in other opportunities. My desire to better understand these issues this led me to conduct my own research.

### **Statement of Problem**

The Decade of ESD (2005-2014) initiated by UNESCO was intended to organize global educational institutions and their governing bodies to assist in the creation of a sustainable planet. Ideally, this process involved a mass reorientation of educational structures, teacher training, curriculum, and administrative bodies which would all contribute to a transition towards a sustainable future. Many countries such as Canada, Australia, and Ireland have already spearheaded initiatives; reoriented their schools' cultures, curriculums, and infrastructure; and provided much needed research on how to weave sustainability into the fabric of the system (Education and Skills for Inclusive and Sustainable Development Beyond 2015). On the other hand, Trinidad and Tobago is just one of the many countries yet to incorporate sustainability in their education system. The result being that many citizens are excluded from this step towards a sustainable future for themselves and generations to come. The MOETT has a vision for the sustainable development of Trinidad and Tobago and officials at the MOETT often encourage educators to incorporate sustainability within classroom practices, yet this is occurring without ESD curriculum or training. Therefore, there is a risk of ESD being reduced simply to concepts, and thus, being implemented poorly, inconsistently, or not at all. The literature regarding teachers' perspectives on ESD in Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean are extremely limited and exacerbates the gap

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in knowledge. In response to the lack of research in the Caribbean about incorporating ESD into the education system and the lack of ESD educational reform in Trinidad and Tobago, specifically, this study investigated primary teachers' perspectives and lived experiences of understanding and incorporating ESD in their classrooms and schools.

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

Given the importance of ESD and the lack of policy and curriculum reorientation regarding ESD in Trinidad and Tobago, the purpose of this phenomenological study was to elicit the experiences, perspectives, and challenges of implementing ESD for Trinidad and Tobago primary school teachers. In doing so, this research considered the following questions:

1. What are primary school teachers' experiences of implementing ESD practices?
2. In what ways do primary teachers attempt to engage students in ESD?
3. What challenges do primary teachers face when they attempt to implement ESD within their classrooms?

Phenomenology as a method was used for capturing the essence of ESD as a lived experience of six primary school Trinbagonian educators who were untrained in ESD and who had no ESD curriculum support. Within this study I offer a description that is altogether powerful and unique yet may have echoes for other educators. The lived experiences of these teachers illustrate their circumstances of being in a post-colonial country, without ESD teacher training, curriculum, and other supports. The teachers' experiences were expressed through the participants' reflections of concrete examples and shared in the analysis section of this thesis. To be clear, this study does not attempt to generalize the teachers' experiences of ESD but the themes in the findings likely illuminate common aspects of ESD as experienced by other teachers, particularly those in post-colonial and Caribbean contexts.



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This research aims to explore Trinbagonian primary school teachers' perceptions of ESD to better understand what and how the education system could better support ESD practices. The findings of this research will also inform Trinbagonian educators of the ways in which other educators of the teaching community approach ESD in the classrooms and what opportunities and challenges they encountered while doing so. For the participants themselves, I hoped that participating in this research it would encourage reflection on their classroom pedagogy and their relationships with students and co-workers, as well as with their environment. I hoped it would also arouse reflection of their cultural consciousness as educators in the primary school teaching community and encourage more dialogue about critical and reflective practices as postcolonial educators, Education for Sustainable Development and the formation of an ESD teacher community. This research will prove useful to educators who wish to consider and employ ESD practices and to policy makers in their quest for curriculum development for a sustainable Trinidad and Tobago.

### **Significance of Study**

The findings from this study will be helpful in addressing the gap in literature regarding Trinidad and Tobago teachers' ESD practices and challenges in implementing ESD practices. This research will complement the existing literature on ESD and encourage other researchers to continue to explore issues of ESD in the Caribbean and in Trinidad and Tobago specifically. Additionally, this research will contribute to the gap in research on ESD in the Caribbean, and more specifically, the perspectives of teachers on ESD in Caribbean countries. This research provides educators and non-educators of Trinidad and Tobago with an exploration of the theories and studies that underpin ESD. This research offers educators an opportunity to reflect on ways in which they understand and employ ESD principles in their pedagogy and in the curriculum, and how the postcolonial context of Trinidad and

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Tobago influences their understanding and application of ESD. The research provides alternative vantage points on implementing ESD practices and the challenges teachers face. It is my hope that a ripple effect might ensue and that teachers, students, and the education system will be encouraged to adopt attitudes, behaviours, knowledge, and practices that epitomizes ESD in the schools and classrooms. For example, like-minded educators interested in promoting ESD might feel supported to build a network and a platform to share and encourage ESD knowledge and practices.

Additionally, policy makers may find this research useful in their work as curriculum developers, making revisions to the curriculum that are relevant to the local culture of Trinidad and Tobago, addressing social, economic, and environmental issues at the school, community, and national level so that there is continuity in the efforts for a sustainably developed Trinidad & Tobago. It might also be helpful in curriculum development as it seeks to engage students in local enterprise while building the social rapport among Trinbagonians. This might assist in developing a greater sense of nationalism, creating safe learning spaces that do not only teach about sustainability, but for sustainability, thus embodying the philosophy of ESD in its every practice including the social interactions, school's mission, motto, curriculum, teachers' pedagogy, administration, and management operations at different levels of the school.

### **Definition of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)**

The term Education for Sustainable Development or ESD is used throughout this study. To ensure that there is a shared understanding of the concept as it is used in this study, the following definitions are provided:

UNESCO (2019) has defined Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as an approach to education that:

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empowers learners to take informed decisions and responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society, for present and future generations, while respecting cultural diversity. It is about lifelong learning and is an integral part of quality education. ESD is holistic and transformational education which addresses learning content and outcomes, pedagogy and the learning environment. It achieves its purpose by transforming society. (UNESCO, 2019, What is Education for Sustainable Development? para 1)

This definition is generally accepted and various studies adhere to this understanding of ESD. However, others have put forth alternative definitions and/or concepts altogether that are discussed in depth in the literature review. One alternative of the ESD concept is Education for Sustainability (EfS) which according to the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority's (2014) is defined as an approach to education that transforms society through empowering people to live sustainable lifestyle. The definition follows:

education for sustainability develops the knowledge, skills and values necessary for people to act in ways that contribute to more sustainable patterns of living. It is futures-oriented, focusing on protecting environments and creating a more ecologically and socially just world through action that recognises the relevance and interdependence of environmental, social, cultural and economic considerations. (p. 32)

EfS like ESD, as a transformational approach to education, offers an overall reorientation of the education system to align with sustainability values and practices. EfS challenges existing unsustainable practices in the way it engages learners in, rather than inform them of, locally and globally relevant issues.

ESD does not negate the EfS concept in definition nor practice since both ESD and EfS share a similar definition of this type of approach and desired outcomes of education. However, the

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term ESD itself has drawn negative attention from others due to concerns about “development” in relation to sustainability. This is discussed more fully in the literature review. ESD and UNESCO’s definition of the concept is used in this study mainly because it is the term more commonly used in other literature, but surely EfS is equally appreciated.

### **Postcolonialism as a Theoretical Framework**

In this section I present the postcolonial theory which is the vehicle used in understanding Trinbagonian teachers’ ESD experiences. Teachers’ experiences with ESD are significantly shaped by Eurocentric ideals due to the colonial influence of the past and which continues to pervade the education system and practices at the levels of the government, teacher educator programs, and in schools. The postcolonial context is relevant to teachers’ experiences because it is a variable that differentiates other teachers’ experiences with ESD from those of postcolonial teachers. It is because of the postcolonial circumstance that these teachers express their experiences the way they do. Therefore, an understanding of postcolonial theory is essential to understanding teachers’ ESD experiences in Trinidad and Tobago.

Defining postcolonialism as an ideology and political theory, is cause for dissension among scholars. Many make a temporal distinction of the concept by hyphenating the word, “post-colonialism”, to imply a separation or marker of colonial times from independence or “... the historical period after territories and peoples that had once been colonized became nations in their own right” (Rizvi, Lingard & Lavia, 2006, p. 251). Other critics are skeptical of any separation in chronology, arguing that there is an “existential resonance” of colonialism and the unhyphenated “postcolonialism” points to the persisting condition as a consequence of colonialism (Ghandi, 1998, p. 3). Rizvi et al. (2006) noted that this position was influenced by Fanon (1968) who asserted that, “even after independence, the colonial subjects remain colonized internally, psychologically” (p. 251). Postcolonialism as an

aspiration (Lavia, 2006) “is a rejection of the notion that colonialism is over or non-existent, or that in some way exposing irreconcilable differences inherent in capitalist society should be set aside for more apolitical, ahistorical and acritical accounts of contemporary society” (p. 286). Lavia considers postcolonialism as an aspiration, a pedagogy of hope (Bristol, 2010) by the ways in which “forms of domination, aggression and ignorance” (p. 280) can be resisted.

Postcolonialism, as inspired by Fanon (1968), provides a lens for analyzing discourses and understandings the ways in which ideals of colonization continue to persist. Rizvi et al. (2006) explain the role of postcolonial theory as a lens to expose “the history and legacy of European colonialism, enabling us to understand how Europe was able to exercise colonial power ... and how it continues to shape most of our contemporary discourses and institutions-politically, culturally and economically” (p. 250). Postcolonial theory provides a “philosophical and methodological endeavour of educational practice” (Lavia, 2006, p. 281). It is a theory connecting the past, present, and future as well as the historical, political, and cultural pedagogical discourses. Postcolonial theory also works to map out the relationship between education, globalization, and postcolonialism (Lavia, 2006). Lavia argues that there is a need to reconsider the colonisation narratives especially with the emergence of “new transnational networks” (p. 286) that seek to globalize education under a new agenda.

While a clearly defined relationship between ESD and postcolonialism is not made in the literature, value can be found in ESD through its values and competencies as it relates to postcolonial theory’s advocacy for revamping educational policy, rethinking the role of education, and transforming educational practice. Literature produced by researchers such as Rizvi, Lingard, & Lavia (2006), Bristol (2010), Freire (1970) and Feinberg (2007) place great emphasis on the role of the teacher as an agent of social change through the teacher’s critical reflective practice in their profession. In like manner, ESD also presents the teacher as an

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agent of social change. ESD's teacher reorientation provides teachers with knowledge, skills, and competencies that can complement the postcolonial teacher's efforts to become a reflective practitioner and thus transform their practice and education.

Postcolonial theory critically analyzes global education policies that often operate to fulfill imperialist motives. Rizvi et al. (2006) argue that contemporary methods of colonialization now "involve more complicated flows and networks of power... characterized by the global movements of capital, people and ideas" (p. 254) as opposed to its former unidirectional operations of domination. This new order is organized and operates through "hybrid identities, flexible hierarchies, and plural exchanges through modulating networks of command" (Rizvi et al., 2006, p. 255) and has its roots in European imperialism and the now modern-day globalization. These new networks promote projects that influence the course of the social, economic, and political sectors of the countries of the world. Lavia (2007) describes UNESCO's global education reforms such as the Education for All (EFA) agenda as an example of how new forces appear under "hybrid identities" and "networks of power" that "affect the very nature of schooling; its related curriculum, policies, and practices" (p. 284). While aspiring for equal access to educational opportunities, EFA plays a significant role in countries' abilities to negotiate external loans and subsequent debt as they attempt to fulfill UNESCO's agenda. Bristol (2010) explained this as a "practice of oppression" and "hopelessness" through "development by invitation" (p. 172) in her plantation pedagogy theory. When developing nations are invited by international agencies like UNESCO to participate in policy development, it is an attempt to create an "equal playing field" with that of developed countries and with agencies such as UNESCO. However, their participation in educational policies as dictated by global agencies such as UNESCO undermines countries' local knowledge of education and intellectual power.

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From Education for All (EFA) and “modernizing” the curriculum to mandating policies and developing pedagogies, Trinidad and Tobago has participated in fulfilling these various mandates. The influence of an external organization such as UNESCO on Trinidad and Tobago’s education system and curriculum acts as management and manipulation of the education system and of the contents of the curriculum. Herein lies one of postcolonialism’s disputation where education is used as an instrument of underlying systemic relations with dominant practices such as those regulated by UNESCO. Through a postcolonial lens, we see how education is used as an instrument of oppression, maintaining the dominance of organizations such as UNESCO over countries like Trinidad and Tobago. Rizvi, Lingard and Lavia (2006) argue that:

postcolonialism’s contentions surrounding the relationship between knowledge and power are linked directly to education, both as an institution where people are inculcated into hegemonic systems of reasoning and as a site where it is possible to resist dominant discursive practices. In this way, education has a systematically ambivalent relation to postcolonialism. On the one hand, it is an object of postcolonial critique regarding its complicity with Eurocentric discourses and practices. On the other hand, it is only through education that it is possible to reveal and resist colonialism’s continuing hold on our imagination. (p. 257)

UNESCO’s authority to wield power and influence in Trinidad and Tobago’s education system closely is an act of colonialization because it means that Trinidad and Tobago must adhere to Eurocentric and Westernized standards and praxis whilst neglecting its own capacity to determine and act on what is appropriate and practical for Trinidad and Tobago as an independent state. Similarly, ESD as put forth by UNESCO, can be considered a Eurocentric endeavour as it fails to directly address colonization and postcolonialism as an important context and issue of ESD. Rizvi et al. (2006) point to the asymmetrical power

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relations between local and global bodies arguing that while the education is promoted as a local operation, “localities have never been more connected to outside forces... and need to be understood historically as being linked to the colonial origins of globalization” (p. 257). They posit that in its new language, colonialism and/or imperial powers are still exercised through educational policies that continue to shape the identities and culture of the formerly colonized.

Postcolonial theory considers globalization as a new form of colonial expression especially in its relationship to education. Rizvi et al. (2006) argue that:

these forces do not simply exist in some reified fashion, to be simply read off for their implications for educational policy and governance. They need to be understood historically as being linked to the colonial origins of globalization, not in some uniform way but in ways that are specific to particular localities. It is only through this kind of “complicated” or “vernacular” understanding that it will be possible for us to elaborate new modes of imperial power and to devise ways of resisting them and through education. (p. 257)

Thus, postcolonialism questions and is suspicious of the role of education in countries such as Trinidad and Tobago. Ramchand (2000) called for a revamping of the education system to reclaim self-knowledge through “cultural confidence” in the classroom and community (Lavia, 2006). Similarly, Best (2004) recognized that the circumstances surrounding Trinidad and Tobago’s independence and that of the greater Caribbean failed to bring about self-knowledge, and thus advocates constructing and understanding identity in educational practice (Lavia, 2006). Creating a cultural identity or even a national identity appears to be challenging considering the legacy of colonialism not only in the way it shaped “the culture and identities of the colonized,” but how the colonized themselves are shaped by “their encounter in a range of complicated ways” (Rizvi et al., 2006, p. 256).



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In the context of this research, ESD is considered another attempt by international agencies and networks, such as UNESCO, to invite countries like Trinidad and Tobago into policy development arenas with the intention of implementing sustainable development goals, policies, and directives. Unfortunately, it cannot be ignored that as a “developing” country, Trinidad and Tobago is dependent on external agencies for funding which perpetuates oppression, debt, and poverty; while also dictating the format and reform of country’s educational system. Although ESD may be seen by some as an ongoing effort of oppression and domination by global organizations such as UNESCO over countries such as Trinidad and Tobago, I argue that ESD as a loose set of recommendations could be adopted by local governments or education ministries and adjusted to suit the culture of that place, making ESD culturally relevant and locally appropriate. Thus, although ESD as expressed by UNESCO does not specifically address issues of colonization, colonialism, or postcoloniality, it does create a window of opportunity for Trinidad and Tobago to determine the ways in which it could address these issues and reorient its education system accordingly.

For the purpose of this research, I used the hyphenated form of the word “post-colonial” to refer to that temporal marker or era that commenced with independence. “Postcolonialism” is used to signify the continued existence of colonial residue or effects of colonialism which is, in part, psychological, manifesting itself in the thought patterns, attitudes, behaviours, and relationships.

### **Outline of the Thesis**

In the next chapter I will provide a literature review which evaluates what scholars have previously shared on ESD and postcolonial theory. In it, I will identify the sources that have contributed to the postcolonial field of study and discuss how education, ESD, reorienting education, and postcolonialism in the context of Trinidad and Tobago relate to each other to inform this study. The methodology chapter will follow and explains why I

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chose phenomenology as my research approach, a description of my research design and method, and how I analyzed my data. In the findings chapter I present my analysis and the themes that emerged from participants' experiences. In the final chapter I discuss these findings, offer recommendations, and share my concluding thoughts.

**Literature Review: How the Postcolonial Context Affects ESD Implementation in  
Trinidad and Tobago**

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is still a relatively new concept despite the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) efforts to promote it through the Decade of ESD 2005-2014. Therefore, it is not surprising that there is a gap in literature regarding ESD curriculum and practices in the Caribbean, as well as Caribbean teachers' perspectives of ESD. Sustainable Development research has gained momentum in the Caribbean as it relates to economic and environmental awareness and therefore, it is hoped that its concomitant, ESD will soon spring from its soil in research, education, and practices. Teachers' experiences and challenges with implementing ESD practices have been a focal point of research in Canada, Australia, Finland, Latvia, Turkey, and Poland. Qualitative research has explored teachers' understanding of sustainability (AESA, 2014; Buchanan, 2012; Badjanova, Iliško & Drelinga, 2013), the efficiency of pre-service and in-service sustainability teacher educator programmes (Bürgener & Barth, 2017; Falkenberg & Babiuk, 2013; Foley, Archambault, Hale & Dong, 2017; Redman, 2013), the implementation of ESD strategies (McNaughton, 2012), and recommendations for teachers' classrooms (Falkenberg & Babiuk, 2010; Fullan, 2001; Van den Branden, 2012).

Considering that teachers' perspectives on ESD in the Caribbean appear to be virtually absent from research literature, this literature review highlights teachers' perspectives on ESD in countries outside of the Caribbean. For example, Redman (2013) questioned whether teachers' behaviour change was an intentional after-effect of being participants of a sustainability education program in Phoenix, Arizona. Her findings revealed that the participants did express a deeper interest in sustainability and made attempts to utilize the knowledge and skills in their practice. However, despite their willingness to empower

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their students through sustainability education, the success of such efforts depends heavily on external support of ESD. Buchanan's (2012) study focused on the opportunities and challenges of implementing ESD at a teacher education university program in Australia. His study disclosed "unrealistic" hopes of curriculum change emerging from the focus groups. Subject delivery, assessment, resources, and use of materials were the areas that presented opportunities and their equivalent challenges for teacher educators. Buchanan accepted that while there were "inhibitors to informed action" (p. 118) and consequently change, awareness must forego any perceived action and/or change.

Since reorientation of education is seen as a pivotal demonstration of change towards ESD implementation, many researchers of ESD centre their research on teacher education. A case in point is Bürgener & Barth's (2017), whose findings advocated the idea that a societal transformation in favour of sustainability requires the development of ESD teacher competencies as agents of social change and curriculum changers. Analyzing the reflective journals of teachers who were subject to Global Citizenship Education (GCE) and ESD teacher education, McNaughton (2012) examined teachers' understandings and values of effective pedagogy of GCE and ESD in the curriculum. She admitted that while the teachers had a lingering concern about assessment priorities, she found that the teachers did have a change in pedagogical practice, perception, and an overall positive attitude towards adopting ESD and GCE practices. McNaughton realized that the process of critical reflection constituted the most meaningful learning for teachers. Through reflective writing logs, the teachers' interests in their professional identity and development as reflective practitioners increased.

McNaughton's (2012) findings of reflective pedagogy correspond with what Ted Aoki (2005) and Paulo Freire (1972) refer to as praxis. Both scholars explain praxis in

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differing ways with Freire (1972) maintaining that, “praxis is reflection (thought) and action (practice) upon the world in order to transform it,” (as cited in Aoki, 2005, p. 119) which closely resembles what McNaughton’s teachers participated in; while Aoki (2005) posits that praxis is not a separation of theory leading to practice but, “praxis is action done reflectively, and reflection on what is being done. Within this view, the act of knowing arises not from inward speculation but from intentional engagement with, and experience of, lived reality” (p 120). In her study, McNaughton compared the teachers’ reflective practice to Kitchener’s (1983) “epistemic cognition” describing it as, “transformative learning that requires key sustainability competencies, i.e. systemic thinking and critical reflective practice in its development and execution” (p. 779). Systems thinking (Capra, 2012) is one of the recommended approaches to thinking sustainably and achieving ESD. Through systems thinking, people understand their place in the whole scheme of things and appreciate the value of all the interconnections of a system.

### **Defining Education and its Purpose**

Defining education has been widely deliberated and debated for decades and to date there is no universally agreed upon definition of the concept. Some may agree in parts, but usually not entirely. The same can be said for the role of “formal” education which for the most part is determined by its society. UNESCO’s (1990) World Conference on Education for All (EFA) defined basic education as a “whole range of educational activities taking place in various settings, that aim to meet basic learning needs...” For UNESCO “basic education” includes both primary and secondary education. This definition has affiliations with “schooling” and so it is argued that the definition of education should be free from formal schooling.

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John Dewey (1929) believed that education was a process that “begins unconsciously almost at birth, and is continually shaping the individual’s powers, saturating his consciousness, forming his habits, training his ideas, and arousing his feelings and emotions,” (p. 291) and this process includes psychological and sociological education. Dewey (1966) proclaimed that, “education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform” and it is through education that “society can formulate its own purposes, can organize its own means and resources, and thus shape itself with definiteness and economy in the direction in which it wishes to move” (p. 57). For Trinbagonians, its local “social progress and reform” has led the people to question the quality of its education and the direction it should be moving as a nation that has 56 years of independence from British rule. The nature of Trinidad and Tobago’s social progress and reform is marked by the nation’s ability to meet the basic needs of humans and their environment.

There are numerous perspectives concerning the purpose of education that stem from a faulty premise of the concept of education itself. David Orr (1991) identified six myths that people maintain without question or query regarding what education can do for people and for society. Instead of the myths, Orr (1991) suggested six principles of what education should be for, three of which includes: “the goal of education is not mastery of subject, but of one’s own person; all education is environmental education, and knowledge carries with it the responsibility to see that it is well used in the world” (p. 55). Generally, Orr’s principles are somewhat reflective of the work of Abraham Maslow’s (1970) Self-Actualization theory—a process that individuals go through to realize their full potential in life—and Carl Rogers’s (1959) theory of humanistic education. Self-actualization and the relationship humans have with their surroundings, as reiterated by Yogi (2008), are aspects of humanistic education.

In its general sense, I believe that the purpose of education is best summarized by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (2008). Such a definition is not temporally or spatially bound, but

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simply covers a broad spectrum of the true goal of any education, irrespective of details that might differentiate one group from another. He states:

the purpose of education is to culture the mind of a man so that he can accomplish all his aims in life. Education, to justify itself, should enable man to use the full potential of his body, mind and spirit. It should also develop in him the ability to make the best use of his personality, surroundings and circumstances so that he may accomplish the maximum in life for himself and for others. (p. 289)

One can say that terms such as “personality” and “surroundings” do appeal to the social, environmental, and economic dimensions of sustainability to some degree, but the concept of ESD is more clearly defined in its purpose. If the means of Trinidad and Tobago’s education did in fact support the end that Yogi (2008) proposes, then we might not have reached this “Great Turning” or era of revolutionary transformation, as referred to by Macy (2009).

According to Macy, this transformation is “the essential adventure of our time: the shift from the Industrial Growth Society to a life-sustaining civilization,” (p. 1). If Trinidad and Tobago’s education was already culturing the mind in a sustainable manner, then as Yogi (2008) acknowledged, we would not feel as though our education was lacking an important element.

This lacking element which Yogi (2008) identifies as an incomplete education unveils itself as dissatisfaction with the education system largely expressed by parents, teachers, and even authoritative figures. In January of 2019 at the President’s Award Ceremony, the President of Trinidad and Tobago made a call for the country’s education system to do better since the current curriculum being delivered was not producing the quality citizens necessary for nation building. Yogi (2008) identified the deficiency in education as a lack of a complete education or a holistic one which:

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will give depth to a curriculum and enable students to become responsible citizens, fully grown in all the values of life, established in higher consciousness and understanding. Subjects should be taught in such a way as to bring home to students the full scope of life. Whatever subject they choose should be so presented as to give them a complete panorama of full values of living. (p. 228)

What might be missing from education in Trinidad and Tobago is a quality of fullness or an enriching education that will furnish a well-educated person. Similarly, Trinidad and Tobago's President also called for parents to be equally concerned about their children's character as much as they are consumed about their academics. Her hope is for a more "empathetic" and "valuable" population to contribute to the country's development (Trinidad and Tobago Newsday Newspaper, 2019).

The report coming out from the Brundtland Commission (1987) brought attention to the need for a more sustainable education, one that would fulfill the needs of the present and consider future generations. ESD is a means to provide a more "valuable" and "relevant" education. The phrase "sustainable society" was first introduced by Lester Brown in the early 1980s. The term, as Capra (2002) remarked, was used to denote a society that is "able to satisfy its needs without diminishing the chances of future generations" (p. 229). This definition was used to define "sustainable development" in the Brundtland Report in 1987. According to Babiuk & Falkenberg (2010), sustainability is not a planetary problem, but rather an issue of values. They assert, "the problem of sustainability is a human values problem, because sustainability is about sustaining something, and what that 'something' is, is (at least in its major part) a matter of human choice based on values" (p. 9). Human values stem from people's beliefs; a mindset that is influenced by culture and so, numerous parallels are seen between the sustainable past and the indigenous value systems. Likewise, the value



systems of Trinbagonians stem from beliefs that are culturally and historically associated to the people and the country.

The focus on sustainability is assuring that our present and future society's needs are met, and these needs are determined by what we value as a society. Sustainability requires us to maintain a certain standard of living for the present and future generation. Not only is sustainability a human values problem but Babiuk & Falkenberg (2010) confirm it is also a "responsibility problem (responsibility toward future generations)" (p. 9). The education system has the responsibility of imparting the values of society unto students, as society's current and future citizens. The mission of the MOETT "is to educate learners to achieve their full potential and become productive citizens who are imbued with the characteristics of resilience, goodwill, honesty, respect, tolerance, integrity, benevolence, civic pride, social justice and community spirit" (Draft Education Policy paper 2017-2022, p.16).

For UNESCO (2015), education is a key instrument in attaining the goals of global sustainable development. According to UNESCO's (2017) ESD Goals Learning Objective, "Education for Sustainable Development empowers learners to make informed decisions and responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society for present and future generations" (p. 2). UNESCO has had a history of influencing change around the world especially through educational reform.

### **Defining Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)**

ESD is an evolving concept; not confined to any set definition or time frame (UNESCO, 2006). It is flexible and is demonstrated in differing ways depending on time and place. The academic literature regarding ESD is layered with alternative concepts for ESD. In many cases, ESD is used synonymously with Education for Sustainability (EfS) and Sustainability Education (SE) (UNESCO, Toolkit, 2006). ESD is more commonly used at the

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international level and in academic literature; however, the other terms are equally significant and are commonly used in different parts of the world. When the Brundtland Commission defined Sustainable Development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (UNESCO, Brundtland Commission, 1987, p. 43), the concept of “Education for Sustainable Development” was born and as UNESCO’s Education for Sustainable Development Toolkit made it distinctly clear, the concept was not to be confused with Education about Sustainability. The former is more action-oriented, as education is the means through which we attain sustainability; while the latter is theoretical discussion in a subject area.

Contention arose concerning the disparity of the ESD concept in relation to its overall goal. The case of two juxtaposing words, “sustainable” and “development,” seeking to unite under the umbrella of education to promote a “green democracy” (Huckle, 2014) to save our planet and our posterity, resulted in the more favourable concept of Education for Sustainability (EfS). In support of this need for a more appropriate concept with less controversy, The Education for Sustainability and the Australian Curriculum Project Report (2014) settled on the term Education for Sustainability (EfS). They defined this as an approach that goes beyond the realm of imparting knowledge (education about sustainability) and towards a transformative nature of educating for sustainability; creating a brighter future.

Importantly, the term “development” often carries negative connotations as it is often seen as an effect of the ongoing colonial effort (Huckle, 2014). However, when paired with sustainability, “Sustainable Development” is an active concern that requires us all to accept responsibility for the planet, to be accountable inhabitants, and to live in a sustainable manner. According to the World Commission on Environment and Development (WECD, 1987):

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development involves a progressive transformation of economy and society. A development path that is sustainable in a physical sense could theoretically be pursued even in a rigid social and political setting. But physical sustainability cannot be secured unless development policies pay attention to such considerations as changes in access to resources and in the distribution of costs and benefits. Even the narrow notion of physical sustainability implies a concern for social equity between generations, a concern that must logically be extended to equity within each generation... The satisfaction of human needs and aspirations is the major objective of development. The essential needs of vast numbers of people in developing countries – for food, clothing, shelter, jobs – are not being met, and beyond their basic needs these people have legitimate aspirations for an improved quality of life. (as cited in Babiuk & Falkenberg, 2010, p. 11)

From this view of sustainable development, I appreciate the interconnected aspects of sustainability, that is, the social, economic, environment and human contexts. This view of development emphasizes equity in resource access and distribution and management as considerations for sustainability solutions but according to Huckle (2014) this view avoids identifying the who and what causes for the world's current ecological crisis. It does not point to those bearing most of the responsibility and who should be held accountable for such developmental policies or lack thereof that advocated unethical practices which resulted in such catastrophic unsustainable outcomes worldwide. The consequences of these practices of "the capitalist world economy" (p. 31) are primarily the cause of the current crisis and is what urged UNESCO, the Organization of American States and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development to establish a Sustainable Development Commission, and lobby for policy replacements. Huckle (2014) argued that the Brundtland Commission's Report (1987) bore political issues and inconsistencies in its approach to sustainability. On

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one hand, the report seems to call for social change, while the report's recommendations for sustainability appeared "conservative in that it seeks solutions through reform or a modified version of 'business as usual' which would leave existing structures of power intact" (p. 40). Furthermore, Huckle (2014) disputed that the report does not shed light on the causes of the environmental crises noting that this "greening of capitalism" initiative "fails to analyze causes, uses vague code words to rally support, seeks solutions that do least damage to the existing order, and identifies the executors of solutions with the existing power structure" (p. 41). Herein lies the confusion between the words "sustainable" and "development." Over the years, development has been an active force of ongoing colonialism, imperialism, and industrialization, and now globalization is what has for the most part brought the world to this point of unsustainability and an uncertain future. In short, Huckle brings to our attention that the Brundtland Commission's Report, promotes greening the existing capitalist world order instead of advocating for a replacement of the current system. Such is the case why many choose alternative concepts to ESD.

UNESCO uses both terms, ESD and EfS, intermittently, however, ESD is used most often. UNESCO's (2018) description of Education for Sustainable Development is a "holistic and transformational education which addresses learning content and outcomes, pedagogy and the learning and the learning environment. It achieves its purpose by transforming society" (p. 2). UNESCO (2018) recognizes that the goal of ESD is to inspire lifelong learning and endow people with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that would encourage them to live sustainably through being responsible human beings and making informed decisions that support a sustainable social, economic, and environmental society. UNESCO's Toolkit (2006) considered ESD to vary across the globe:

ESD carries with it the inherent idea of implementing programs that are locally relevant and culturally appropriate. All sustainable development programs including

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ESD must take into consideration the local environmental, economic and societal conditions. As a result, ESD will take many forms around the world. (p. 15)

Thus, Education for Sustainable Development in Trinidad and Tobago could mean similar things to other countries and yet appear quite different when it is implemented because of culture and local relevance.

ESD aims to provide people with the knowledge, skills, and tools that develop their attitudes and behaviours in a manner that will help them to live a sustainable life. The current basic education system does not completely lack these skills and can be manipulated to suit a sustainable outcome however, according to UNESCO (n.d.), basic education such as literacy skills need to be improved, education needs to be reoriented, and content matter and practices that do not reflect the goals of ESD should be removed to make education more explicitly sustainability driven. ESD content is relevant in that it aims to address critical global issues as well as local issues. The pedagogical practices of ESD are designed to promote student-centred learning, critical thinking skills, systems thinking, problem solving skills, and creativity. The environment for ESD should be inspirational for this type of educational practice and it should match the sustainability ideals or at least aspire to. The transformational changes expected from ESD requires reorientation at all levels of education from pre-school to professional (UNESCO, 2006).

The idea that ESD transforms the economy and society as a derivative of sustaining the environment, testifies to ESD's symbolic representation of three interconnected spheres. Each sphere represents a pillar or dimension of sustainability, specifically, social, economic,

and environment (UNESCO, Brandtland Commission, 1987).

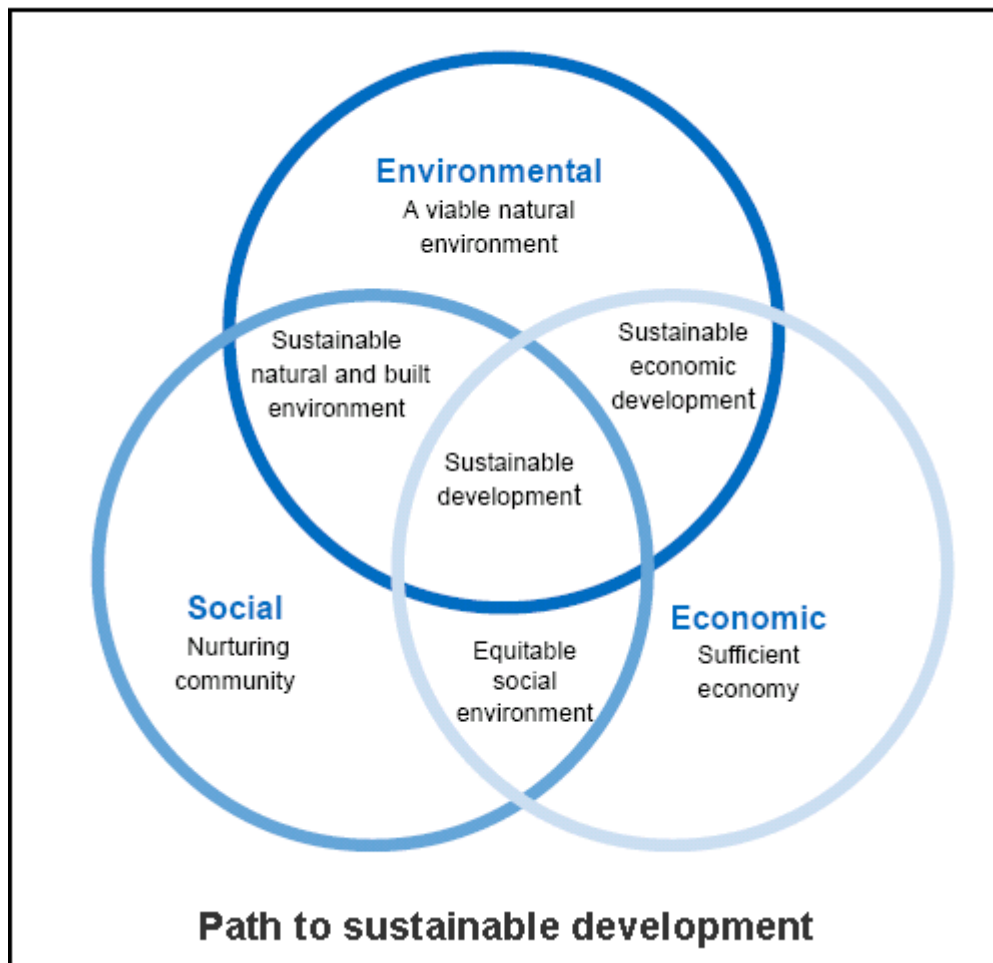


Figure 1. Path to Sustainable Development. Adapted from *A Sustainable Lens* (p. 33), by S. Mann, 2011, Dunedin, NZ: newSplash Studio, Copyright 2011 by S. Mann.

As illustrated in Figure 1, where the spheres connect in the center lies the goal of ESD; the well-being of all dimensions and a sustainable society. These overlapping spheres are meant to illustrate that ESD is not solely an environmental ideology. Importantly, Bonnett (2006) identifies education as a “vehicle for actively promoting positive attitudes and patterns of behaviour that reflect the requirements of sustainable development... the essence is to develop pupils’ own critical ability and interpretation of issues in the context of firsthand practical situations they confront” (p. 266). ESD incorporates cognitive and affective domain skills which include investigative, analytical, critical, and creative thinking skills; communication

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and collaboration; literacy and reflection (Buchanan, 2012). Importantly, ESD education aims to transcend the borders of specific subject areas that may be “more favourable” to environmental teaching and learning.

Working for Sustainable Development in Trinidad and Tobago (2012) describes these interrelated spheres in the following way: the economic strand of Sustainable Development pertains to innovation, growth enhancement, capital efficiency, margin improvement and risk management. The environmental strand addresses issues surrounding biodiversity, clear air, water and land emissions, and zero waste production. The societal strand is a component that concentrates on labour relations, diversity, environmental laws, human rights, community outreach and Indigenous communities. These spheres are interconnected and are able to recognize the complexity of issues. For example, socio-environmental relationships address environmental justice, safety and health, global and climate change; the environmental and economic aspects share an eco-efficiency relationship and address resource efficiency, product stewardship, products to service, and life cycle management; the socio-economic aspect deals with local economic impacts, skill enhancements, security, job creation, and business ethics.

Another illustration depicts ESD as a three-legged stool upon which sustainability (sustainable society) rests (Mann, 2011). Each leg of the stool represents a pillar of sustainability—social, economic, and environmental—and each leg is of equal dimension and proportion so that no one leg measures differently. The idea is that they are all equally important in the purpose of achieving its goal: to uphold sustainability. No one leg bears the load more than the other and for sustainability to rest comfortably in a stable position, parallel to a flat surface, each leg or pillar must carry its share of the load and be of equal measure. If one leg or pillar were to be broken or damaged in some way or is unable to fully meet the requirements of supporting sustainability, then the entire stool collapses or is unstable. Such

is the case in practical life, sustainability cannot work without all its parts because essentially, sustainability is interconnected in nature, depending heavily upon the functioning of all its parts for it to be effective.

Although the “three-legged stool” as a model has no definite source it is sometimes referred to in literature regarding sustainable development. Dawe & Ryan (2003) referred to this model as faulty, arguing that the model is based on the premise that the environment is separate from mankind’s social and economic well-being. Dawe & Ryan (2003) stress that:

Humanity can have neither an economy nor social well-being without the environment. Thus, the environment is not and cannot be a leg of the sustainable development stool. It is the floor upon which the stool, or any sustainable development model, must stand. It is the foundation of any economy and social well-being that humanity is fortunate enough to achieve (p. 1459).

Currently, there are numerous ways to illustrate the nature of sustainability, but the majority of depictions use interconnected, spherical representations and symbolisms.

Education for Sustainable Well-Being (ESWB) has become a much meaningful concept alongside EfS. Education for Sustainable Well-Being aims to illustrate the complexities and interrelatedness of the “consequences of ecosystem change for human well-being and the scientific basis for action needed to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of those systems and their contributions to human well-being” (p. 12-13). Babiuk & Falkenberg (2010) explained that:

the notion of “human well-being” emerged in some approaches to sustainability (sustainable development), ... as an attempt to comprehensively capture the multiplicity of human needs that would need to be considered in response to the question of what kind of human ecology is to be developed and sustained.(p. 12)



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The Canadian Index of Wellbeing uses eight categories of well-being. These are: “living standards, healthy populations, community vitality, democratic engagement, education, leisure and culture, time use and environment” (p. 13). These categories are recommended for determining human well-being as the indicator for quality of life instead of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which was purely economic. The Canadian Index of Wellbeing established the principle of “shared destiny” which is an understanding that sustainability has limited potential if attempted by individuals acting alone. Collective action towards sustainability and the development of its core values reaffirms those of ESD as put forward by UNESCO’s ESD 2030 Goals (2017).

To achieve sustainable development, the UN General Assembly established 17 Sustainable Development Goals under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UNESCO, 2017). The 2030 goals aim to address poverty and hunger and promote health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, climate action, life below water, life on land, peace, justice and strong institutions, and partnerships for the goals (UNESCO, 2017). ESD is said to be a central means through which this vision of transformation can be achieved. The critical role education has in accomplishing this feat is reiterated by Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO (2015):

A fundamental change is needed in the way we think about education’s role in global development, because it has a catalytic impact on the well-being of individuals and the future of our planet... Now more than ever, education has a responsibility to be in gear with 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges and aspirations, and foster the right types of values

and skills that would lead to sustainable and inclusive growth, and peaceful living together. (as cited in UNESCO, 2017)

The stance taken is grounded in the view that ESD will develop the values, attitudes, and competencies in individuals, thus empowering them to attain a global sustainable society and maintain life-long learning (UNESCO, 2017).

ESD is a transformational approach to education (UNESCO, 2018) that cultivates a person's frame of mind which "presumably must underlie any policy development" (Bonnett, 2006, p 268). Bonnett (2006) believed that our relationship with nature brings up questions about our own human identity and is essential to our understanding of sustaining nature. Bonnett (2006) explained that as it pertained to sustainability as a frame of mind, nature is defined as, "that sense of a self-originating material/spiritual world of which we are a part, including the powers that sustain and govern it," (p. 269). He affirmed that sustainability as a frame of mind requires us to extend empathy to things outside of ourselves and to desire seeing them flourish and this desire and empathy are determined by the way we understand the things in the world and our relationship and role in the web of life (Bonnett, 2006). He argued that sustainability as a frame of mind goes beyond our environmental attitude but:

... represents a perspective on that set of the most fundamental ethical, epistemological and metaphysical considerations which describe human being; a perspective which is both theoretical and practical in that it is essentially concerned with human practices and the conceptions and values that are embedded in them (p. 270).

We consider ourselves part of the natural order of the universe (Taylor, 1983 as cited in Bonnett, 2006) so there is a need to understand our place in the universe and what sustains our own existence in it (Bonnett, 2006). One aspect of understanding our place in the universe rests on our own self-understanding and self-mastery (Smith, as cited in Bonnett,

2006). When we have achieved self-mastery and self-understanding of our place in the world and our relationship in the ecosystem that sustains all existence, Edwards (2005) claims that a paradigm shift will occur and sustainability would no longer appear to be a far-reaching aspiration (as cited in Babiuk & Falkenberg, 2011). Yet, the education system does not reflect the values of ESD, (Babiuk & Falkenberg, 2011), and instead, maintains unsustainable values, attitudes, and competencies that perpetuate a cycle leading us to eventual deterioration (Badjanova, Iliško & Drelinga, 2013). It is due to this contradiction of education values and practices that there is a need for reorienting education across the various levels at which they exist.

### **Reorienting Education**

As argued above, education bears the responsibility for instilling the values of ESD. From a pedagogical standpoint, UNESCO (2017) compiled the learning objectives for Sustainable Development Goals 2030 inclusive of suggested topics, approaches, and methods educators can use in their classrooms. UNESCO (2017) explained that:

ESD is a holistic and transformational education that addresses learning content and outcomes, pedagogy and the learning environment. Thus, ESD does not only integrate contents such as climate change, poverty and sustainable consumption into the curriculum; it also creates interactive, learner-centred teaching and learning settings. What ESD requires is a shift from teaching to learning. It asks for an action-oriented, transformative pedagogy, which supports self-directed learning, participation and collaboration, problem-orientation, inter-and transdisciplinarity and the linking of informal learning. Only such pedagogical approaches make possible the development of the key competencies needed for promoting sustainable development. (p. 7)

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Not long after the Brundtland Report, UNESCO called for a reorientation of basic education to meet the needs of a sustainable education system (UNESCO, Agenda 21, 1992).

Reorienting education does not simply mean that sustainability finds a place in the curriculum rather, it means reshaping the education systems (UNESCO, 2004). Reorienting education is a continuous process of assessing needs and resources of a community, re-evaluating the goals and purposes of the education system, community planning, and implementing. During this process, reorientation is taking place in all the constituent parts that make up the education system including programs, policies and practices that govern the operations at the government level, ministry level, whole school level and classroom level from pre-school to professional education, impacting teachers and students and by extension families and communities (UNESCO, 2006).

Changes can include reinstating indigenous ways that continue to apply throughout the generations, advancing what is presently used, removing what was once useful in the past but has become obsolete in the present, eliminating what works against the goals of sustainable development, and building an education that is appropriate and relevant to that culture and place (UNESCO, 2006). On an individual level, changes would have to occur in knowledge bases, values systems, attitudes, and behaviours as well. It is the combination of all these changes that will eventually trigger a paradigm shift (UNESCO, 2006).

Reorientation of the education system means addressing the knowledge, skills, perspectives, values, local, and global issues to align with and contribute towards a sustainable society (UNESCO, 2006). Sustainability knowledge can be gained through an understanding of basic principles underlying the knowledge bases of the social sciences, natural sciences, and humanities. Within this understanding, traditional practices that serve sustainability are reinstated. ESD promotes lifelong learning that equips people with the

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skills they need to live sustainably throughout their years even after school. Some of these skills include but are not limited to communication, systems thinking, critical thinking about values, cooperative working, thinking in time including locally relevant skills for their society (UNESCO, 2006). Perspectives in ESD are numerous as they pertain to the environment, economy, society, and the collective well-being of these dimensions. Additionally, an understanding of how the past influenced the present and how the present affects the future is a part of understanding sustainable development.

Understanding values that are culturally relevant contributes to one's overall understanding of ESD. Values can be taught directly and indirectly in schools and outside of school. An understanding of one's own values and that of others in their community, of their country, and international values puts things into perspective when trying to understand sustainable development. Values clarification and analysis are fundamental to ESD (UNESCO, 2006). Critical issues vary from country to country, but there are shared issues that affect all countries regardless of geography, culture and economic status such as human rights, globalization, and climate change to name a few (UNESCO, 2018). ESD prioritizes locally relevant issues while placing emphasis on shared global issues. While reorienting education and the curriculum does not mean all global issues pertinent to ESD will be addressed in schools, the focus on locally relevant issues contributes to the overall development of sustainability how because all collective efforts towards sustainability on a local level amass to global impact (UNESCO, 2017).

While this feat of reorienting education might appear overwhelming, a systemic approach is considered practical. In its ESD Toolkit, UNESCO (2006) recognizes that:

reorienting education can appear as an insurmountable task that requires reform at every level of education- reform that would require more funding than is currently

available in national budgets. However, if the strengths model is applied beyond curriculum to administration, the efforts of existing ministries, departments, universities etc. can contribute greatly towards reorienting education to address sustainability. (p. 44)

Systems thinking recognizes that for the whole to function, the interconnected parts must be functioning and fulfilling their duties. Still, small steps towards ESD remain significant throughout the process, despite the delay of a complete reorientation of the education system. UNESCO has supported countries in South Africa, Central and East Asia, and other countries around the world through its Global Action Plan (GAP) which is the follow-up programme to the Decade of ESD (2005-2014). The purpose of GAP is to expand and accelerate efforts towards ESD. UNESCO has also offered support in ESD training to educators around the world, worked with governments to advance ESD policy, transform learning and environments, and empower youths in ESD endeavours all through their Global Action Plan on ESD.

Although UNESCO itemized the commitments involved in education reorientation in their Agenda 21, Chapter 36, inclusive of government activities, education officials' activities and community groups and NGO's activities, there is a focus on teacher reorientation in research literature. Teacher education is essential to the progress of ESD because the changes made at that level impact upcoming teachers, their primary schools and their students (Sims & Falkenberg, 2013). In the absence of teacher education, only those teachers who have a personal interest in sustainability are typically the ones to practice some form of ESD in their classrooms when the opportunity arises (Ferreira et al. 2007). However, teacher education will give educators the knowledge and skills to confidently endeavour in ESD goals in their classrooms. Ferreira, Ryan & Tilbury (2007) pointed out that teacher reorientation or

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“mainstreaming of education for sustainability in teacher education programs” (p. 226) is what will greatly impact the transformation of education. Ferreira et al. (2007) refer to mainstreaming as “the incorporation of ESD philosophy, content, and activities within an initial teacher education system to such an extent that ESD becomes embedded within all policies and practices” (p. 226).

Teacher education reorientation means that universities and teacher programmes must also reorient their curriculum to better prepare teachers for ESD but more so, to frame their minds in a way that sustainability becomes a part of the very nature of their thinking and attitudes and engage students in the process of ESD. Besides making curriculum changes or designing a new curriculum that is culturally relevant and appropriate, teaching strategies and pedagogies suitable for ESD should be promoted. For example, student-centered learning, problem-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and collaborative learning all help shift from teaching to self-directed learning. These approaches, coupled with an ESD curriculum that is centered on sustainability knowledge, competencies, and skills, allows for ESD attitudes and values to emerge and be displayed in people’s actions. Teachers educated in this manner transfer this type of educational experience to their own classrooms and schools. UNESCO (2006) concedes in their toolkit:

Teacher education programs need to produce professionals who not only teach sustainability themes but also can “pull together” the various disciplinary strands that will give their students a holistic understanding of a sustainable future and the role of individuals, communities, and nations in a sustainable world (p. 35).

The government bears the responsibility of establishing “national frameworks, policies, and measures for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda” (UNESCO, 2017, p. 6). This would include taking responsibility and ownership for ESD teacher education, curriculum

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reorientation, and administrative reorientation for ESD. A curriculum that is reflective of ESD in Trinidad and Tobago must bring awareness to the local areas that require sustainable development. A culturally appropriate and relevant type of education is mirrored in the type of curriculum the Ministry of Education embraces.

The curriculum is the planned experiences that are to be executed by the teachers and students in the classroom. This is echoed by Murray Print (1993) whose popular definition of curriculum is, "all the planned learning opportunities offered to learners by the educational institution and the experiences learners encounter when curriculum is implemented" (p. 9). While this definition has its merit, others argue that the curriculum includes much more than what is documented by curriculum developers. Aoki (1999) called for an expansion of curriculum beyond the planned experiences to include curriculum as a lived experience of both the teachers and the students.

Nora Allingham (1992) offered a wholesome definition of curriculum which caters to an all-encompassing educational experience. In a keynote speech to the Ontario Teachers' Federation, Allingham (1992) expounded on the definition of curriculum as inclusive of both planned and unplanned learning opportunities, from textbooks to the seating plan, to the food in the cafeteria and the assembly, sports, assignments, administrators, pedagogy, body language, and everything else that surrounds children from which they can learn. This idea is closely aligned with ESD principles which seeks to align the whole educational experience and setting with sustainability goals and practices. The curriculum is significant to ESD because it is through these lived experiences and opportunities for growth provided by the curriculum that sustainability attributes can be recognized. UNESCO (2006) suggested a re-examination of the curriculum at all education institutions, from pre-school to adult



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education, to address sustainable development goals for their nation and facilitate the type of transformation necessary for that country.

The paradigm shift that ESD aims to bring about is often conceptualized as “Ecological Literacy” or “Eco-literacy” (Babiuk & Falkenberg, 2010). The concept signifies how all systems work and rely on each other. Society and the economy rely on nature for its continued existence while the relationships humans have with nature impacts both humankind and the environment. Capra (1996) recognizes eco-literacy as symbolic of the symbiotic systems of relationships of all species in an ecological community (as cited in Babiuk & Falkenberg, 2010). An adequate description of ecological literacy is offered by Orr (1992):

The ecologically literate person has the knowledge necessary to comprehend interrelatedness, and an attitude of care and stewardship. Such a person would also have the practical competence required to act on the basis of knowledge and feeling... Ecological literacy, further, implies a broad understanding of how people and societies relate to each other and to natural systems, and how they might do so sustainably. It presumes both an awareness of the interrelatedness of life and knowledge of how the world works as a physical system... Ecological literacy presumes that we understand our place in the story of evolution. It is to know that our health, well-being, and ultimately our survival depend on working with, not against, natural forces. The basis for ecological literacy, then, is the comprehension of the interrelatedness of life grounded in the study of natural history, ecology, and thermodynamics... A second stage in ecological literacy requires a comprehension of the dynamics of the modern world... Ecological literacy, then, requires a thorough

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understanding of the ways in which people and whole societies have become destructive. (as cited in Babiuk & Falkenberg, 2010, p. 30)

From the literature presented thus far, it is evident that when speaking about sustainability and concepts borne out of sustainability such as ESD, EfS, ESWB, and Eco-literacy, a common theme of relationships, interdependence, and interrelatedness surfaces. What is needed for eco-literacy is system thinking (Orr, 1992). Systems thinking is the type of approach required for the success of EfS in schools. Through systems thinking, children understand their place and role in the entire system and smaller systems too (Capra, 2012). They can see interconnecting relationships between systems and analyze complex ones. Ultimately, building this type of competency will have an impact on the way we see, interpret and make everyday decision and major resolutions. Furthermore, the systems thinking approach can be seen as the brain behind the global sustainable transformation through sustainability in schools. Capra (2012) postulates “thinking systemically requires several shifts in perception, which lead in turn to different ways to teach, and to different ways to organize institutions and society” (Shifts in Perception section, para. 1).

Reorienting education has also presented the notion of whole-school system reform (Fullan, 2001; Van den Branden, 2012). Van den Branden (2012) established that the quality of ESD relies on the quality of each school in the educational system. While educational reform occurs on all levels, including the local, national, and regional level (Fullan, 2001), reorientation involves a process of “reculturing” both teachers and principals (Fullan, 2001) allowing for ESD to take root and be effective (Burgener & Barth, 2017). ESD is interdisciplinary and to implement it would require acknowledging the critical linkages ESD creates. The government must recognize this interdisciplinarity if reorienting education is to occur (Hopkins & McKeown, 1999). UNESCO refers to this as the Whole Institution

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Approach (WIA) because reorientation takes place at the level of the administration, teaching, and learning content, methodology, facility management and engages communities and forges partnerships.

There are certain conditions that support ESD such as leadership, cultivating shared values, and teacher training, to name a few. Buchanan (2012) asserts that sustainable leadership and direction are needed to transform education by “challenging current assumptions” (p. 110) as opposed to stabilizing them. Hopkins & McKeown (1999) recognized the importance of responsible and accountable leaders who can “pull together the pieces and form a picture of the role that individuals, communities and nations must play in a sustainable world” (p. 27). Falkenberg & Babiuk’s (2014) case study of initial teacher education programmes in Manitoba also revealed lack of leadership as an ESD challenge in reorienting teachers and suggested “joint institutional leadership and addressing the question of the purpose of education” (p. 426) as a possible resolution. Redman (2013) further explained that internal and external support cannot be overstated when we consider the challenges of reorienting education and implementing ESD. In Redman’s (2013) Phoenix case study, the participants revealed that the lack of internal and external support added to their uncertainty of implementing ESD confidently. “Sustainability-literate teachers” is what the UNESCO-UNEP (1990) document envisages upon completion of the post teacher-training in Sustainability university programs. Teacher training is a fundamental aspect of reorientation and ESD. This reinforces Redman’s (2013) study which indicated that teachers lacked confidence especially because of their limited knowledge and “know-how” of ESD to carry it beyond a theoretical approach to an action oriented, interdisciplinary approach.

There is an important connection between teacher reorientation and postcolonialism and that is value systems and understanding of self. Ennis’ (1992) research study, “Influence

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of Value Orientations in Curriculum Decision Making,” emphasized the point that teachers’ value orientations predicates the curriculum decisions they make. Therefore, if a teacher’s values about sustainability are not strongly positioned, they may not be reflected in their practice. This was reiterated in Firth & Winter’s (2007) study of ESD teacher training for a geography curriculum in secondary school when they found that only teachers who were already interested in ESD dedicated themselves to it. Hopkins & McKeown (1999) furthered the idea that value systems impacted ESD in their own research in which they maintained that society’s values, schools’ values, communities’ values, and world values all have a place in ESD and should be acknowledged.

Bonnett (2006) argued that our attitude towards nature tells us a lot about who we are and what value we place on everything else in nature. This position corresponds with Babiuk & Falkenberg (2010) understanding of ESD as a human values problem. Bonnett (2006) eloquently explained, “our relationship with nature, whatever its kind, is an important aspect of our own identity, and thus our self-knowledge” (p. 270). He insists that to value anything, one must value oneself first and this can be translated to love for ourselves and love for what sustains us (Bonnett, 2006). Smith (as cited in Reid & Scott, 1998) claims that this type of “attunement” is also known as self-mastery . Without self-knowledge there is no valuing of other relationships, be it environmental, social or economic oriented.

Consider Bonnett’s (2006) claim that ESD “as a frame of mind will be to reconnect people with their origins and what sustains them and to develop their love for themselves” (p. 271). From a postcolonial perspective, citizens struggle with identity and self-knowledge and therefore, there exist an imbalance or rather misappropriate value systems within their “frame of minds” and in their society. In a postcolonial context, understanding issues related to identity is a priority in developing a national sustainable Trinidad and Tobago because understanding one’s self will foster an understanding of one’s relationship with others and

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can expose “irreconcilable differences inherent in capitalist society” (Lavia, 2007).

Furthermore, it should then follow that self-understanding will allow for exploration of one's identity in light of being a Trinbagonian citizen and what constitutes national sustainable development. Understanding issues related to postcolonialism can support better understandings of sustainability by confronting colonial legacies and reclaiming cultural confidence (Lavia, 2006) which are associated with identity. ESD is encouraged more so at a local level to address the issues that are pertinent to the context of that place. National sustainable development for Trinidad and Tobago relies on understanding the national identity and culture of the two islands, hence before any policy on sustainability can be developed, one must first have an appreciation for and value the thing that is to be sustained (Bonnett, 2006).

As previously discussed, education reorientation addresses value systems in a culturally relevant way and fosters an understanding of values of other cultures. In a postcolonial context such as Trinidad and Tobago, reorienting education will depend heavily on the social dimension and/or socio-cultural aspect of sustainability; relationships in society that are derived from value systems of a colonial imagination. As London (2002) posited, “school is used to produce agents with dispositions and values appropriate in the service society” (p. 97). Reorienting education in Trinidad and Tobago must be mindful of the postcolonial context and include a transformation of colonial attitudes and values that perpetuate unsustainable norms at the national level.

In the case of a postcolonial country, education was used as a means to sustain colonial values and systems. Not only were the colonized people denied a culturally relevant education, the enslaved Africans were also denied chances of maintaining their identity. At the same time, the Indentured East Indians who comprised the cheap labour force maintained

their identity, traditions, and ways of being. The education system was a form of mind control (London, 2002) and hindered the progress of nation building (Alleyne, 1995).

In light of the relationship between ESD and postcolonialism value systems, the following section explores postcoloniality and what ESD would mean for Trinidad and Tobago in light of this context.

### **The Context of Postcolonial Trinidad and Tobago**

The transition from colonialism to independence and self-governance has many layers for a country and its people. Postcolonialism does not necessarily qualify as freedom. Ghandi (1998) proffers, “the emergence of anti-colonial and ‘independent’ nation-states after colonialism is frequently accompanied by a desire to forget the colonial past... newly independent nation-States are often deluded and unsuccessful in their attempts to disown the burdens of their colonial inheritance” (p. 4). Ghandi (1998) advocated the work of Albert Memmi (1968) who argued that postcoloniality is “a historical condition marked by the visible apparatus of freedom and the concealed persistence of unfreedom... The perverse longevity of the colonised is nourished in part, by persisting colonial hierarchies of knowledge and value...” (p. 6). Memmi, according to Ghandi (1998), retained that “the triumphant subjects of this aftermath inevitably underestimate the psychologically tenacious hold of the colonial past on the postcolonial present” (p. 6). One can say colonialism is very present in the postcolonial state of Trinidad and Tobago.

Trinidad and Tobago’s colonial experience and independence differs from other postcolonial territories such as South Africa, Australia or India. For one, most of the Indigenous population in Trinidad and Tobago were wiped out by the European powers, leaving very little traces of their existence behind. The Europeans then filled the void of a “working population” through what Lavia (2006) calls “transplanted people,” or Africans stolen from their homeland and enslaved by Europeans. The enslaved were prohibited from

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practicing their traditions and from passing on their knowledge of livelihoods, spirituality, forms of education, values, morals, and communal existence that they were accustomed to and which benefitted them in their native land. Instead, having been robbed of these things, they had to accept beliefs and practices that were foreign to them and consequently generations later, it became all that they knew. There was no return to former ways of knowing, as for the most part they were forbidden, long lost, and forgotten. Any traces of African culture that survived were chancily practiced in secret. Independence then, was not an opportunity for the formerly enslaved, and now the current citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, to reclaim what was lost but rather to build anew under unfamiliar circumstances, that is, governing their own affairs as an independent nation. Unfortunately, having enculturated the practices and beliefs of their colonial masters, their aspirations after independence was to become more like their colonial master (Alleyne, 1998).

Upon independence, the first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. Eric Williams, sought a sense of nationalism for the country, a concept Frantz Fanon (1968; 1984) argued could not be achieved by mere independence. Fanon (as cited in Rizvi et al., 2006) maintained that, "independence from colonialism does not mean liberation, and that 'national consciousness' often fails to achieve freedom because its aspirations are primarily those of the colonized bourgeoisie..." (p. 251). The government of Trinidad and Tobago made intentional efforts through the Development Plan 1964-1968 (Alleyne, 1995) to stimulate nationalism and develop a culturally and racially diverse integrated society. The intention was to steer away from the "colonial mentality" of the past by using education as the medium through which this goal would be accomplished.

However, as Ghandi (1998) acknowledged, this will-to-forget takes a number of historical forms and is impelled by a variety of cultural and political motivations. He stated that, "the mere repression of colonial memories is never, in itself, tantamount to a surpassing

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of or emancipation from the uncomfortable realities of the colonial encounter” (p. 4). In considering Walcott’s (1974) historical amnesia, this desire to forget refers mainly to the colonial experience. But something more was forgotten, something that did not need desire or will to be overlooked, that is, the lost history of a people. Walcott (1974) distinguished the Caribbean as an archipelago more of mimicry, and less of culture; mimicry due to its imitation of the superpower due to forgetting its own source of beginnings. He explained:

in the Caribbean history is irrelevant, not because it is not being created, or because it was sordid; but because it has never mattered, what has mattered is the loss of history, the amnesia of the races, what has become necessary is imagination, imagination as necessity, as invention. (p. 6)

Walcott (1974) believed that this amnesia leaves the postcolonial person powerless with, “no alternative but to imitate those systems offered to or forced on it by major powers, their political systems which must alter their common life, their art, their language, their philosophy” (p. 5). In other words, mimicry for the amnesiac Caribbean citizen is inevitable.

In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, the cultural motivations indicated by Ghandi (1998) manifested themselves after emancipation in the form of “reinventing themselves” through the limbo, the mas, the calypso, and the pan (Bristol 2010). But even after this reinvention and the heralding of independence, the already established systems used to govern the education sector continued. The educational system and educational practices which still perpetuated colonial preferences were maintained largely due to postcolonial aspirations towards the British which was something embedded in the very nature of the educational structure and the people themselves (Walcott, 1974). The focus on literary and academic subjects as opposed to practical and technical subject areas was evidence to the aversion of stigmatized sectors within the society (Alleyne, 1995).



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With self-governance and the urge to promote nationalism in Trinidad and Tobago, education was seen as “the key to the solution of the national inferiority complex” (Alleyne, 1995, p. 68). It was hoped that the teaching of West Indian History in secondary schools would develop national consciousness in students. This was an attempt to move away from an education that was characteristic of the colonialists to one that focused on the local environment and what was relevant for the creation of a national society. This inclusion of West Indian History among other subjects in the curriculum was one of the policy measures adopted. Some of the other changes included the use of local textbooks which promoted Trinbagonian culture and environment and aimed to foster an attitude of appreciation, love, and respect for the two islands.

However, the nationalistic values that were prominent in the curriculum after independence were not able to undo/counter the colonial imagination. According to Alleyne (1995), education alone cannot bear the responsibility of changing a society when there are other powerful influencers and institutions that shape society. The inclusion of subjects in the curriculum cannot erase psychological effects of years of colonialism, and neither can it (re)create a nation. “Nationhood” is a form of exercising national identity, and identity is not gained through subject inclusion, especially in cases where colonial educational practices and pedagogies remained intact and were never reoriented to align with the new emerging culture and ministry’s goals of education for Trinidad and Tobago. While the Trinidad and Tobago government did make attempts to improve the curriculum, the pedagogical practices remained reflective of the former colonial masters’ education system. This means to say that emphasis was placed on completing the content through colonial educational practices, or what Bristol (2010) presents as:

traditional teaching and testing, which work to dampen down the opportunities for students and teachers to reconstruct new knowledge by drawing upon their existing

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indigenous intellectual patterns, such as storytelling, dance, the Carnival and spontaneous community gatherings. Thus, a traditional (masked as modern) mode of teaching and testing has implications for the way knowledge gets transferred and is understood as property, how local development is initiated from without and how external international policies get accepted locally. (p. 173)

Thus, even a curriculum whose subject matter was geared towards independence and postcolonial ambitions, could not be enlivened within and under colonial-type pedagogies and education systems. Memmi (1968) suggested that the “lingering colonial residue” could be dissolved through postcolonial citizens owning up to their “reciprocal behaviour” (Ghandi, 1998). This might be achieved through a more reflective educational praxis if the MOETT were to transform its curriculum from a dependent to independent ideology, thus empowering the teacher to become an agent of social change. Williams (1995) attempted to reorient education which commenced at Teacher Training Colleges. Education was recognized as the means through which the transmission of culture would occur, whilst creating a “modern” and democratic society. It was believed that by training teachers to work with the curriculum it might transform the secondary and primary school experience. But education too is embedded in culture. According to Bristol (2012), “the transformation of teaching requires an awareness of the teacher’s cultural role as well as the development of a critical cultural consciousness” (p. 20). In the end, the anticipated “nationalism” that education was authorized to conjure was fleeting, if it was even attained at all, as there remains even presently, a longing to be liked or accepted by the colonizer.

Nationalism, as it relates to postcolonialism, has politically influenced many revolutionary struggles in anti-colonial movements. Despite the apprehension critics held concerning nationalism, Fanon (1990) still considered it as:

the principal remedial means whereby the colonised culture overcomes the psychological damage of colonial racism... Nationalism responds to the urgent task of rehumanisation, of regaining an Edenic wholeness. It becomes a process of reterritorialization and repossession which replaces the 'two-fold citizenship' of colonial culture with a radically unified culture. (as cited in Ghandi, 1998, p. 112)

It would appear that Trinidad and Tobago has yet to respond to this task of impending nationalism. Through reorienting education, a unified culture can be achieved, however, history should teach that curriculum revision alone or even teacher educator programs that may be misaligned though well-intentioned, will not suffice in deeply-embedded postcolonialism contexts.

### **Education for Sustainable Development in the Post-colonial Context of Trinidad and Tobago**

While Trinidad and Tobago teachers may not be ESD-trained, their value orientations and educational beliefs are partly the motive for the curriculum decisions they make on a daily basis (Innis, 1992) including matters concerning ESD and their own "lingering colonial residue" (Memmi, 1968). The value orientations of postcolonial educators regarding self-knowledge and identity, their role as educators, the role of schools, the ministry, the community, and the government all influence their capacity to foster ESD values and principles in their schools and classrooms. The postcolonial educator's values influence their content delivery, the pedagogical approaches used, and the types of relationships developed. If the educator's value system does not reflect ESD values and principles, it is difficult to instill ESD values in the citizenry and advance ESD goals in the country for national sustainable development.

ESD and postcoloniality are interrelated in that they both include developing critical thinking and self-awareness competencies to confront and resist practices and attitudes that

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do not support their respective goals (Lavia, 2006, 2007; McNaughton, 2012; Rizvi et al. 2006; UNESCO, 2018). UNESCO has reiterated the important role of education towards sustainability operating from the premise that education is the mode through which changes within society occur. However, Alleyne (1995) cautioned that education alone cannot bear the responsibility of social change and transformation. Conversely, Phillips' (1964) believed that "education systems usually reflect social structure rather than change it" (as cited in Alleyne, 1995, p. 67). Alleyne (1995) noted:

just as education makes the man, so too, it creates and develops a society. During the period from the freedom of the slave population at emancipation in 1834 to the gaining of independence in 1962, one could question the contribution that education made to the "creation of society." It could be argued that the type of education provided and its availability to the different segments of the population had an undeniable influence on the structure and characteristics of the society of those times. It is equally arguable that the education system inherited by the national government at independence bore such strong traces of its colonial past that it militated against education playing a very positive role in the creation of a viable integrated society and in the elimination of the undesirable effects of the period of colonial domination. Only time could tell whether the political decision makers were correct in placing so much faith in education for ridding the society of its colonial acquired ills. (p. 80)

Alleyne (1995) suggested that while education can influence transformation, it should not be regarded as the "panacea" for all of our social ills as "the effective solution to many of the problems in society may be outside of the realm of education" (p. 81). He suggests that if schools are not the architects of change, but some other stronger and more powerful initiator is, for example, family, government, and war, then schools could at least contribute to the

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transformational shift by furnishing students with the “skills, knowledge and attitudes to accommodate changes that are already underway in the society” (p. 67).

As previously discussed, knowledge and power are perpetuated by education; therefore, education is linked to postcolonialism as it serves to upkeep or dismantle existing practices of knowledge and power that are postcolonial in nature. By re-evaluating the purpose of education, it is possible to uncover these motives, examine their influences, and impede any further negative consequences of this type of education (Rizvi et al., 2006). The process of reorienting education provides the government of Trinidad and Tobago an opportunity to assess its current education systems and make the changes that the government considers fitting for its society and economy. One concern is that government officials or education officials themselves are influenced by a postcolonial mentality, and so may not be able to identify their own postcolonial imaginations, making it difficult to reorient the education system.

Who then is responsible for educating the teacher educator and what type of education is needed to rid Trinbagonians of its postcolonial mentality? If ESD is said to be culturally relevant and appropriate, requiring one to first have an awareness of their individual and cultural identity to gain an understanding of values and perspectives (UNESCO, 2006), then ESD as an approach to transformative education can also be used to some extent as an approach to deconstruct the postcolonial mentality by acquiring the critical reflective competencies encouraged in UNESCO's ESD Goals and Objectives (2018). This could potentially contribute to the theory of postcolonialism as an aspiration which resists and/or confronts dominant oppressive policies and practices, and could result in a paradigm shift challenging the status quo.

In primary school education, the postcolonial residue remains in the curriculum (including the content and forms of assessment), in teachers' pedagogical approaches, in

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classroom management strategies, in the schools' systems of operations, and in the relationships fostered in schools. At the time of Trinidad and Tobago's independence, the late Prime Minister, Dr. Eric Williams (1962) noted, "two races have been freed, but a society has not been formed" (p. 278). Trinidad and Tobago aimed at integrating the different ethnicities under one national umbrella. Reorientation of the curriculum for the newly independent Trinidad and Tobago sought to promote national unity and get rid of the colonial mentality through subject inclusion and textbook changes. It was hoped that the changes in the curriculum would foster a sense of nationalism.

To date this disunited society has remained the status quo of Trinidad and Tobago; an independent nation without a locally-oriented and informed sense of values and beliefs that are reflective of those who live there and aim to foster racial and cultural unity. For nationalism (which is used in this study to denote national pride and unity) to be realized, Dr. Williams vested his interests in education, holding the view that education would steer the people towards a sense of nationalism and away from the colonial and pervasive influences of Britain (Alleyne, 1995). Yet, racial discord among the citizenry and their subdued if not imperceptible display of nationalism hinders progress. The people often remain divided by race and, for the most part, maintain an ideology that the local is less valuable, while what is "foreign" is superior (Alleyne, 1995).

It will be difficult to reorient the Trinidad and Tobago's education system given the "psychological scars" (Alleyne, 1995) of colonialism. It is necessary to recognize that reorienting education takes more than just curriculum revision (Bristol, 2010; Lavia, 2006, 2007; London, 2002; Rizvi et al., 2006). The educator is extremely influential in the curriculum process and education in general. Two reorientation processes towards ESD include: reorienting pedagogies that empower students to make well-informed decisions and demonstrate responsible attitudes and behaviours; and redefining education objectives.

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UNESCO's ESD Goals and Learning Objectives (2017) provide some insight as to what ESD can entail for Trinidad and Tobago. For example, the guide describes ESD as "a shift from teaching to learning" (p. 7) through the creation of learning spaces that would facilitate "self-directed learning" (p. 7) among other pedagogical approaches. This shift from teaching to learning can be interpreted as a shift from relying on the teacher as a source of all knowledge which they dispense to students, to one where students are empowered to take charge of their learning and become independent initiators of their own learning process.

Curriculum and teacher education reorientation towards ESD do not directly address the issues of a postcolonial nation and citizenry. What ESD provides are certain skills and competencies that can be beneficial in the process of critical reflective practices. ESD provides a frame in which Trinidad and Tobago could reorient its education system to something that is relevant and appropriate in order to address the complexities of its society. The UNESCO ESD Goals and Learning Objectives (2017) provides core ideas only and suggests learning objectives, topics, and activities that serve to guide curriculum developers and educators in their ESD efforts. However, the document is not "descriptive, prescriptive or exhaustive" (p. 8) and does not require adherence. For example, the document "must therefore be complemented by appropriate locally relevant topics and updated regarding the new issues that constantly emerge..." (p. 8). The current system in Trinidad and Tobago encourage the preparation of students "to move up the next rung of the educational ladder" (Bacchus, 2003), positions exams as the central purpose of education, and perceives knowledge acquisition as the recall of facts and rote learning (London, 2002). Reorienting education would require the nation to re-examine the purpose of education, the curriculum, pedagogical practices, and teacher education programs.

Herein lies the significance of historical and social context; two fundamental elements at play in understanding ESD in postcolonial Trinidad and Tobago. ESD is a human values

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problem as identified by Babiuk & Falkenberg (2010) and in postcolonial Trinidad and Tobago the value systems have been heavily influenced by the Western and oppressive colonial history of the country. According to Bristol (2010), the purpose of education at the time of colonialism was “plantation pedagogy as a practice of oppression” (p. 171). This type of education served to keep the labouring class oppressed and gave the state authority to control and monitor the colonized population. Bristol (2010) maintains, “education carried the assumption of freedom and, with it, the utopian belief in democratic and economic progress through a dependency relationship with the metropolis” (p. 171). Aspiring towards British ideals especially in governance and education (London, 2002a; 2002b) was a natural inclination for the now independent Trinidad and Tobago after years of British indoctrination. Thus, the education system in post British colonies is illustrative of colonial imagination. The colonial imagination is illustrated through the work of C.L.R. James (as cited in Lavia, 2006) who explained:

it was only long years after that I understood the limitation of spirit, vision and self-respect which imposed on us by the fact that our masters, our curriculum, our code of morals, everything began from the basis that Britain was the source of all light and leading and our business was to admire, wonder, imitate, learn; our criterion for success was to have succeeded in approaching that distant ideal. (p. 284)

In Trinidad and Tobago, a society whose independence did not bear liberty, whose independence continued in imitation of colonial ideals, whose identity is still shrouded in a colonial legacy, the education system remains rooted in the colonial imagination. London uses Rizvi's (2000) definition of the concept of “imagination” (as cited in London, 2002, p. 96) which is referred to as:



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the attempt to provide coherence between ideas and action, to provide a basis for the content of social relationships and the creation of categories with which to understand the world around us. What is imagined, defines what we regard as normal. (p. 96)

Colonialism is seen as not only a physical form of tyranny but also an ideological construction of mind control (London, 2002) which we come to know as the colonial imagination as expressed by C.L.R. James (1969) or a lack of human agency.

Educators are the ones called upon to resist new forms of colonialism since they are the ones working in the postcolonial education setting, transmitting and perpetuating colonial forms of imagination whether consciously or unconsciously. Bristol (2010) acknowledged teachers' unconscious practice of "anti-self procedure...where he/she works towards the actualisation of colonial/international cultural habits without consciously distinguishing that these habits are in fact subjugating a realisation of indigenous/local intellectual patterns," (p. 173). The effects of colonization blinds the educator and they remain unaware of their contribution to the colonial perpetuation and hence are unable to see beyond the illusion or even desire for a break away from the oppression. Bristol illustrates this point in the example of teachers pedagogical practices which favours completion of the syllabus in time for test over students' actual learning thus minimizing teaching and learning opportunities that are indigenous and more appropriate patterns of knowledge creation. The role of the teacher must then shift from being an agent of colonisation to that of an agent of transgression (Bristol, 2010).

Lavia (2007) also believed that postcolonial educators bore the responsibility of questioning history, becoming a cultural critic, and reclaiming self-knowledge. She argued that postcolonial work must involve a radical framework whereby legacies of colonialism can be unlearned and pedagogies can "arise out of a commitment to critical dialogue, action and research for education; and embark upon the reconstruction of new cultural and educative

forms of practice that are informed by indigenous knowledges,” (p. 294). This reinforces Freire’s (1985) critical consciousness through reflective praxis and Bristol’s plantation pedagogy as a practice of subversion. Bristol (2010) argued that oppressive educational practices can also be utilized as a “practice of subversion,” meaning to say that through subversion, the teacher can be redefined as:

an indigenous intellectual who acts as the cultural critic of plantation pedagogy... If a teacher is to more self-consciously participate in the cultural production of knowledge, the teacher must begin from an interrogation of her/his own historical-cultural circumstances, her/his personal biography as a teacher and the assumptions of her/his own practice in the classroom. (p. 175)

Bristol (2010) proposed that the plantation pedagogy in this light can be used as a transformative “tool of re-acculturation” (p. 174) which moves away from educational dependency to exercising “the intellectual force needed in order for postcolonial society to face the challenges posed by the demands of new imperialist and international agendas,” (p. 174). The teacher, through a practice of critical professionalism (Lavia, 2006) committed to self-actualization can then more consciously participate in the construction of knowledge and redefine themselves as “an indigenous intellectual who acts as the cultural critic of plantation pedagogy,” (Bristol, 2010, p. 175).

Self-awareness achieved through reflective praxis is transformative in that it can encourage transgression but equally important in the postcolonial theory of educational reform is engaged pedagogy to confront “understandings of colonialism, not only as a form of direct control of external structures and resources,” (Lavia, 2007, p. 295) but as ways to conceptualize identity. Self-actualization, identity and critical reflective practice are all present in ESD research (Babiuk & Falkenberg, 2010; Bonnett, 2006; McNaughton, 2012,) but not as it emerges in the context of postcolonialism. Commenting on Lavia’s (2006)

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postcolonial position on education, Rizvi et al. (2006) asserted that, “the teacher as a subaltern professional, becomes socially aware by engagement in a practice of critical professionalism” (p. 258).

This process of the oppressed speaking their truth is parallel to Paulo Freire's (1970) “conscientization” and the development of critical consciousness. This critical consciousness is reflected in ESD through its social dimension and the human well-being that considers the kind of “human ecology” and values that should be sustained (Babiuk & Falkenberg, 2010). The social dimension of ESD emphasizes symbiotic relationships among the dimensions. However, the relationship one has with oneself, that is, self-knowledge is the first relationship that will determine other relationships. This is how ESD in Trinidad and Tobago can address the colonial mentality as it will require self-realization and acknowledgment of the reciprocal behaviour. Furthermore, considering the temporal and spatial relevance of ESD in the Trinbagonian postcolonial aspiration, nationalism and sustainability can grow.

Presently, the education system of Trinidad and Tobago continues to revise the primary school curriculum in response to globalization, modernizing and now mandating its own national sustainable development goal as an independent state. It is noteworthy that the government recognizes that, “any attempt to promote sustainable use of the environment must challenge existing norms and cultural practices, changing behaviour patterns and attitudes about environmental sustainability” (Working for Sustainable Development in Trinidad and Tobago, 2012, p. 48). Moreover, I would argue that environmental sustainability cannot be achieved by changing the attitudes of citizens towards the environment without also improving their attitudes about their identity and own self-awareness since these factors develop a sustainable mindset (Bonnett, 2006). The government of Trinidad and Tobago recognizes that such an attitudinal change requires “sustained educational efforts... for any significant effects to occur” (Working for Sustainable

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Development in Trinidad and Tobago, 2012, p. 48) but they must also be mindful that sustainability rests equally on all its interconnected dimensions namely, environmental, social, and economic. So to change people's mindset as it pertains to one ESD dimension would mean engaging in sustainable thinking and attitudes regarding the other dimensions as well.

In order for the people of Trinidad and Tobago to “recover from the effects of colonial relationships” (Lavia, 2007, p. 295) both Lavia (2006, 2007) and Bristol (2010) advocate for defiance on the part of the educator that seeks to transform colonial education through self-awareness and regaining cultural identity. Lavia (2006) advocates for “critical professionalism” as a means of “developing a commitment to exposing forms of understanding, meanings and expression about the complexities inherent in the impact of colonial imagination on teacher professionalism” (p. 289). Global education plans such as UNESCO's Decade for ESD 2005-2014 and Global Action Program which follows up on the Decade of ESD must be scrutinized to ensure that the reorientation process does not replicate a new form of colonialism through globalizing ESD. It is the duty of the educator to ensure that policy statements are “interpreted in ways that advance sustainable development as well as sustainable growth” (Huckle, 2014) and that liberation is sought through true democracy. Likewise, in reorienting education as is the case transpiring globally through UNESCO's Decade for ESD and Global Action Program active engagement on the part of the Trinbagonian educator is required in the reorientation process of education to ensure national sustainable development.

In conclusion, an understanding of postcolonial theory provides the context through which we can come to understand the viewpoints of Trinbagonian educators and their context as they consider ESD in their classrooms and the challenges they encounter. In the following chapter, I will explain the methodological approach and rationale used in this study as I

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sought to gain insight into teachers' perspectives of ESD in Trinidad and Tobago primary school within this post-colonial context.

### **Methodology: Phenomenological Practice in ESD**

For this research I conducted a small-scale phenomenological study that sought to elicit primary teachers' experiences and challenges with implementing ESD in their practice. The study focused on primary school teachers' understanding of ESD, ways in which they engaged their students in ESD, and the challenges that arose as they attempted to do so. In this chapter, I disclose my personal interest in this study and will provide a description of my methods and why I considered it appropriate for this study.

### **Epoche**

As a Rastafari woman, the principles that govern my life philosophy are considered "grassroots". The precept is simple: to live a life in harmony with nature and the Creator. As a primary school teacher for the past 12 years, my Rastafari principles have complemented my profession more specifically as it pertains to respect for nature, sustainability, ensuring a high quality of education for children and principled actions. It was because of these values that are held in high esteem for Rastafari people that I was drawn to the idea of ESD which merged two of my own principles, namely sustainability and education. It is not that to be a custodian of the earth, one must follow Rastafari. It is my belief that education and sustainability, in their most general sense, are universal concerns because they affect us all both individually and collectively.

As a Trinbagonian primary school teacher my purpose for conducting this research was borne out of curiosity; curiosity about what my fellow Trinbagonian educators felt about ESD and, if employed, how it might influence the changes we longed to see in our society. The Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers' Association (TTUTA) is a trade union that represents teachers in the public sector of Trinidad and Tobago. It holds an annual meeting inviting teachers to share and discuss things related to their practice and our education

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system. After attending these annual meetings, I always felt that the same issues resurfaced, and I became frustrated that despite the suggestions and revisions made, it did not bring about teachers' desired results, such as improved working conditions inclusive of the working environment and reasonable salaries, a relevant, appealing and feasible curriculum, student-centered pedagogies, resources that would meet students' needs, and support from the Ministry of Education regarding timelines, quality of teaching, student outcomes and tools for achieving the ministry's vision of quality education for national sustainable development

As I conducted this research, I went through a step commonly referred to in Husserl's transcendental phenomenological method as bracketing or epoche. Creswell & Poth (2018) described epoche as a process whereby investigators "set aside their experiences, as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination," (p. 78). It was necessary to cast aside all "preconceived experiences" (p. 314), prejudices and beliefs I had concerning ESD. If I wanted to understand participants' own experiences with ESD and arrive at the essence of it, it meant putting aside all preconceived notions about myself as a primary school teacher and Trinidad and Tobago's primary school education. Setting aside a researcher's assumption of the phenomenon is not easily accomplished and is considered one of the challenges of phenomenology (Creswell & Poth, 2018) which is why I was drawn to LeVasseur's (2003) response to the call for a redefining of the concept of epoche to mean "suspending our understandings in a reflective move that cultivates curiosity" (Creswell and Poth, 2018, p. 81). LeVasseur explained that curiosity is a process of becoming philosophical, that is, assuming a position of not fully understanding the phenomenon and reflectively questioning your own position and prior knowledge about it. Thus, not denying your own experiences but suspending them for a moment to make space for something new. For example, my personal experience of ESD is one I associate with a modern type of grassroots education closely aligned with my Rastafari principles and values. However, as previously

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mentioned, ESD and Rastafari are not synonymous and while they may complement each other they do not rely on each other, nor do they require educators and other education stakeholders to adhere to Rastafari principles to adopt ESD or appreciate it. I adopted a natural attitude towards ESD and suspended my experience with the phenomenon in an effort to transcend myself and arrive at the essence of ESD.

It is also important to note that race, as it is constructed by the participants does influence the data and its analysis. I am a Trinbagonian of African decent, commonly referred to as Afro-Trinbagonian, and this may have influenced the relationship between participants and me, how they responded to me and the questions I posed, how I viewed them, and how I interpreted the data. However, I positioned myself to be critical and mindful of these shared or contrasting characteristics between participants and myself when analyzing the data. I had to confront my biases as being an Afro-Trinbagonian, Rastafarian, primary school teacher in order to maintain a critical stance as to how this could have influenced the data analysis. This will become more apparent in the findings chapter.

### **Methodology: Phenomenology**

I chose qualitative inquiry because it allowed me, as the researcher, to gain an in-depth understanding of a problem, specifically an understanding of teachers' understandings and experiences of ESD. Qualitative research is a natural approach to research consisting of different methods. Saldaña (2015) summarizes qualitative research as:

an inclusive term for a wide variety of approaches to and methods for the study of natural social life... thinking qualitatively means applying a particular set of thinking patterns and mental operations throughout the stages of qualitative inquiry...

Qualitative inquiry, by nature, is a customized, inductive, emergent process that



permits more of the researcher's personal signature in study design, implementation, and write up. (p. 3)

Qualitative research is a form of "adopting different lens, filters and angles" (p. 4) as the researcher explores the phenomenon and discovers the participants' various understandings of it. Creswell and Poth (2018) identified five main methods of qualitative inquiry, one of which is phenomenology.

Phenomenology is a qualitative method of inquiry rooted to philosophy. It focuses on a phenomenon and describes a shared meaning as it is lived or experienced by participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A phenomenon can be an experience, a thing, an emotion, a spectacle or incident. Lin (2013) explained that, "phenomenology seeks to expose the implicit structure and meaning of such experiences. It is the search for the "essence of things" that cannot be revealed by ordinary observation," (p. 470). Phenomenology marvels at the meaningfulness and origin of experiences of a phenomenon because at the heart of it lies curiosity and open, thoughtful questioning; questions that do not require answers that prove or negate but enriches our understanding of the phenomenon. Phenomenology provides an opportunity for insights that can lead us closer to the world through prereflective experiences, before we are able to "taxonomize, classify, codify or abstract it" (van Manen, 2014). While I hold fast to the possibility that ESD might provide a pathway for Trinidad and Tobago, by choosing phenomenology as a method of research, it was not my intention to prove this. Rather, my intention was to get in closer relations with ESD in a Trinidad and Tobago setting, to experience it in its array of presentations, to get a sense of its essence and appreciate the moments it presents itself. In that way, it can be resourceful in the space it resides.

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Conducting a phenomenological study allowed me to investigate the lived experience of others (van Manen, 1984), that is, primary school teachers' perspectives of ESD, how they engage their students in ESD, and the challenges they face. I pursued phenomenological research in this instance for two main reasons, firstly because the phenomenon in question is a loaded concept and secondly, because phenomenology required me to constantly reflect on my own preconceived ideas about ESD. The fact that I was enthralled by ESD was an asset in this phenomenological study. ESD was still a fairly new concept but already loaded with meaning by UNESCO, researchers, education ministries, and councils globally.

Based on the literature, this loaded concept meant slightly different things for different organizations, governments, and individuals. Chi Shiou Lin (2013), following the work of Sanders (1982), Heinrich (1995), and Cohen et al. (2000), stated that phenomenology can be used to investigate “a concept loaded with social and cultural meanings especially when the topic does not render itself easily to quantification, and when fresh perspectives are needed” (p. 470). Given that ESD is a concept that is relevant temporally and spatially and that the historical context of postcoloniality has a looming presence in all of Trinidad and Tobago's affairs including sustainability, I felt that phenomenological research would allow for investigation into the postcolonial influences in teachers' experiences

Lin (2013) states that phenomenology requires the researcher to “constantly reflect on his perceptions and presumptions,” (p. 476). My curiosity and desire to experience the phenomenon through the lens of the participant demanded an openness or “unjudgmental attitude” that I was very eager to adopt because with each lesson or “discovery”, my mind formulated new questions and deeper wondering. With each question calling for constant reflection on the part of the participant, I too found myself in constant reflection of my own presumptions. As van Manen (2014) puts it, “phenomenology is more a method of

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questioning than answering, realizing that insights come to us in that mode of musing, reflective questioning, and being obsessed with sources and meanings of lived meaning” (p. 27). It is in this thoughtfulness of the significance of their experiences with the phenomenon, that its essence is derived. It isn't so much the appearance, as it is the essence of the phenomenon that the researcher tries to capture (van Manen, 1984).

Phenomenological research includes a process called epoche which Moustakas (1994) explained is the “setting aside our prejudgements, biases, and preconceived ideas about things” (p. 85). According to Moustakas (1994), the idea behind this action is to place the world:

[...] out of action, while remaining bracketed. However, the world in the bracket has been cleared of ordinary thought and is present before us as a phenomenon to be gazed upon, to be known naively and freshly through a “purified” consciousness. (p. 85)

Phenomenology's ability to engage both researcher and participant in modes of reflection, opens them up to greater realization and “aha moments”. In so doing, the practice of phenomenology does something to us; it “opens up possibilities for creating formative relations between being and acting, between who we are and how we act, between thoughtfulness and tact” (van Manen, 2014, p. 70). How fitting it was then to use phenomenology as a method of research about ESD , whose foundation lies in this budding relationship of between “being and acting, between who we are and how we act, between thoughtfulness and tact” (van Manen, 2014, p. 70).

Heidegger (2000) agreed that the efficiency of phenomenology is lacking due to its philosophical nature yet still it maintains practical value. He debated, “... even if we can't do anything with it, may not philosophy in the end do something with us, provided that we

engage ourselves with it?" (as cited in van Manen, 2014, p. 69). My intention behind using this method was not to teach, but to invite others, now aware of ESD for Trinidad and Tobago, to also wonder and reflect and participate in a mode of thoughtfulness about it.

### **Research Design and Methods**

The research study contained the combined data of the pilot and core study. The pilot study was completed for course requirements in 2017 while the core study was conducted in 2018 and 2019. The data collected from both studies were analyzed together to present the findings discussed in chapters four and five respectively. The details are as follows:

#### **Pilot Study.**

This research included the data collected from both my pilot study and this study. After completing the "Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans" course on Research Ethics (See Appendix A), I conducted a small-scale, pilot study of interviews with three primary school teachers. Using WhatsApp, I conducted these interviews for a qualitative research course during my winter semester in 2018. Following the completion of this course, I conducted four additional interviews with teachers and then used the data from all seven interviews for analysis for this study.

#### **Recruitment.**

Due to the nature of the pilot study (adhering to a timeline for the course), the recruitment process differed from the procedure used to recruit participants in the core study. For the pilot study a convenient sample of three teachers was used. All three teachers were colleagues of mine and resided in my homeland Trinidad and Tobago; however, I hold no position of authority over them. These participants were contacted via electronic mail about participating in a video WhatsApp qualitative, semi-structured, individual interview. These

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teachers had between one and 20 years of teaching experience in Trinidad. There are eight education districts in Trinidad and Tobago seven of which are in Trinidad and one in Tobago. The three participants of the pilot study all belonged to the same education district in the North West part of Trinidad.

For the core study, I used snowball or chain sampling which Creswell & Poth (2018) explained, “identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich” (p. 159). I recruited teachers through my professional networks and interviews (See Appendix B) were conducted in-person when I returned to Trinidad and Tobago in the summer of 2018. I emailed (See Appendix C) in-service teachers who were known to me (but over whom I hold no power), this included the previous participants of my pilot study. I sought their assistance by having them forward the invitations (See Appendix D) on my behalf to practicing teachers in the various districts of Trinidad and Tobago. As per the request of a former committee member, I recruited one reforestation educator for the sole purpose of enriching the data with someone who specialized in sustainability at all levels in the education sector. The reforestation educator was contacted via email and invited to participate in the study (see Appendix E) after which she accepted and was forwarded the Informed Consent (see Appendix G).

Apart from the participants in my pilot study, all of whom agreed to participate in the follow-up interview, I requested that all participants had at least ten years of teaching experience in public schools in Trinidad and Tobago for the main purpose of increasing the possibility of having participants relate to the postcolonial questions. I recruited teachers unknown to me because I wanted to decrease the chances that familiarity could influence responses. The criteria of having 10 years of experience can be considered purposeful sampling. Initially, I planned to select participants on a first come, first serve basis. However,

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there was no need for that as only four teachers contacted me to express their interest in participating.

Interested participants contacted me via cell phone, after which I emailed them the Informed Consent (See Appendix E) along with the informational ESD document (See Appendix F). Of the four that contacted me, the audio for one of the interviews was poorly recorded to the extent that it could not be used. This participant was informed, and the audio was deleted from the recording device. I also destroyed my copy of their consent form along with notes I made immediately after our interview for ethical reasons. When I was contacted by the fourth interested person, they replaced the previous person and brought my total to the required three primary school teachers. In the final count for the core study, four participants were interviewed, and their data secured. This brought the total number of participants to seven, that is, three from the pilot study and four from the core study. All seven transcripts were used in the final analysis of the study.

### **Participants.**

In total, seven participants were interviewed for this study. Six of the seven participants in this study were primary school teachers from different schools from three education districts in Trinidad and Tobago. The initial three participants from the pilot study, who were also recruited for follow up interviews in this study, were selected from a convenient sample and belonged to a district in the North-West of Trinidad. For this study, I sought to recruit three additional participants, who were unknown to me, and who had at least 10 years of service in primary education. These participants were recruited via snowballing sampling and belonged to the North-East and Victoria districts in Trinidad. Another participant belonging to the North-West district is not a primary school teacher, however she

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is an educator with years of experience educating all age-groups about sustainability, conservation and reforestation.

As shown in Table 1, the ages of the participants ranged from 23 years to 58 years with between 1.5 to 21 years of experience in teaching. Of the seven participants, two were male and five were female. All primary school teachers had experiences of working in different primary schools during their teacher training at Teachers' College and/or University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) and after graduating they worked in at least two different primary schools. The other participant labelled under the pseudonym as "Adika Bey" did not attend teachers' college or UTT but has taught reforestation and conservation at multiple schools including kindergarten, primary school, secondary schools, tertiary institutions and adults at private companies or NGOs. The table also shows that of the seven participants, only one identified as having mixed heritage of African, Spanish, and Carib Amerindian, another identified as East-Indian (Indo-Trinbagonian), while the remaining five participants identified as being of African decent (Afro-Trinbagonians).

In Trinidad and Tobago classes or levels are called Standards, except for the students who are 5 and 6 years of age; they are referred to as Infants. Generally, primary schools are arranged as follows: Infant 1 (5 - 6 years of age), Infant 2 (6 - 7 years of age), Standard 1 (7 - 8 years of age), Standard 2 (8 - 9 years of age), Standard 3 (9 - 10 years of age), Standard 4 (10 - 11 years of age), and Standard 5 (11 - 12 years of age). There are cases where students are older or younger than the typical age range at their level for different reasons such as repeating a level, transferring schools, began school earlier or later than the norm.

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Table 1.

*Participants' and their Teaching Background*

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Experience (years)</b>	<b>Experience (schools)</b>	<b>Current Level Lower/Upper</b>	<b>Current District</b>	<b>Race</b>
David	18 years	2 schools	Interviews 1 & 2: Standard 3	██████████ ██████████	Mixed heritage decent
Sasha	2 years	2 schools	Interview 1: Infant 2 Interview 2: Standard 3	██████████ ██████████	East Indian decent
Cheryl	17 years	2 schools	Interview 1: Standard 4 Interview 2: Standard5	██████████ ██████████	African decent
Louanne	22 years	3 schools	Standard 5	██████████ ██████████	African decent
Daniella	18 years	4 schools	Standard 3	██████████ ██████████	African decent
Kamba	11 years	2 schools	Standard 3	██████████	African decent
Adika	22 years	numerous	All levels	██████████ ██████████	African decent

The first three highlighted participants are those who participated in both the pilot and the core study. After the completion of an academic year, it is typical for students to move to



the following level with a new teacher. However, teachers at the Standard 4 level accompany their students up to Standard 5 and remain their teacher. Such would be the case for Louanne and Cheryl as they are Standards 4 and 5 teachers. Cheryl, like Sasha, was also a participant of the initial study and at the time her students were in Standard 4. For the second interview Cheryl and her students were in Standard 5, hence in the table above Cheryl is recorded as a Standard 4/5 teacher. Standards 4/5 are called the S.E.A. class as they prepare for the Secondary Entrance Assessment; a nation-wide examination that determines the secondary school students will attend when they complete Standard 5.

### **Interviews.**

Between the pilot study and core study I conducted 10 interviews in total, the first three for the pilot study, an additional three follow-up interviews with the participants of the pilot study, three interviews with primary school teachers for the core study and one interview with the reforestation educator. The follow-up interviews with the participants of the pilot study were David, Cheryl, and Sasha and these were conducted at their homes. There was no one else present at the time of the interviews. To begin, there was light conversation about the purpose of the follow-up interviews which was to gain deeper insight into the postcolonial context of Trinidad and Tobago as it pertained to their experiences with ESD in their schools. Participants then re-read and signed the informed consent, agreed to be audio-recorded and interviewed. These interviews lasted between 30 and 75 minutes.

The interviews for the core study lasted between 75 minutes and 100 minutes. One participant, pseudonym Kamba, was interviewed at my father's home, an area we were familiar with and considered to be a good mid-way point since he was at another engagement and would be coming to the interview directly from his prior commitment. Before commencing the interview, I explained to Kamba why I was interested in my study, we

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discussed and signed the consent form and completed the audio-recorded interview in approximately 75 minutes. Daniella's (pseudonym) interview was conducted in the backyard of her home in the South of Trinidad. Again, I had a light conversation about my interest in the study, after which we discussed and signed the informed consent and commenced the interview. We were interrupted from time to time by her son and daughter, but this did not affect us in any considerable way. She agreed to being audio recorded and her interview lasted around 90 minutes. The reforestation educator, Adika, was interviewed in her office at her reforestation project site ABEBA (pseudonym). I first made the requested contribution towards ABEBA as was customary practice for researchers meeting with Adika at her NGO. We then signed the consent forms after which she alerted me to future interruptions by her staff as they completed work requiring her input. This interview was completed in 70 minutes.

### **Interview Protocol.**

The interview protocol consisted of semi-structured questions to elicit participants' ESD experiences. The protocol for the pilot study asked participants about their general teaching background, schools, levels taught, and their earlier teaching experiences compared to their present. However, the protocol focused on teachers' understanding of ESD, their experiences of ESD in the classroom, and in their schools. All the questions were created with the intent of phenomenologically exploring and describing what ESD is like for Trinbagonian teachers who were trying to implement it in their classrooms without curriculum support, teacher training, and in a postcolonial setting. I wanted to know what their experiences were with ESD and what circumstances influenced these ESD experiences. Some questions pertained to the presence and/or absence of ESD in the curriculum, the challenges teachers experienced implementing ESD in their classrooms, things that supported

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their ESD efforts, and how they felt ESD attempts could become more prevalent experiences in schools. For the core study I revised the interview protocol (see Appendix B) slightly to accommodate clarity in phrasing one question and to include questions pertaining to ESD and nationalism and postcolonialism. In the original protocol (see Appendix I), nationalism and postcoloniality were not factors I considered until David emphasized them in the pilot study as fundamental aspects of sustainability. It occurred to me that postcolonialism was an underlying context for teachers' ESD experiences and I became intrigued by David's conviction that sustainability, nationalism, and postcoloniality shared a relationship. I attempted to elicit other participants' response to this by including three additional questions that zoned in on nationalism and postcoloniality. During the time between the pilot study and the core study the current government of the Ministry of Education of Trinidad and Tobago (MOETT) highlighted national sustainable development as part of its revised vision for the ministry, which I thought complemented my new questions.

### **ESD Informational Document.**

ESD are very unfamiliar terms in Trinidad and Tobago. Teachers do, however, observe parts of it either in their pedagogical approach or curriculum content, unknown to them that they were indeed incorporating some aspects of ESD in their practice. It was necessary that both teachers and I shared a basic understanding of the concept of ESD. Therefore, there was a need to provide the participants with an informational document about ESD prior to the interview. This document (see Appendix F), which was given to all seven participants, consisted of shared understandings of ESD concepts for their review prior to the interview session. I collected the information from UNESCO's website, but I also included affiliate links for additional reading if persons were interested to research the topic further.

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These links are not personal preferences of mine, but I received them as part of the course work in one of my program courses entitled, "Education for Sustainable Well-Being."

### **Trinbagonian Creole Audio Records and Member-Checking.**

As previously mentioned, all interviews were audio recorded with the permission of participants. I used my tablet to audio record all interviews and later transferred them to my laptop and additionally stored them on my flash drive. The tablet, laptop, and flash drive were all secured with passwords. During the interviews, the participants and I transitioned between formal standard English and our native Trinbagonian Creole. When transcribing the interviews, I maintained this switch in languages and recorded the conversations verbatim, as language is a key indicator of one's identity. Considering that the study targeted Trinbagonian educators, using the creole language of Trinidad and Tobago was one way of honouring our identity and I made no attempt to correct or formalize the speech into the British English. On my part, I wanted participants to feel comfortable in their space and in their speech as they expressed their thoughts as naturally as possible as opposed to focusing on being grammatical correct and poised in their language. After the interviews were transcribed, participants reviewed their transcripts, which provided them with an opportunity to add, delete or change their responses before I conducted the analysis. I acknowledged that although this opportunity for member-checking was provided, none of the participants made any alterations. For anonymity purposes, pseudonyms were given to all seven participants, and any identifiable data was disguised.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis presented here can be considered vantage points of these seven educators' experiences attempting to incorporate Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenology was employed in my analysis.

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Transcendental phenomenology was developed from the principles of Edmund Husserl (1931) into a phenomenological method by Moustakas (1994). Transcendental phenomenology “is focused less on the interpretation of the researcher and more on a description of the experiences of participants,” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 78). I employed Moustakas’ (1994) modification of Stevick (1971), Colaizzi (1973), and Keen (1975) phenomenological data analysis method because it offered practical guiding steps for analyzing the data. Data analysis in this method of transcendental phenomenology involves epoche or bracketing and phenomenological reduction which includes horizontalization, developing textural, structural and composite descriptions of participants’ experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Lastly, imaginative variation was employed to determine the essence of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). According to Moustakas (1994) this is the process of seeking, “possible meanings through the utilization of imagination... and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives.” (p. 97).

I first bracketed my own experiences with ESD and suspended my own perspectives of ESD as transcendental phenomenology means perceiving things “freshly, as if for the first time,” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34). By this I mean I attempted to appreciate the teacher participants’ perspectives with a fresh lens and permit my curiosity to wander as they reflected on their own experiences with ESD. By doing so I was able to consider, as Husserl (1977) puts it, “infinite multiplicities of actual and possible cognitions that relate to the object... and can somehow go together to make up the unity of an identifying synthesis of meanings and essences” (p. 63).

I managed and organized my data in a password encrypted folder on my computer and secured them on a flash-drive. Each file (transcription and field notes) was labelled after the pseudonym of the participant and each could be easily located considering there were only 7

participants in this study. At first, I did not read the texts in their entirety, instead, I scanned the transcripts to get a gist of what the participants offered (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The next step in my analysis was horizontalization. I highlighted significant statements about participants' experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018) with ESD. These verbatim statements from participants' transcripts each held equal value (Moustakas, 1994) about how participants experienced ESD. The horizon is described by Moustakas as, "the grounding or the condition of the phenomenon that gives it a distinct character," (p. 95). Following this, I reviewed these significant statements, identified any repetitions and overlaps and removed them, leaving only the (invariant) horizons or textural meanings of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). I clustered these horizons into meaning units or themes (Moustakas, 1994) as follows:

1. National Identity Confusion and the Education System: "I am We"
2. School and Community: "Together we Aspire, Together We Achieve"
3. Classroom and Teacher: Capturing ESD Moments.

In keeping with the Modification of Stevick (1971), Colaizzi (1973), and Keen (1975) "Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121-122) I merged these themes to develop a textural description using verbatim examples of participants' experiences. Textural descriptions tell us what happened and describes what participants experienced with the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Then through imaginative variation the textural descriptions were examined to provide me with a structural description of the experiences which accounts for how these experiences occurred including contexts and settings. Imaginative variation is a, "reflective phase in which many possibilities are examined" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 99). It provides researchers with various possibilities connected with the meanings underlying participants' experiences (Moustakas, 1994). In

exploring the textural descriptions, I constantly asked myself, "In what context did they experience this?" to provide me with the structural descriptions.

Finally, I incorporated both the textural and structural descriptions in a process Moustakas (1994) referred to as the "intuitive integration" (p. 100) to arrive at a composite description of the essence of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Husserl (1931) described the essence as that thing that is, "common or universal, the condition or quality without which a thing would not be what it is" (as cited in Moustakas, 1994, p. 100). The essence is described in a unifying statement of what was experienced (textural description) and how it was experienced (structural description). This description captures the meaning of the experience as a universal whole experienced by all in the group.

In the following chapters, I reveal the themes and details of the findings followed by a discussion of the findings and their relationship to existing literature if any. In the final chapter, I conclude this study with recommendations for teachers, the ministry of education and future research.

### **Findings: Opportunities for ESD and the Challenges Teachers Face**

This study explored Trinidad and Tobago primary school teachers' perspectives of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), and the opportunities and challenges they faced as they attempted to incorporate ESD in their teaching. I used a phenomenological methodology to explore the following questions:

1. What are teachers' experiences of implementing ESD practices?
2. In what ways do teachers engage students in ESD?
3. What challenges do primary educators face when they attempt to implement ESD within their classrooms?

In this chapter, I will present my analysis using data from the participants' interview transcripts and will make connections to the data to illustrate the emergent themes. I will describe the participants' experiences, also known as the textural descriptions, and how they were experienced, which is referred to as the structural description (Creswell & Poth, 2018) in an attempt to articulate the participants' experiences of the phenomenon.

In my data analysis, the following three themes emerged:

1. National Identity Confusion and the Education System: "I am We"
2. School and Community: "Together we Aspire, Together We Achieve"
3. Classroom and Teacher: Capturing ESD Moments.

The first theme speaks to the confusion of identity within a multicultural and multiracial society such as Trinidad and Tobago and how the education system addresses this issue. From their experiences, participants established relationships between history and identity, between the curriculum and identity, between identity and developing an ESD mindset, and between the education system and schools. The second theme is the national motto of the



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Democratic Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and alludes to the strength of community in sustainable nation building. The final theme signifies the opportunities that are available for ESD to be maximized upon in the classroom and by the teacher in their relationships with students. There are overlaps in the findings as they pertain to teachers' practices, the curriculum, and teachable ESD moments as these are always intertwined concepts. The following analysis offers a detailed description of each of these themes. Participants' quotes are provided to illustrate the ideas and provide insight into the primary school teachers' lived experiences of teaching ESD in the context of postcolonial Trinidad and Tobago.

### **National Identity Confusion and the Education System: "I am We"**

This theme emerged from participants' considerations of how Trinbagonians understood identity and demonstrated their "Trinbagonianness" which I refer to as their sense of national identity. Because ESD emphasizes cultural appropriateness and local relevance, it is essential that Trinbagonian teachers have a sense of national and cultural identity in order to engage the principles of ESD necessary for national sustainable development. An understanding of one's own identity especially in educational practice is also fundamental to ESD especially in the postcolonial countries such as Trinidad and Tobago, whereby citizens often bear a *colonial imagination*, which is an effect of experiencing colonial ideological constructs (London, 2002). This colonial imagination includes how people identify and perceive themselves which affects the valuing of their relationships with others and the environment. One of UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goals for "Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions" (2018) states that at the primary level, this can look like educating students about various religious and ethnic identities and encouraging respect for differences and contributions made by all on a global level. This goals of ESD can easily include national and racial identities since this is what is contextually relevant to postcolonial countries such

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as Trinidad and Tobago. Stemming from the national identity confusion, participants discussed how the government set the precedent for citizens to develop a sense of national and cultural pride via the education system, but these educational policies and practices caused participants to question their country's independence and show of true nationalism and postcolonial aspirations. For the purpose of distinction, this section is divided into three subheadings: Nationalism and the Identity Confusion, The Curriculum and National Identity Confusion, and the Education System.

### **Nationalism and the Identity Confusion.**

The participants felt that some Trinbagonians do not feel a sense of national pride for Trinidad and Tobago nor do they understand what it means to be Trinbagonian. As David explained, "a lot of us here in Trinidad and Tobago don't know what it means to be nationalists. Being a nationalist is something that has to be learnt." This identity confusion could manifest in Trinbagonians' high esteem for other nations. David explained this by stating that "not a lot of people believe that their country can offer them the opportunities that they deserve, that they want... we believe that everything Western or European is better." Such attitudes could include displaying qualities of nationalism to another country instead of their own. Cheryl shared, as she discussed students' inclination to valuing foreign countries over their own, "you have children who know more about what's taking place in a foreign land than what's taking place in their own land and that is disturbing." Kamba added that "to be valued as a citizen really impacts nationhood, really impacts nationalism... so if I am valued then I would act differently... I would look for the national good in terms of how I operate as a person." Kamba considered being valued as someone looking after "my well-being" but that people would not take nationalism seriously because "they are not valued." I interpreted this to mean that for someone to feel a sense of national pride and identify with

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being a patriotic Trinbagonian, they must feel appreciated and valued within that community or else they cannot reciprocate what they are not receiving.

The national identity confusion is visible also in the language of Trinbagonians. Many Trinbagonian educators who lived through the colonial and immediate post-colonial era “are people who are typically of the English persuasion... who lack in many ways that Caribbeanness because they were taught the British way of life,” rationalized David. These educators propagated their inherited colonial ideals in their own classrooms because, “it is what they consider right. You are being taught and socialized into a way of life ... it teach you to try to be proper and what is considered proper is the English way!” Those who did engage in their Creole language or those who emulated more locally cultural ways of expression sparked criticism because it was considered unacceptable. “It sad, you can’t have somebody taking away your Trinidadian-ness.” David’s statements described how the colonial residue is further perpetuated by educators who, due to their own colonial imagination felt that it was the ideal way to be and demonstrated that Trinbagonians often aspire to and seek to attain the British standards.

The participants recognized that, within recent years this had changed at the university level where professors are now encouraging teachers to accept students’ home languages or Trinbagonian creole as an acceptable form of student speech. David expressed his frustration by saying, “Why do we have to stop saying this is how we are? Dis is how we is! This does not make me less of a person... if we let them take that away from us who are we then? Your language is the first thing, it’s one of your major identities.” Captured in his words we get the impression that David associates Trinbagonian creole language with national identity and something worth valuing and sustaining as it helps identify people. In the classroom, language can be a common ground shared between teachers and students to

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reflect their national identity. David gave the example of a conversation he had with his students:

“But Sir, you does sound just like we!” Ah does say, “Because I am we! I am part of de we allyuh talking about! I am Trinidadian yuh know! I come from Trinidad!” So it’s important that we be proud of who we are and where we come from and once we have that pride, we would have the ideal necessary to maintain sustainability.

In my experience, students have also said, “Miss, you does sound just like we!” to denote the difference between students’ speech and teachers’ speech. The students mean that because they are children, they are usually told that they speak “badly,” while teachers speak “properly” because they are educated according to what is “proper,” as David explained earlier. This is an example of the postcolonial imagination; when teachers speak in creole, students interpret this as improper. David’s response to his students is a good example of how a shared identity could build rapport between teachers and students and help them proudly identify as Trinbagonian since creole is generally spoken by both Afro-Trinbagonians and Indo-Trinbagonians alike.

Despite a shared identity based on language to promote national pride, Trinidad and Tobago’s national identity remains shrouded in colonial effects that has preserved racial segregation and racism both in schools and in communities. “Where is the middle ground? Where do we meet? How can we move together as a people?” questioned one participant, who then suggested that primary schools are a good starting ground to have “taboo” conversations about how racism and the racial divide (between those of African heritage and those of Indian heritage) negatively impacts all Trinbagonians and the nation itself. However, in many schools, the racial divide is obvious, and this could be attributed towards the location of the school or whether they are government or denominational schools. For example, David said, “the classrooms are still segregated; they are still far apart. They go to school in their

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community, we go to school in our community, then those who don't want to be associated with both go to private school." I got the impression that school location, population, and religion inadvertently contributed to the racial divide in Trinidad and Tobago, thus making it harder to address racial harmony in pursuit of nationalism and national sustainable development.

After emancipation, the indentured East Indian labourers did not merge as a citizenry with the freed Africans. Instead, freed Africans and the East Indians maintained separationist views fostered by factors such as East Indians arrived in the country under different circumstances, not as slaves, but as indentured labourers. One of the effects of this was that the East Indians were able to maintain many of their traditions and cultural practices while the enslaved African peoples were denied this opportunity, resulting in the loss of their traditions, knowledge, and cultural practices. Participants recognized the importance of maintaining and accessing cultural traditions. For example, Adika associated national sustainable development with being able to continue cultural traditions, when she said, "being able to pass on models and even looking at traditions and this is where we fall short, traditional values. Where are the traditions? We have lost it along the path." She acknowledged that sustainability is a process of "zooming into yourself" or assessing yourself and identifying your needs, using what you have acquired through traditions and other types of education to "manage your own destiny." Adika felt that primary education did not foster learning about cultures and traditions, especially those of the African descendants in Trinidad and Tobago. Although Adika sees the importance of maintaining and fostering cultural traditions of the Afro-Trinbagonian, all cultural traditions must be fostered in the school system. This is reiterated in UNESCO's Sustainable Goal for peace, justice and strong institutions which promotes inclusive societies through educating students about different cultures and traditions and establishing mutual respect.

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On the other hand, David noted that, the East Indians who “formed their different groups” sustained their cultural identity and were “perpetuating that mindset which is not bad” also maintained the racial divide because they are very “together in their understanding of it. So it is very clannish and it is very hard to penetrate this group.” This seems to reflect the famous line of the first Prime Minister, Dr. Eric Williams who said, “two races have been freed, but a society has not been formed” (Alleyne, 1996, p. 68). David’s experience of race and identity is symptomatic and illustrative of the colonial construction of racism and segregation, and thus results in generalizations experiences of race and identity.

The racial divide is further encouraged by politicians who are “trying to divide the people.” David described how the racial divide was fostered politically:

We need to address that plural society ‘cause there are political vibes going on right now that is trying to divide the people... it is there in our political system we see it all de time. Yuh know? Is political party voting along racial lines all kinda ting. So it is there. It is not as though we don’t see it. It is there. I think we tolerate it and I think Trinbagonians level of tolerance is extremely high. So we have to kinda understand what it truly means to be Trinbagonian.

David asserts that there are some political leaders who consciously or unconsciously encourage racial discord because Trinbagonians condone this behaviour, and some might even be in silent acquiescence. On a professional level, there is a lack of racial harmony when teachers have to protest to make demands of the government. David felt that “all the collectives” were needed to show a united front if any headway was to be made as a nation. “If I cannot get the East Indian community to say ... we are moving forward with this... it will just be one part of the country trying to do things on their own and that not beneficial at all.” David’s understanding of national identity is one where all citizens identity as Trinbagonian

regardless of race, and that a Trinbagonian national identity could unite the people in the greater interest of the country.

### **The Curriculum and National Identity Confusion.**

Participants often focused on the limited depth of the primary school curriculum and its lack of content that could evoke either a sense of national pride or create an understanding of students' own identity. Participants believed that the curriculum only "scratched the surface" when it came to topics such as identity, history, and nationhood particularly in the social studies curriculum. As the participants elaborated, they expressed dissatisfaction with the curriculum, as well as with other teachers, as they considered them both inadequate in addressing two pressing social issues. The first issue is the racism between people who identify as East Indian descendants and those who claim African ancestry. The second pressing issue is the identity confusion of citizens, particularly African descendants who, due to loss of traditions, seemingly lack cultural knowledge that could assist in developing their cultural identities and understandings of how they could continue to contribute to our Trinbagonian culture.

Some participants felt that the social studies curriculum should be used to promote national unity and cultural awareness, particularly as these pertain to national sustainable development in Trinidad and Tobago. David admitted that, "in many ways the curriculum is trying to address some of our concerns when it comes to sustainable development," and that the current curriculum rewrite was tackling the issue from a national identity awareness reference point. He went on to say that "it is addressing that it begins with the child... the child has to understand what it means to be Trinbagonian,... it begins with the child understanding: Who is me?" In so doing, he believed, it would build that sense of national pride in students and encourage them to think along the lines that David said, "we can now take care of what we have in order to keep that vibe." David recognized that the curriculum

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“doesn't miss de mark... in that it is addressing this, there is still a lil lapse...is a division still... even though the curriculum tries to address it... it is addressing it in de level of understanding their culture only.” However, David also makes the point that the curriculum still does not resolve the issue of racism.

Similarly, Adika felt that the curriculum was lacking. She said, “a lot is missing within the education system. A lot is missing and for me, even the type of history that is being taught, I find they miss a whole lot.” For Adika, history was important in understanding cultural and national identity and that “from the colonial period it was a deliberate task to suppress African history.” She pointed out that children were unaware of their history, especially the African heritage. She explained, “you ask kids about the Black Power Struggle, they know this much, you ask about Maroons, they know this little much, you ask about the Merikins, they don't know anything!” Adika's view is that the curriculum is deficient because students are not taught their history and consequently, they cannot relate to it, which speaks to how identity confusion is perpetuated. Additionally, it might be assumed that some teachers are also unaware of this history so they cannot pass on this knowledge that they themselves are unfamiliar with. Adika's viewpoint tells us that as an Afro-Trinbagonian herself, it is easier for her to identify biases in the education system for Afro-Trinbagonian students. This reminds us that teachers' experiences of ESD as it relates to race and the identity confusion are separationists due to the colonial residue.

Participants did try to make good use of what was provided to them in the curriculum to promote nationalism, patriotism, and ESD values, but for David, this was predominantly in one subject area. David observed, “we see it so clearly in like de social aspect of our curricula... when it comes to sustainable development, we see it as a social type of issue... we never really think about how science can assist in the sustainable development of the country... it is not pushed that way.” ESD is sometimes perceived to have a subject locale in



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which ESD might be more easily identifiable such as science or social studies, but David admitted that “you as an educator have to have that type of sensibility to know that: let me now integrate... and that is where I think a sustainable thinker comes in because we don't have that sensibility.” David's view is that ESD requires training so that teachers can make connections across subject areas. Cheryl also found that the curriculum was “loaded with a lot of isolated topics” that were not driven by “overarching themes or questions or concepts,” making it challenging to connect ESD across subject areas.

Additionally, the teachers felt that the curriculum did not fully promote national sustainable development in terms of content regarding environmental fields of study and related professions that could contribute towards preserving and conserving Trinidad and Tobago's natural resources. David noticed that the curriculum “don't include it in terms of you can become a marine biologist, you can become a forester... even though that is de type of work we need now.” Teachers must find ways to expose students to professions that would sustain Trinidad and Tobago. David gave the example of farming as a viable profession that is usually looked down upon by students. He asked, “How do you get a lil boy who just infused and Americanised in his own way through mass media to consider farming?” According to David, in order to achieve national sustainable development, revising the curriculum and reorienting teaching are necessary so that teachers could be exposed to the values of ESD.

### **The Education System.**

Participants associated national sustainable development with independence, through comments such as, “being able to maintain yourself,” “putting systems in place that you can manage and develop and maintain the growth,” “people taking charge of their destiny,” where the “outside dependency is less,” “being able to fend for yourself... and sustain yourself to some level,” and “valuing the things that sustains you, that makes you what you

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are.” Participants did not consider Trinidad and Tobago to be truly independent since the country was dependent on foreign aid to sustain itself. Adika pointed out, “there’s nothing like postcolonialism as far as I can see. It’s right in our faces, it’s disguised but it’s right there still.” She continued, “they take the shackles off their body and place it on their minds,” as she explained how the education system was still a colonial structure, reflective of the entire Trinbagonian system.

Kamba shared this view saying, “becoming independent did not allow us to do our own thinking.” Sasha gave the example of ESD being a project first initiated by UNESCO, “they probably really don’t think that we know how to have a sustainable development plan in our little island because we were once ruled by somebody.” Sasha gave the impression that with a history of colonization, there might be a tendency to think postcolonial islands such as Trinidad and Tobago will always need guidance from more powerful constructs which does not present an image of true independence. Kamba referred to Trinidad and Tobago’s independence as a “change in de guard” since that type of independence “did not make sense” because a foreign form of government (Westminster) was adopted. Kamba explained, “so you are now free, you are independent, but you are independent within our system.” For Kamba, “using colonial strategies on your own people” is not a sign of independence but one of continued colonization.

An example of continued colonization is demonstrated in the fact that the Ministry of Education relies on externally-produced resources because, as Kamba explains, “we continually depend on loans from de world bank and from other institutions,” This type of dependency calls into question how the government intends on fostering a vision for national sustainable development when Kamba asserted “we are not dictating our own pace; they are dictating our pace.” He continued, “sustainability is affected because they are not going to allow you to rise any greater than they want you.” Kamba is critical of taking loans from

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international agencies who then dictate the structures of our education system wondering if “there must be some form of thinking that outwits the powers that want to keep us at a certain level so that we can have growth and development.” For this kind of strategic thinking and planning to occur Kamba suggested:

what we need is some type of leadership that has separated itself from that miseducation that says now I am going to do what is in the best interest of my country regardless... we need statesmen and stateswomen that would not be afraid.

Kamba believes that a radical approach should be taken by leaders which requires developing a different mindset that will foster nationalism, a duty to serve, and a loyalty to our country first over loyalties to external powers that lead to an unhealthy practice of dependency.

Furthermore, participants felt that the government did not appropriately value teachers and students. Daniella felt that the teachers' profession garnered little respect from the government and was undervalued:

We should be paid properly so that we would do our jobs properly. If a teacher is paid well and thought about in a proper way, you get more out of that teacher. Even if you can't pay us well, make our surroundings pleasant. Make us feel that we are worth what we are, what we are being paid for. Our professions need to be treated with the kind of respect we need.

Daniella's comment gives the impression that when teachers feel undervalued, it affects their quality of work. The government's attitude towards teachers is perceived as neglect for teachers' personal and professional well-being. Sasha added to this by stating that teachers are not equipped and supported by the ministry. She explained, “the ministry is saying don't do this but deal with all of this, not having the resources to deal with these problems, and the

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ministry still wants you to function properly.” Sasha felt that the expectations of the ministry seemed impractical.

Sasha also felt that the criteria for promoting teachers also reflected the government's devaluing of teachers. “They base your promotion on five years, how much times you were late, how much times you were sick... it's so much pressure to be a good teacher,” she explained. This reinforced the idea that teachers feel devalued when the government did not consider their well-being or failed to support their efforts because merit was not judged by their quality of work.

Kamba also spoke to the point of feeling devalued because of his school's location: “We are next to a landfill and we get all the smells. Children were hospitalized from our school when it comes to all those toxins and heavy metals.” This also demonstrated a devaluing of not only teachers but of all staff and students at the school. As pointed out earlier, participants felt that the government needed to better demonstrate valuing of its teachers in order to foster qualities of nationalism, patriotism, and ESD values.

In summary, participants considered identity to be a fundamental aspect of national sustainable development because they believed that improved understandings of identity would foster national and cultural identity, fostering national sustainable development. Because of the country's multicultural population, participants felt that by gaining an understanding of one's own identity and the identities of others, individuals could develop a greater sense of shared national history and consciousness and work towards a national sustainable developed Trinidad and Tobago. This sentiment parallels Bonnett (2006) who posited that, self-knowledge establishes our relationship to the source of the thing that sustains us, and with it a desire to sustain it in return. In this case, the thing worth sustaining would be the national identity of Trinbagonians. The curriculum was seen as presenting opportunities for students to learn about our nation's various heritages and cultures although

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participants also agreed that more needed to be done by the Ministry to develop a stronger curriculum that also addresses issues of racism, cultural identity, and understandings of local professions that promoted national sustainable development. Participants also considered the role of the government as important in demonstrating nationalism, independence, and a valuing of teachers and of the education system. They felt that this needed to be improved as teachers did not feel valued. The participants also felt that the government's dependency on foreign aid did not represent the values of independent country capable of managing its own affairs.

### **School and Community: "Together We Aspire, Together We Achieve"**

"Together We Aspire, Together We Achieve" is the national motto of the Democratic Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. It reflects unity, community, relationships, shared values, and support required for sustainability. Participants shared a common understanding that communities exist at different levels and that the success of ESD adoption depends on how much ESD is valued by each stakeholder. Most participants gave examples of clashing values between communities and the school which presented a challenge to teachers as they tried to instill ESD values and attitudes in students. For example, David said, "we can only have them for a few hours of de day," after which students are often exposed to unsustainable practices that counter the teachers' efforts. Thus, participants felt that communities play a significant role in the success of implementing the values of ESD. For example, Sasha felt that a richer experience of ESD for students would be achieved if she had received "support from the school itself," and if there was "teacher collaboration to create a richer environment for learning." Additionally, she mentioned the importance of receiving "de full support of parents... and the ministry." She also suggested that "if corporate companies can endorse the movement towards sustainable development within the educational hemispheres, I think you

will see more teachers on board, more parents and other stakeholders on board for the development of this plan.” Sasha felt that the combined support of all stakeholders would make for a rich ESD experience for teachers and students. Teachers’ experiences of ESD between the school and the community are divided into three sections: Clashing Values Between the School and the Family, The School and the Wider Community, and The Whole School.

### **Clashing Values Between the School and the Family.**

Participants stressed the importance of the family being the first place a child learns both family values and shared societal values. Educators believed that schools perpetuated shared societal values; however, if families did not share these same values, it created a clash between what is valued at home and the societal values which the schools are trying to instill. For instance, in David’s opinion, some young parents placed greater value on materialism than in their children’s educational experience. He explained that parents who had children in their mid-teenage years struggled to pass on ethical and less materialistic values:

What you going to pass on to your children? Just go to school and do what you have to do. Yuh know, no type of healthy support. Of course, they would want their children to look good. They might buy all the books, but they would have the expensive bags, the expensive sneakers...The majority of them would buy the best things for their children and that is where the values lie. It’s in the materialistic, the value of education is not that important, parents are not really involved much in the school lives of their children. They believe that success comes from the way you look, what you listen to and the way you are and so the idea is just wrong and it’s very hard to turn that out.

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David explained the difficulty when parents place greater emphasis on materialism as a sign of success, giving the impression that material objects are worth more than academic engagement. For David, the values that some children inherit from their parents do not always align with that of the school. He questions how to “turn out” or undo the differing values that are sometimes found in the home.

David spoke of other instances where students' attitudes and behaviours reflected their parent's values. When parents overtly “fight the rule,” meaning that they would outright oppose the school's rule, their children would often follow suit. In one example, David explained that if a child had not been taught to act responsibly and to care for their surroundings because their parents always “pick up every little thing after them,” then children saw no harm in littering because they did not consider themselves responsible for the garbage they discarded. Instead, according to David, these children were of the view that there will always be others to pick up after them: “Well it have cleaners to clean de school!... We could drop this on de floor because it have garbage men to pick it up.” This example illustrates the ways the children seem to act as if the “sanitation” workers are public servants that are always ready to pick up after them or are at their “beck and call.” Such an attitude reflects the interest of a classist system whereby people of certain professions are faced with condescending attitudes and devalued by others. As Louanne explained, “we came from that particular colonial culture where we believe that the person in de shirt and tie is of more value than de man who has to work with his hands.” Louanne's words depict the ways in which the postcolonial imagination remains active, in this case, between the labourers and the office workers. David's and Louanne's perspectives illustrate the point that clashing value systems between the home and the school makes it difficult for teachers to promote greater sustainability values. When parents and teachers do not share the values of ESD, it can undermine the teaching of ESD values and attitudes.

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The home community and the school community may also clash because of lack of communication and shared understandings. Participants explained that some parents hold a very “negative view of the teacher,” based on teachers’ having to “fight” against all the factors that tried to steer children on a negative path. Examples included students’ negative behaviours towards teachers as well as towards academics. Parents saw teachers “as the enemy” and when communicating with the teacher the “whole demeanour of the parent is one of ready to fight,” explained one participant. However, David pointed out that the negative attitude towards teachers surfaced because some teachers had to learn to “deal with the community a lil better.” Some parents, like those belonging to the socio-economic community of David’s school, needed the assurance that “you’re not going to infringe on them in some kind of way or take advantage of them ... because you might be more educated.” He felt that teachers who maintained an air of authority when dealing with parents, gave parents the impression that teachers were acting superior to the parents.

David also identified the communication between communities and the teacher as an obstacle and as an opportunity for ESD. He believed that teachers have a responsibility to create the opportunities for respectful dialogue. He said, “That is why I always promote having a nice classroom meeting with your parents... socialize with them a couple hours... let them see the type of person you are, and it builds on that.” David believes that part of being a teacher is to develop a healthy relationship with the students’ parents or guardians.

Respectful communication creates a space for parents and teachers to understand each other to best help support the child as they develop sustainable values. Clashes can be addressed between communities and teachers by developing the ESD competencies of collaboration, self-awareness, problem-solving, and effective communication skills.



### **The School and The Wider Community.**

All participants understood that for ESD values and behaviours to become a regular practice a team effort was required. Participants agreed that the adoption of ESD values, attitudes, and behaviours could not be achieved by teachers alone and required greater community participation, partnerships, support, and commitment. In some cases, teachers reached out to other stakeholders to partner in ESD efforts. Cheryl contacted the national sewerage and environment company to assist in a recycling project at her school. She was happy to admit that “soon we will have an ‘I Care’ environmental bin installed in our school.” Private companies sometimes host environmental campaigns to raise awareness about littering in Trinidad and Tobago. Cheryl noticed that these “bottle collection” competitions, however, were often more focused on the prizes while the intention behind the campaigns were hardly ever achieved. She explained, “I felt that this could have well gone beyond just the collection of bottles for a competition but more of an awareness about how much plastics our school dispose of in a week... in a month!” Despite the fact that “there’s a lot of work being done” in schools and by these stakeholders to reduce littering, Cheryl questioned, “is it really making a difference? Was it just about accumulating bottles for a prize?” She observed that when environmental competitions ended, students resorted to their unsustainable habits. Cheryl stated, “Because if it had to do with change of behaviour nothing really was achieved, you know?” Cheryl was dubious that education was making a difference because there were no perceived changes in students’ behaviours. She gave the impression that competition-based teaching did not yield lasting results as the learning was not evident after the prizes were collected.

In other instances, participants shared cases where private companies partnered with schools on ESD-based initiatives, but schools did not maximize on those opportunities. David

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added, “a lot of schools, including my own, never take it seriously.” David explained that this was mainly because teachers felt, “this is not our job, this is what we should do and we ain’t going further than that.” ESD projects initiated by private agencies are often seen as an additional burden for teachers who do not consider it a part of their responsibility. David suggested the need for teachers with “forward thinking ideas and who truly want to impart that knowledge.” Here David gives the impression that sustainability-minded teachers need to be employed in the teaching service to take on such responsibilities since some teachers lack the drive and/or knowledge to see how this is applicable to their teaching.

The values of some community members also clashed with that of the school, and thus bombarded students with norms and values that were not in alignment with ESD values and practices. All participants made references to some Trinbagonians’ insensitivity towards the environment and littered the streets or dumped in the rivers and other waterways. David wondered, “Why can’t they understand? How could you not understand that what you doing this you doing something wrong? Cause they were not taught how to be sensitive to their environment.” David’s concern suggested that adults also needed to be taught ESD values if they are to demonstrate them in the community and for their children. The government makes educational attempts such as posting bins and litter wardens in the capital city of the Trinidad, yet still participants considered it a “difficult thing” to get citizens to change their unsustainable behaviours. As David pointed out, “dey throwing things on de ground normal and there are garbage bins around.” He continued, “these things are costly, and we are just pouring money into things that are not appreciated by the people because they haven’t learnt it well. There is a lack of connection with their environment.” This idea of adults learning about ESD values was echoed by Cheryl. In her example, citizens did make use of the compartmentalized bins, “but yet people are just throwing these things as if it were one bin and that bothers me because there is so much talk now about preserving the environment.” It

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seemed that although the government provided the instruments to encourage citizens to act responsibly towards their environment, some people simply disregarded the bins.

Sustainability requires both government infrastructure as well as education for the public.

### **The Whole School Community.**

Within the school community participants felt that teachers needed to be operating with shared values regarding the school's sustainability policy. Sasha's experience within her school community dampened her initial enthusiasm about ESD. She felt that some teachers refused to support other teachers' attempts at implementing ESD practices and would "turn de blind eye," when students openly displayed attitudes that opposed ESD values.

Commenting that the cause was probably because some teachers "reach de fed-up stage,"

Sasha felt that she alone was burdened with the task of ESD. She explained that it was as though "it's really left up to de teacher, up to a one man show. There is no support from de rest of de staff members or from de school itself." Sasha's comments revealed that many teachers might not see the sense in consistently and continuously instilling ESD values.

Sasha, as a young teacher, felt that there was no mentor or support, which can be challenging because national sustainable development cannot be achieved by teachers working as islands.

It might be that those teachers realized these efforts and values were not reinforced outside of the school community, so they gave up hope. Their lack of support might also be interpreted as a reflection of teachers' own values and what they consider to be their duty and responsibility.

Louanne supported this idea that "Education for Sustainability means you cannot do it on your own," and believed that it took "teamwork" and "successive planning" to ensure that there is continuity in the proper functioning of school. She urged that "The staff should be involved in the planning process... we should be able to talk to each other about issues... challenges ... and bounce ideas off one another and feel that actual comradery." She

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reflected on the fact that teachers were not working together as a unit. "Teachers are more to themselves," she admitted and she felt that this presented a challenge because she believed in the strength of community. "I think de school will fall," she stated.

Other participants described successful ESD attempts were due to the combined efforts of the whole school. These moments proved to be favourable ESD opportunities for teachers who anticipated that the continued support of entire school would continue to yield positive results in their ESD attempts. For example, at Daniella's school, the teachers, students, and the administrative staff worked together to promote national pride in a whole school re-enactment of independence. She explained, "we want to achieve more, a lil more pride in country." Daniella continued, explaining that, "we had sessions and we used the assembly... for whole school," for students to practice their roles and discuss the events for the day. Daniella expounded further on how teachers would cook different ethnic foods, students would create crafts and dramatize the hoisting of the flag, and explained how all "teachers work together," for the sake of the students. She stated that, the students "don't see us feuding and warring. Once you have a good staff, ah mean we would have differences but when it comes to the children, we try to put that aside." Daniella's example illustrates that the combined efforts of the whole school presents opportunities for successful ESD learning which in her case was national pride. Daniella was of the opinion that learning had taken place because students expressed excitement and "they love doing it." Furthermore, "if they get a social studies test you see they get those particular things correct. It becomes a part of that, but yuh don't know if they take it and go further with it." For Daniella, whole school projects yielded great success based on students' attitudes towards the learning and the results of tests, but she was uncertain if continuity occurred after the project was completed. For David's whole school projects on healthy lifestyles and healthy environments, he was uncertain about its success. He said, "it is hard to tell you! Some of them you will capture..."

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there is some of them their natural attitude is someone who loves cleanliness and then there are the others who just don't care," because they were taught differently either at home or from the wider community.

Participants felt that there were opportunities for the whole school to develop ESD values if they re-evaluated the mission of the school, that is, the purpose of the school should have a greater purpose. "Education has to join hands with our social services," Kamba commented. As a whole school effort, Kamba believed that "the school has to change how it is, so that children and parents must see the school as part of their life." He expressed the idea that the school should be of service to the community and one "would see an improvement in terms of the lives of the people that are in your educational institution and that improvement in their livelihood." This improvement Kamba hoped for will then, "bear fruit in terms of their ability to learn because their needs in terms of belonging, in terms of basic human needs for food and clothing and shelter would be met." In other words, Kamba saw potential for the school community and the local community or family community to be affiliated in such a way that the whole school could be of service to others by addressing ESD goals such as poverty and hunger. Cheryl furthered this idea of whole schools serving the wider community in continuous sustainable learning, stating, "if we are educating for sustainable development, we could adopt a children's home!" Cheryl believed ESD would be "a long-term undertaking" and could foster lasting awareness of the values of ESD. Cheryl argued that many whole school projects were short lived and did not "achieve awareness for sustainable development in students," causing children to lose, "that essence of awareness... because brilliant undertakings ... are not sustained!" Cheryl and Kamba both felt that the school, being a part of a wider community, should offer services to that community to sustain healthy relationships and lifelong learning.

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In summary, a community-wide effort is needed to advance the goals and values of sustainable development. Communities exist at various levels, and relationships within and across communities are fundamental in implementing the values, attitudes, and behaviours of ESD. Participants stressed the importance of establishing healthy relationships, engaging in respectful dialogue, and employing consistent and continuous efforts in implementing the values of ESD. Educators identified opportunities in developing community relationships but felt challenged by the lack of support from others, including the ministry of education, parents, and sometimes, their colleagues, who may not share similar values of ESD. Because ESD requires a communal effort of different networks, agencies, and units, more work needs to be done in strengthening community relationships and establishing partnerships with the various communities.

### **Classroom and Teacher: Capturing ESD Moments**

Participants felt that opportunities to foster ESD presented itself in a variety of ways both within the curriculum and outside the formal curriculum. For example, Cheryl proclaimed that “there is a wealth of opportunities!”. Teachers considered ESD teaching moments as they appeared in subject areas. Adika said that “all subject areas there are components that can lead you to sustainability or to sustainable practices.” Some participants saw ESD opportunities as more prominent in social studies, because they considered it “a social issue.” Others saw it “definitely in science” because of factors related to the environment and environmental awareness. Louanne agreed that, “it have opportunities in the curriculum for sustainability in terms of thematic approach for education,” however she admitted that these opportunities are “taken away when we consider that we have an exam-oriented nation.” Participants saw ESD opportunities outside of the curriculum as well. David acknowledged, “outside of the classroom there is always a teachable moment, I think every

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moment is a teachable moment.” These moments outside of the classroom sometimes occurred “at assembly time” or at random moments, for example, during “supervision in de yard or savannah where de children play,” “when it comes to social interaction,” or even inside the classroom when “conversations arise” spontaneously. However, participants expressed their frustration in not being able to maximize on ESD teaching opportunities “because of de demands of test” or because the curriculum “is based on rote memorization, regurgitation of facts and our education is exam driven.” Others pointed out that “teacher training has a lot to do with it,” because untrained ESD teachers may not have that “sustainable mind” to make those connections for students. To explore this section, two subheadings are used to guide the reader: Teachable Moments in the Curriculum and Teachable Moments Outside of the Curriculum.

### **Teachable Moments in the Curriculum.**

Louanne said she was surprised to find that a math lesson on calculating interest turned into an ESD teachable moment on consumerism and then she thematically connected it across subject areas such as social studies, citizenship, and creative writing. She explained, “I talked about my own personal experience because I think it’s good to bring in your personal experience.” Using personal experiences were common pedagogical practices of participants because students can “relate to all these things... and they too will learn,” Louanne explained. Cheryl shared another example found in the science curriculum where she taught students about the marine pollution happening in the waters that surround Trinidad and Tobago. She stated that “there have been oil spills in the Gulf-of-Paria ... it was highlighted in the newspaper that thousands of fish were found floating.” She added that Trinidadians are “poaching” the Leatherback turtles that come to nest on their beaches and she taught students the values pertaining to biodiversity and conservation. This was locally

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relevant, and students were engaged in discussion. Cheryl again used this opportunity to teach ESD competencies such as respectful collaboration. She explained that, “there are times when questions are asked in a class discussion that some students dominate the conversation.” When those moments arise, and she confirmed “that happens throughout the day,” she makes it her duty to remind students that, “this is forum for everyone. While it is good that you have a response for something you must also be willing to give someone else the opportunity to respond and practice de right thing of listening.” Cheryl was able to foster ESD in both the subject content and in her pedagogical practice, connecting local experiences to the curriculum.

On the other hand, Cheryl said that those opportunities were obvious ones in the curriculum where teachers could identify relevant environmental issues. Other than those easily observable ESD topics, she stated that in the curriculum “you don’t see much opportunities being set out in de standards in which teachers could use or build their lessons or build on students’ experiences,” where they could “connect it with something that is happening in the real world.” In Cheryl’s experience, while there were some obvious ESD opportunities in the curriculum, she felt that more connections could be outlined to show their relevance to students’ lives. Cheryl did now deny that generally “we have many opportunities” but that “we are not capitalizing on them” because teachers are “driven by the curriculum” which in her opinion, ESD is not “set out in its standards.” Thus, teachers “continue to teach subjects in isolation” because without a clearly established ESD curriculum and training in cross-curricular teaching, it remained a challenge for teachers to make all the necessary connections.

Sasha used creative assessments that were interactive, which is an advocated ESD strategy that promotes student-centered learning. She explained, “I allow them to play like a



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grocery store game, you are going to shop and pull out the healthy foods. So that was my form of assessment to make sure they know what are healthy foods.” This was made possible by “planning it out properly,” or else it would have been “chaotic and no real learning would have taken place.” Sasha explained, “planning those lessons was an integral part of this... to make it as authentic as possible for that culture of children and what they knew.” Sasha felt that fun, interactive ways of teaching and learning produced better results because students were able to apply the learning even after the topic was completed. She remembered an incident where “Somebody came a day with skittles and everybody else was like, why do you have skittles? That is sugar! And they were coming down on that child.” Sasha intervened and saw it as an ESD teachable moment. She said, “I had to sensitize them to her feelings... to develop their thinking as good citizens because yuh don’t judge without knowing, probably that is what Mummy could have afforded at de time, yuh don’t know.” Sasha facilitated a conversation about respectful communication, empathy, and adopting an attitude of kindness instead of blame. “They were willing to share their bananas and stuff with her in order for her to not eat that sugar,” she concluded.

Sasha added that ESD values, competencies, and skills, would become more prevalent if all teachers adopted ESD pedagogical practices. Sasha said that some teachers taught the same topic as her but maintained their “chalk and talk” pedagogical practices. Sasha indicated, “So you can’t decide you want to stick to your old habits and not strive to reinvent yourself to meet de needs of these children now.” Sasha as a young teacher less than two years out of teachers’ college was able to demonstrate better use of ESD pedagogical practices. Furthermore, she upheld values reflective of ESD saying, “I am all about sustainable development.” She gave the impression that some teachers are engrained in old pedagogical practices that were probably adopted in their teacher training and did not have

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more current practices to transform their teaching because their knowledge and skills had not been updated.

In David's experience, he used the science and social studies curriculum to inform students of local professions that would aid in local environmental sustainable development. He asserted, "we have to engage them... in de environmental part of de Caribbean islands and sustaining yuh life on de island itself." David said that local professions related to the environment are not highlighted in the curriculum, however, the topics in the curriculum that promoted sustainability such as conservation, preservation, and wildlife habitats for example, provide a window of opportunity for him. He said, "I in my own lil way have to now point out certain lil jobs." David used these opportunities to tell students about the job of a biologist and those who "deal with de soil and de earth, then yuh have those people who are doctors who see about trees and different plants." David believed that if he pointed these things out to students it, "kinda light a spark of interest in them." David pointed out that it is not always easy to elicit ESD connections in all subject areas and topics without being trained in ESD. David expressed the view that "we need very qualified, very strong willed, very positive environmentalist mindsets to be good teachers for sustainable development on an island, specifically an island." His view of sustainability being deeply rooted in science and social studies supports the idea that teachers need to be trained to become more environmentally sensitive to make connections to the sparse and disparate ESD strands in the curriculum. More so, he emphasized that teacher training should be geared towards sustainability ensuring that teaching and curriculum be locally relevant and appropriate.

Louanne understood the importance of teacher professional development in the absence of teacher training programs. She advocated for professional development sessions where we could "teach de dynamics of ESD and you consider, we have teamwork, put things

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in place to discuss how we can improve on it for the sustainability of the school.” Louanne was both a teacher and part of the administrative staff and spoke of professional development from this experience. She believed that staff development could include teachers as “part of the planning process,” and that this would create a “bridging” so that teachers could have a “a broad point of view with regards to the dynamics of the school.” Louanne’s idea seemed to focus on teachers’ understanding of their role for whole school ESD planning and implementation stating that teachers needed to understand, “what the dynamics of the school are and not just your classroom and teaching the students,” since to her “there are other things involved.” Louanne understood that a school has to consider the “dynamics of ESD”, “be aware of it,” and “have a holistic picture of everything and not just be one-tracked minded.”

Like David, Adika saw the relationship between subject areas and promoting sustainable professions. Adika associated sustainability with independence, not only for the country but for individuals as well. Thinking that students should be educated on how to “take charge of their destiny,” and “make something out of nothing,” Adika emphasized self-sufficiency as part of sustainability and creating your own businesses instead of depending on a system “to lead you.” She gave the following examples of how subject areas could lead to entrepreneurship:

If I’m into sports, I can come out with a business in sports. I can sell sports gear, do sports health, ... math, I can have a maths school, ... agriculture, ... you plant mango trees... if you don’t like the environment and you don’t want to plant trees... you can be the one from your graphic arts knowledge take on the marketing side of things so right there is a business as well.

Adika’s understanding was that each subject presented an opportunity to guide students on the path of becoming business owners “from your passion.” She stated that “in all areas you

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can create some form of sustainable activity or sustainable lifestyle than just being dependent,” and this exemplified true independence because “you are able to fend for yourself... putting systems in place where you can sustain yourself to some level.” Adika explained that the sustainable development of Trinidad and Tobago required, “letting people be, giving them the opportunity to take charge of their destiny, or to make that kind of contribution in the growth and development of their country.” Adika believed that the education received in primary schools should then be geared towards “applied learning,” where students get an opportunity to be engaged in their environment more. “For me it’s all about feasibility,” she said, “it’s getting them engaged in liking what they do or choosing to do the things they like.” Applied learning or “action learning” as she referred to both meant that students would be actively engaged and “getting more time to be outdoor” where they can cultivate an understanding and appreciation for the natural systems and build their “connection with nature.”

Other participants desired more freedom in their practice to engage in what Adika referred to as “applied learning” or “action learning.” However, as Adika admitted, the teacher still has to stick with a curriculum,” where they “can’t get out of that too much and therefore you’re trapped!” All participants shared in Adika’s view that they were “trapped” in a “rigid education system in society.” Adika’s view of the education system coincided with Louanne and Cheryl’s concern about offering students quality educational experiences. Both teachers advocated for a more flexible and less rigid system to achieve quality learning. Cheryl suggested, “we have to differentiate learning and cater for students’ different learning styles. We should employ all strategies at our disposal to reach them as best we can,” while simultaneously acknowledging the reality that “S.E.A. drives what is being taught.” Louanne added, “everything is an exam and not just an exam that is student friendly, ... it is one way

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for everybody.” Louanne continued to express the frustrating situation adding, “because of that it limits the creativity which allows you in education to bring in sustainability.”

This view is different to Sasha’s who taught at the lower school and felt that there was flexibility in the curriculum to adopt ESD. However, the other primary school participants who taught at the upper levels shared the sentiment that while the curriculum might encourage sustainability in some areas, “it takes it away,” because “we have this test over our heads and the quality of the school, primary school is determined by how children perform in de paper and pencil test.” We see how participants, while desiring to foster ESD in their pedagogical practices and the type of educational experiences they offered their students, were constrained by the demands of an exam-driven education system which “puts a lot of pressure” on “teachers and students and even parents to get the information or the understanding of the concepts to pass on those exams.” These experiences suggested that the system undermined opportunities to foster ESD.

### **Teachable Moments Outside of the Curriculum.**

An example of a teachable moment was recounted by Louanne who observed the unhealthy relationships her students often had with each other stating that the student community was often disrespectful and lacked compassion. Louanne noticed that the “children are becoming more selfish... insulting one another for kicks, for everybody to laugh,” without “any compassion for the other person.” Louanne considered such relations as unhealthy and viewed this as an opportunity to draw on ESD values, beginning with establishing healthy relationships and a class student community built on improved communication skills. One approach Louanne attempted to improve class community and communication was through study groups. She described “the ultimate goal was for students to help students... give them the opportunity to be leaders and ... to consider others as

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friends.” Students helping each other academically creates the potential for empathy and respectful dialogue to be exercised and to give students a sense of belonging. This matched Cheryl’s experience who said that teaching her students respectful collaboration then transferred into “instances of resolving conflicts where children themselves reasoned things out.” Upon seeing scenarios like this play out, she felt that “with practice, I find children are more given to talking out their issues on the playground or issues in the classroom.” Cheryl felt that if students were given more opportunities for learning ESD values, and attitudes, and once practiced, students would greatly benefit from adopting it.

The teachers explained that they were sometimes presented with opportunities outside of the curriculum to instill values that could contribute towards students’ positive sense of identity, both ethnically and nationally. The topics of racism and identity were considered to be sensitive to some educators who did not wish to be, what David called, “a traitor to my tribe.” David admitted that racism and identity confusion are “a very pressing issue” in Trinidad and Tobago. Kamba furthered this idea of racism as an obstacle for implementing ESD practices when he reflected on its presence in his school stating, “our school is a microcosm of what we don’t want to talk about in society.” This statement gave the impression that the school mirrors society but on a smaller scale. Thus, if racism was evident in the politics and in society as revealed earlier, then it would also be evident in the schools.

In addition to the racism between Africans and East Indians, “there is a definite distinction of colour and class in the school and it’s present from the principal come down,” Kamba revealed. Kamba spoke of racism as an act of discrimination which undervalues the racial and/or ethnic identity of another and the effects this has on students. He said, “de darker you are is de more trouble you could get into.” Students experience confusion when they are taught that they are all Trinbagonians, that this is their country, and that they should be proud; while at the same time, being discriminated against. As Kamba despondently

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pointed out, “if yuh too dark yuh end up to the back of the class, Miss don’t like yuh, Sir don’t like yuh.” The participants’ comments reveal one example of the way racism in schools maintains the racial divide and reflects attitudes prevalent in society.

These racist attitudes become the hidden—yet powerful—curriculum that the children learn. This hidden curriculum constitutes the “norms of schooling” (Moroye, 2009) that informally and unintentionally transmit values to students. The hidden curriculum can include both positive and negative values, beliefs, and lessons. If these negative norms are identified by a teacher, they can use it as a teachable moment to counter these destructive beliefs. As an example of interrupting negative and misconceived attitudes, David reflected on a classroom scenario where he and his students discussed a newspaper image of children celebrating Phagwa, which is also known as Holi and is a popular Hindu celebration involving colourful powders and liquids being spread on the body. David explained:

[David speaks pretending to be a student] “*Sir, waz all dem children wit dis setta colour? Wha dey doing dey? What is dat?*” And they like to use sometimes derogatory terms to talk when dey talking about East Indian people and yuh know it might be back and forth. But I does work in an Africanized cultural school, so I have to explain to them, yuh know this is part of even our culture... And so, I use it as a teaching opportunity to tell them that, you know, this is part of our country... they are all considered Trinbagonians. We did not just grow up in [Trinidad] from roots. We were transplanted from different parts of de world! So I think it [ESD] has to begin with us...we are who we are as a society... Once we have that pride, we would have the ideal that is necessary to maintain our sustainability.

This example of how David engaged his students reflects values of ESD that are related to human diversity, tolerance, coexistence, and respect. In this scenario, David illustrated how teachable moments such as these could be used to clarify cultural ambiguities and racial

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differences that were adopted through the hidden curriculum, dispel misjudgements, and foster awareness of the multi-ethnic identities that are a part of our shared national identity. Teachable moments such as those relating to race, ethnicity, and identity can be opportunities to support the principles of ESD but only when teachers are willing to engage in these potentially sensitive discussions, correcting these misconceptions and promoting cross-cultural respect.

Another teachable moment outside of the curriculum dealt with students "emotional intelligence." Kamba felt that his students' social skills were lacking. He said, "they can't speak to people, they can't work in groups." He considered social skills as "critical" and "compulsory" and that "you would value people more" once social skills were more fully developed. In order to develop their emotional and social faculties, Kamba had to "find teaching techniques that were appropriate for his students. He said, "I had to retool, because what our education system was offering wasn't doing anything really for the students in my care." Kamba reiterated the idea that the customary pedagogies teachers were trained to use in their classrooms did not appear to be student-centered or culturally appropriate forcing him to reinvent ways that he considered suitable for his students. One of these strategies he called, "The Positive Room" where "everything in the classroom has to be positive. You are not allowed to say negative things to each other. You have to think positively about yourself. You have to say things that are positive in nature to each other." This strategy was in response to students' negative interactions with each other as was also seen with Louanne's students. Furthermore, Kamba's "Positive Room" was essential to students' social development because he affirmed students "don't have that at home. They don't have someone telling them positive things like, "they have to do well," or that "I am bright, I am important, I'm beautiful, I'm special. It never happens." Kamba maximized on this



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opportunity to teach students a valuable lesson for students' well-being and the ESD competencies of respectful collaboration and self-awareness.

To summarize, participants were able to identify areas in the curriculum that highlighted ESD content and teachers were also able to employ practices that were aligned with pedagogical practices reflective of ESD values. Outside of the curriculum, teachers found opportunities to maximize on ESD during assembly, lunch break, and other moments of social interaction between teachers and students or among students themselves. Participants were able to address ESD topics such as environmental awareness relevant to Trinidad and Tobago, national and cultural identity and independence, environmental-related professions, poverty, and consumerism, while practicing pedagogies that were reflective of ESD standards.

Participants also encountered barriers that hindered their attempts at fostering ESD such as the lack of teacher training which deprived them of sufficient knowledge of ESD and suitable pedagogical approaches. Rigid educational policies, such as exams, prevented teachers especially those in the upper levels, from creative planning for more active and engaging student-directed learning. Without ESD curriculum support to guide teachers in their instruction and making of thematic connections for ESD integration, teachers struggled to capitalize on ESD in their own practice. Although participants appreciated the ministry's attempts, they felt that the curriculum and policies were inadequate in fostering ESD approaches in education and much more was required on the ministry's part especially where the curriculum and policies were concerned.

### **Conclusion**

The participants described how the postcolonial context of Trinidad and Tobago influenced ESD practices in primary schools and sustainable development for the nation

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itself. Participants identified stumbling blocks towards ESD stemming from a national identity confusion, clashing value systems, or an absence of shared values altogether. Participants were challenged by the effects of postcolonialism reflected in Trinbagonians psyche and manifested in negative forms such as lack of self-knowledge, racism, unhealthy government dependency, and a clashing of values. Other obstacles experienced by participants included rigid educational policies, the devaluing of teachers, lack of curricular and policy support, and insufficient teacher training. Participants agreed that the opportunities were insufficient to bring about significant changes as envisioned by the ministry for national sustainable development.

In the following chapter, these findings are discussed in detail and compared to the existing literature to establish connections and identify gaps. The chapter also includes recommendations for teachers and the Ministry of Education which is followed by the conclusion.

**Discussion: ESD a Window of Opportunity for Postcolonial Trinidad and Tobago**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to elicit the experiences and perspectives of implementing Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) of Trinidad and Tobago primary school teachers. ESD has become more common in certain countries and is considered a means through which sustainability can be achieved for the world. I embarked on this study because I was curious about Trinbagonian primary school teachers' understandings of ESD and how they experienced it in their schools. Considering that Trinidad and Tobago is a postcolonial nation, I was intrigued about the different experiences this context would provide. The specific questions of this research were:

1. What are teachers' experiences of implementing ESD practices?
2. In what ways do teachers engage students in ESD?
3. What challenges do primary educators face when they attempt to implement ESD within their classrooms?

In this chapter I will consider the participants' experiences, my analysis, and the relevant literature regarding these questions. I will also share my recommendations on how both teachers and officials in the Ministry of Education can approach their challenges to address them and how to maximize on the resources currently at the teachers' and the Ministry's disposal. This is followed by my concluding thoughts on this research study.

The analysis produced three themes which were: (a) National Identity Confusion and the Education System: "I Am We;" (b) School and Community: "Together We Aspire, Together we Achieve;" and (c) Classroom and Teacher: Capturing ESD Moments. The first theme focused on the enduring psychological effects of colonialism on Trinbagonians and how these effects obstructed ESD because of failure to sagaciously address issues such as racism, the racial divide, and the identity confusion in the curriculum. The "School and

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Community” findings indicated the need for community support to make ESD fully functional and for ESD attempts to be successful. Parents, students, teachers, administrative staff, the wider community including local agencies, and the ministry must work toward a unified approach for the implementation of ESD. The findings in “Classroom and Teacher: Capturing ESD Moments” highlighted opportunities where teachers were able to capitalize on certain aspects of the curriculum or teachable moments throughout their school day and engage students in either ESD content, values, or competencies. In these moments teachers were also able to utilize ESD-promoted pedagogical practices. Conversely, participants also discussed challenges to ESD, in part due to the “lingering colonial residue” (Memmi, 1968) evident in the curriculum, in some citizens’ lack of self-knowledge and their attitudes towards each other, and in the government’s relationship with foreign agencies. The teachers’ experiences also highlighted the perceived undervaluing of teachers by the ministry, their need for internal and external support, teacher training, and education reorientation to deal with the rigid educational policies that that did not allow for sustainability to be fully adopted in educational practice. Teachers found opportunities for ESD mainly in the social studies and science syllabi, in random teachable moments, and in whole school projects. In this chapter, I will put these themes into discussion with the literature and discuss their greater relevance to ESD in Trinidad and Tobago.

### **National Identity Confusion and the Education System: “I Am We”**

The theme of National Identity Confusion and the Education System: “I Am We”, elicited the importance of identity; whether it is national, cultural, or self-knowledge, and how the participants felt that these understandings were a necessary element of ESD. Understanding aspects of identity was underscored as fundamental to fostering sustainability values, attitudes, and behaviours. Participants felt that students must first appreciate who they

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are and must value their own existence and the characteristics that define them. In a broad sense the importance of understanding aspects of identity correlates with Bonnett's (2006) understanding of sustainability as a frame of mind. He explained that self-knowledge establishes our relationship to the source of the thing that sustains us, and with it a desire to sustain it in return. Bonnett (2006) spoke from an epistemological and metaphysical standpoint that effects our empathetic relationship to the planet and humanity and this ethical perception that we are inextricably tied to all other things in the universe help humankind to appreciate the role of each thing as it sets "the basic contours of our understanding and behaviour," (p. 270). Some participants alluded to this understanding of environmental ethical conduct when they questioned people's lack of understanding of the need to protect the environment. From a macro perspective, humankind should acquire self-understanding and self-mastery (Smith, 1998) to gain an appreciation of their place in the ecosystem and their role in sustaining it. But on a micro level, participants' perspectives illustrated the national identity confusion in Trinidad and Tobago as contributing to unhealthy practices that countered the core values of ESD, namely love, peace, integrity, co-existence, and harmony. Race, ethnicity, and the effects of colonialism were seen by participants as impediments to ESD, therefore, issues of identity must be better incorporated into ESD curriculum.

While participants perceived identity as a fundamental requirement for striving towards sustainability goals, they also saw ESD as a process through which identity formation can be nurtured. Participants expressed concern about the racial divide that exists between East Indians and African descendants. In this study, participants' own racial and ethnic identity, their experiences of racial segregation and racism is constructed through historical and current experiences of colonization and manifests through colonial residue. Their understanding of race is influenced by the way in which race was constructed historically—often hierarchically—by the colonizers. Participants' understanding of their

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own racialized identity and that of others, as well as their understandings of the relationship between Afro-Trinbagonians and Indo-Trinbagonians is, at times, problematic in that their assumptions are often based on racial generalizations. That said, participants' understandings of race and their experiences of racism and racial segregation reflect their personal experiences and understandings. Nonetheless, racism is a nation-wide issue that needs to be addressed within and for national sustainable development.[state here to why this is important for ESD]. As one participant explained in regards to the pursuit of sustainable development and national unity, this “deep rooted separation is one of the things that is holding us back”. It was apparent that the divide, which is a product of colonialism, continues to be perpetuated in and through schools because the school is both a microcosm of society and a system through which colonial practices were maintained. Thus, schools reflect public issues and values including those that are instilled in the home.

This can be addressed as part of one of UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goals (2018) which supports peace, justice and strong institutions through students' learning to appreciate multiculturalism and understanding various religious and ethnic identities and respecting differences as well as similarities. Therefore, the curriculum could be a tool to educate student about misconceptions and negative influences that detract from national unity and sustainable development. The persistence of racism, the racial divide, and lack of self-knowledge could be attributed to the failure of the curriculum to promote national consciousness and cultural identity in a meaningful way. It can also be attributed to some teachers' inability, fear, or refusal to address these issues as they arise in the classroom. I suggest that two things must be considered. The first is that we cannot rely solely on the education system (and by extension the curriculum, schools, and teachers) with the task of remedying Trinidad and Tobago of its social ills, especially those as deep-rooted as racism. Alleyne (1995) reminded us that besides the education institution, other highly influential

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institutions are equally responsible, and in some cases, more so than schools. While education can contribute towards the transformation of a sustainable nation by instilling the ESD knowledge, skills, and values in citizens, especially in building students' competencies of collaboration, self-awareness and normative thinking which can be linked to uniting different ethnicities and races to come together for national sustainable development, such strong issues cannot be tackled unilaterally and require action on many other levels.

Indeed, as the participants reported, the social studies curriculum presented some opportunities to develop a sense of national pride in students, but they also regarded the current topics within the curriculum as inefficient and the subject itself as insufficient to deal with the issues of identity development including understanding self-knowledge, colonial history, and pervasive racism. The identity confusion could be attributed to Hall's (2001) idea of a transplanted people "whose cultural traces are everywhere intermingled with one another," (as cited in Lavia, 2006, p. 283). The confusion is also indicative of Ramchand's (2000) "cultural confidence" argument which suggests that identity confusion is a result of having values, knowledge, and norms of a colonial origin. Ramchand argues that identity confusion is passed along from generation to generation from colonial to post-colonial era and is perpetuated in schools and throughout society. Yet, addressing issues of identity confusion is not properly addressed in the curriculum. Participants experienced a mix of frustration and despondence stemming from the barriers they experienced in incorporating ESD. Specifically, they felt that the social studies curriculum was insufficient in addressing these complex ideas. Despite their frustrations, it appeared that participants still felt that the Ministry of Education was trying to develop a better social studies curriculum through its revisions, in the hopes that it would address national pride, national unity, and issues of identity through the exploration of history and traditions of Trinidad and Tobago.

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Although participants felt that the curriculum was lacking, they still found ways to engage their students in ESD as it pertained to the identity confusion. These opportunities arose in teachable moments in which participants encouraged ESD values relating to human diversity, coexistence, respect, and competencies such as self-awareness and critical thinking. Participants utilized these opportunities to dispel racial misconceptions, promote interracial unity, and encourage self-awareness in students. This is reflected in postcolonial literature which identifies the teacher as an influential stakeholder in the curriculum process (Bristol, 2010; Lavia, 2006, 2007; Rizvi et al., 2006). The teacher who is “to more self-consciously participate in the cultural production of knowledge,” (Bristol, 2010, p. 175) finds themselves in a position to direct students’ learning along a path of constructive cultural creativity.

Importantly, a revised social studies curriculum that directly addresses issues of identity, racism, and the racial divide can only achieve so much. It would take more than curriculum development to address racism in schools or to become truly postcolonial (Bristol, 2010; Lavia, 2006, 2007; London, 2002; Rizvi et al., 2006). Simply addition issues such as identity confusion, racism, and the racial divide to the curriculum does not ensure it is taught or instilled and practiced in and out of schools. Teachers who refrain from addressing such issues or who perpetuate intolerance for others in their classroom can further entrench ideas identity confusion, the racial divide, and racism. This means that in addition to curriculum revisions, teachers must also be provided with training to expose them to postcolonial thinking so that they can dispel misconceptions in their classrooms while constructing more appropriate narratives.

Lavia (2007) argues that educators in postcolonial settings, “must address key questions of history, self-knowledge and resistance,” (p. 293). She furthered argued that the type of curriculum required for nations such as Trinidad and Tobago should be one “steeped in reflexivity, critical inquiry and engagement,” (p. 293) in order for self-knowledge to be



fulfilled. It is relatively unlikely that teachers in postcolonial contexts are aware of their own postcolonial imagination, less so, that their practices reflect and maintain a postcolonial imagination. Hence, I suggest that a reorientation process for the postcolonial teacher includes critical reflexivity as a first step in teacher training. As Lavia (2007) stated, “an engaged pedagogy [can] confront understandings of colonialism” (p. 259). This type of confrontation should engage teachers in personal interrogation of historical and cultural circumstances and in examining one’s own assumptions and biography as a teacher (Bristol, 2010). This reorientation could facilitate the transition from a practice of hopelessness to one of subversion as posited by Bristol (2010), ultimately leading to transgressions and transformation. McNaughton (2012) found that the process of critical reflective practice for teachers of ESD fostered a change in their pedagogical practices, as they become more interested in their professional identity and development.

The findings also revealed the government’s role in preserving colonial relationships with international agencies that engage countries such as Trinidad and Tobago in adopting global policies which de-emphasize local contexts. This imbalanced relationship gave participants the impression that Trinidad and Tobago was not a truly independent nation because the government depended on foreign agencies for financial aid. Bristol (2010) and Lavia (2006) acknowledged the relationship between education, globalization, and postcolonialism and warned of new transnational networks with new agendas whilst preserving imperial relationships. Past experiences with UNESCO’s Education For All, is illustrative of this imperial relationship. ESD could be critiqued for being another example of an imperial relationship but I argue that there are possibilities that exists within UNESCO’s ESD. Participants acknowledged ESD as a UNESCO initiative but also understood the Trinidad and Tobago’s disadvantaged financial situation. It was expressed that participating in the international community has advantages and disadvantages for developing countries,

but it was a matter of capitalizing on those opportunities for Trinidad and Tobago's best interest. Because ESD is an approach to education that is appropriate and relevant to that culture and place (UNESCO, 2006), it is not prescriptive and is not mandatory. Local bodies are required to either complement the UNESCO document or adopt their own based on research that would have guided the development of their own ESD curriculum. UNESCO (2006) explained that the curriculum reorientation process consists of removing things that have become irrelevant and what goes against ESD goals, and instead, introduce what is relevant and pertinent. This presents a window of opportunity for Trinidad and Tobago to customize an ESD curriculum that serves local needs while addressing global sustainability issues. This is one way the government can "outwit the powers that want to keep us at a certain level so that we can have growth and development," as one participant suggested.

Additionally, reorienting education is a relative process that can be adapted to reflect particular contexts. Teacher training and reorientation can be created around localized perspective and can include indigenous knowledge. The reorientation process can then also provide a space for the postcolonial plantation pedagogy to be used as a transformative "tool of re-acculturation" (Bristol, 2010, p. 174). Reclaiming cultural practices can be used to tackle these new imperialist agendas and reduce the dependency on international agencies. These suggestions mean that Trinidad and Tobago can—and should—produce its own curriculum and reorient its education system and teachers according to its own values.

### **School and Community: "Together We Aspire, Together we Achieve"**

Not surprisingly, the participants' experiences with ESD were affected by the relationships between the school and the community. Sustainable development is usually illustrated with three interconnected spheres (UNESCO, 1987) symbolic of their interrelatedness and the balance required for sustainability to flourish. Therefore, ESD relies on the healthy relationships among stakeholders, such as community members and parents

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for ESD to be effective in schools. ESD is more successful when communities form partnerships to work together towards realizing its goals UNESCO (2018). The idea of systems thinking, which is one of the ESD competencies, is understood as that for the whole to function optimally, the interconnected parts should be functional and fulfilling their duties (Capra, 2012). Participants' experiences emphasized these ideas of teamwork and community collaboration, as a challenge they faced in implementing values of ESD.

It was apparent that the relationships between the school and the family, the school and the wider community, and between the teachers within their own school community were, at times, difficult due to clashing values. Babiuk and Falkenberg (2010) identified ESD as a human values problem. Bonnett (2006) further stated that whatever we value or fail to value reveals much about who we are. Postcolonial theory points to misplaced values of a colonial imagination that devalue things that are local to Trinidad and Tobago (Alleyne, 1995), valuing instead foreign things were considered the ideal. This colonial imagination hinders nationalism and continues to challenge the uptake of ESD values, often because of lack of appreciation and environmental sensitivity by other citizens in the community. Teachers felt challenged by clashing values; particularly by families who did not share ESD values; and by community members unconscious of their own negative influences.

External agencies attempting to partner with schools sometimes faced unwilling teachers or in other cases were successful in their competitive environmental competitions only to realize that the practices were not maintained after prizes were collected. Curriculum efforts and short-term competitive projects cannot alone engender the transformative practices of ESD. Despite teachers' efforts to incorporate ESD in their practice, the success of their efforts is challenged by the lack of internal and external support (Redman, 2013). It seems that students learn by observing their surroundings and what is practiced which can undermine what the curriculum might promote, which means the adopting of ESD values,

attitudes, and behaviours must be a community-wide effort. Additionally, it seems that students learn through active engagement which is reflected in the ESD objectives that promote student-directed learning (UNESCO, 2018). ESD must be part of a shared national initiative so that the wider community can understand the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes required for sustainable development. Ideally, reorientation as put forward by UNESCO, involved all education stakeholders including the government, education authorities, governmental associated organizations, NGO's, businesses, and community groups (UNESCO, 1992). This would ensure a more collaborative and strategic attempt towards reorientation at all levels within the community of education stakeholders to meet the goals of ESD as both students and adults would have been educated for ESD.

On a practical level, UNESCO's ideal reorientation policy might not be possible for many postcolonial countries. However, teachers did explain that whole school projects were favourable ways to promote and learn about ESD, especially when the entire school community engaged in these projects. The literature for whole-school reform (Fullan, 2001; Van den Branden, 2012) encourages reorientation at all levels of the school's operations. Teachers who lacked support from their own school community due to lack of interest, knowledge, or preference found that their attempts were also short-lived or that they were alone in their ESD efforts. If a whole-school approach to reorientation is adopted it would involve "reculturing" both teachers and principals (Fullan, 2001), thus facilitating ESD would require a school-wide paradigm shift. The whole-school reform or, *The Whole Institution Approach*, as it is referred to be UNESCO, addresses this challenge and advocates for a strengths model to be applied in progressive stages. The strengths model requires contributions made by every discipline, teacher, and administrator towards ESD.

There appeared to be a gap in the literature in regards to similar findings of teachers' frustrations with the lack of support from these communities. This gap in the literature as

identified here could encourage further research into how communities can assist schools in the adoption of ESD. The findings in this research point to the need for community support to reinforce ESD values being taught in schools. Participants expressed that clashing value systems between the school and the home and between the general community and the school made it difficult for teachers to have any significant impact in teaching students ESD values. Thus, suggesting the important role of the wider community in influencing ESD practices. In implementing ESD in Trinidad and Tobago primary schools, the government should invite stakeholders to participate in the transformation so that simultaneous efforts can be made towards adopting ESD not only in primary schools but in communities themselves. In that way students will see ESD values and attitudes that are taught in schools being reflected in their communities and strive towards adhering to these principles. Reorientation can also be seen an opportunity for communities and schools to strengthen relationships for the purpose of ESD and national sustainable development.

### **Classroom and Teacher: Capturing ESD Moments**

ESD does not present entirely new contents of knowledge and pedagogy to the education practice. Some of the ESD pedagogical practices, core values, and content matter already existed (UNESCO, 2017) in current curricula in different parts of the world. What ESD presents is an approach to education that weaves sustainability values, knowledge, and pedagogical practices across all subject areas and permeates the education system at the level of policies, relationships, administrative, and associated networks through its reorientation process. ESD aims to have students understand deeper insights regarding all the systems, organisms and their functions both natural and manmade. It teaches us how to perceive our existence as part of an interconnected symbiotic system and how to manage our lives sustainably for the mutual benefit of all three dimensions through developing our competencies. Examples of these competencies include our anticipatory, inquiry thinking,

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systems thinking, normative, strategic, collaborative, critical thinking, self-awareness, and integrated problem-solving competencies (UNESCO, 2017).

Participants, although untrained in ESD, were able to share experiences that they identified as ESD teachable moments in the curriculum and outside of the curriculum. Their main challenges were lack of training and trying to engage in ESD within rigid education system. Participants acknowledged that if they were trained for ESD, there would be less missed ESD opportunities. Training is needed to foster sustainability-minded teachers so they can promote ESD. Ferreira et al. (2007) noted that without teacher training programs for ESD, only those teachers with a genuine interest in sustainability would seek ways to incorporate this education in their schools. Through teacher training and professional development teachers can develop ESD values and “an attitude of care and stewardship... and have the practical competence required to act on the basis of knowledge and feeling” (Ferreira et al., 2007, p. 30). UNESCO (2006) urged for teacher education programs for ESD, recognizing that ESD trained teachers would not only “teach sustainability themes” but would be able to “pull together the various disciplinary strands that will give their students a holistic understanding of a sustainable future,” (p. 35) and their role in it.

Although lacking in ESD training, participants made vital connections to ESD values, were familiar with some of the values and competencies, and were attempting to utilize them in their own practices. It was apparent though, that changes to the curriculum's isolated topics, for the upper school especially, would make for more integrated and meaningful learning. The findings also revealed that there were more opportunities for ESD in the lower school which was considered less rigid and more flexible according to teachers' experiences. One participant in the lower school found that there were sufficient opportunities for ESD until she experienced teaching at the upper school and found that time afforded little

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opportunities for the level of creativity in teaching and assessments that she was familiar with in the lower school.

The rigidity of an exam-oriented education that forced teachers to focus less on the quality of education and more on completing the syllabus robbed students and teachers of rich educational opportunities. It is not surprising that teachers found it challenging to adopt ESD in any significant way when one considers the numerous obligations of teachers and students in an exam-driven system. Similarly, Buchanan (2012) found that the same areas that presented opportunities for ESD such as subject delivery and assessments were the same areas that presented challenges. The ESD approach is driven by quality education and while it advocates for assessments that are creative, appropriate, and learner-centered, it does this not at the expense of quality education. One of the goals of ESD is “to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (UNESCO, 2017, p. iv).

The focus on assessments and exams in Trinidad and Tobago primary schools is part of a colonial practice that educators have continued to adhere to. Bristol (2010) explained that teachers are teaching to the syllabus or text in a race against time which detracts from focusing on. The focus on syllabus “completion” also meant that teachers were less concerned with creative, student-centred ways of teaching and learning, and more directed by traditional standards of rote “chalk and talk” transference of knowledge. The findings illustrate teachers’ desire to move away from those ineffective methods evidenced in their own creativity and to make the most of ESD opportunities through a more integrated curriculum. However, without support from the ministry, teacher training and policy development to complement an ESD curriculum, teachers will continue to work in isolation and with few other supports.

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Participants expressed the need for quality of students' education but admitted that the education system does not thoroughly encourage this in their policies and in their relationships with schools. Because emphasis is placed on what the ministry and one participant (during her tenure as a lower school teacher) referred to as an "excellent curriculum," teachers are usually blamed for students' performances ignoring the fact that the curriculum alone does not determine the type of educational experiences teachers and students will share.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the findings reveal that whether at the level of whole school only or at the level of the government, there is a need to reconsider education, its role taking into account the postcolonial context and its global function. Adopting ESD as a practice will require consideration of the above before ESD can be adapted in a locally relevant and culturally appropriate way. ESD has the potential to reorient Trinidad and Tobago's education system for the purpose of transforming society. This is more than any curriculum revision can handle and depends on the restructuring of various levels of education. As it currently exists, Trinbagonian teachers may find some opportunities for ESD in their existing curriculum, when engaging in whole school projects or environmental awareness competitions organized by private agencies. Additionally, teachers can seek opportunities outside of the curriculum, seeking teachable moments to foster values and practices ESD.

The challenges experienced were of the same nature, that is, lack of support from the curriculum; lack of support from the community including private agencies, families, other teachers and administrators; and other citizens in the general community; lack of support from the ministry especially in the perceived valuing of teachers; and lack of ESD perspectives in teacher educator programs. A significant challenge was the postcolonial residue evident throughout the education system and the community. The colonial history and



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consequent postcolonial mentality shaped the values, attitudes and behaviours of Trinbagonians, and considerably affects the potential for ESD in primary schools. However, education was seen as both the goal and the means through which both ESD and postcolonial understandings could be adopted and realized respectively. ESD develops thinking skills that can be used as the basis for critical professional thinking. I argue that teacher reorientation can occur through adopting ESD recommended skills and competencies and utilizing them in their practice of critical professionalism and teaching as an act of subversion.

Importantly, and an opportunity for Trinidad and Tobago's education system, is that ESD will appear differently in every part of the world because of culture, history, local relevance and appropriateness. Trinidad and Tobago's government can then determine the shape of reorienting education for ESD with particular consideration for our postcolonial context.

### **Final Conclusion**

Throughout this research I became more certain that context is of great significance in regards to educational practices, policies, and experiences. Postcolonialism, as the context for educational experiences in Trinidad and Tobago, emerged as a major influence on teachers' experiences of ESD and their interpretation of it. The educators I interviewed, although they were not fully aware of the concept of ESD, were able to relate to what ESD meant in values and in practice in their particular contexts. The teachers' experiences with ESD seemed to be heavily influenced by the limitations of the education system and the curriculum.

Undoubtedly, support from the community, (including other teachers, the administrator, the wider community, the education ministry, and others) also influenced the success of teachers' ESD attempts. This supports my understanding that ESD, as it is represented through the interrelated spherical illustrations, relies on the functioning, participation, and well-being of all aspects of the spheres. ESD cannot be achieved by teachers alone or by the ministry of education without greater government and community commitment. Like the interconnected spherical parts, teaching for ESD requires full participation, commitment, and responsibility of all stakeholders to ensure consistency and continuity in ESD efforts.

Importantly, the past colonial experiences have affected the present and influence the future of postcolonial Trinidad and Tobago. In aspiring towards ESD goals, Trinidad and Tobago must also aspire to become truly postcolonial, that is to say, have warded off the colonial residue that stifles growth, development, nationalism and self-knowledge. As previously stated, ESD is a culturally relevant and locally appropriate approach to education. To establish what this entails for our country, we, as Trinbagonians, must first "know ourselves" to understand and appreciate our cultures and to consider what is locally relevant and appropriate. But to do so, requires us to acknowledge our postcolonial history and its

current influences. The experiences and challenges faced by teachers implementing ESD may appear to be a small contribution globally but is a significant contribution to the teachers of ESD in the Caribbean.

### **Limitations**

The limitations of this study are recognized as follows:

The sample is not representative of Trinidad and Tobago writ large, since most of the participants belonged to the Port-of-Spain and environs district. A wider scope which includes participants from the Tobago district, as well as the three remaining districts in Trinidad and Tobago, would enrich this data in providing perspectives from various regions.

A further limitation surfaced during the data collection as teachers were not familiar with the concept of ESD. An informational document (sourced from UNESCO) was sent to participants (as discussed in the methodology) to facilitate a shared understanding of the concept. However, I am uncertain if all of the participants read the document. Those who did confirm reading it, shared that it was their first time reading about ESD concepts. Thus, participants might not have been able to fully divulge in their ESD experiences due to lack of knowledge. For example, teachers probably engaged in ESD practices, yet did not understand them as such, and so may not have discussed them due to their unawareness. I believe that this would have affected the quality of data provided.

### **Recommendations for the Ministry of Education of Trinidad and Tobago and Teachers**

Although this study was small in scope, the analysis provides some revealing and salient starting points for ESD implementation for teachers and ministry officials in Trinidad and Tobago. The following points are categorized under recommendations for the Ministry of Education and recommendations for teachers.

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Recommendations for the Ministry of Education of Trinidad and Tobago are that the Ministry of Education should:

1. Adopt ESD as an approach to education and seek to modify ESD to make it culturally relevant and locally appropriate. This means instituting ESD at all levels of education and reorienting education at all levels including ministerial, administrative, whole school, curriculum content, and pedagogies. By doing so, education would align with the needs of the country and seek to address issues that affect the ministry's vision of national sustainable development.
2. Incorporate a critical and reflective practice as part of teacher education to make teachers aware of their cultural practices and colonial residue. Also institutionalize teacher professional development for those already on the field so that it becomes part of teachers' educational praxis. The ministry can facilitate professional development and workshops on critical professionalism to expose, confront, and dismantle decolonial imaginations
3. In the process of reorienting education, curriculum developers must ensure that locally relevant issues such as identity, racism, and the racial divide are specific curriculum topics to be addressed across all grades.
4. Collaborate with local agencies that already promote sustainability through projects and competitions and work with them to establish permanent relationships and partnerships with schools and other community stakeholders. Therefore, I recommend that the ministry form sustainable networks to share the responsibilities accordingly.
5. Remove standardized testing to provide both teachers and students an opportunity for more meaningful, action-oriented, student-directed learning, and practical educational experiences. Teachers will become less restricted in their pedagogies and more

## TRINBAGONIAN TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON ESD

creative in their teaching and students will have greater opportunities to develop ESD knowledge, skills, and attitudes that would foster national sustainable development.

6. Provide release time so that teachers who have a natural inclination to ESD can work together in building a foundation for the development of an ESD committee which will include all teachers and encourage staff and students to promote ESD practices and projects that are continuous and consistent. This ESD committee can also be the foundation for the strengths model which stipulates that every discipline can contribute towards ESD but that no one discipline can claim ownership of ESD and; every teacher and administrator can contribute to ESD.
7. Support the development of locally-developed resources for successful ESD implementation and offer financial support to furnish schools with ESD resources.

Recommendations for teachers are that teachers should:

1. Access UNESCO ESD Goals Toolkit kit, share it with their staff members, and modify it to reflect the culture of the school and make it locally relevant to the country. In the absence of teacher training and education reorientation, UNESCO has provided an ESD Goals Toolkit that offers detailed suggested topics, pedagogical approaches, whole school projects, and learning objectives. Teacher communities can benefit from this document by incorporating it in their teaching, while being cognizant of the context of Trinidad and Tobago, their students, and their school.
2. Seek ways to promote careers related to sustainability within their classrooms that would enhance the national sustainable development of Trinidad and Tobago. For example, teachers could invite community members (students' parents or family members) who are engaged in sustainable livelihoods to share creative ways of sustaining one's self. For example, students could organize markets for their crafts,

for plants, and for other money-making ventures. This would also provide an opportunity to build community relationships.

3. Explore and engage in practices of ESD. Teachers must actively engage students through developing ESD competencies and then applying their skills in their community. Critical thinking, collaboration, problem solving, systems thinking, and strategic competencies can all be utilized to assess the needs of the community and implement action to address these needs. Teachers should provide students with opportunities to apply and self-direct their learning and to forge community relationships and partnerships for sustainable well-being.
4. Work to build relationships with parents with a focus on getting to know each other, assess each other's needs, and work together to fulfil some of those aspirations. Concomitantly, the ministry must value the time that teachers need to spend to develop relationships and provide time and offer financial support to assist in the planning of these events. Financial support could be used for venues, communication, transportation coverage, refreshments, and/or financial aid.
5. Partner with community groups and community members to demonstrate sustainable relationships. Invite community members to become part of a School and Community Sustainable Team. The more community members are aware of the efforts being made by the school, the more likely it is that they too will contribute in their efforts to achieve the goals of ESD. For this to occur, the ministry must grant concessions to teachers and offer them release time to manage these groups and meetings.
6. Keep a journal or log to critically reflect on their pedagogical practices and discern their own postcolonial imaginations. Granted there are no particular guidelines as to how this is done, the teacher must then investigate ideas of postcolonialism and first

become aware of their cultural roles and judiciously engage in personal and professional reflective praxis.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The following recommendations highlight some ways in which future studies could emerge from this present study:

1. Expand the sample of a similar study including more teachers and from the wider educational districts from Trinidad and Tobago, including participants from Tobago and rural parts of Trinidad.
2. The issue of racism and the racial divide was discussed as a major ESD obstacle for teachers. It would be interesting to recruit a sample that reflected the multiracial characteristic of the Trinbagonian people to share and compare the experiences of differing racial groups.
3. The Ministry of Education's vision includes the national sustainable development of Trinidad and Tobago. Principals, school administrators, and teachers must be kept abreast of the curriculum revisions that are currently underway at the Ministry level. A study that analyzes the documents produced by Ministry officials for ESD practices and values would be insightful.
4. Research on the perspectives of principals and school administrators would expand this study.

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Appendix A





Appendix B

Interview Guide

Introductory Comments:

May I have your permission to audio record this interview?

Let me begin firstly by saying thank you for your willingness to participate in this study and being present for this interview. Keep in mind that if you want to withdraw from the study or stop at any point during the interview, you are free to do so without repercussions. I will not try to convince you otherwise. Regarding anonymity and confidentiality, any statements made by you, the participant, will not be shared or discussed by me with anyone else. When I transcribe the interview, your name will be replaced with a pseudonym and any contextual information that might reveal your identity would be disguised. If you would like to receive a final copy of the report, the consent form provided offers you an opportunity to indicate this.

Now that we are ready, let's begin.

1. Can you tell me about yourself?
  - a) What is your name?
  - b) How many years have you been teaching?
  - c) What levels have you taught?
  - d) Can you describe the setting of your earlier years in teaching? For example, what was the country like then? What was school and the teaching experience like then?
  - e) How would you compare your earlier years in teaching to the present?
2. What do you understand by the concept "Sustainable Development"?

## TRINBAGONIAN TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON ESD

- a) If you were to imagine a sustainably developed Trinidad and Tobago, what picture comes to mind environmentally, socially, economically?
  - b) When you reflect on the history of the Trinbagonian people from independence to present time, how would you describe the attitude and behaviours of citizens regarding sustainability?
  - c) Do you see a relationship between nationalism and sustainability? Why do you think so?
3. Do you see opportunities for Education for Sustainability to be included in the curriculum that are not maximized upon?
- a) Why do you think this is the case, why is it not maximized upon?
  - b) In what subject areas might/can you see the potential for Education for Sustainability highlighted or focused upon?
  - c) When and to what extent do ESD teaching opportunities arise in the school day outside of the curriculum document?
4. Can you describe how you engage your students in Education for Sustainability in your classroom?
- a) Can you describe a time when there was a teachable moment in which you used an opportunity to engage in an issue or concept related to sustainable development?
  - b) How successful was this? Why or why not?
  - c) What were the conditions that supported this experience?
  - d) What would have made this experience richer for the students?
  - e) Have you had other experiences like this? Describe them.

## TRINBAGONIAN TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON ESD

5. What do you think can be done to make ESD more prevalent in primary schools?
  - a) What more can be done to improve ESD in curriculum and in the classroom?
  - b) Do you think being a post-colonial state dictates the potential for ESD in T & T?  
How so?
  - c) Is there anything that we have not discussed that you would like to comment on or discuss?



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Appendix C

Email to Participants of Pilot Study

Greetings [NAME],

I hope you are in great health and spirits! As you know, I am currently pursuing my M.Ed. at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada. I have completed my courses and have returned to Trinidad to conduct my thesis research entitled, “Primary School Teachers’ Perspectives on Education for Sustainable Development in Trinidad and Tobago.”

Thank you for participating in the pilot study for my course “Qualitative Research Methods in Education”. As previously mentioned, I am using this study to inform my thesis research which requires me to interview an additional three in-service government primary school teachers (from Tobago and Trinidad) with at least 10 years of experience teaching in the public-school system. I am seeking your assistance in contacting your network of in-service teachers from Trinidad and/or Tobago by sharing the letter of invitation (attached) to those who fit the criteria of having a minimum of ten years of teaching service and are currently in-service in government schools.

I have also revised the original interview protocol to include an additional five (5) questions. If you are interested in continuing your participation in this study by means of being interviewed for the additional five (5) questions, please contact me via email at [crosss@myumanitoba.ca](mailto:crosss@myumanitoba.ca) or via my cell phone at [REDACTED]. Please be reminded that you are not obligated to participate in this subsequent interview.





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Appendix D

Email to other colleagues

Greetings [NAME],

I hope you are in great health and spirits!

The purpose of this email is to seek your assistance. I am currently pursuing my M.Ed. at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada. Partial fulfillment of this degree is to complete my thesis research entitled, "Trinidad and Tobago Primary School Teachers' Perspectives on Education for Sustainable Development."

For my study I would like to interview three (3) in-service government primary school teachers who are unknown to me. I am seeking your assistance in contacting your network of in-service teachers from Trinidad and/or Tobago by sharing the letter of invitation (attached) to those who fit the criteria of having a minimum of ten years of teaching service and are currently in-service in government schools. Teachers can be teaching in any government primary school in either Trinidad or Tobago and of any gender.

Please feel free to read the attached Invitation letter to be emailed to other in-service teachers. Persons who express their interest can contact me at [crosss@myumantioba.ca](mailto:crosss@myumantioba.ca) or call me at [REDACTED] I truly appreciate your assistance and support. If you need clarification or have any concerns, please let me know.

Kindest Regards

Shinelle



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Appendix E

Email to Specific Individual

Greetings [NAME],

I hope you are in great health and spirits!

The purpose of this email is to seek your assistance. I am currently pursuing my M.Ed. at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada. Partial fulfillment of this degree is to complete my thesis research entitled, “Trinidad and Tobago Primary School Teachers’ Perspectives on Education for Sustainable Development.”

For my study I would like to interview 3 primary school teachers and you. I have followed the work of Fondes Amandes Community Reforestation and on the many occasions we have met we always discuss sustainability and education. I find these conversations rich and valuable and would like very much to interview you because of your expertise in this area.

I have attached a letter of invitation which provides basic information about the study. If you are interested in participating in my study, you can contact me via email at [crosss@myumanitoba.ca](mailto:crosss@myumanitoba.ca) or via my cell phone at [REDACTED]. I will then forward an Informed Consent letter which provides details about the research and process.

Looking forward to hearing from you!

Take Care,

Shinelle



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Appendix F

Letter of Invitation to Participate in Research Study

Dear [ NAME ],

The Study Title: Teachers' Perspectives on Education for Sustainable Development in  
Trinidad and Tobago Primary Schools

Principal Investigator: Shinelle Cross, Graduate Student, University of Manitoba

Email: [crosss@myumanitoba.ca](mailto:crosss@myumanitoba.ca)

Phone: [REDACTED]

Academic Advisor: Dr. Melanie Janzen

Email: [melanie.janzen@umanitoba.ca](mailto:melanie.janzen@umanitoba.ca)

Phone : 1-204-480-1451

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education, Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the University of Manitoba. Currently, I am fulfilling the requirements of the Master of Education Program by means of my thesis entitled, "Trinidad and Tobago Primary School Teachers' Perspectives on Education for Sustainable Development", which requires me to conduct a research. The data will be used for my thesis which has a projected completion date of December 2020. The results of this study will be presented to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Melanie Janzen. This letter serves as an invitation to participate in my research study, "Trinidad and Tobago Primary School Teachers' Perspectives on Education for Sustainable Development."



## TRINBAGONIAN TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON ESD

My interest in Education for Sustainable Development is in response to the vision of the Ministry of Education of Trinidad and Tobago which highlights the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner as a holistic child capable of satisfying the sustainable development of society. The purpose of this study is to describe the challenges of implementing education for sustainable development for Trinidad and Tobago primary school teachers in the classroom.

To accomplish this task, I will need to conduct one-on-one semi-structured interviews with primary school teachers. I am seeking in-service government primary school teachers with at least 10 years of experience. A total of five main questions (with sub-questions) will be asked about your teaching experience in general and more specifically your perception of Education for Sustainable Development, your experiences as you attempt to incorporate Education for Sustainable Development in your classroom practice and the challenges you encounter in doing so. It is expected that the interview will last about 60-90 minutes in length and will be conducted in person at a place and time most convenient to you. Upon completion of the study, a summary report can be emailed to you if you express this interest.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please reply via email to [crosss@myumanitoba.ca](mailto:crosss@myumanitoba.ca) or via my contact number [REDACTED]. Upon receipt of your expressed interest, I will email you an Informed Consent Letter which will provide further details about the study. It will detail your rights, and allow you an opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification if need be.

The University of Manitoba may look at the research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way. This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB). If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 204-474-7122 or [humanethics@umanitoba.ca](mailto:humanethics@umanitoba.ca). A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

## TRINBAGONIAN TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON ESD

I look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me or my thesis advisor.

Sincerely,

Shinelle Cross



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Appendix G

Informed Consent

Dear [ NAME ],

The Study Title: Teachers' Perspectives on Education for Sustainable Development in  
Trinidad and Tobago Primary Schools

Principal Investigator: Shinelle Cross, Graduate Student, University of Manitoba

Email: [crosss@myumanitoba.ca](mailto:crosss@myumanitoba.ca)

Phone: [REDACTED]

Academic Advisor: Dr. Melanie Janzen

Email: [melanie.janzen@umanitoba.ca](mailto:melanie.janzen@umanitoba.ca)

Phone# 1-204-480-1451

Thank you for your expressed interest in this research study. This consent form provides details of the study that would be of interest to you as a potential participant in this research. Please take the time to read carefully the following information. Should you need clarification or further details please feel free to ask me or my Academic Advisor, Dr. Melanie Janzen.

PURPOSE OF STUDY:

## TRINBAGONIAN TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON ESD

This qualitative research study seeks to understand the experiences of and challenges faced by primary educators when attempting to implement education for sustainable development within their classrooms

### METHODOLOGY:

If you decide to be a participant in this research study, then you will participate in a 60-90-minute one-on-one semi-structured interview. The interview will be audiotaped and then transcribed by me.

During the interview you will be asked general questions about yourself as it pertains to your career and other questions concerning your experience with Education for Sustainable Development in your classroom. To facilitate an understanding of the concepts "Sustainable Development" and "Education for Sustainable Development" I have compiled a document that consists of theories and shared understandings of the concepts for your review prior to the interview session. This document is provided to you to help clarify and determine shared understandings of ESD.

The interview data will be used to inform my thesis project and may be used in subsequent publications and presentations.

### POTENTIAL RISKS AND BENEFITS

The perceived risk to participants is minimal as neither the interview topic or questions are considered sensitive. Actual names will be replaced with pseudonyms and actual school names will not be used. Any information that can be used to identify the participant in the interview will be anonymized or disguised.

## TRINBAGONIAN TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON ESD

Should you feel uncomfortable during the interview and wish to end your participation, you are free to do so, and all data can be removed upon your request. Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time for any reason.

You may find that discussing your experiences about ESD to be a positive experience and provide you with an opportunity for reflection.

### CONFIDENTIALITY

All data that can identify you such as contact information, transcripts, interview guide will be stored on a password protected laptop and flash drive and kept safe. My thesis committee will have access to the data in order to support the development of the thesis. At the end of the research study, December 2020, all data will be shredded, destroyed and deleted.

### COMPENSATION AND PARTICIPATION:

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and participants may withdraw at any time. Participants can withdraw by contacting me via email or by phone. Contact information is listed at the beginning of this form. If you withdraw from this study, all data collected from you will be destroyed and removed from use in the study. No compensation will be provided to participants who participate in this study.

### FEEDBACK AND DEBRIEFING:

Once the study is complete, all participants who have indicated on the consent form that they would like to receive a copy of the final results will receive a summary. I anticipate sending the summaries by December 2020.

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### DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS TO PARTICIPANTS:

If you have indicated on the consent form that you would like to receive a copy of the final results, a summary will be sent to you at the completion of the study. The findings of the study will be used to inform my master's thesis. The findings may also be disseminated in presentations, conferences, papers, or publications. When study results are shared, all findings will be presented in a way that does not identify any participants.

### DESTRUCTION OF DATA:

The data will be kept until December 2020. When the study has ended all data on the laptop, flash drive and hardcopies will be deleted and shredded. Digital files will be deleted and removed from the "trash can" on my computer.

### CONSENT

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB). If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of

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the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 204-474-7122 or [humanethics@umanitoba.ca](mailto:humanethics@umanitoba.ca). A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Feel free to contact me or my Academic Advisor for information.

PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

PARTICIPANT'S NAME (Print) \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate yes / no if you would like to receive a copy of the summary of the study results.

YES            NO

If you indicated "yes", please provide either an email address or mailbox address to where you would like the final project report sent:

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Appendix H

Sustainable Development & Education for Sustainable Development Informational  
Document

The term “sustainable development” gained global recognition in 1987 through Gro Harlem Brundtland’s Report, “Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development.” In this report, Brundtland defined the concept as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p 16).

This definition was consequently described as “a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations” (United Nations, 1987). The United Nations World Summit Outcome Document of 2005 highlighted that “sustainable development” is as integrated approach that addresses economic development, social development and environmental protection. In the pursuit of development, sustainability acts to balance these ambitions as they affect these three spheres of life.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) has parallel importance as it is considered the central driving force for sustainability to be successful. Acknowledging that it is inextricably tied to the motives of sustainable development, UNESCO’s Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura announced: "Education – in all its forms and at all levels – is not only an end in itself but is also one of the most powerful instruments we have for bringing about the changes required to achieve sustainable development” (UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014, The DESD at a Glance, p 3).



*Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)*

“ESD is a vision of education that seeks to balance human and economic well-being with cultural traditions and respect for the earth’s natural resources. ESD applies transdisciplinary educational methods and approaches to develop an ethic for lifelong learning; fosters respect for human needs that are compatible with sustainable use of natural resources and the needs of the planet; and nurtures a sense of global solidarity.” (UNESCO Decade of ESD 2005-2014)

“The term "reorienting education" has become a powerful descriptor that helps administrators and educators at every level (i.e., nursery school through university) to understand the changes required for ESD. An appropriately reoriented basic education includes more principles, skills, perspectives, and values related to sustainability than are currently included in most education systems. Hence, it is not only a question of quantity of education, but also one of appropriateness and relevance. ESD encompasses a vision that integrates environment, economy, and society. Reorienting education also requires teaching and learning knowledge, skills, perspectives, and values that will guide and motivate people to pursue sustainable livelihoods, to participate in a democratic society, and to live in a sustainable manner” (UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014, ESD Toolkit, p 15).

“ESD also involves studying local and, when appropriate, global issues. Therefore, these five (i.e., knowledge, skills, perspectives, values, and issues) must all be addressed in a formal curriculum that has been reoriented to address sustainability. Simply adding more to the curriculum will not be feasible in most schools; they already have a full curriculum. The challenge for communities in the process of creating ESD curriculums will be to select knowledge that will support their sustainability goals. An accompanying challenge will be to

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let go of those topics that have been successfully taught for years but are no longer relevant. Deciding what to leave out—what does not contribute to sustainability or is obsolete—is an integral part of the reorienting process.” ((UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014, ESD Toolkit, p 18).

“There is a clear distinction that should be noted between sustainability (developing understanding and awareness) and Education for Sustainability (the process of engaging people in actions toward sustainability). Education for Sustainability aims to go beyond individual 'behaviour' change and seeks to engage and empower people to implement systemic changes. ESD identifies what citizens should know, be able to do and value when they graduate from the formal school system about key sustainability issues including climate change, energy, biodiversity, ecosystems, water, citizenship, transportation, poverty, etc.” (UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014, ESD Toolkit, p 9)

“ESD requires changes in “how” teachers teach, not just “what” they are teaching. ESD is experiential, authentic, and action-oriented education, utilizing real world sources, rather than relying exclusively on textbooks. ESD emphasizes information *analysis*, not just information transfer. ESD brings together elements from many curricular areas at the same time, and integrates these through a sustainability lens, ensuring that students are able to address the key challenges we face. ESD also requires new methods of measuring and assessing student achievement that reflect these characteristics. An examination of ESD pedagogy suggests that the characteristics of ESD are central to good teaching in any context and consistent with most education research and education reform initiatives underway globally.” (Background-Developing a Pan-Canadian ESD Framework for Collaboration and Action, 2010, p 8)

If you are interested in finding out more on this topic, then the following links should prove to be helpful:

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<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002163/216383e.pdf>

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001416/141629e.pdf>

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001524/152453eo.pdf>

<http://www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf>

The following articles might also be of interest to you:

1. Goleman, D., Bennett, L., & Barlow, Z. (2012). *Ecoliterate: How educators are cultivating emotional, social, and ecological literacy*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
2. Kozak, S., & Elliott, S. (2014). *Connecting the dots: Key strategies that transform learning for environmental education, citizenship and sustainability*. Learning for a Sustainable Future. Retrieved from [http://www.lsf-1st.ca/media/LSF\\_Connecting\\_the\\_Dots\\_full\\_EN\\_web.pdf](http://www.lsf-1st.ca/media/LSF_Connecting_the_Dots_full_EN_web.pdf)
3. Orr, D. (1991). What is education for? Six myths about the foundations of modern education, and six new principles to replace them. *In Context*, 27. Retrieved from <http://www.context.org/iclib/ic27/orr/>
4. Shujah, S. (2008). A Pedagogy for social justice: Critical teaching that goes against the grain. In D. Lund and P. Carr (Eds), *Doing democracy. Striving for political literacy and social justice* (pp. 351-365). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
5. \*Stone, M. K. (2009). *Smart by nature: Schooling for sustainability*. Healdsburg, CA: Watershed Media. Stone, M. K. (n.d.). *Campuses and buildings that teach*. Retrieved from <http://www.ecoliteracy.org/essays/campuses-and-buildings-teach>
6. Macy, J. (n.d.). *The great turning*. Retrieved from <http://www.ecoliteracy.org/essays/great-turning>

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7. The New Economics Foundation (n.d.). *Well-being and the environment: Achieving 'one planet living' and maintaining quality of life*. Retrieved from [http://b.3cdn.net/nefoundation/88cb2c4314731314d0\\_gxm6bq37b.pdf](http://b.3cdn.net/nefoundation/88cb2c4314731314d0_gxm6bq37b.pdf)
8. Orr, D. (n.d.). *Ecological design intelligence*. Retrieved from <http://www.ecoliteracy.org/essays/ecological-design-intelligence>
9. Rifkin, J. (2010, May 30). Empathic education: The transformation of learning in an interconnected world. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/article/Empathic-Education-The/65695/>

Feel free to do your own research on the topic if you are inspired.

Appendix I

Original Interview Guide

Introductory Comments:

May I have your permission to audio record this interview?

Let me begin firstly by saying thank you for your willingness to participate in this study and being present for this interview. Keep in mind that if you want to withdraw from the study or stop any point during the interview, you are free to do so without repercussions. During this interview phase, you can have any parts of your interview deleted or revised. I will not try to convince you otherwise.

Regarding anonymity and confidentiality, any statements made by you, the participant, will not be shared or discussed by me with anyone else. When I transcribe the interview, your name will be replaced with a pseudonym and any contextual information that might reveal your identity would be disguised. You would be given a copy of the transcription for feedback purposes before results are documented.

Now that we are ready, let's begin.

1. Can you tell me about yourself?
  - a) What is your name?
  - b) How many years have you been teaching?
  - c) What levels have you taught?
2. What do you understand by the concept "Sustainable Development?"
  - a) How do you imagine a sustainably developed Trinidad and Tobago?
3. In what ways do you see the potential for sustainable development to be reflected in the primary school curriculum?

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- a) Do you see other opportunities for education for sustainability to be included in the curriculum that are not maximized upon?
  - b) Why do you think this is the case, why is it not maximized upon?
  - c) In what subject areas might/can you see the potential for education for sustainability highlighted or focused upon?
  - d) When and to what extent do ESD teaching opportunities arise in the school day?
4. Can you describe how you engage your students in education for sustainability in your classroom?
- a) Can you describe a time when there was a teachable moment in which you used an opportunity to engage in an issue or concept related to sustainable development?
  - b) How successful was this? Why or why not?
  - c) What were the conditions that supported this experience? What would have made this experience richer for the students?
  - d) Have you had other experiences like this? Describe them.
5. What do you think can be done to make ESD more prevalent in primary classrooms? In the primary school curriculum? In your daily practices?
- a) What more can be done to improve ESD in curriculum?
  - b) Is there anything that we have not discussed that you would like to comment on or discuss?