CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Problem

The existence of mass media allows people to provide information for the mass. The most obvious feature of the mass media is that they are designed to reach the many (McQuail, 2010, p.56). With mass media, the process of communication to the mass (from one to many or from many to many) is possible. Mass communication is a major source of information and entertainment which consists of all media that address mass audiences: books, film, television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and other forms of visual and print communication that reach masses of people (Wood, 2011, p.297). With the power of mass communication, people can know what happens in other parts of the world although they didn't experience it directly. Walter Lippman stated that "The world that we have to deal with politically is out of reach, out of sight, out of mind" (Lippman, 1997, p.18). There will be no fixed meaning of any events until it has been represented.

Because people are not able to experience those events that are out of their reach directly, the media has a role in representing the reality of those events for people around the world. Stuart Hall in his book "Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices" stated that:

Representation is the production of the meaning of the concept in our minds through languages; it is the link between concepts and language which enables us to refer to either the real world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people and events (Hall, 1997, p.17).

There will be no meaning and the public will never know about certain phenomena that happen unless it has to be represented by the media. Comics is one of the mass communication tools that used to send messages to masses. It represents social phenomena that happen outside.

Comics as one of the pop cultures also used to give entertainment. Besides for entertainment, comics can be used for several purposes. Comic is one of the media which can deliver messages in various fields such as politics, economic, social, culture, education, and many else. Comics, according to Eisner's (2008) are one of the sequential art which communicate by using a "language" that relies on the visual experience of its creator and audience. Comics can be a soft power to introduce anything for the public. Japan has popularized pop culture such as *anime*, *manga* and others. Those pop cultures, especially anime and manga, have become soft powers for Japan to promote their culture. The Second World War has resulted in the anti-Japan sentiment for other countries, especially in Southeast Asia. Therefore, the Japanese government was urged to take action in softening the anti-Japan mood at that time and emphasized the importance of promoting the international understanding of Japan with conducting the cultural exchange (Iwabuchi, 2015, p. 420). With those Japanese Pop as the soft power especially anime and manga, Japan is able to introduce their culture to the country around the world. The success of

Japan in using pop culture such as manga (comics) has influenced many parties to use comics as the soft power in delivering messages.

Because it has been the soft power and the media to deliver messages to the masses of people, comics which contain any messages or symbols that may imply sensitive issues can be debatable and it has ever been controversial. Comics as the media of mass communication can deliver implicit and explicit messages. The issue of "X-Men Gold #1" has been debatable because it signified several controversial signs. As reported in detikHot, there is a debate about the controversial issues over the comic 'X-Men Gold # 1', the comic that was published by Marvel (Agnes, 2017). It has become the topic because the author, Ardian Syaf, included elements of Al Maidah verse 51 (QS 5:51) and '212' that refers to 2nd December 2016 or the 212 action in the comic which are related to the alleged case of religious blasphemy by Basuki Tjahaja Purnama as known as Ahok (Ratnasari, 2017). Therefore, Marvel comic publisher in the US has terminated the contract with Ardian Syaf.

Besides, comics also can be used to deliver the social realities that occur. *Si Juki* is one of the examples of comics that is created by Faza Meonk about the everyday life of a teenager named Juki with the setting of the story in Indonesia. This comic is published on Faza's online platforms such as facebook, twitter, instagram, Webtoon, and also on the printed version. One of the social realities described by the comic *Si Juki* is "*Lika-Liku Anak Kos*" which tells about the life of Juki as an *Anak Kos* when he is

still studying in university. Faza created his first comic, *DKV Empat*, during his time in the college inspired by his friends behavior which is the pioneer of nowadays *Si Juki* comics (Pradana, 2020).

Comics have become part of the education process for at least a century. In the first decade of the 20th century, the pages of newspapers were filled with illustrations and comic strips that resulted in the increased interest in bringing comics to the educational settings (Smith and Duncan, 2017). The use of comics in education allows people to understand the complicated subjects or topics easier. Comics are utilized to cover important and complex issues in an appealing and interesting format that might introduce a new audience to scientific topics (Friesen, Van Stan and Elleuche, 2018, p.38). For example, in Indonesia, "*Komik Sains Kuark*" is one of the comics that introduced scientific topics for elementary school students. *Komik Sains Kuark* presents science information that has slick visuals, interesting stories, and language that is easy to understand with fun science experiments to hone children's ability in critical thinking through observation, experimentation and analysis.

The existence of digital technologies allows every printed media to be accessed digitally. Other entertainment media such as movies and games also can be accessed anytime with the internet. This phenomenon also occurs in comics where people can access comics with their gadgets without having to buy it in bookstores. Those comics that can be accessed digitally are called webcomic which consist of the word website and comic. One of

the most popular webcomics platforms that was created by Korea is Webtoon. The history of Webtoon began in the 21st century when a few skilled amateur comics enthusiasts began to publish their work digitally on their personal websites after the emergence of the World Wide Web (Kim & Yu, 2019, p.1).

With Webtoon, every creator can create their works as they like. They can create their works in any style, any technique and in any genre of story as long as they still follow the policies from the Webtoon. Webtoon platforms do not necessarily have many technical restrictions, aside from regarding the width and resolution of images, and the requirement that images need to be arranged vertically for optimized online reading (Kim & Yu, 2019, p.4).

The existence of webcomics platforms such as Webtoon enable comic artists to publish their work with less costs. At the same time, webcomics also allow the works of comic artists more accessible than the printed one. Web and digital technologies significantly lowered the cost of digital image creation by reducing the need for drawing tools (e.g., drawing pens, screentone), while enhancing the readiness with which a larger audience can be reached (Kim & Yu, 2019, p.2). With the webcomic platforms, comic creators don't have to pay for the printing, shipping, and other costs that are usually needed to publish printed comics.

Comics as media of sending messages also can be used to give the social critic that happens among society. Trickster is one of the webcomic, specifically Webtoon which was written by Mas Hiro and Kairnn about a high school student that has cheating as his hobby. This Webtoon describes the social realities, specifically the condition of education in Indonesia.
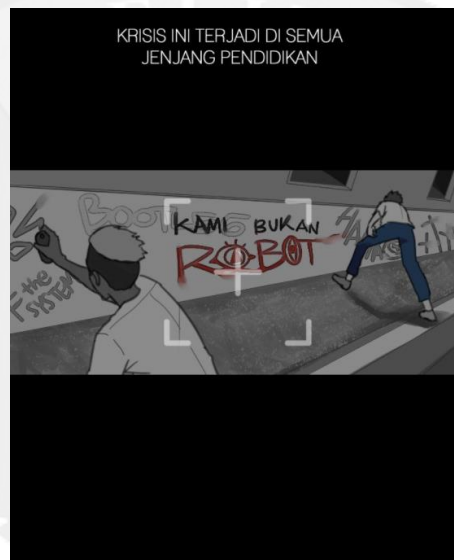

Figure 1.1 Portray of Condition of Indonesia's Education
Source: webtoons.com

Science and technology continue to develop, people are required to keep up with those developments. Education is the main asset of a nation for shaping the character of their human resource to increase the living standard of every individual ("Pentingnya Pendidikan untuk Para Generasi Muda", 2017). Education can be one of the ways to improve one's welfare and minimize poverty and contribute for a country's welfare by creating jobs to give prosperity for others (Marilyn, 2019). With the importance of

education, there are still many problems in the educational system in some countries especially Indonesia that have not been resolved.

1.2 Identification of the Problem

There is a Webtoon series named Trickster which describes some of the conditions regarding the education that occur in Indonesia. Indonesia adhere *pendidikan nasional* as the educational system where in *Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 pasal 1 ayat 2*, it is stated that *pendidikan nasional* is the education based on *Pancasila* and *Undang-Undang Dasar Negara Republik Indonesia Tahun 1945* that rooted in religious value, Indonesia national culture, and responsive to the demand of changing times. The function and purpose of Indonesia's educational system according to *Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 pasal 3*:

> "*Pendidikan nasional berfungsi mengembangkan kemampuan dan membentuk watak serta peradaban bangsa yang bermartabat dalam rangka mencerdaskan kehidupan bangsa, bertujuan untuk berkembangnya potensi peserta didik agar menjadi manusia yang beriman dan bertakwa kepada Tuhan Yang Maha Esa, berakhlak mulia, sehat, berilmu, cakap, kreatif, mandiri, dan menjadi warga negara yang demokratis serta bertanggung jawab*".

Broadly, *pendidikan nasional* aims to develop students' character, potential, creativity, independence, and responsibility, so they are able to contribute for the country.

In contrast to the law that has been appointed, it is described in the Webtoon Trickster that all of the students are required to finish all of the material that is required and get a good score even though they have

different specialities. The demands to cope with all of the subjects which have a lot of material and also get good scores resulted in encouraging the students to cheat.
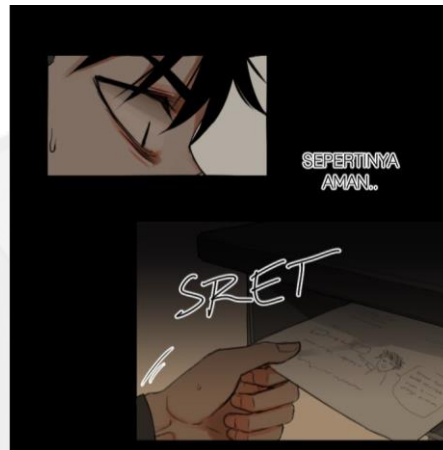

Figure 1.2. Cheating
Source: webtoons.com

In this webtoon series, some of the settings such as the school, curriculum, and the characters are fictional. *SMA Nusantara 1 Gresik* in the story is adapting *Kurikulum 2015* as the educational system where schools with high integrity were free to create their own educational system and the one that can deliver the best result will be adapted as the national education system. This curriculum was made because of the chaos of the *Kurikulum 2012* that was established before. With the *Kurikulum 2015*, those high integrity schools including *SMA Nusantara 1 Gresik* are competing to create the system that can deliver the best result. In *SMA Nusantara 1 Gresik* itself, the school principal forms a secret organization named *Netra* to record the students' foul. The students that have committed the foul for five times will be expelled from the school. The curriculum that is implemented in the story

also shows that the students must study a lot of subjects with a lot of material. Because of the number of the subjects and materials with the expectation of the school, some of the students are forced to commit fraudulence to keep up with the materials and exams.

According to the readers comment on the figure 1.3. below, most of them said that Trickster is very depicted and related to the condition of education in Indonesia. They think that this Webtoon has drawn everything that is experienced by them regarding the educational system in Indonesia. Every pressure to get a good score in every exam, the number of subjects and its homework, a lot of rules, and many other situations in this Webtoon also have drawn the condition of education that have been experienced by the readers.

Figure 1.3. Reader's Comments in Episode 15
Source: webtoons.com

In reality, the education in Indonesia demands every student to master all of the subjects given and compete with their friends to be the best in their class and school. In many countries including Indonesia, there is a strong point of view that "Whoever is successful in school will be successful

in life" ("Penyebab Anak "Bodoh" Itu Ternyata dari Orang Tua", 2019).

Most parents will be proud of their children only if they can get the top rank in class or become the best graduate in their school. Based on the experience of Utik Kaspani as one of the teaching staff at Nurul Huda Palabuhanratu, it is very rare for parents to ask about the attitude and character of their children during the distribution of report cards; they will always asked about the academic achievement of their children (Kaspani, 2020). The number of subjects that must be learned and the demand for good grades makes memorizing a major part of the learning process (Abdurakhman, 2016). As long as the students can manage all of the subjects given with their homeworks and exams, understanding the material is no longer the priority in studying. Also, the pressure given by their parents and environment to become the best in academics encourage students to commit fraudulent acts such as cheating (Satriani, 2018).

Figure 1.2 Demands in Indonesia's education
Source: webtoons.com

Education in Indonesia is considered very rigid. The application of education that only aims to achieve the target of the curriculum hinders the students in developing their creativity. They are required to finish the number of subjects and material within a specified time. The education observer Mohammad Abduhzen stated that the education in Indonesia is too rigid and bureaucratic, the academic process of education in Indonesia is contaminated by bureaucratic behavior that produces the narrow, rigid, and formalistic teachers (Dewi, 2020). Besides, the education in Indonesia also curbs the students by regulations from the government regarding the educational system. Therefore, the Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Makarim said the Ministry of Education and Culture targets that each education unit is free from government intervention or regulation or independence in learning (Taher, 2019). The freedom in learning that is given is expected to fix the bureaucracy in education that hinder the development of education in Indonesia.

With the phenomena that have been mentioned above, the researcher wants to conduct a study on how the Webtoon Trickster represents the reality of the condition of high school education in Indonesia.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Based on the research background and the previous study that is described above, the statement of the problem of this study is as follow:

How are the portrayal of education in the fictional high school *SMA NUSANTARA 1 GRESIK* in the Webtoon "Trickster"?

1.4 Purpose of the Study

Based on the statement of the problem that is described above, the purpose of this study is to know the portrayal of education in the fictional high school *SMA NUSANTARA 1 GRESIK* in the Webtoon "Trickster".

1.5 Significance of the Study

There are two significance of the study for this research:

Academic : the results of this research are expected to be used as a research reference for individuals who want to conduct research with a similar topic.

Practice : the results of this research are expected to educate society how social construction can affect students in developing their skill and abilities.

1.6 Organization of the Study

Systematic writing of this research is divided into six chapters with the discussion of each chapter as follows:

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This chapter will describe the background of the problem, the identification of the problem, the statement of the problem, the purpose of this study, and the significance of this study.

CHAPTER II: RESEARCH OBJECT

This chapter will explain and describe more in detail of the object that is being researched on which is the Webtoon Trickster.

CHAPTER III: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will describe the theoretical basis and the concepts that will be used as the reference in analyzing the research finding of the problem in the research.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter will describe the research approach that is used in conducting this study, data collection method, data validity checking method, data analysis method, unit of analysis and the research constrain.

CHAPTER V: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter will discuss the result of the data analysis and discussion based on the literature review and research methodology.

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This chapter will discuss the overall results of the research from the findings and discussion in the previous chapter. This chapter will include conclusions and suggestions which can be used for the next similar research.