

## **The Necessity of Teaching History for Film and Animation Industry in Tanzania**

**Boniface Mhella (PhD.)**

Senior Lecturer at the AMUCTA-  
Constituent College of St. Augustine University of Tanzania.

---

### **ABSTRACT**

*The experience, challenges and opportunities that have risen from the production process of a historical film which is in the form of animation have encouraged me to do a survey of the programs related to history, animation and film in the universities of Tanzania to see whether the methodologies, objectives and learning outcomes of these programs are of any relevance to the creative industry, specifically film and animation, in Tanzania today. The presumption behind this article is the conviction that there is a difference between 'to teach history' and 'to teach history for film and animation industry'. While the former is referred to the general methodology of teaching history from which a student is prepared to understand the history of 'something' (let us say of either Africa or colonial economy or mediaeval Europe, etc.), the latter is more practical in sense that it directs a student to possess predefined applied skills to realize 'something historical' in the industry of film and animation. And it is from the application of the latter, the sustainable creative industry of film and animation in Tanzania will prosper. This article argues for the relevance of teaching history for film and animation industry today. It surveys the universities' programs before offering a proposed design of a program that can improve the marginal productivity of films and animations.*

**Keywords:** history, animation, film

---

Date of Submission: 22-01-2021

Date of acceptance: 06-02-2021

---

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

This article is written upon the completion of an animated film called Babamalundi<sup>1</sup>. The experience, challenges and opportunities that have risen from the production process of Babamalundi have encouraged me to do a survey of the programs related to history, animation and film in the universities of Tanzania to see whether the methodologies, objectives and learning outcomes of these programs are of any relevance to the creative industry, specifically film and animation, in Tanzania today. The presumption behind this article is the conviction that there is a difference between 'to teach history' and 'to teach history for film and animation industry'. While the former is referred to the general methodology of teaching history from which a student is prepared to understand the history of 'something' (let us say of either Africa or colonial economy or mediaeval Europe, etc.), the latter is more practical in sense that it directs a student to possess predefined applied skills to realize 'something historical' in the industry of film and animation. And it is from the application of the latter, the sustainable creative industry of film and animation in Tanzania will prosper. In short, this article argues for the relevance of teaching history for film and animation industry today. It surveys the universities' programs before offering a proposed design of a program that can improve the marginal productivity of films and animations.

#### **The relevance of teaching history for film and animation industry today**

There is a difference between 'to teach history' and 'to teach history for film and animation industry'. While the former is referred to the general methodology of teaching from which a student is prepared to understand the history of 'something' by means of remembering and memorizing historical facts, the latter is more specialized in sense that it directs a student to have a predefined specialization in which he or she can apply 'something historical' for the industry of film and animation<sup>2</sup>. In teaching history today, we are supposed

---

<sup>1</sup> Babamalundi is an anticipated 3D film of a Sumuka icon Mwanamalundi. It is designed to assimilate the 1882 historical environment of Mwanza, Tanzania. This was just few years before the official colonialization of Africa. The preview can be seen at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z80NmGyIpM4>

<sup>2</sup> The idea I am proposing here may be seen to fall into the school of 'applied history' with a clear distinction that the applicability of historical knowledge in my case is not for the creation of a good public policy. It is rather for the industry of film and animation. For more information about applied history see: Peter N. Stearns

not to limit ourselves to the empowerment of a student theoretically, but rather going further to make a student be an effective agent of change in the society, by empowering him or her with practical capabilities of realizing useful historical products. The knowledge of history (and our heritage in general) is necessary but not the ends of its own<sup>3</sup>. One has to use the knowledge of history as the means to produce a final product that can be consumed and generate an added value to the community. For example, considering studying history as an investment, then instead of just being able to recite the history of colonial economy of Tanzania, a student should be able to unearth more facts regarding colonial economy and apply it creatively in a way that its application stimulates positive returns on investment. This is one of many examples that make a graduate an effective agent of change, who has been empowered by instruments of change, rather than being a scholar who is good in reciting the writings of the past. Even the guideline of TCU (2018, Sect. 3)<sup>4</sup> insists that all proposed programs in the universities should have a justification from market survey and situational analysis on how the program is going to fill the identified gap in the society. The designers of a program of history for film and animation should be able to explain, among other things, what gaps the program intends to fill in the sector of film and animation, to make the graduates be effective agents of change of the sector of animation.

### **Why Film and Animation industry?**

The animation industry is one of the fastest growing sectors in the world, although the industry is in its nascent stage in Tanzania. Despite of the lack of reliable statistics in Tanzania, the "Global Animation, VFX & Games Industry: Strategies, Trends & Opportunities, 2019" reports the total value of global animation industry was US\$ 259 billion in 2018 and was projected to reach US\$ 270 billion by 2020.<sup>5</sup> Such growth of the industry is accompanied by the transformations that make the industry less Hollywood centric, less child-oriented and more accessible globally. Adult-themed, narrative-driven animation is emerging offering a good opportunity for Africans to animate not only films for children but also for adults, that could have costed millions of dollars if were to be acted in a traditional way. It is this kind of development to offer the golden opportunity to historians and film makers in Tanzania today.

Despite all the potentials that are a result of the development of animation industry globally, the industry needs to be taken seriously in Tanzania. By the time this article is written, there are very few relevant animated products within the film industry of Tanzania. A random survey done in the shops and kiosks that sell films in Tabora and Mwanza<sup>6</sup> has proven that most of animated films in the market are not Tanzanian, mostly imported from Europe, America and Asia, sold in the black market, adding little or nothing at all to the Tanzanian heritage. The heritage of Tanzania that could have been manipulated into fiction and nonfiction resources for film and animation industry is dormant, as the sector faces a lot of managerial challenges including administration and legislation<sup>7</sup>. Comparing with Europe and North America which have successfully produced a lot of historical films, documentaries and animations, Tanzanian history is yet to be animated to capture not just the world market, but its own domestic market.

### **A survey of programs of history, animation and film in Tanzanian universities**

One of the reasons for poor performance of the sector of films and animations in Tanzania can be caused by the lack of serious investment in the sector. Despite of the existence of a sounding *Cultural Policy* (Sera ya Utamaduni)<sup>8</sup> from which its section 8.2.1 clearly states *government shall encourage the establishment of educational and training institutions for the teaching of different cultural professions*, the policy itself does

---

and Joel A. Tarr, (1981). 'Applied History: A New-Old Departure' *The History Teacher*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Aug.), pp. 517-531

<sup>3</sup> For further study on how heritage is related to creative industry see: Barrère, Christian (2013), 'Heritage as a basis for creativity in creative industries: the case of taste industries.' *Mind and Society*, 12 (1):167-176.

<sup>4</sup> Tanzania Commission for University, 'Revised Curriculum Framework' 2018, p. 4 <https://pms.tcu.go.tz/Template%20for%20Curriculum%20Submission.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/4900485/global-animation-vfx-and-video-games-industry?w=5> Lastly accessed: 27<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

<sup>6</sup> 30 selected shops and kiosks were identified randomly in the city center and none of them was selling an animated film from Tanzania.

<sup>7</sup> Bwasiri, E.J. (2011). 'The challenge of managing intangible heritage: problems in Tanzania legislation and administration'. *South African Archaeological Bulletin* 66(194):129-135

<sup>8</sup> United Republic of Tanzania (1999), 'Sera ya Utamaduni'. <https://www.habari.go.tz/uploads/publications/sw1548234087-SERA%20YA%20UTAMADUNI.pdf>

not explicitly recognize animation as a potential cultural profession capable of conserving and promoting national heritage. This may be one of many causes for the under-investment of the industry in Tanzania today<sup>9</sup>.

The survey and analysis of programs of history in different universities of Tanzania reveals that students in universities of Tanzania<sup>10</sup>, who are specializing in History, do not take any animation course. The specialization in history in most of these universities serves a different purpose, mostly taught to student who are expected to be teachers in primary and secondary schools (Bachelor of Arts in education)<sup>11</sup>. In this way, there is no guarantee that a graduate in education, with the specialization of history, can effectively and efficiently work in film and animation industry without taking another course of animation and film.

Among all seventy four high education institutions observed, only two, namely University of Dar es salaam (UD) and University of Dodoma (UDOM), seem to have programs that, when slightly modified, can produce a graduate who can animate historical films. Specifically the collage of humanities of University of Dar es salaam has very interesting and relevant programs, but as it is for those who are taking BA in Education, all of these programs serve a different purpose. The university is not directly producing a specialist who can produce any historical animated film.<sup>12</sup> A student taking Bachelor of Arts in Film and Television or Bachelor of Arts in Art and Design in the UD, for example, will not be capable to animate a historical film upon his graduation simply because the course is not meant to do so<sup>13</sup>.

The findings from UD are almost the same as the findings from UDOM. The surveyed programs of UDOM reveal lot of relevant courses that are useful for the development of historical films and animation, but as it is in the case of UD, the design of these programs and courses serve a different purpose<sup>14</sup>. Unless they are modified and coordinated, it will be hard to produce a graduate who can be effective in animating historical films. For example, the purpose of the Bachelor of Fine Arts and Design states clearly that *it is a self-job creation professional training intended to create a generation of Tanzanians who are able to appreciate and create works of art for national and international consumption. In addition, the programme also provides students with skills in film and television to enable them expand their working platforms and markets for their works.* (p.48). This program is the closest one in term of relevance to film and animation industry due to the fact that it has incorporated many of the theoretical courses that suits film and animation industry (such courses are ranging from those of history of film to the Cinematography and graphics). But animation per se is not taught sufficiently despite of the fact that there is a course called (AD315) *Illustration and Cartoons Production*, which is not a core course and it has less credit hours. Obviously, the purpose of these UDOM's programs was to allow a wider choice of job opportunities for graduates, however, since the areas of studies are too broad, the programs end up producing graduates who cannot take up a specialization in animating historical films.

### **Teaching history for film and animation: the program design**

The observation of different programs offered in all seventy four recognized universities of Tanzania and my critiques that these programs are not capable of producing graduates who can effectively and efficiently animate historical films lead me to this point where I am supposed to state the ideal structure of the program that can produce an ideal agent of change for film and animation industry. The personal experience earned from the production of the film *Babamalundi* and the challenges I have faced during and after the production of this film

---

<sup>9</sup> Other researchers have gone far to conclude that: [...] *government institutions [...] were established as mechanisms to control local cultural products as well as the intrusion of foreign cultural products. The policies, legislation, and cultural institutions gave the government the power to influence the opinion of its citizens by dictating what cultural images and identities were permissible.* Mwakalinga, M. Ngusekela (2010), *The Political Economy of the Film Industry in Tanzania: From Socialism to an Open Market Economy, 1961–2010*, Doct. Diss. University of Kansas. p. iv.

<sup>10</sup> In writing this section, 74 higher education institutions recognized by the Tanzania Commission for University were identified.

<sup>11</sup> More than 31 higher education institutions offer the program of Bachelor of Arts with Education in Tanzania, with an option of History as specialization.

<sup>12</sup> These programs are: BA in Archeology, BA in Archeology and History, BA in Archeology and Geography, BA in Heritage Management, BA in Art and Design, BA in Theatre Arts, BA in Film and Television, BA in Philosophy and Ethics, BA in Music, BA in Language Studies, BA in Literature, BA in History.

<sup>13</sup> Analysis was done by observing the program structure as presented by the 'Undergraduate Prospectus 2019/2020' of University of Dar es salaam.

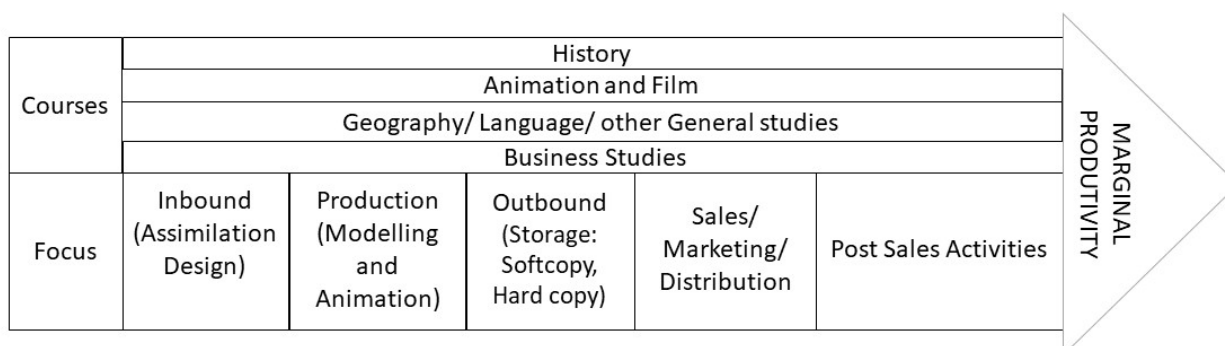
<sup>14</sup> The analysis was done by analyzing courses as per the Undergraduate Prospectus 2018-2019 of University of Dodoma.

make me believe that in order to have a good number of historical animated films in Tanzania, universities must produce graduates who are good in both history and animation.

History should be taught to allow not only the understanding of the facts that occurred during the time in which the film is set, but also to enable a student steering a simulation of it. Whether the environment is created through either fine arts or computer, depending on the type of film and animation intended, both methods demand an intensive and detailed study of the past. For example, the material texture of what a 1880's Sukuma-man used to wear has to be studied and its assimilation be reproduced. Think about the housing structure, furniture, type of arrows and spade, etc., all these have to be studied and be reproduced to bring realistic props for film and animation. It is the recreation of a living history that will make the success of a historical film. But who else should be capable of doing such a task, if not a graduate of history for film and animation industry? Certain historical facts may not be detailed in a general study of history (for example in the course of BA in History), but the details may be of fundamental importance in the study of history for film and animation. It is not important to micro-detail the castle used by the Portuguese (Fort Jesus) when studying general history of colonial penetration but it is when studying the history for film and animation industry. We need to know all the details such as the types of stones/bricks used, its location from the ocean, how many rooms it had, its height, etc., for simulation purposes. This is why, from the beginning of this article, I have argued that there is a difference between teaching history and teaching history for film and animation and the latter is needed in order to develop the industry.

**The model for program design**

Basing on the value chain theory<sup>15</sup> commonly taught in business studies and its modification for the purpose of film and animation industry, I propose the following model that can be used as a baseline for appropriate program design.



**Figure 1:** Program design for film and animation.

Figure 1 explains the kinds of courses and focus of the program. *Courses* to be taught should be those which are directly related to the focus of the intended production. *Focus* reflects the course outline which shows a study of every aspect of business: from pre-manufacturing to post-sales of an animated film. Every aspect of focus should be studied in both isolation and as a part of a whole. Focus is divided into five generic categories: inbound, production, outbound, marketing/sales/distribution, and post-sales activities.

- *Inbound* covers the study of the resources to be used in the production of the film. Students should be trained to design the assimilation of the historical world in which a film is set. They should know how to write and modify scripts, how to design characters (whether in 3D or 2D), environment, props and poses. The study of history is very crucial in this stage because it is from it we can describe, for example, types of pangas used by the tribe of Chaga in 17<sup>th</sup> century, maybe in contrast to those introduced by Arabs. The inbound job needs lot of creativity at the beginning and should be carried out by the use of updated software and best fine arts techniques.
- *Production* consists of all the processes involved in transforming the work of inbounding (script, designed characters, props, poses, motions and the environment) into scenes before a compilation of the whole film. Starting from the how to create a storyboard, students have to be taught photography and cinematography and animation as well. As it was in the inbound stage, students need to learn new software that are currently

<sup>15</sup> For the understanding of the theory find: Porter, M. (1985). *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance*. New York: Free Press.



used in order for them to guarantee acceptable quality in animation, coloring, lighting and all other special effects that are necessary, including composing of music, editing, voicing.

- *Outbound* encompasses all of the processes required after the production of a film. There are questions that are usually asked in this stage. For example: 1) in which digital format and preset is the final product rendered and stored (h.264, AVI, MPEG4, 1080p, 2160p, etc.)? 2) How many copies? 3) In which hardware are they going to be stored? 4) How will they be consumed by the customers (in cinema halls, drive-ins, DVDs, streaming, social media, etc.)? The solution for these questions and many more regarding post-production handling of a film needs to be taught to enable students perform in the industry.
- *Sales and Marketing/ Distribution* involves all activities associated to provide the means by which buyers and customers can either receive the film or be induced to do so. It involves topics of marketing, sales, advertising and promotion. It also involves personal selling, market research and channel selection. At least an introduction to business leadership needs to be taught to the students who in one way or another will have to manage the industry.
- *Post sales activities* are associated to all other indirect activities that are related to the film. What is next after the film has been watched by the customers? Students need to know that selling a film is not the ends of business. There is a need of doing something to retain the customer probably making them re-watching it or be good ambassadors by inviting others to purchase the film. Moreover, students has to learn the techniques of accommodating complaints and questions from their customers. Appropriate course content needs to be developed for film and animation industry.

On the other hand of the Figure 1, *Courses* refers to characterization of the generic subject taught. I have identified four main generic subjects: History, animation and film, geography/language/other general studies, business studies<sup>16</sup>. The program designers can choose the percentage distribution of each generic subject. I am not going to discuss this distribution in detail in this article but my suggestion is that at least History, Animation and Film should occupy 80% of the total distribution, allowing only 20% to be distributed to the rest of remaining courses.

## II. CONCLUSION

The relevant course that can bear positive results in the industry of historical films and animation in Tanzania should capture the entire value chain as reported in Figure 1. This means that the program should be structured in five generic courses and these courses should contain all focal points from inbound to post-sales activities. Nevertheless, as it was the headline of this article, I hope it is clear now why it is necessary to teach history for film and animation industry in Tanzania.

## REFERENCE

- [1]. Barrère, Christian (2013), 'Heritage as a basis for creativity in creative industries: the case of taste industries.' *Mind and Society*, 12 (1):167-176.
- [2]. Bwasiri, E.J. (2011). 'The challenge of managing intangible heritage: problems in Tanzania legislation and administration'. *South African Archaeological Bulletin* 66(194):129-135
- [3]. Mwakalinga, M. Ngusekela (2010), *The Political Economy of the Film Industry in Tanzania: From Socialism to an Open Market Economy, 1961–2010*, Doct. Diss. University of Kansas. p. iv.
- [4]. Peter N. Stearns and Joel A. Tarr, (1981). 'Applied History: A New-Old Departure' *The History Teacher*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Aug.), pp. 517-531.
- [5]. Porter, M. (1985). *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance*. New York: Free Press., Tanzania Commission for University, 'Revised Curriculum Framework' 2018, p. 4  
<https://pms.tcu.go.tz/Template%20for%20Curriculum%20Submission.pdf>  
<https://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/4900485/global-animation-vfx-and-video-games-industry?w=5>
- [6]. The Undergraduate Prospectus 2019/2020 of University of Dar es salaam. University of Dar es salaam.
- [7]. The Undergraduate Prospectus 2018-2019 of University of Dodoma. University of Dodoma.
- [8]. United Republic of Tanzania (1999), 'Sera ya Utamaduni'. <https://www.habari.go.tz/uploads/publications/sw1548234087-SERA%20YA%20UTAMADUNI.pdf>

---

<sup>16</sup> It is just important to remember that the generic subjects contain many sub-subjects. For example, History may contain: history of colonialization, the iron-age history, history of colonial economy, etc. History may also contain: history of film marketing, history of animation industry, cinematographic history. Hence, a generic subjects may refer to one or more focus as identified in the value chain. Regarding the sub-courses for Animation and Film, they should be those related to inbound such as photography, graphic design, 3D design, etc. They should also be those related to production such as lighting, animation of a character and props. A course of rendering techniques is typically for outbound.