The Management of Media Literacy Development for Thai Students

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Abstract—The purpose of this research was to enhance student's media literacy. The process was divided into 4 periods: the first phase was to hold the meeting for 100 representatives from various institutions in Thailand; the second phase allowed them to design activities to be used in their institutions; the third implemented activities to reach other target groups; and the last phase was to summarize results. It was found that the participants had clear understanding on media literacy. They knew well about the media. In other words, they knew the difference between creative media and bad ones. Students could use analytical process when searching for information. Thus, the project enabled the students to use analytical thinking skills in designing new activities. Therefore, they could creatively integrate Thai folk song with short movies and cartoons. To increase students' media literacy, there should be chances for them to gain first-hand experience.

Keywords—Management, development, media literacy, Thai students.

I. INTRODUCTION

IN today's society, media has been given more and more important role. In consumerism, you are surrounded by all forms of media. Via a particular channel, these media convey messages or tell a story from the sender to the receiver. Media have several roles. For several decades, several types of media including the mass media have been employed as a key instrument in the development of the country. They have made positive impact on the society, polity, economy, education, culture, wisdom communication and social psychology. However, the media impact has been found on the members of the society as well, especially when it is used by business sector to arouse the desire to consume products and service. The situation becomes worse when it comes to the sensitive target like children.

It was found in several previous studies that children and teenagers tend to learn from watching media and imitating them [1]. This is because media play a very critical role in one's learning. It is a learning source which can effectively raise awareness and draw a lot of attention from children and adolescence. According to Child and Youth Media Institute, there are around 14 million children and teenagers in Thailand. These young people spend time watching television for at least 10 hours per week. Unfortunately, the programs they watch are mostly for entertaining purposes. These programs range from soup operas, game shows, music video to commercial. The viewers can be as young as 3 years old kids whose parents leave them to watch television on their own.

Although there have been studies conducted to investigate the impact of media on children and adolescence, most of them focused on the negative impact rather than the positive one. Three main negative impacts that were usually studied are 1) Consumerism leads to being exposed to advertisement, resulting in children eating fast food which lacks nutrients and causing obesity. People are tempted to buy extravagant products. Teenagers want to have body image like models which is sometimes too thin. 2) Sexual behavior is usually influenced by mass media particularly the television because these media play an important role in the teenagers' sexual outlet e.g. having immature sex, dressing style, attitudes and behavior towards the opposite sex, inappropriate behavior resulting from imitating a character in a television series. 3) Violence – it is well known that children and teenagers tend to imitate violent behavior from a fighting scene in video games. Violence is shown via online games and several inappropriate websites. It is the cause of deteriorating personality such as poor human relations, highly introvert and the reducing ability to restraint oneself.

Due to the problems mentioned before, people have been worried about the influence of mass media. Thus, some western researchers are well aware of the potential of media literacy. Media literacy is the consumer's ability and skills to encode and decode the symbol transmitted via media. It is a process to build up the understanding towards the communication especially the mass communication which the receiver or consumer should fully understand the structure, value, ideology and belief embedded as well as the distribution system. How it is produced and dominated and its limitations should also be understood. Once the consumer knows what is going on in the media, his situation will be advantage which can be done by exploring for more information and accessing to a variety of quality sources. They can be part of making better media by protesting the inappropriate ones. By this, the receiver can decode the message effectively which will definitely beneficial to the society as a whole.

Media literacy is thus essential for children and adolescents who will grow up to be the country's driving force in the future. The Office of National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission had cooperated with Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University in organizing the Radio-Television Media Literacy for Adolescents. The purpose of the program was to educate the young people to be media literate.

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The program ran activities which offered chances for teenagers to release their creativeness. They would design a program for media literacy for their peers in schools who will become media literate, therefore, strengthening themselves, families and the society.

II. PROCEDURE FOR PAPER SUBMISSION

1. To study how to manage a media literacy project to best suit the teenagers.
2. To encourage and develop Thai teenagers' potential to be media literate.
3. To learn lessons from managing the project this can be beneficial for future media literacy projects.

III. SCOPE

1. It was a workshop with 100 participants. They were university and high school students from across the country. The number of representatives from each institution was 10 students. The activities held in the workshop would be implemented again at their universities and schools.
2. The workshop's content covers the constructing the understanding and conceptual framework of the media literacy. There was a discussion session which was expected to lead to students' critical thinking skill development and conclusion. After that, they would design the media literacy model which should be used in practice.

IV. EXPECTED OUTCOME

1. Gaining the appropriate approach to the management of a media literacy project for teenagers.
2. Constructing knowledge in managing a media literacy project for teenagers.

V. CONCEPT

During the past several decades, there have been several researchers trying to define media literacy. The media literacy is the changing in culture and history and media literacy can mean the understanding and the ability which are developed accordingly to the technology of new and old media.

The Dictionary of Media Literacy (1997, p.48) defines media literacy as the critical thinking skills which enable the receiver to interpret the true meaning of the message and freely consider the content of the media [2].

Bunrak Bunyaketmala (1996, pp. 122-126) defines media literacy as the ability to measure the depth of the information on the media so the consumer will not fall prey to journalists. Consequently, they can have more control of the media [3].

Uerjit Virojtrirat (1997, p.21) states that media literacy is the state when a person is capable of understanding that media consists of media organization. The relationship between the media producer and the economic and political power influences the production, content, style and broadcasting [4].

Therefore, it can be concluded that media literacy is the ability or skills of the receivers in interpreting the messages from mass media. The receivers will exercise their understanding towards the mass media process so they will not fall victim to the media.

Media Literacy is the essential skill for the receiver-consumer. This is because mass media is dominating our daily lives, particularly in politics and culture. Also, almost all information is presented via the mass media, influencing our values and behaviors. Apart from that, most people are not aware of the influence the mass media have on them and the society. As a result, the media literacy is highly important for media consumers nowadays. Media literate people can assess interpret and conceptualize the message effectively. The development of media literacy in any individual consists of 4 main factors: Knowledge Structure, Decision Motivated, Information Processing Tools, and Information Processing Task. To be media literate is to ask the questions such as who produces this media content, how it is produced, why different people interpret different meaning, what are the hidden content, what are the values embedded, why the content is targeting us. In other words, to be media literate is to be conscious and to question the media, using reasons to differentiate fact from opinion.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This project focuses on running a workshop. This study research was conducted in stages as follows:

Stage 1 Preparation: In preparation we need to review, analyze and conceptualize theories, conceptual framework, previous studies and documents on media literacy. This includes the study of related curriculum, lesson and activities to be used in the workshop for 100 students from both high schools and universities equally.

Stage 2 Running the workshop: In running the workshop, developing students' skills in media literacy the students should share their ideas on media literacy activities. They set a plan for the activities which would be used in their institution.

Stage 3 Implementation: Students would run the project in their university. The activities implementation meant that the media literacy project would reach the target group which can the community members in that particular area.

Stage 4 Conclusions and Assessment: The media literacy activities conducted in Stage 3 would be assessed by a forum of advisors and experts who would give suggestions and conclusion in terms of policy to the students.

VII. CONCLUSION

Apart from gaining new knowledge in managing media literacy project, we also founded the media literacy network and promote students 'role in developing activities. The findings are as follows:

The media literacy activities include learning activity concerning media literacy, drama, and short films. Other

channels of media were also used such as personal media, campaign, radio and television. Thus, students in the campus who did not participate in person in the project will have higher awareness in media literacy. Some universities also expanded their activities to reach the nearby community, creating awareness in media literacy among the members. Thus, they would pay more attention in the media to which their children are exposed.

Fig. 1 The media literacy activities on radio program

Fig. 2 The media literacy activities on Thai traditional folk song

Apart from creating the awareness of media literacy in community members, it was found that teenagers who participated in the project were more aware of media literacy. Besides, these students also developed other important skills-the 21st century skills. These skills are crucial to make these youngsters become a driving force for a better society.

A. Media Literacy Skills

These skills can range from a basic one - understanding the component and production of media so they can realize the importance of media literacy to a more complicated one – harnessing the skills to be used in their daily lives. The structure of these skills is as follows [5].

1. Knowing the Media and Being Able to Choose

Because they had a chance to produce a good content to the society, they knew how to communicate effectively. They got to learn and see the differences between the good media and the bad one. As a result, they know how to choose the appropriate one effectively.

2. Searching for Information and Curiosity

Since they needed to produce the media correctly, they needed to search for a lot of information. They, therefore, gained the skills of information searching. They learned how to look for interesting point to present to draw attention from the audience.

3. Thinking, Analyzing and Criticizing Lead to Having Consideration

These students had to search a lot of information so they needed to analyze it for correctness. Then, they needed to synthesize the information to present to the audience. Thus, they had practiced analyzing and criticizing skills throughout the project. They learned that every coin has two sides. They learned to see from a different perspective. They now have consideration in every topic they are going to encounter.

4. Transmitting, Telling and Using the Media Creatively

In organizing the project, the students needed to create one piece on media literacy. This was really a good way to learn how to transmit, tell and use the media creatively. They did really well and interestingly in creating personal media, short films, radio and cartoons.

5. Change in Media Use

Because they were charged with the task which had to be balanced between creativity and social responsibility, they had a chance to become media literate. They had to do every step in media production. They designed, planed, and executed the plan as well as assessment. They became media literate so their behavior in media use changed positively.

B. 21st Century Skills

Apart from direct learning from the project "Kon Tun Sue", students also learned from running their own project which they developed the 21st century skills along the way [6].

Fig. 3 Students learning from the project "Kon Tun Sue"

1. Information Searching and Curiosity

Searching for information was really important for this task. It means that students were instilled with the working ethics based on information and searching for information. They became curious people.

2. Analyzing, Differentiating and Having Consideration

In learning about media literacy, they had a chance to practice their analytical and differentiating skills. As for student leaders, they were required to think and analyze about the target group for their project. This made them became better at decision making and having consideration.

3. Creativity

Students needed to draw attention from a lot of people and this greatly challenged their creativity. The project provided a chance for students to practice creativity. They needed to find a new way to present so they learned how to think creatively.

4. Systematic Thinking

Systematic thinking is highly crucial to complete the project. It was like a classroom where students learned how to think and work systematically. In this project, they learned this important skill through doing.

5. Decision Making and Problem Solving

Operating the project gave them the best chance to practice their decision making and problem solving skills. They had hands on experience in both skills. There were several problems needed to be solved along the way of doing the project. After this project, they were better at decision making and problem solving.

6. Social Adjustment and Network Building

Participation in the project requires the students to build up connection with various groups of people. They would realize that networking was greatly important to the success of the project. Besides from social adjustment which occurs during the project, they would learn the importance of networking and keep the network with their best effort.

7. Creative Media and Technology Skills

This project allowed teenage leaders to develop several skills including media skills. They would learn how to choose a good media to receive message, how to use it appropriately, and how to produce a good one for the society. They would also learn how to use the technology creatively.

The media literacy project will not only develop media literacy skills for adolescence through training, but also encourage them to have hands-on experience. Thorough working, they will learn and understand, and gradually leading to changes in behavior. This project will also encourage the students to realize their potential and value, thus inspiring them to make a contribution to the society. All these things cannot be learned in the classroom alone. To be skillful in media literacy does not result from old-school teaching style in which the teacher is the center but it is the learning-by-doing style that pushes the students to their full potential in media literacy.

VIII. SUGGESTIONS

1. The major or field of study of the student leader plays a very critical role in making the project become more diversity. It was found that students who are not majoring in Mass Communications or other related fields tend to have different perspectives when it comes designing the activities. Therefore, the next project should recruit students from various educational backgrounds.

2. As for the high school level project, advisors' supervision is highly crucial to its success. Therefore, special consideration should be given to advisors from high schools. For the smoothness of the operation, these advisors should be informed about the goal of the project. When problems arise, they will be solved in time.

3. In the next project, there should be a clear output index for effective monitoring. Likewise, the activities assessment should be for the effectiveness and direction measurement.

4. The results show that media literacy can be instilled to both university and high school level. It will be possible in the future that the project will include primary students. Apart from that, the participating organizations should be more diverse, not just limited to educational institutions.

5. For better project planning in the future, the assessment result of the media literacy project should be investigated as a case study research. It can be conducted in the form of books or academic service report.

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