

IMARA ROUND TABLE 3

THEME: SKILLS AND THE FUTURE OF THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY

THURSDAY 27TH JUNE 2019

Background

In this third edition of the Imara Round Table Discussions, the focus was on the skills needed to sustain and develop the creative sector. The forum drew participation of stakeholders from academia, government and practitioners working in film, animation and new media.

1. Report by Stakeholders on Action Points from the last Round Table

Kenya Film Commission: It was reported that Kenya does not have a co-production treaty but there are several business agreements it has signed. Cooperation agreements do not require laws to be passed or treaties ratified for Kenya to engage with other parties. KFC has signed cooperation agreements with NFVF of South Africa and CNC in France.

Opportunities offered by cooperation agreements include: (i) development of a conducive environment do business with film industry in another country. (ii) Film industry gets quality services by exposure to productions at international standards. For example the cooperation agreement with CNC includes institutional strengthening framework for the Film Commission, capacity development and advocacy within higher levels of government to sign a coproduction agreement. Co-Production agreements allow collaboration across borders for mutual benefit.

Update on the Film Policy The policy was approved by Ministry of Sports, Culture and Heritage, CS Rotich, Treasury, and the ICT Minister. This is now ready for discussion at Cabinet level, and the Cabinet Memo has been raised. The Commission is now urging for the policy to be approved so that the sector can now move to the Bill. The draft bill that covers issues which the sector stakeholders have been raising for a long time but this cannot be passed without a film policy.

Data: It was reported that in the second half of 2019 the Film Commission will be undertaking research to establish the film industry contribution to the economy and industry training needs so as to advice policy makers and government, establish local content audiences and modes of consumption among others.

Funding for the sector is available through the Universal Service Fund. However, the sector associations should identify priority funding areas so that development benefits a majority of the film industry.

2. Discussion on Skills Development

Participants shared their views on what the training gaps in the industry are, as follows:-

- Identifying and nurturing the talents and skills of young film makers who are trained is important and should incorporate preparing them for the market not just as employees but also as employers. *Training needs to include running a production enterprise.*
- The skills attained in local animation training are often not what the industry requires. *There is lack of understanding of the quality required for the industry and of doing*

stories in a way that is captivating. Animation software is expensive and working with international companies requires use of genuine software.

- There is need for an education system that identifies talents and preferences early. Tertiary level institutions were ignored in the past and converted to universities and yet this was not what the industry required. Universities need to focus on research and training on critical thinking and not on making money. ***There is need for increased infrastructure for training spanning skills and equipment. The industry can work with government and training institutions to provide quality internships.***
- **Taxation:** It was reported that the revenue authority now had a category for freelancers who are allowed to pay Kshs. 10,000/- annual tax.
- The youth and many Kenyans in general have been conditioned to get a job after schools but the youth are now being told to become job creators. Universities are in the business of creating critical thinkers. We've killed middle level colleges which were focused on building skills. ***There is need to strengthen middle level colleges and allow universities to focus on their level- research and critical thinking and analysis etc.***
- While there have been challenges in training institutions where the Commission of University Education expects lecturers to have a Master's and Ph.D to train and that all degrees are in the same specialization, there have been a few developments where one is now able to get promotion based on productions released and not just book/article publication. ***It is important to that creative sector productions are viewed as publications.***
- It is vital to consider a students' motivation in studying within the creative sector. This will inform what kind of student or worker one will have. Some challenges that have arisen include students sometimes try to specialize in particular areas and may want to avoid or are intimidated by already established working clusters and lack of finances.

Key Questions Discussed or raised include:-

- How is the young creative being mentored and nurtured?
- How are youth expected to enter the market?
- How to get into production immediately after graduating?
- Are we making content for Kenya alone or for the whole world?
- Does the creative sector policy/bill cover the new media in the digital space? Is the policy timeless?
- Do the industry opportunities generate income? Does the industry understand Virtual Reality and the opportunities it provides?
- How do we ensure continuous supply of the critical professions in the industry?

Further experiences and solutions proposed:-

On internship and training: Learning on the job is more important and enables skills to be passed through daily and on-the-task experiences. The South Africa government provides incentives for production projects that take on interns. This has ensured skills development. In Kenya, Universities/Colleges have not been deliberate or structure in their approach to the sector to collaborate in equipping their students. As film is highly specialized, production houses want skilled crew. For example the Hamburg Film School takes 20 students annually and only teaches technical courses. ***The local public broadcaster KBC should take the lead in providing***

internships, and the commercial stations should also provide opportunities. Foreign productions can be compelled to take on internships so that there is knowledge transfer.

The Animators Association have been going to schools and colleges and sensitizing students on the industry requirements.

Unique learning Opportunities: These can be created for students outside the regular education space e.g. attending film festivals and provision of short internships. They can contribute to better learning and development of skills. Building and supporting cultural and creative institutions is important. For instance, training on the creative economy at the Go Down Arts Centre had a positive impact when facilitators realized there is a gap in training to meet industry needs. The diploma students on the program tended to be more hands on and degree students were more theory oriented but wanted more skills.

There is the place for on the job training and for Master classes. The digital divide is maintained by use of software and hardware that is archaic and of little use in a rapidly changing technological environment. Training institutions need to take the lead in ensuring their students are trained on quality tools and equipment. Unique approaches to learning can also be applied. For example Black Rhino started from learning on Youtube. With regards to new media there is need to provide curriculum that leverages on western knowledge/technology such as AR/VR/Mixed Reality/Extended Reality. There is a huge knowledge gap between artistes abroad and in Kenya. ***Access to international internships can help bridge the gap.***

Partnerships: Training institutions have been exploring partnerships to provide quality skills and infrastructure for students. For example ADMI is working with Rubica and USIU working with Microsoft to establish Animation Studios.

Increasing access to local content: The Government can set aside a digital channel for the local producers, which is expensive. This will provide opportunity for local producers to gain exposure. The Communications Authority cannot enforce the local content percentage requirement with the law as it is. One of the solutions is increasing the number of platforms for distribution of content. Studio Mashinani is a fantastic idea but they are not churning out sufficient amount of content. Creating content should also incorporate a plan for the marketing and distribution of the content.

Specialized training: There is need to broaden the specializations trained in Kenya, for example training for stunts, special effects, unit, First AD, animation, hair & make up, among others.

Way Forward

- Kenya Film Commission to provide an outline of national policy approval stages, where the policy is and what the stakeholders need to do for the process to move forward. This applies to both the Film Policy and Bill.
- All pending reports from various stakeholders to be presented in the next meeting
- For a better understanding of the opportunities in virtual reality media, Black Rhino will do a presentation on the Virtual Reality experience in a subsequent forum.