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### **Abstract**

The premise of this paper is to sensitize family economics and resource management educators to the merits of integrating the three fields of global, citizenship and consumer education so as to shift the focus from one of rights to responsibilities and to place citizens first and consumers second.

I am very intrigued with the notion of bringing a global perspective to home economics education and family resource management. In the early 90s, I was exposed to the concept of global education and have made a concerted effort to extend and refine my own perceptions of what a global perspective entails and how it can extend the current approach to socializing citizens into their consumption role. This discussion will provide some background on the global perspective and then discuss the merits of integrating this perspective with citizenship education and consumer education and especially with consumer and human rights and responsibilities.

### **A Global Perspective**

Several Canadian and American home economics and family resource management scholars have delved into the concept of global education. Smith and Peterat (1992) drew on several global education theorists as they developed their discussion of what is global education, how does one globalize home economics curriculum and what are the key principles that one draws on as one teaches from, or practices, this perspective. Table 1 is a distillation of their analysis into 14 principles comprising a global perspective, in no particular order.

### **Table 1 -Collection of 14 Global Principles**

*Perspective consciousness - we must begin to appreciate that our view of the world is not universally shared by others*

*State of the planet awareness - we must be aware of prevailing and emerging world conditions and developments*

*Cross-cultural awareness and diversity - we must appreciate that there are a diversity of ideas and practices found in human societies and communities*

*Knowledge of global dynamics - a modest comprehension of key traits and mechanisms of the world order is necessary*

*Aware of changing choices and alternatives - we must be aware of problems related to choices facing people and nations and how these choices change as one gains a consciousness of global systems*

*Balanced development - the demands on local supply to support development initiatives must not place undue strain on local supply*

*Voluntary simplicity - we should strive to create a life style by streamlining and simplifying personal possessions and consumption*

*Complementary technology - the technology introduced into a country should be compatible with, or not compromise, local indigenous technology or how it is passed on to the next generation*

*International reciprocity - we must appreciate that each culture has much to give and gain from cross cultural interactions*

*Sustainable lifestyles and production - we must ensure that current collective lifestyles and production methods renew and support, rather than harm, the environment and ecosystem, other people or future generations*

*Systems consciousness - we need the ability to think in systems mode rather than a dualistic mode*

*Involvement consciousness and preparedness to consider repercussions - we need to appreciate that the choices we make, and the actions we take, have repercussions for the*

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*global present and future*

*Process mindedness - we need to appreciate that learning and personal development are a continuous journey with no fixed destination (life long learning and socialization)*

*Responsible value deliberations and morally justifiable decisions - we must base consumer and resource management decisions on values as well as facts; make decisions on the basis on good reason rather than habit, fear, force, self interest or customs; be able to morally and ethically justify our positions on issues knowing that we may encounter resistance*

Crawford (1993) shares guidelines she developed for globalizing family resource management curriculum so that students could be socialized to use resources in a globally responsible way, meaning that resources are managed at the local level such that world needs are met over the long term. Her guidelines include six major conceptual areas which she relates to what she believes students should learn as a result of being exposed to a globalized curricula. She feels that several concepts should be entrenched in any curriculum designed to sensitize students to a global perspective including: the relationship between values and behaviour; the diversity of family resource management patterns; the interdependence between global systems and family resource management behaviour; ethical and global family resource management issues and problems; critical thinking; and, the power of global actors to create alternative futures.

The 1990 Home Economics Teacher Education Yearbook (Williams, West & Murray, 1990) is dedicated to the topic of global education. In her introductory chapter, Williams (1990) acknowledges that the movement towards global education started around the mid 1960's, about 35 years ago. The profile of a global perspective that is shared by Williams is almost identical to that in Table 1 (likely because Smith and Peterat and Williams all cited and read a similar collection of global education scholars to gain their understanding of a global perspective). She tenders several ideas that reflect the intent of programs that embrace a global perspective: (a) gain an understanding of the world human condition, (b) examine various frames of reference and points of view (values) other than one's own, (c) prepare people to participate responsibly in the world, (d) foster respect for harmony, diversity, pluralism and interdependence, and (e) predispose students to gain knowledge and understanding of themselves in a two

way relationship with the world community. These ideas are evident in Table 1, just worded differently.

Based on the premise that people and communities exist in relation to the larger world, and that people's actions have an impact of the lives of others around the world, West (1990) cites representative samples of principles (she calls them curriculum goals) from the global education literature. In addition to those principles noted in Table 1, she adds that people need to recognize that the pursuit of self-interest necessitates cooperation and that people need to appreciate the rights and duties of people toward each other, especially across nations (the latter will be especially linked to human and consumer rights and responsibilities in this paper). These two principles are especially germane to the topic of this paper. Succinctly, if one accepts that "global education is education for responsible participation in an interdependent global society"(Anderson as cited in Becker, 1979, p.99), that citizenship education is designed to socialize people into their role of a responsible participant in society and that consumer education includes helping people appreciate that their consuming role is linked to their role as a socially responsible citizen (National Institute for Consumer Education, 1996), then it can be argued that consumer education, citizenship education and global education go hand-in-hand.

### **Citizenship Education**

Citizenship education is comprised of three components: civil, political and social. The civil refers to community involvement, and learning about and becoming involved in the life and concerns of one's community. This involvement becomes global simply by conceiving of oneself as a citizen in a world community as well as a local or national community. The political refers to learning to be effective in public life. If public life is conceived, from a global perspective, as the power sphere (business and government), then the political can refer to the global principles of state of the planet awareness and knowledge of global dynamics (see Table 1) meaning that the person can strive to be an activist on behalf of the human condition by taking issue with actions of, and being a voice at, national and international political and industry bodies and agencies. Finally, the social component of citizenship education refers to moral and socially responsible behaviour. From a global consumer perspective, this would mean that citizens would make morally

justiciable consumption decisions based on the global principles of social awareness, involvement consciousness and repercussion consciousness. In an earlier discussion, McGregor (in press) provides exciting evidence of the synergy between consumer education and citizenship education. She suggests that a strong argument can be made that lack of education in citizenship can translate to less than responsible consumption decisions in the global marketplace. As well, lack of education from a global perspective can translate to less than responsible consumption decisions.

Consider that Gabriel and Lang (1995) actually say that “a citizen is a responsible consumer, a socially aware consumer, a consumer who thinks ahead and tempers his or her desires by social awareness, a consumer whose actions must be morally defensible and who must occasionally be prepared to sacrifice personal pleasure to communal well-being” (pp.175-176). This definition of citizen as consumer is brimming with global principles, in descending order: responsible participation, social awareness, responsible value deliberations and morally defensible decisions, awareness of human choices and consequences, understanding of world conditions, balancing self-interest with mutual interest and, lastly, respect for relationship of self relative to the world community. This is further evidence of the synergy between consumer education, global education and citizenship education.

Another global principle that is relevant to this paper is that people need to appreciate the rights and duties of people toward each other, especially across nations (West, 1990). From a consumer education viewpoint, this can easily be extrapolated to refer to the need to appreciate the links between consumer rights and human rights and consumer responsibilities and human responsibilities. Even more exciting are the links between consumer rights and human responsibilities and consumer responsibilities and human rights. The former two relationships were examined in an earlier paper (McGregor, 1999). Their summary will be followed by some initial thinking about the latter two relationships.

### **Consumer and Human Rights**

Consumers have seven recognizes rights in the marketplace (Consumers International [CI], 1999):

safety, information, choice, voice, redress, education, and a healthy environment. It is assumed that business will respect these rights and that government will enter the equation when this respect is denied. In 1948, the UN recognized a collection of human rights organized by six themes including the theme of civil and cultural rights, and economic, social and political rights. The former comprises, among other things, recognition under the law, movement within the country, public assembly, and ability to participate in government. The latter includes employment and working conditions, social security, standard of living and education, plus others (<http://www.un.org>).

There are inherent links between consumer rights and human rights. In fact, one cannot have consumer rights if human rights are not in place and enforced. To illustrate, one cannot enjoy the consumer right to education if the human rights of literacy, schools and basic education are not available. A consumer cannot have the right to information, if she is illiterate and cannot read the product or service information. A consumer cannot have the right to choice (price, availability and quality) if their human rights of adequate income and steady employment not are assured. Consumers cannot exercise their right to having a voice in the policy process if they cannot vote, cannot meet in groups in public or are not allowed to participate in government (all human rights) (McGregor, 1999).

### **Consumer and Human Responsibilities**

The Interaction Council (1997) proposes a collection of five basic responsibilities that humans should respect including: non-violence and respect for life, justice and solidarity, truthfulness and tolerance, mutual respect and partnerships, and treat everyone in a humane way. CI (1999) recognizes five consumer responsibilities: strive for social concern, for solidarity, to be critically aware, to take action and be involved, and to exercise environmental awareness.

The five consumer responsibilities recognized by CI inherently reflect the human responsibilities suggested by the Interaction Council. McGregor (1999) compares the responsibility to exercise social concern while making consumption decisions against the collection of human responsibilities. In brief, social concern deals with being aware of the impact of one's consumption decisions on other citizens.

Consumers would moderate their consumption decisions if they were concerned with the Golden rule; if they were to hold all marketplace players accountable; if they were to respect justice, solidarity, diversity, other's well-being, standard of living and working conditions.

This paper takes McGregor's (1999) initial discussion further by relating the other four consumer responsibilities to the collection of human responsibilities tendered by the Interaction Council (1997). First, the consumer responsibility to exercise environmental awareness parallels the general human responsibilities to act in a non-violent way and respect life, including ecological protection, and to exercise justice and solidarity which includes sustainability and respect for intra and inter-generational ecological imperatives. Second, consumers have the responsibility to organize themselves and to develop collective strength and influence so they can promote and protect their interests, referred to by CI (1999) as solidarity. The Interaction Council also suggests solidarity as a human responsibility and meant by this honesty, integrity, fairness and to strive to meet one's potential while not abusing power and wealth. Third, consumers have the responsibility to be critically aware of, and to question, their choices in the marketplace. This consumption responsibility does not have a direct parallel human responsibility but it can be equated to the human responsibility of mutual respect and partnerships relating to caring for other's well-being, welfare and safety, augmented by critically aware consumption decisions. Finally, a responsible consumer will take action and get involved, be assertive rather than passive, and make a concerted effort to make their voice heard. Two parallel human responsibilities could be to act in peaceful ways while making one's voice heard, respecting privacy and confidentiality, being honest, and holding business, government, the media and other consumers to this high standard.

### **Consumer Responsibilities and Human Rights**

Let us now examine the links between consumer responsibilities and their impact on human rights in the global village followed by an attempt to relate consumer rights in the marketplace and their impact on human responsibilities in the global village. As global citizens, consumers have to realize that their actions in the marketplace will impact the rights of citizens in other parts of the world. If a consumer acts

responsibly (strives for social concern, solidarity, to be critically aware, to take action and be involved and to exercise environmental awareness), they cannot help but foster the improvement of human rights in other countries. Being aware of the impact of one's consumption decisions on other citizens (social concern) and the environment will mean that decisions to consume a good or service will be made using a different set of choice criteria including the impact on another's standard of living, working conditions, gender relations, moral and material interests and intellectual property and their social security (health, education and social welfare), all human rights (Lusby, 1990; McGregor, 1999; Nolen & Stover, 1993). Consuming from a critically aware perspective means questioning the price of a good or service (CI, 1999). If one is concerned with the link between human rights and responsible consumption, more than price has to be questioned! As noted in the previous sentence, choice criteria has to be expanded considerably to also include: trade relations, country of origin, power relations between state, citizens, industry and international bodies, to name the most salient. Also, a responsible consumer is supposed to work with other consumers (solidarity) and take assertive action to lobby for the consumer interest and make the consumer voice heard by government and business. If these organized consumers spoke on behalf of the rights of citizens in other countries affected by off site consumption, they could have an impact on the human rights of other citizens perhaps on family well-being and standard of living, working conditions and labor laws, education, access to education, and the right to organize.

### **Consumer Rights and Human Responsibilities**

This final section will provide a sketchy beginning of examining the link between consumer rights in the marketplace and human responsibilities in the global village. As noted, consumers have seven recognized rights in the marketplace (CI, 1999): safety, information, choice, voice, redress, education, and a healthy environment. Also, the Interaction Council (1997) proposes a collection of five basic responsibilities that humans should respect including: non-violence and respect for life, justice and solidarity, truthfulness and tolerance, mutual respect and partnerships, and treat everyone in a humane way. If people act responsibly as citizens will they, by association, find respect for their role as consumer? Or... if people expect rights in their role as consumer, will they tend to act any less responsibly as a citizen? This idea is still underdeveloped in my

mind, hence the questions instead of answers. But consider this... will the fact that consumers expect to have their rights respected in the marketplace desensitize them to their responsibilities as humans in the global village? To illustrate, will the right to choice and a variety of products lead to the expectation that this choice be there regardless of the impact on the lives of those living elsewhere, those not yet born or on the environment?

### Conclusion

Should consumer educators and family resource management educators be shifting the focus from rights to responsibilities and will this shift lead to more responsible citizens in their consumer roles? I think the answer is yes. This shift involves integrating aspects of consumer education, citizenship education, and global education, at the very least. This discussion also implies that human rights education also become part of the equation. The principles inherent in a global perspective provide a solid foundation from which to integrate consumer education and citizenship education. All three perspectives provide a powerful, long reaching approach to educating citizens into their consumer and resource management roles. The change in language, from “educating people to be consumers” to “educating citizens into their consumption role” reflects the explicit shift to seeing a person as citizen first and a consumer second. This change is necessary if we are to prepare the next generation of citizens to be caring and responsible consumers and managers of the earth’s and human resources which comprise the human, global community.

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