Associate Professor Donna Pendergast d.pendergast@griffith.edu.au Jean Pollock Memorial Lecture presented at the Home Economics Victoria World Home Economics Day Celebration, 18 March 2010, Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Abstract

Now that the centennial celebrations are over home economics – more than any time in its rocky history – is at a cross roads. The current times of the knowledge economy with unprecedented societal change, innovation and a socially aware community demanding sustainability, ethical and socially just policy and practice, is both opportunistic and threatening to the profession. We cannot afford to bask in the glory of having survived 100 years as a profession. This presentation will offer ideas for thinking about possible futures for home economics

World Home Economics Day

World Home Economics Day is a United Nations designated international day initiated by the International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE) and celebrated each year on 21 March by home economists around the globe. The goal of this day is to promote the aims and purposes of home economics. IFHE was established in 1908 in Switzerland and is the only global organisation for the profession. Its mission is to provide an international forum for home economists to develop and express concerns for individuals, families and households at the United Nations and among other international non-governmental organisations whose interests parallel those of home economics. IFHE is an INGO with consultative status with the United Nations (ECOSOC, FAO, UNESCO, UNICEF) and the Council of Europe. IFHE works in such areas as education, health and global development and holds a World Congress every four vears in a different city of the world. In July 2008 the centenary of IFHE was

celebrated in Lucerne, Switzerland at the 21st IFHE World Congress. In 2012 Home Economics Victoria will host the next World Congress in Melbourne. It will be the first of the *next one hundred* years.

Groundhog Day

On 21 March 2000 I was invited by the Victorian Home Economics and Textiles Teachers Association (VHETTA), Larnook Ex-students Association and the HEIA (Victoria) to present the address at the World Home Economics Day celebrations held at the Oueen Victoria Women's Centre in Melbourne. The title of my speech was The future of home economics. I re-read my speech preparing for the 2010 speech with great curiosity - perhaps this was a chance for a Groundhog Day type of experience. A reminder that Groundhog Day is the name of a now famous 1993 comedy film about a TV weatherman covering the annual Groundhog Day event, who finds himself repeating the same day over and over again. After indulging in hedonism and numerous suicide attempts, he begins to reexamine his life and priorities. Perhaps this is a chance for a Groundhog Day type of opportunity for myself and for the home economics profession. Can I improve on what I did ten years ago? Do I want to change the events that have occurred over the last ten years or would I repeat it precisely? So, I find myself a decade later at a similar place, with a similar topic. Ten years ago I asked the following questions:

... what of our future? Will home economics have a future? If so, what? (Pendergast 2000)

At that time, I spoke of the past and then told a tale of the future – I shared

a scenario I had constructed about a possible future. It began like this:

It is the year 2020. Home economics though some call it other names – is the core and central unit of curriculum for all primary and secondary school students. Home economics was identified as the most crucial element of the curriculum in 2010, after influential members of the profession lobbied decision makers and argued the importance of the subject for empowering individuals and families to optimise their living and life skills. The subject was reintroduced after it had been abolished in 2009. The reason for its reintroduction in 2015 was a global tragedy (Pendergast 2000).

In my story the reasons for the demise of home economics were connected to the loss of teachers with the expertise to teach it, a refocusing of the home economics curriculum towards vocational outcomes (hospitality), and a change in the general focus of the curriculum towards generic outcomes. The global tragedy that prompted the reintroduction of home economics was a complex tale about food globalisation trends (McPendy's); the use of monkeys to replace food preparation employees; the loss of food and consumer skills; the control of the food supply by large organisations with massive global buying power. This led to loss of individual food control, loss of food preparation skills, and high unemployment. At the time I shared this scenario I also revealed that the core concepts underpinning my scenario were derived from some of the local and global trends at that time, so were not implausible fantasies but a possible future.



What has happened since the year 2000?

Plenty! It's a rare event to celebrate a milestone like a century, and home economics as a profession celebrated the centennial of the establishment of IFHE at the World Congress in 2008. This was followed up by the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS) centenary in 2009. Given these milestones that trumpet the longevity of the profession, it is timely to reflect on what could be regarded as one of the defining and enduring impacts on the establishment, continued development and the future of the field. As an aside, one hundred years is regarded as a kind of safety level in a profession's history, suggesting it has achieved status that can be benchmarked against other professions.

Elsewhere, I have described contemporary home economics as being at a 'convergent moment' (Pendergast 2006, 2009), a time of opportunity where several key societal factors are occurring simultaneously. I argue that these factors serve to provide a moment of alignment of potentially facilitating factors that, when taken together, provide an unprecedented opportunity to re-vision our profession. These convergent factors can be seen as a catalyst for major reform, and include:

- the past century of invention, development and changes in roles for men and women
- consumption and globalisation patterns

- generational characteristics and the emergence of the Y-generation 'digital natives'
- features of 'New times' and the need to be 'expert novices' (good at learning new things)
- significant changes in individual and family structures impacting globally on demographic patterns.

Importantly, the home economics profession has now entered its sixth generation. It is characterised by a multigenerational cohort of professionals with the greatest number of members and the most leadership roles held by baby boomers, that is, people born between 1943 and 1960 (Howe and Strauss 2000). Each generation brings to the field predictable traits, values and beliefs, along with skills, attributes, capacities and preferred modus operandi directly reflecting their generational location (see Pendergast 2009).

At a global level, there has been important progress in the conceptual development of the profession, leading to the development of the IFHE position statement - Home economics in the 21st century (IFHE 2008). The position statement is a two-page document produced through a global collaborative process with members of IFHE and more widely of the home economics profession (see Pendergast 2008). It is an attempt to locate the profession in the contemporary context by serving as a platform, looking ahead to viable and progressive visions of home economics for the 21st century and beyond. It is expected to be used to provide defensible arguments for individuals and professional groups requiring such support and is the product of extensive global consultation with members

of IFHE and the home economics profession (the statement is available from www.ifhe.org.

As I did in 2000, I am now going to turn to the future and propositions that currently exist about its likely shape, so that it is possible to stride into the next 100 years with some degree of informed confidence as a profession. To do that, I will call upon the futurists to outline the megatrends affecting humankind, in the first instance in the next two decades, and later in this speech, for the next century.

What do the futurists say? Megatrends

There are many futurists who make predications and speculate about the future. In fact there is a whole field of study that thrives on predicting future trends and advising organisations, professions, businesses, countries, individuals – almost everyone and anyone - how they might survive and thrive in the context offered by alternative futures. One such futurist group is the Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies. I am going to draw from the future megatrend predictions made by this institute as the basis for this next section of my speech. Here I will explore the megatrends and make connections with the home economics profession, particularly thinking about the implications for the profession.

The idea of mega (great) trends (move in a direction) is in fact a megatrend in itself, that is, the idea of having great moves in a direction is a trend we are likely to see more of. Theorists generally define megatrends as the great forces in societal development that will very likely affect the future in all areas over the next 10–20 years.



Many companies and organisations use megatrends in their strategic work, and these trends are expected to affect all areas – state, market and civil society – both at the time of their emergence and for many years subsequently, as they change capabilities and impact on human behaviour.

Megatrends are our current knowledge about the probable future, and hence are regarded as being predictable.

Megatrends are the forces that define our present and future worlds, and the interaction between them is as important as each individual megatrend. That is why futures researchers, companies and others use megatrends when they develop and work with scenarios.

Even though megatrends say something about what we know about the future, it is not certain how society, companies or any of us will react to these forces. The future is never a given, and any one of us can affect or create the future. Futures researchers always work with three types of futures: the predictable, the possible, and the preferred. Megatrends say something about the predictable future, but there are other possible futures. Every megatrend can be set aside or can suddenly and fundamentally change direction. Wildcards - events that are unlikely, but that would have enormous consequences – can slow a megatrend's development or create counter-forces. For example, the events of September 11, 2001 temporarily stopped corporate growth and slowed some aspects of globalisation.

Megatrends can be used as a methodology to strategically look to the future. This moves into the applied sphere of futures work known as future

proofing, one of the key strategies for the future highlighted in the IFHE position statement.

Ten megatrends toward 2020

Megatrend 1 - Ageing

The world's population is ageing. It is happening because we live longer and there is a decline in birth rates. This means there will be relatively more elderly people than youths in the next decades. This ageing megatrend applies particularly to developed regions of the world, and has great significance for society, economics, corporations, and individuals. Japan and Italy have been identified as two of the oldest populations in the world, so will lead the ageing megatrend. A federal government report released in Australia points to some of the implications of this megatrend as follows.

Over the next 40 years, a number of developed countries are expected to experience long-run population decline associated with low fertility levels. Europe's total population is projected to fall by over 40 million by 2050, driven by substantial falls in the populations of Russia and Germany. Higher spending on public health care, pensions and other social services caused by population ageing is resulting in rising fiscal pressures for governments across the OECD (Australian Government 2010).

Most OECD countries have the issue of an ageing population at the top of their political agendas, and health care, pension systems and care for the elderly have been prioritised in many countries in recent years. More elderly outside the labour market

means reduced tax revenues and higher (public) expenses.

The elderly of the future are expected to get a great deal of attention because many of them are financially well off. Today's elderly are in better health and more affluent than the elderly of the past. As a result, age has taken on a different meaning, and many elderly have a completely different self-image than earlier generations. The elderly in the western world want an active retirement with travel, experiences or other forms of self-realisation.

The greatest consequences of ageing will be felt on the labour market after 2010, when the number of people of working age will fall. The labour market will be a seller's market, and youth will be in great demand. This may prompt bottle-neck problems, upward pressure on salaries, greater international competition and, in the end, poorer competitiveness for OECD countries. The reaction can be more off-shoring and outsourcing and a different perception of immigration. In the immaterial and creative economy of the future, more of the especially well-educated elderly may remain active in business life longer, but that requires companies and organisations to start considering new forms of employment to create the optimal conditions for this group.

Megatrend 2 – Globalisation

Globalisation is regarded broadly as any range of processes, innovations and changes that increase the interconnectedness of the world. Globalisation of the economy is bound to the expansion of new communications technologies, such as the internet, creating a global village

where the traditional boundaries of time and geographic space have been negated. It is not a new phenomenon, but it will mean something different in the future.

Globalisation makes us more alike across the world, but it also makes us more aware of local differences. When we look at what is most globalised today - markets and companies the trend is towards regionalisation. However, in the near future we will far more clearly than today see and experience what makes us alike - more globally oriented - and what makes us more different or locally anchored.

The global development leads to increased liberalisation and expanded trade in most countries and regions. However, it does not seem likely that the world will be dominated by common political and ethical values in the near future. A probable future can therefore be 'a world of nations and regions' with global free trade but only deeper integration at regional levels. Citizens and consumers also seem to be crossculturally different in their behaviour and their preferences for products. A growing number of multinational companies have therefore begun to adapt their products and marketing to the individual markets.

Megatrend 3 – Technological development

Our use of technology is what differentiates us from other animals. We are the only creatures who construct and develop tools that make life more pleasant for us. Since the start of the industrial age, technological development has accelerated, so changes come faster and in more areas. The most important technological

development areas in the next decades are information technology, biotechnology, nanotechnology and

Information technology has created enormous changes in recent decades: personal computers, the internet, mobile telephones, industrial robots, iPods, and much more. In 2020, computers will be about 200 times faster than today's computers, and will have memories 1000 times as large. Computers and robots will take on increasingly complex assignments, and the internet will be a breeding ground for completely new, virtual industries.

In recent years we have seen great progress in biotechnology with the mapping of the human genome, cloning of mammals, and genetic modification of plants and animals. Research in biotechnology opens the door to new, future treatments in the form of gene therapy and transplantation of cloned organs. Genetically modified plants and animals (GMO) may potentially relieve world hunger. However, at the same time, biotechnology opens ethical questions: is it acceptable to manipulate life? Is GMO just another way for the west to exploit the Third World? Will biotechnology prompt unforeseen biological catastrophes?

Nanotechnology is a general term for technology with structures on a nanometer scale (one billionth of a metre). Researchers develop nanomaterials with many fantastic characteristics such as extreme strength, special electric properties and extremely low friction. Nanoelectronics may, in a few years, replace microelectronics. A little further into the future are nanomachines: microscopic robots that, for example, swim around

in our veins removing cancer and plaque.

One of the great challenges of the 21st century will still be finding energy for both the new and the old industrial countries. Oil will run out eventually, so we must find alternatives. There is much research in sustainable energy from wind, the sun, and the earth's warmth and in alternative fuels such as hydrogen and biofuel. The following decades will also offer progress in atomic energy, both the traditional fission energy and the controversial fusion power that creates energy the same way the sun does.

Megatrend 4 - Prosperity

Prosperity is a megatrend because the majority of the population of OECD countries and large groups in formerly developing countries are now growing more prosperous. Between 2 per cent and 4 per cent growth is assumed in the western world in coming years, and in some regions - especially North America, Latin America, and Asia – the growth rate will likely reach 10-15 per cent. It is doubtful that Africa and the Middle East will enjoy such growth and increase in prosperity because fertility rates are expected to remain high in these regions, among other factors. Moreover, prognoses indicate the Russian middle class will grow from 50 to 85 per cent in the next 10 years, the Chinese from 5 to 40 per cent and the Brazilian from 25 to 50 per cent.

Gross National Product (GNP) is usually used to measure and compare the wealth of nations. The US and EU are, measured by GNP, far richer than other parts of the world, but that can change in step with the high economic growth



rates and increasing employment in many developing countries.

The economic growth will cause a change in the demand for new types of products, with a new business structure as a result. In short, most countries are going through a structural social and economic change in the transition from agricultural and/or industrial society to a knowledge society. When we grow richer, new needs arise and we consume more in the form of intangible products such as entertainment, experiences, services, savings and investment. More prosperity changes our consumption of traditional tangible products such as food, because affluent consumers focus on aspects of food such as health, quality, reliability, origin, animal welfare, ethics etc.

More prosperity and more consumption will change the relationships between costs, prices and profit. The relationship that formerly existed between consumer prices and production costs, based on resource contributions such as labour and capital, is no longer present. Much of the value of the tangible products of the future is not in production costs but in the knowledge behind the product: product development, marketing, distribution, etc. That also means that there will be much greater pressure on companies and individuals to be change oriented, creative and innovative.

Megatrend 5 – Individualisation

Individualisation is the shift from more collectivist societal norms to the person. It seems to be counter to globalisation, but in fact both work together. Individualisation of life paths refers to the never before experienced lack of clear guidelines about future

roles, the difficulties associated with long-term decision making where careers and jobs have not yet been created. This ambiguity challenges what have been relatively predictable 'social scripts' for adolescents of times past. The individualistic approach has made branding one of the key figures in modern sales and marketing.

Individualisation will be significant for the lives of the individual – and in private relations between people. As customers, people are increasingly going to expect individual and unique products. Secondly, companies are going to feel the increasing employee turnover more. The labor force of the future can handle more changes than that of the present. Thirdly, individualisation will be felt as an employee demand for individual attention.

Megatrend 6 – Commercialisation

Commercialisation is the meeting of increasingly more human needs on the private market through trade that can be both supply and demand driven. Commercialisation is closely linked to other megatrends such as globalisation, prosperity, individualisation and digitalisation. Digitalisation has made it much easier to reach consumers globally, and the internet promotes commercialisation by making it both cheaper and faster for companies to market to the global market. Globalisation has great influence on commercialisation because of increased international trade, greater investment and more travel. Prosperity and individualisation also accelerate commercialisation because consumers have more money and at the same time

demand individually tailored products and services.

Commercialisation will probably increase in the future, and the consequences will range from even more prosperity to specialisation in business and the labour market. Specialisation means that companies deliver more differentiated products and services while employees work more with product development, innovation, marketing and sales. This will in turn speed up the transition to the creative knowledge economy.

Commercialisation gives the individual more choices, increases competitive pressure on many companies and organisations, and thereby creates a growing market for new products. More competition forces businesses to further specialisation and effectiveness. Some companies will concentrate on large-scale operations, centralisation and standardisation. Others will do the opposite, concentrating on decentralisation, flexibility, niche production, marketing and customer service.

Megatrend 7 – Health and environment

Today, fitness has become wellness, and so has gained a more spiritual and personality-optimising character. New spa baths, treatment resorts, and other offerings are constantly appearing on the market. The health and environment megatrend will have even greater significance in the coming years. There will come more age-related illnesses, more lifestyle illnesses such as obesity and stress, and more mental illness. Health changes linked to the physical environment include men's sperm quality falling greatly over the last ten

years, more children suffering from allergy, and smoking being banned in more and more places. There will be focus on clean drinking water – even in the countries that until now have not had problems drinking water from the tap. The Asian Development Bank calculates that a pandemic could create a period with low growth in which global trade would fall by 14 per cent. The health megatrend is, therefore, of great significance for the world economy.

The individual household uses more and more money on environment and health, and the number of new companies in health care has quadrupled in Denmark in just five years. The modern person buys vitamins, practices yoga and eats healthfully. In step with the individualisation trend, more are interested in the body, beauty care and wellness, and more are aware of the connection between health and environment.

For companies, it will also be more important to take into account employee health. Many already work to improve employee morale, loyalty and productivity through meal programs, fitness centres, etc.

Megatrend 8 – Acceleration

The industrial revolution was the starting signal for increased acceleration, which has only grown since then. Today, for example, there is more knowledge for the individual to consider, more to produce and consume, more to throw out, more to communicate, more to transport, and many more people to interact with. The pace of change is the number of changes in society per unit of time, and there are no absolute numbers for it. But that many people say there are

more and more changes is sign enough of it.

Change touches us on many levels, and we change job, partners, friends, interests, home, knowledge, news and ideas faster than before. Information is not just more accessible today – the entry of new products on the market goes faster and faster. A single example is that it took 13 years before 30 million video cassettes were on the market, but just eight years for the same number of CDs and only five years for 30 million DVDs. Modern people have to make more daily choices than ever before, and our curiosity and our aspirations for development, new knowledge and improvements will be forces that will increase the pace of change in the future. So will new technologies such as nanotechnology and biotechnology.

The pace of change already makes great demands on the ability of companies and organisations to reorganise. And that is not all: if you want to protect your competitive power, it is not enough to be change ready – you must be change-oriented so that you do not make do with subsequently and passively adjusting to the changes that happen in your world.

Megatrend 9 – Network organising

To enter a network is a natural part of being human. Central to all networks is communication, because communication is the reason we have a society, a culture, an identity and an economy. Network organising is a megatrend because network has become a central term that permeates our way of thinking. Cheaper transport, better infrastructures, the internet, mobile telephony and increasing

prosperity have revolutionised the opportunities for communication and network organising. This megatrend is, in other words, closely connected to the development in several other megatrends, not least digitalisation, globalisation, and individualisation, but also prosperity and commercialisation.

A network's value increases exponentially with its number of members. Changes in a network society do not happen linearly as they do in an industrial society. That means that many changes that took decades in the past now happen significantly faster. An example: just two years after the World Wide Web was launched in 1992, 10 million users were on it, while it took the telephone four decades to attract the same number of users. Network organising greatly affects technological, societal, and economic development, and we have probably seen only the beginning. The rapid development potential in the network society means, on the one hand, that companies can expand incredibly fast, as happened with Microsoft, but, on the other hand, companies in all industries can risk outcompeting each other in a very short time. This applies even to Microsoft, which, even though 90 per cent of computers use its programs, is losing share to the free operating system Linux.

In 2009 Facebook announced that 250 million people use the social networking tool. This is an amazing statistic given that it was only created in 2004!

Networks drive out hierarchies and create many new open and decentralised social structures. This applies to private life – especially for the younger generation – to the labour market, and business life.



Medicon Valley in the Øresundregion is an example of one of Europe's largest clusters of biotechnology companies. Network organising also promotes urbanisation, because urban regions with good infrastructure, good development possibilities, and a rich research environment attract the creative class. Network organising challenges our entire way of thinking and traditional institutions such as the nation-state, the church, culture and language because people enter other and new networks.

Google is an example of a company where the network principle has shown itself to be a good business ideology. The Google search engine's strength is, in fact, that it lists search results according to how centrally a website is in the network – that is, according to how interesting users believe it is.

Megatrend 10 – Urbanisation

Forty-eight per cent of the world's 6.5 billion people live in urban areas. The United Nations predicts that the share of the world population living in urban areas will rise to 53.6 per cent in 2030, or about 3.9 billion people. While the average annual rate of change in urbanisation towards 2030 is predicted to be only 0.5 per cent in more developed regions, it is predicted to be 2.3 per cent in less developed regions, primarily in Asia and Africa.

Large-scale migration from region to region and countryside to urban areas continues in both Asia and the Middle East. Rapid urbanisation poses a fundamental challenge to the development of adequate infrastructure and liveable housing, and the maintenance of healthy environments. It also puts stress on traditional ways

of living, family structure and cultural values – creating a growing potential for social and political unrest.

Nevertheless, there are also reasons for optimism. The historic association between economic development and urbanisation is well established. Cities are crucial environments and institutional assemblages for economic growth. Current research indicates that even in less developed countries cities experience lower rates of natural population increase than rural areas. average household income is higher, and education levels are well above those in rural areas. Thus, cities can also be seen as places of opportunity in which the major needs are effective management and provision of services, creation of economic opportunity, and the provision of safe and healthy environments.

The next 100 years?

To revise, the ten megatrends are: ageing; globalisation; technological development; prosperity; individualisation; commercialisation; health and environment; acceleration; network organising; urbanisation. So what does that mean our world might look like in the coming decades, in the next one hundred years?

In his book, *The next 100 years:* A forecast for the 21st century, George Friedman reflects on historical and geopolitical patterns dating back hundreds of years to predict what the next 100 years hold. Among his predictions are the following:

 The US-jihadist war will conclude, replaced with a second full-blown cold war with Russia

- China will undergo a major extended internal crisis, and Mexico will emerge as an important world power
- A new global war will unfold toward the middle of the century between the United States and an unexpected coalition from eastern Europe, Eurasia and the Far East
- Technology will focus on space, both for major military uses and for a dramatic new energy source that will have radical environmental implications
- The United States will experience a Golden Age in the second half of the century (Friedman, 2009).

These rather more bold predictions about the future are also probable futures for us. So where in this story of the future does home economics as a profession sit? Is there a role? Is there a future?

Future-proofing the profession

The final section of the IFHE position statement – Home economics in the 21st century (IFHE 2008) states the following objectives for the next decade:

The focus on the decade ahead is on future-proofing, which describes the elusive process of trying to anticipate future developments, so that action can be taken to minimise possible negative consequences, and to seize opportunities. Future proofing the home economics profession and the Federation is a challenging task but one which is necessary to ensure a sustainable vision both for the profession, and for individual members. The International Federation for Home Economics has commenced its future-proofing strategy by focusing on questions

of sustainability, advocacy and the active creation of preferred futures for home economics, relevant disciplinary fields, and the profession itself, while critically reflecting upon and being informed by its historical roots (IFHE 2008).

This is the platform upon which our future should be built. By way of commencing this work, the Think Tank committee is midway through a rebranding exercise, involving the reflection and forward visioning of home economics as a recognisable 'brand' into the future. Connecting with the core megatrends of individualisation, commercialisation, networking and others, this future making is a proactive way towards creating a preferred future for the profession. Within this mission, it is important to consider what home economics might be; and how we ensure the profession is a part of the future of humankind.

Clarity about what home economics is has been a challenge to the profession for one hundred years. We now have a unified position to work from.

Home economics is a field of study and a profession, situated in the human sciences that draws from a range of disciplines to achieve optimal and sustainable living for individuals, families and communities (IFHE 2008).

Furthermore, home economics can be clarified by four dimensions or areas of practice:

 as an academic discipline to educate new scholars, to conduct research and to create new knowledge and ways of thinking for professionals and for society

- as an arena for everyday living in households, families and communities for developing human growth potential and human necessities or basic needs to be met
- as a curriculum area that facilitates students to discover and further develop their own resources and capabilities to be used in their personal life, by directing their professional decisions and actions or preparing them for life
- as a societal arena to influence and develop policy to advocate for individuals, families and communities to achieve empowerment and wellbeing, to utilise transformative practices, and to facilitate sustainable futures.

We have a position about this. What we need to now progress to is to capturing the 21st century thinking that enables us to enact this vision for the profession. It is my argument that we can achieve this by adopting thinking such as that outlined in Howard Gardner's Five minds for the future (2008) and Sir Ken Robinson's The element: How finding your passion changes everything (2009).

If the profession of home economics is to survive and thrive, there must be a committed effort to adapt the incentives, the motivators, the leadership models and the overall culture of the profession to strategically target a preferred future. The profession is responsible for making its own future and must engage with the megatrends of society as a way forward.

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