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## **Media Literacy: Smart in Educating Society in Information Technology Era**

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### **Abstract**

Communication Media has been developed in the form of printed Media and electronic Media. This development is not only easy to communicate and receive information fast wherever and whenever we go but also cheap. Besides positive impacts, it has negative influence to children and teenagers growth and adults. In other word it brings great influence to people. That is why Media literacy is needed so people will be able to know what Media is. Media presents through a long process. What we see is not 100% true. There are politics, economics, culture etc in it. People have to know and understand Media. So, media literacy is so important to educate society when they access information in mass media. The program must be doing together, comprehensive from all element in society in structural and cultural way.

**Keywords:** *Media literacy; information; mass media; people*

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## **Background of Study**

This paper is not absolutely comes from writer, but it comes from many references and some experts. While, most of description about media problems based on writer's experience and observation during he was becoming postgraduate student of communication Science. The discussion of this paper will begin from background of study about the born of media literacy, its meaning, and media literacy. Education is the key of culture progress, education as medium to increase the quality of human resources. Therefore, education is the socialization process of culture value, it also can be used to indoctrinate ideology. Whatever the meaning of education, its position is really important for society, realize that the function as the cultural maintenance regulation in social system. However, along with development of period, education gets serious challenge, when society transformation into media society who life in information era.

In this era, media appear as the forth education central in education space absolutely, which before just be filled by family central, school, and society. The challenge comes from mass media domination in public life, when its position change the role of education central, it is supposed had served hidden curriculum – the hidden curriculum – by the content which is not society. This challenge can be solved by – media literacy – a concept (literacy) which is implemented in mass media. By this action, society is invited to understand that actually mass media is not neutral, but it is as the way to show social, economy, and politics needs. Actually, media is not only social control tool and deliver the reality, but also has role to instruct social reality subjectively. By this effort, media literacy action will guide society to use information and other media content based on the needs. Moreover, this action means to guide society to be critic and wise when they receive information and the effort of media dominate society life.

## **The Existence of Media Literacy n Technology and Communication Era**

In previous time, communication needs time and cannot get response quickly. Now, because of the development of technology and information, media society used media as the alternative which is fast, easy, and effective. Society begins to enjoy media world. In media Now (2009) media technology makes convergence (point) of media technology, telecommunication, and computer. Technology impacts society life style, before people read newspaper, but now they read online media which is cheaper and easy to be accessed. Moreover, it can be read by gadget or smart phone.

Understanding Media – The Extension of Man (Marshall McLuhan, 1999) said that medium is message (media message is media itself). McLuhan considers media as human extension and the kinds of media represent kinds of message. Media creates and makes globalization. So, McLuhan delivers Technology Determine Theory which get critics and some complaints, it shows media effect overacted. For instance of media impact, 6 or 7 years ago, internet was new tool but now person who cannot operate internet will be considered as out of date person or usually called “gaptek (gagap teknologi), manusia jadul (jaman dulu).”It is only big media group which can exist. Such as Kompas Gramedia group, Pos Kota, Jawa Pos, Pikiran Rakyat, Femina group, etc. Like television and radio, there are television and public radio, community, private, and subscribe television. Based on the report, there are 14 TVRI station and local, 160 private TV (20 private TV from Jakarta and 150 local private TV, 6 local public TV, and 18 comunitree TV. Until April 2008, (Senjaja, 2008) there are only 19 subscribe TV at the beginning and will be increased by 31 requesters of digital subscribe TV (terrestrial, satellite, mobile, etc). However, actually subscribe TV is still very small, only 0,7 % from the amount of family population in Indonesia. Although there are many new customers, opportunity of subscribe TV still opened well. While, the amount of radio broadcasting till 2008 is 2.504 consist of 58 RRI station, 2.038 private radios, 369 comunitree radio, and 38 local public radios.

In addition, Senjaja (2008) said that broadcasting Station Free to Air (FTA) which exist in Indonesia (by merge and acquisition process) will decrease (just some which exist), while the amount of subscribe TV operator (included into TV with Digital Video Broadcasting / DVB technology) will increase (tens till hundreds). Absolutely, the increasing of media amount is the good requirements for media freedom along with economic and politic democratization. Then, competition in media will arise. The condition is more complicated because it includes competitor.

There are 3 competition groups, such as: competition among printed media, competition between electronic radio and television, competition media between printed media and electronic media. This competition is not only included content aspect, news serving, or other forms, but also advertisement. So, the method, style, and strategy of competition for each mass media participate as respond towards market demand. Advertisement makers who will get respond, is not reader, watcher, or listener of media. Therefore, all of media content seems similar.

Now, big media group is formed by private owner. So, the process of media selling is happen in many places. Maybe it just causes the increasing of partial benefit for party who join with media industry. According to public point of view, it cannot guarantee the service of public interest. The purpose of conglomerate is how to maximize the benefit / advantage, decrease fund, and minimize risk. Automatically, it gives impact for media content. Hegemonization and trivialization happen (make unimportant things) because grab and adjust interest of business.

In this case, mass media has role to spread and strength dominant hegemony to build society support by influencing and forming thinking so that they follow what is done by media. Media comes to introduce, form, and build point of view to society. Information in the newspaper, radio, television, ad film can be manipulated, depend on willing and purpose of the owner.

Other example is film from America, which shows the world that America is extraordinary, great, superhero, world police, and world saver. Its film describes America as "superhero". It influences we belief that all America action is used for the benefit of all nation around world. In another example is fashion. All of girls, women, and boys follow fashion style which arise continuity in media, it will be change when the newest mode is shown. Media always show girls whose hair is straight with bangs, T-shirt, jeans boat cut, and high heels shoes. Because of that, most of girl rebound her hair, including women who wear veil also follow this style. If girls whose hair is curly go to campus, they will feel less confidence. Beautiful and handsome concept is given by media. Handsome is like artist Meteor Garden film and beautiful is girl whose skin is bright, long hair, and her face similar with native.

Television is the easiest media to be accessed. According Rochmatie (2009:68) culture which is introduced and socialized by television has pop or urban style, whereas as we know that Indonesia is very kinds. Sexuality theme is also become tricks of broadcasting media to get public attention. For instance, a private tv station shows about night life of woman. In that program, it makes audience enjoy sexuality. Moreover, tv program usually shows artist who wear "incomplete clothes", included into religious and mystical program. Alike with advertisement, girl will be promoter who can increase production result by transforming sensuality value, such as soap advertisement, facial foam, skin product, etc. Artist gossip program also become audience priority in Indonesia, such as silet, was-was, insert, kabar kabari, etc (Wijaya, 2007:8 – 9).

Directly, communication technology especially television, computer, and internet have taken some social function in society life in 21 century, around us, media dominate our life and influence our emotion and consideration (Mulyana: 2009). Mass media is not objective again, point of hegemony theory; role of mass media; do not become supervisor (watch dog), government, but support capitalist life. This case is happen in western, then Indonesia. See! Information in newspaper, tv, radio, online media inform fearful conflict, violence, social insulting, divorce of relationship, dishonest, does it make our society fear? Or feel happy?

Based on the condition above, people who know about media will be frustration, because their hope which id created by communication message in mass media is not suitable with fact. However, the usual people will trust and considerate that the information is real.

Besides, Katherine Miller (2005:258) stated that mass media gives satisfying for society, based on each category and need. The 4 categories of public gratification as follow:

1. Information, the indicator: finding case and condition, looking for advice in everyday practice or opinion and decision choice, satisfying by self education with knowledge of safety feeling.
2. Private identity, the indicator: finding strength of private value, finding behaviour mode, identifying with other value, deeper self understandings.
3. Integration and social interaction, the indicator: understanding others condition (social empathy), knowing other and sense of belonging, finding basic to talk each other and social interaction, finding the change to real life friendship, taking part in social role, and making someone builds relation with family, friends, and society.
4. Entertainment, the indicator: avoiding problems, getting culture and beauty value, spending time, exploring emotion, and sexual interest.

Explanation above has a point with normative point of view, that mass media (especially tv and radio) must have good function as information media, education and entertainment, control and social relation, economic function, and culture (chapter 4 UU 32/2002). Basically, to increase nation intelligence, build character, and personality who obey God command then directed to increase human resources. However, the fact is opposite. Then, what we have to do as the students of university? The answer is by giving media literacy to society and public.

## Media Literacy

Media literacy or called „*melek media*“ (Rachmiate, 2009:64) is a statement which used as the answer of society point of view about the influence and impact of mass media content which has negative tendency and hopeless. Ability, knowledge, awareness, and specific skill have to be given for society. Media literacy definition by Chang and Sup (2001:424) are: a) abilities to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate message (National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy, 1992). b) Knowledge about the function of media for society (Paul Messaris, 2990). c) Culture understanding, economy, politic, and limit technology in creation, production, and message transmission. d) Specific knowledge, awareness, and rationality as cognitive process to get information, and e) the basic focus to evaluate critically about message and the way of communicating. Then understand the sources and communication technology, used symbol, resulted message, selected, interested, and the impact.

One can be said „*melek media*“ if : a) capable to select and classify media; b) realize that television is public, economic and social culture business; c) realize that radio and television do not provide reality only; d) be critical to the content of media; e) realize that society has authority and duty upon the content; f) aware with the impact of media thus identify things to do when use media; g) be selective to choose media; h) use media with purpose.

One should build up strong filter either his/herself or society to avoid the impact of media. In simple word, media literasi basically is the awareness of society toward bad-impact-of-media, particularly mass media. The development of technology is not only giving advantages but also disadvantages, as follows : a) alleviate personal privacy; b) raise criminal; c) unlimited access; d) influence social cohesion; e) overload information (Fukuyama and Wagner, 2000).

The aim of media literacy is to teach society in analysing the content of media, considering commercial and politic purposes and examining the responsible person. School of Communication in Bandung (2008) media literacy, called as „*melek media*“, is defined the capability to classify, access and analysis the content of media. This capability should behave by society because the fact that not all media are useful. Many of them are uneducated instead commerce only. Media literacy is proposed to provide information in criticising media, then society could use media with specific purpose.

## Education and Media Literacy

The concern of national education is to develop the human resources. Education seems to be the only stone for nation to stand in global competition. We realize the important on university existence as formal education which should develop science and technology and have best output in it.

The implementation of Tri Darma in university is based upon university autonomy. They are knowledge autonomy embedded to the lecturer and financial autonomy embedded to the stake holder. Based on the development of technology, media literacy can be considered as one of the subject in national curriculum for new students in education life. Lecturer should give description related to the communication media, particularly phone cellular.

In research project, institution has a chance to study the content, management and user of media which give adverse consequences for children and teenagers. The result could be as an input for media publishing and advice for society. As dedication, media literacy shall become informal education in providing information for society, then people will be not blind information. In this case, every civitas academica whether personal or community have authority and duty to implement their autonomy, especially in education, research and dedication.

Media literacy can be a topic to discuss in KKN activity for students and social dedication for lecturer. In developed country, media literacy has become subject in national curriculum from elementary level until university. In Indonesia, it has started by Indonesia Broadcasting Commision with media literacy as a program in Dirjen Pendidikan Tinggi. Fortunately, it seems has not been developed yet. In the other hand, UNESCO Declaration about media education (Grundwald document/UNESCO Declaration of Media Education, 2006) gained the concepts of media education. The concepts are, first starting and supporting media education program comprehensively from pre-school until university in order to develop critical thinking in using media and its consequences. Also provide larger competence the user of printed and electronic media. This program commonly covered analysing the product of media, the using of media as expressive tool and the using media effectively. Second, develop training for educator and intermediaries to improve their knowledge by using appropriate method which considered background knowledge but fragmentary toward the media. Third, supporting research and

developmental activities to increase the benefit of media education in field as psychology, sociology, communication science and so on. Fourth, supporting and empowering activities reflecting to the UNESCO with the purpose to boost international cooperation in media education. Those concepts can be implemented by university, then university as medium of media literacy for society.

Isnawijayani (2008) in information media DAMAS article entitled “influence watching television, the easiest media literacy to give is how to have a healthy television watching”, as follows :

1. 1. Television is not only as tool of media but also of social, culture, economic and politic; Television in certain condition could have big influence for society more than other mass media, such as radion, newspaper, magazine and movie; Television in Indonesia has been developed as industry which its program as commodity; Television has powerful influence for society; Influence of television is not only toward kognitive (knowledge), but also attitude and behaviour; Television is very persuasive in society life;
2. Television is simile of uninvited person in our home and teach children either good and bad things; Television has ability to create opinion, image, imagination, expectation and provided many informations which the impact could be positive and negative; The good side of television : provide information, self-elaborate, social relation facilities, entertainment, daily activity, and; The bad side of television : distortion information, reality dramatization or artificiality, seize personal privacy, character-destructive, sex-exploitation, society-poison, uneducated learning and a-social.

Watching television says as consume unhealthy food and less-advantage, too much food are not good for healthy. Because of that, it is suggested to limit television (when, how long and what we could watch). Therefore, the role of parent is absolutely needed, parent are suggested to keep an eye upon their children in order to not watch negative content.

## Conclusion

Concept of “melek media” or media literacy education is an alternative of society to take part in global of text media production. This concept is proposed to educate society to be able in communicating and using media critically. Then people are not fooled by media and not easily being exploited by unilateral party. Beside campaign with various form, author place a huge expectation for media literacy to use education sector especially university as an effective tool to emerge “melek media” society. As the sector consists of young generation that is university students as the agent of national development.

Recently, the moral value in the content of media has been being concerned. This action need to be supported by training society for being aware with media literacy, until they have powerful self- mental-culture to prevent themselves from „media”. When public space is being threatened by capitalistic media to get personal benefit through media commodity, public should be educated the concept of media literacy in order to get back the space. Media literacy program particularly is addressed to the children, teenagers and media user. As the matter of fact, children and teenagers are in serious path faces with media. The naivete makes them easily to be directed by media for being loyal to the media upon modern life style and globalisation.

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