

# THE ROLE OF SCHOOL IN DEVELOPING SMART CONSUMERS' CHARACTERISTICS THROUGH HABITUTATION

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**Abstract.** Students' consumption pattern influences both themselves and environment. This article reflects an education that becomes a mean in constructing characteristics. One of the characteristics is smart consumers, that is consumers who are healthy and enviromentally friendly (eco-friendly). A healthy consumer is someone who is smart in choosing food for himself and the eco-friendly consumer is someone who is concerned about the impact of consumption on the environment. These characteristics can be used as a foundation in behaving and supporting sustainable life. Sustainable development is an attitude in meeting the needs of the present without reducing the ability of future generations to meet their needs. The method used in this paper is the literature study. Through habituation started from the school environment, it is expected that smart consumer characteristics can be realized so that the expected Indonesian people can be realized in accordance with the predetermined educational goals.

**Keywords:** Smart Consumer, Character, Sustainable Consumers

## I. INTRODUCTION

One of the characteristics as a living creature is that everyday human cannot be separated from using goods and services to meet their needs. Therefore, being a consumer becomes the branding of every human being and human has unlimited needs. The consumption pattern of each period continues to experience development or change in line with the development of the era itself. However, these developments tend to be in the wrong direction.

Indonesia is the fourth largest country in the world after China, India and America. Based on data taken from Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), the population of Indonesia in 2010 reached 237,641,326 inhabitants, while according to the CIA World Factbook 2013 population of Indonesia reached 251,160,124 people or 3.5% of the World Population. With such a high population, Indonesia becomes one of the world potential market country, because the Indonesian people tend to be consumptive.

Consumptive here is defined as buying or using something not because of the need but to fulfill desire. So it is not something suprising to see a new product to be sold or marketed successfully in Indonesia.

The problem that arises at this time is that the environmental damage continues to increase; one of the causes is the consumption style that tends to be environmentally unfriendly. Environmental damage occurs in quality and quantity. In quality, the kind of damage appears in some problems such as decreasing quality of water in various areas, air pollution, and soil pollution. As in quantity, the occurrence of forest destruction that mostly due to humans, among others, logging and shifting land for agriculture or plantation which would certainly endanger the human itself as causing floods and landslides.

In contrast to the trend of the world where consumers are more likely to have environmental awareness, so that implicate the products they buy or their consumption, Indonesia has not yet been so. As presented by



Hadi Irawan, Chairman of Frontier Consulting Group, one of Indonesian consumer characteristics is that they have a low awareness attitude toward the environment.

Besides having a low awareness of the environment, Indonesian consumers tend not to be a smart consumer for themselves, including in elementary school environment. Lifestyle is one of the aspects that affect less intelligently in consuming goods.

The lack of intelligence in choosing the goods can lead to negative things. If we see news in electronics or printed media, many of elementary school children experience food poisoning due to eating unhealthy foods. As I quoted from [tribunnews.com](http://tribunnews.com), as many as 21 students were rushed to health centers due to food poisoning. In the news portal, one of the parents of the victim stated that her child came home feeling nauseous and dizzy after school, then vomited and followed by defecation.

Some foods sold to elementary school children tend to be cheap with less health and hygiene. Among these foods are fast foods with preservatives, food or beverages with striking colors and excessive sugar and foods that have passed the expire date which of course can endanger health.

This is in line with the results of research conducted by YLKI stating that there are still many food snacks that use chemicals prohibited for food. The cause is irresponsible business actors wanting only profits in an easy way, as well as ease of obtaining various hazardous chemicals.

From the above description, it can be concluded that the problems experienced by humans as consumers are deficiency in environmental awareness and intelligence in selecting healthy food. One of the causes of this to happen is lack of character education, as it is rare in schools to familiarize students to practice

healthy choosing, because at this time education tends to emphasize only the intellectual.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Smart consumer referred to in this paper is a healthy and eco-friendly consumer. Human in his daily life consumes in order to meet the needs of his life. Consumption is generally defined as the activity of using or spending goods and services. While the term consumer can be found in Law no. 8 of 1999 on Consumer Protection that defines that consumer is any user of goods and / or services available in the community, whether for self-interest, family, other people, or other living things and not for trading.

Healthy living is everyone's dream. Health can be achieved when one's lifestyle is healthy. Selective picking needs to be possessed by students; the skill of determining the food to be consumed based on several criteria.

Healthy is smart; smart in determining foods to be consumed and in a good way. Here are some guides by Zahir (2011) to be a healthy consumer:

1. Do not get used to eating snacks. Get used to have breakfast before leaving for school
2. Read the information on the packaging of processed food products.
3. Wash fruits and vegetables before used.
4. Choose seasonal local fruit to avoid excessive chemical exposure.

In addition to students expected to be a healthy consumer, students need to be familiarized into environmentally friendly consumers or sustainable consumers (Sustainable Consumption). According to Fien et.al (2008) Sustainable Consumption is identified as:

1. Satisfying basic human needs (not the desire for 'wants' and luxuries)
2. Prioritizing quality-of-life concerns over material standards of living



3. Minimizing resource use, waste and pollution
4. Taking a life-cycle perspective in consumer decision-making, and
5. Acting with concern for future generations.

Based on the above definition, there are five activities that reflect as a sustainable consumption.

The first that humans have many desires and needs amid the tools of satisfying the limited needs. Therefore, it is necessary to teach students to use or buy something based on needs rather than desires. Secondly, prioritizing quality of life by considering the materials used to be in a good standard or environmentally friendly. Third, minimizing the use of natural resources (non-renewable), reduce waste-generating things and pollution. Fourth, instilling a life-cycle perspective in making decisions as a consumer. Activities undertaken will have an impact on the proceeding life. The latter is to consume by not only pay attention to themselves but also to the attention of future generations.

The Ministry Of The Environment Norwegia 1994 (Fien et.al. 2008) defined Sustainable Consumption *as*:

“... the use of services and related products which respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life while minimising the use of natural resources and toxic materials as well as emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle of the service or product so as not to jeopardise the needs of future generations”

The issue of changing consumption patterns has been widely discussed internationally. Like Earth Charter from Unisco in 2007; among the Earth Charter principles are:

1. Adopt patterns of production, consumption, and reproduction that safeguard Earth’s regenerative capacities, human rights, and community well-being (principle no 7);
2. Integrate into formal education and life-long learning the knowledge, values, and skills

needed for a sustainable way of life (principle no 14).

Based on these principles, the importance of integrating the curriculum in the daily life of the child begins with knowledge, skill and attitude that implies a sustainable way of life. Developing student empathy is another teacher’s job. Not only empathy towards fellow human beings but to all aspects of life as mentioned by Goleman et al. (2012: 133) that empathy is for all form of life.

Students need to be familiarized early to be a healthy consumer and environmentally friendly because it is a mandate of the Act. Based on Law No. 20 of 2003 of National Education System, the goal of national education is to develop the potential of learners to become human beings who believe and pious to God Almighty, have a noble character, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become citizens of a democratic and responsible. The objective is an ideal formula describing the quality of Indonesian society. As for the implications, teachers need to design a learning experience that builds the value and character of the students that refers to the educational goals as a guide.

The purpose of education mentioned above is fully loaded with characters. The characters explained in the book of Pengembangan Pendidikan Budaya Dan Karakter Bangsa (2010: 3) is character, morality, or personality formed from the internalization of various virtues that are believed and used as a basis for the worldview, think, behave and act. Among the characters that need to be developed are:

1. Caring for the environment, i.e. attitudes and actions in that one always seeks to prevent damage to the surrounding natural environment, and develop efforts to repair the already existing natural damage;
2. Responsibility, i.e. the attitude and behavior of a person to carry out his duties and



obligations, which he should do, to oneself, society, environment (nature, social and culture), state and God Almighty.

In relation to the curriculum of 2013, character development is facilitated in Core Competencies (KI) 1 and 2. Implementation is directly through Religion and Civics subjects. As for other subjects, it is imperative to develop values and character indirectly. The main purpose is to foster student behavior in the context of character building. As for efforts used to improve and foster an expected attitude in accordance with KI-2, teachers should provide continuous habituation and coaching both in learning and outside learning. At the elementary level of competence, it is expected to have honest, disciplined, responsible, polite, caring, and confident behavior in interacting with family, friends, and teachers.

Based on the above material exposure, I think there is a very close association of current student consumption patterns, the concept of sustainability with the legal basis of education in Indonesia. For more details, the linkage is as follows :

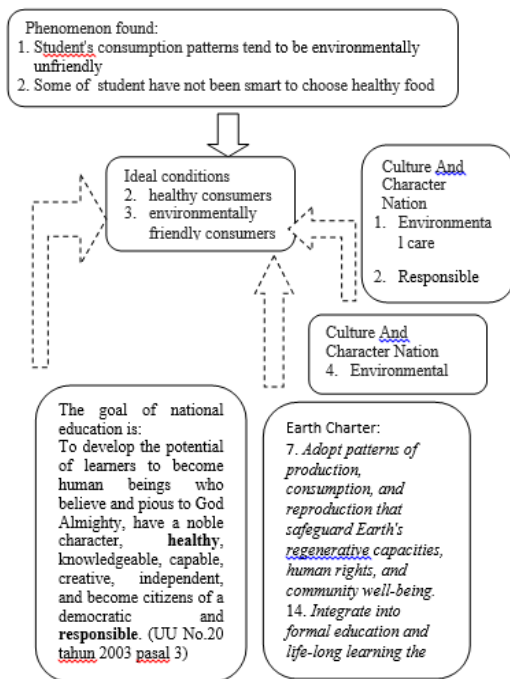


Figure 1 the concept of sustainability with the legal basis of education in Indonesia

Based on the exposure of smart consumers, the efforts that can be done by teachers through habituation are:

1. Reminding students to look at expiration dates as well as halal labels when buying a food (for Muslims);
2. Asking students to bring their own tumbler;
3. Minimalizing the use of plastic;
4. Walking to a near destination;
5. Using masks when going outside;
6. Turning off lamps when not in use;
7. Using both sides of paper when writing

Previous research has been conducted by Supriatna under the title of Developing Green Behavior trough Eco-pedagogy in social studies learning in elementary school in Bandung, Indonesia. The results of this study shown through eco-pedagogy approach in which it can increase of students' green behaviour, such us: (1) putting trash into trash can, (2) separating organic and anorganic waste, (3) reducing the usage of environmentally-unfriendly products, and (4) using public vehicles rather than privat vehicles.

It is expected that through continuous habituation, students can become smart consumers because the pattern of consumption or lifestyle will affect the health of students and affect the environment.

### III. CONCLUSION

Education has two main goals, namely to help students to be smart and excellent. Therefore, building the knowledge and character of students is the responsibility of educators. One character of students that need to be developed is a smart consumer in which becoming a healthy consumer for himself and consumers who are friendly to the environment. Smart consumers are in line with the goals of national education, cultural education and nation character, and earth charter principles. The development of these characters can be achieved, among others, by the habituation given to students starting from the school environment.

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