

Perceived Status of the Filipino Film Industry: Implications for Media Education

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Abstract

Media use is seen as a very important part of Filipino life as exposure to media mirrors the desire to be part of both society and environment. Yet, despite claims of some critics that Philippine cinema is dying, this study determined the perception of communication educators on the status of the Filipino film industry and its implications for media education. The study determined the technical, artistic, business, and social responsibility aspects of the Filipino film industry. The study utilized the descriptive normative survey method to describe and interpret the current condition of Filipino film industry. Results of this study revealed that a majority of the respondents have less exposure to film from both mainstream and indie or independent cinema. Educators put the highest premium on the aspects of story concept or screenplay which were followed by cinematography and casting. The artistic and business aspects received good status but very evident is the dissatisfaction of the educators in terms of screenplay. Educators suggest better story concepts for films and more trainings for those who will constitute the backbone of the industry. Educators believe that the industry has inadequately skilled movie workers which represent the major problem of the industry. In order to address the issues, Cavite Communication Educators proposed solutions to the pressing problems of the industry such as patronizing Filipino films and more trainings or seminars for movie workers.

Keywords: Media, Media Education, Film Industry, Film

Introduction

The development of media marks society's growth and improvement. It projects connection to the realities of society and mirrors the experiences of people. The power of media may never be questioned as literature and research prove that exposure to media can influence perspectives and decisions.

Out of 18,539,769 total households in the Philippines, an average household size of 4.76 persons have an average TV penetration rate of 96.21% while newspapers have 63.45. Statistics show that people today spend more time with media with 24.30% for magazines, 71.47% for radio, and 33.09% for the Internet. Meanwhile, 68.72% of Filipino moviegoers are from classes D and E. Watching movies reached a low mark of 5 from 9 in 2007, with 71% of Filipino audiences going to movie theaters less than once a month (The Media Fact book, 2012-2013).

Films provide an escape from realities (Griffin, 2013). Still, these are social mirrors as they provide a media landscape where values and culture may be used for critical thinking. Movies recreate the experiences of others and even one's own struggles as an individual.

The downfall of Philippine cinema is traced from Filipinos' exposure to foreign films rather than mainstream cinema. In addition, the number of films produced over the years has decreased from 140 to 73 or fewer movies in the 2000s. The competition from foreign films with better editing techniques, cinematography, story concept and far bigger production made it difficult for Filipino films to compete. Also, high taxation for film producers affects the number of films available. Hence, with the advent of new technologies and new media platforms, the industry is faced with new challenges.

New competitors come and go, from DVDs to cable TV and free TV. With several movie downloading sites, YouTube channels, and social networking sites, it became harder for the film industry to regain its glory. Over the years, 80% of moviegoers from class C and D have a high preference for drama, romance, comedy, and action. About 70% are 15 – 29 years old (The Media Fact book, 2012-2013).

Determining the status of Philippine Cinema therefore provides a better understanding on how this perceived status reflects media education techniques. Media education refers to the process of developing an informed and critical understanding of the nature of the mass media, the techniques used by them, and the effects of these techniques (Owens & Hunt, 1985).

Production and technical aspects of Philippine movies signify the state of the film industry because the perceived status of the industry has implications for media education techniques that educators may use in the classroom. Media education helps students develop an informed critical understanding of the nature of mass media work, how they produce meanings, how they are organized, and how they go about constructing reality (Media Education: A Teaching Manual, 1995).

This research endeavor primarily focused on the perceived status of Cavite Communication Educators, the home of the Cavite Filmmakers Association which is a newly accredited group by the National Commission for the Culture and Arts (NCCA) launched in December 2014.

The endeavor sought to find answers to the following questions:

1. What is the profile of Cavite Communication Educators in terms of:
 - a) age
 - b) sex
 - c) educational attainment
 - d) numbers of years teaching

- e) media practice
- 2. What is the exposure level of respondents to Filipino films?
- 3. What is the status of Filipino film industry in terms of
 - a) Technical b) Artistic c) Business d) Social Responsibility
- 4. What are the problems confronting the film industry?
- 5. What are the proposed solutions to the problems of the industry?
- 6. What are the implications of perceived status to media education?

Theoretical /Conceptual Framework

The framework reflects the communication educators’ perceived status of the industry. Those educators with negative perceptions have a direct effect on the use of media education techniques. However, those educators with positive perceptions have a strong predisposition to use media education techniques. Whatever is the perceived status, an impact on the usage and preferences of various media education techniques is expected.

The framework notes that the perception of communication educators on the Filipino film industry is divided into four aspects: artistic, technical, business, and social responsibility. Each category comes with factors or measures anchored from Hall who stated that audiences do not just view media messages or media products but audiences become engaged in the process of interpreting such depending on experiences, values, and cultural background. Audiences with similar backgrounds may have a common interpretation (Baran, 1995).

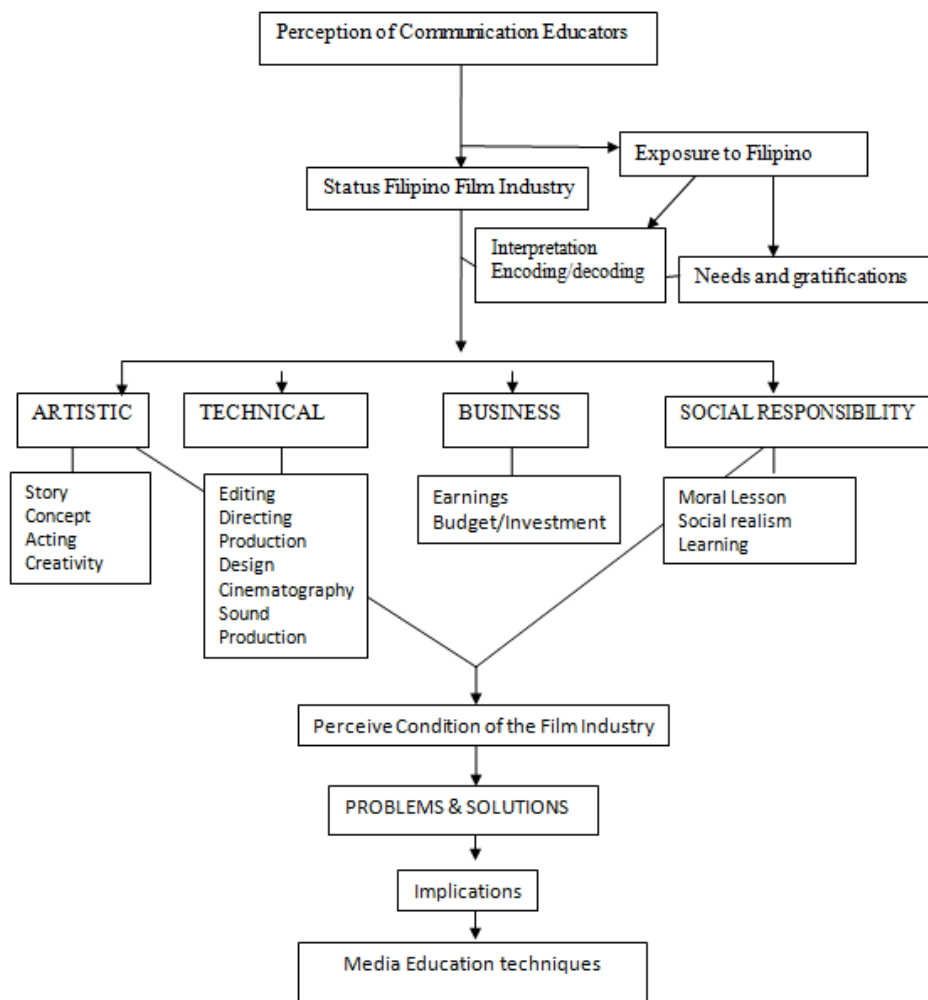


Figure 1. Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

In the encoding and decoding process of Reception theory, communication educators interpret messages from experiences in watching Filipino films. Based on their exposure and experience, a process of interpretation on the status of the film industry was utilized which created a corresponding impact on the media education techniques used in the classroom.

This research is anchored on the uses and gratifications theory of Katz. This perspective is a challenge to communication educators who tend to amplify the thought that individuals use media differently depending on their particular needs and gratifications (Griffin, 2013). In the same light, the exposure of Cavite communication educators to Filipino films may influence the perception on the status of the industry and the media education techniques used in the classroom.

Method

This study used a descriptive survey method to determine the present condition of the Filipino Film Industry. It combined quantitative and qualitative approaches to interpret the current state of the industry. Five schools offering communication programs were selected with a total of 40 full-time and part-time educators from the province of Cavite, Philippines. Key informants are from the following academic institutions: Cavite State University, De La Salle University-Dasmariñas, Emilio Aguinaldo College, Perpetual Help University-Molino, and San Sebastian College-Cavite City.

In-depth interviews were conducted with practitioners to validate results and to provide insights on the current condition of the industry based on their experiences. Focus interviews were also utilized to determine the views of some educators in the use of media education techniques and determine the extent of usage for such.

A survey questionnaire was used as data gathering tool for this study. It was divided into six parts: Profile of the Respondents, Exposure to Filipino Films, Status/Condition of Filipino Film Industry, Problems of Filipino film Industry, and Implications to Media Education. An open-ended part was included for insights on the variables of the study.

The units of analysis refer to the key informants or participants in the interview. They qualify as key informants if they have been teaching for more than 10 years and with industry practice. The respondents of the study are those who have been teaching from the identified institution offering Communication programs and are teaching major subjects that are not necessarily film subjects.

Results and Discussion

An inquiry was made on the profile of the respondents with respect to school, age, sex, educational qualifications, number of years teaching, and number of years experience in mass communication industry or related fields.

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School	Fulltime/ Part Time	Respondents	Male	Female
Cavite State University	11	11	0	11
De La Salle University-Dasmariñas	16	15	6	7
Emilio Aguinaldo College	6	5	2	3
Perpetual Help University-Molino	4	4	2	2
San Sebastian College-Cavite City	5	5	4	3
TOTAL	42	40	14	26

Table 1
Profile of Respondents

Five (5) schools are represented in the study with majority of full time and part time faculty members participated from the selected schools namely Cavite State University, De La Salle University-Dasmariñas, Emilio Aguinaldo College, Perpetual Help University-Molino and San Sebastian College-Cavite City.

Age Bracket	Total	Years of Teaching Experience	Total
20-30	18	Below 1 year	5
31-40	7	3-5 yrs	16
41-50	10	6-10 yrs	10
51-60	3	11-15 yrs	12
61 up	2	16-20 yrs	4
		21yrs up	3
Total	40		

Table 2.
Age bracket and tenure of respondents

Years of Media Practice	Total
3-5	8
6-10	3
11-15	3
16-20	1
21 up	3
Total	18

Table 3
Years of Media Practice

It is determined that twenty-two (22) respondents do not have any work experience in related communication fields.

Educational Attainment	Total
COMM Related Courses/Dev Com, Broadcasting Mass Comm, Journalism	21
MA in Communication/Comm Management	14
PhD Graduate	3
Others	2
Total	40

Table 4
Educational Qualifications

A majority of the respondents are graduates of Communication-related courses while two faculty members are graduates of Marine Engineering and Ph.D. Linguistics.

The following table corresponds to the exposure level of respondents to films such as:

- frequency of exposure
- medium of exposure
- elements watched in films

General Classification of Films		
Preference	Yes	No
Mainstream	10	0
Indie	2	0
Both	28	0

Table 5.
Respondents' preference for general film classification

The data shows that all of the respondents are exposed to Filipino films – both Indie (Independent Cinema) and Mainstream cinema.

Frequency of Exposure	
Frequency of watching	N=40
Very often	4
Often	9
Fairly often	17
Seldom	11
Not at all	0

Table 6.
Frequency of exposure

Twenty-eight (28) of the respondents have less exposure to films while thirteen (13) have high exposure. This notes Clarino's (Agence France-Presse, 2012) observation that local movies are not given as much support. It was also noted that thirteen respondents watch movies often while thirteen seldom watch movies. These films are watched usually in movie theaters or through cable TV.

When watching films, communication educators put the highest premium on the aspects of story concept or screenplay followed by cinematography, the casting of lead actors and actress or star appeal, then production design.

The artistic aspect of the Filipino film industry covers three factors; "screenplay" which got a mean score of 3.15 interpreted as "good status." "Acting" and "creativity" got mean scores of 3.5 and 3.4 respectively interpreted as "Satisfactory." Creativity covers the use of symbolism, lightings, and special effects in the presentation of the story.

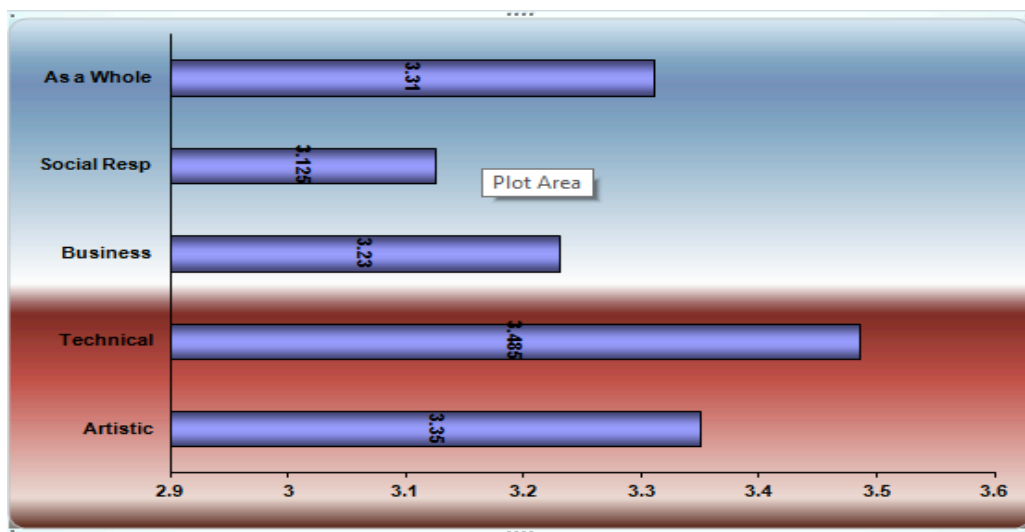


Figure 6. General Mean Scores of Four Aspects

The overall rating of the artistic aspect is 3.35 interpreted as "Good status." These results are similar with the 2001 study "Communication Educators in Metro Manila" which yielded the same results. The study determined that the majority of communication educators look for good story concept or screenplay in films that they watch. They believe that there is a need for good stories to elevate the state of the film industry for the audience to appreciate.

Regarding the current condition of the industry, communication educators expressed neutrality with 3.1 in terms of their satisfaction to the story concepts and creative approaches of Filipino films.

In an interview with Director Jose Mari Avellana (2001), he said that Philippine culture is so rich from its language, arts, and literature which can be used to come up with better film outputs (Garcia & Marasigan, 2001).

According to the Attorney Espiridion Laxa (cited in Garcia & Marasigan, 2001), former Chairman of the Film Academy of the Philippines (FAP), "In order for a movie to be considered a quality one, it must possess the following features: 1) good story, 2) believability, 3) well-written script, 4) good acting, 5) competent direction, and 6) technical aspects such as sound, photography, music, cinematography, etc. should be world-class." He reiterated that, even though a movie possesses the first five aspects, if it did not conform to the technical requisites, then it is not a quality movie because technicalities bring out the best in elements of the film.

Ms. Rosanni Sarile, a film educator, said that Filipino films lack creativity or uniqueness because filmmakers use the same “*kilig*” or romance formula without depth. An important aspect of a film is its ability to connect to its audience which is observed to be missing. In order to establish a connection with the audience, visuals are important and it comes with creativity and artistry in films.

Included in the technical component of a film are editing, directing, production design, cinematography, and sound. Directing got the highest mean of 3.67 which is interpreted as “Good status.” Cinematography Editing techniques follow. The lowest mean score was obtained for “production design” with 3.2.

The overall mean score is 3.47 interpreted as “Satisfactory.”

In general, technical aspect rated well with a total mean score of 3.48 which is the highest of all the aspects of film industry measured in whole. In an article from *Inquirer.net* (March 12, 2010), it was pointed out that the sound aspect of Filipino films is one of the most ignored parts of production work that can be attributed to lack of time especially for “*pito-pito*” movies (indie film), resources, budget, and experts in the field.

The business aspect of the film got a mean score of 3.2 with a mean value of 3.3 for earnings and 3.1 for budget both interpreted as “Good status.” With local films and Indie movies shown in mainstream cinema, some of these films earned well with proper marketing and promotional strategies. In 2013, the following movies earned the most during the Metro Manila Film Festival: “*Boy Girl Bakla Tomboy*” (429 million) followed by “*It Takes a Man and a Woman*” (405 million) both produced by Star Cinema. In 2014, Star Cinema produced “*The Amazing Praybeyt Benjamin*” (456 million) and “*Starting Over Again*” (410 million).

Still, there are Indie movies shown in mainstream cinema due to its remarkable reviews and awards in the Cinemalaya Independent Film Festival with the likes of “*Ang Babae sa Septic Tank*” (Woman in Septic Tank) which won Best Screenplay and Best Picture and was even nominated for the 6th Asian Film Awards. “*Transit*” (2013) competed in the 18th Busan International Film Festival and was even selected as the Philippine entry for Best Foreign Language Film in the 86th Academy Awards. These are low-budget films yet producers were able to get formidable returns of investments. Other independent films such as “*Thelma*” by Director Paul Soriano won the Bronze Palm Award for "demonstrating excellent and outstanding filmmaking" at the 2012 Mexico International Film Festival. <http://www.abs-cbnnews.com>

“*Thy Womb*” in 2012 of Director Brillante Mendoza was awarded three special prizes by other Italian film groups - La Navicella Venezia Cinema Award, the P. Nazareno Taddei Award - Special Mention, and the Bisato d' Oro Award for Best Actress (for Nora Aunor) given by an independent Italian critic group called Premio Della Critica Indipendente.

In September 2015, *Heneral Luna* made history through its promotion in social media. In five (5) weeks, the film earned 240 million gross ticket sales even with the 50% discount offered to student viewers. Facebook pages, Twitter, and other media platforms acknowledged the film’s excellent features apart from its story concept and cinematography.

Moral and social realism got mean scores 3.15 and 3.17 respectively interpreted as “Good status.” The statement “films educate or inform” received a mean score of 3.05 which is the lowest in this category.

An executive of ABS-CBN, Ms. Charo Santos Concio, during the 7th Pinoy Media Congress in 2012 said that the “economics of our country pushes Filipinos not to prioritize local movies much more socially responsible movies.” But according to Enrico Santos, head of the concept development group and new media for ABS-CBN Film Productions Inc., movie outfits now try to balance depth and feel-good entertainment. What is important is that movies promote discussion among its viewers in which they can reflect on their lives, give

substance - a catharsis where it mirrors our lives.

<http://www.abscbnnews.com/entertainment/03/01/12/>

As a whole, the Filipino film industry has a mean rating of 3.31, which means that the status of the Filipino film industry is perceived as “Good” by communication educators. Thus, the movie industry may still flourish. Social responsibility got the lowest mean score of 3.125 while the technical aspect got a high mean score interpreted as “Satisfactory”. It is followed by artistic and business aspects with 3.35 and 3.23 respectively.

Using one sample T-Test, the state of the film industry given the four aspects is rated as “Good” by communication educators. There is a slim dissatisfaction on the part of the respondents as far as the present status of the movie industry is concerned.

The table below presents the perceived condition of the film industry in which the majority of the respondents believe that new story concepts must be created for the audience to appreciate the industry anew. Communication educators perceive the industry negatively due to lack of better film materials or poor story concepts. Respondents have a slight agreement in terms of projection of positive values/moral lessons in our films, readiness to compete in the international market, and satisfaction in terms of its general state.

Perception on Current Condition of Film Industry	Mean	Rank	Remarks
A. There is a need to create good stories to elevate quality of Filipino films and the industry which will eventually be appreciated by Filipino audience.	3.775	1	Agree
B. I believe that the movie industry has improved in the last three years as seen in excellent production aspects	3.475	2	Agree
C. Films today project positive values and impart moral lessons to viewers	3.175	3	Neutral
D. I am satisfied with the general state of today’s film industry because of good story concepts and creative approaches of our films	3.1	4	Neutral
E. Local films are ready to compete in the international market	3.05	5	Neutral

Table 7.
Current condition of the film industry as perceived by communication educators

Respondents were instructed to rate problems through a scale where 1 is regarded as a major problem while 5 is not regarded as a major problem. It is revealed that the majority of communication educators believe that the industry has inadequately skilled movie workers with a mean score of 2.75. This was followed by competition with foreign films and the high cost of production. Over-taxation, lack of government support and film piracy followed next. Nestor U. Torre (in PDI, 2006) said that “the industry gets little support from the Government because the leaders do not see the value of the film medium.”

High taxation in films has been a pressing issue since then having the most heavily taxed in Asia that includes amusement tax, culture tax, income taxes, permit fees etc. Thus, the taxes imposed on filmmakers are shouldered by moviegoers. In order to support local producers, the local Government of Quezon City, the entertainment capital of the Philippines, reduced the amusement tax from 50% to 30% through a city ordinance in 2008 with 0% for local films (Inquirer.net 2010). In 2014, Buhay Party List Representative Lito Atienza filed

House Bill 3840 as a 5-year tax holiday for the film industry to help in its recovery. He believes that the Filipino film industry is dying due to the decline of a number of movies shown in theaters. Being one of the fastest growing industries, the Philippines was used to be recognized internationally in terms of creativity, originality, and talent (www.philstar.com).

The technical quality of foreign films made it difficult for the local industry to compete since moviegoers mostly watched films for entertainment and a sort of enjoyment and diversion. In an interview with cinematographer educator Mr. Richard Padernal, he said that the industry lacks a new breed of good filmmakers and movie workers. From the staff down to the key production heads and even directors, he attested to the unprofessional handling of important aspects of production and the process of filmmaking alone. He also reiterated the lack of support from government leaders considering that past President Joseph Estrada was an actor. Even some of the senators in the country failed to support the dying film industry then. The industry is not dying but the people who are working in the industry.

In contrary to what Padernal presented, one communication educator noted that “Filipinos artists are good directors and actors and have complete stable creative production staff. The producers are just around the corner. It is the story concept or idea that should be given emphasis. Filipinos are great filmmakers too. They just need support from the government.

The table below presents the perceived problems as attested by the respondents:

Problems	Mean	Rank
Inadequate skills of movie workers	2.75	1
Competition with foreign films	2.45	2
High Cost of Production	2.35	3
Over taxation	2.32	4
Lack of Government Support	2.12	5
Film Piracy	2.025	6

Table 8
Problems of Film Industry

Data reveals that patronizing Filipino films ranked first, followed by protection against film piracy and support from the government in terms of tax exemption. In an interview with professor and film maker Elvin Valerio, he said that educators need to use local films in classrooms. Still, he understands the reasons why some communication educators failed to do so because of the lack of film materials in schools. Most of the best films since the 1960s, 70s (Golden Age of cinema) and even in past decades are not archived due to the absence of a national film archive in the country.

Ms. Mojica of Cavite State University likewise said that as educators, support for the industry is shown by simply patronizing Filipino mainstream/indie films as well as encouraging students to watch films in the cinema though she sees the difficulty in convincing students to support the local film industry, unless there is an improvement in story concepts, lessons, or social implications in films. Ms. Rosanni Sarile reiterated that

We failed to educate our moviegoers but as communication professors, we educate our students. However, teachers need to be educated also in terms of

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the use of local films for teaching and that is media literacy. But it seems only a few communication educators really watch local films and use them in teaching. (September 2015)

This perspective of Ms. Sarile was even attested by the views of Mr. Padernal and Mr. Valerio, filmmakers and educators who said that most of the communication educators use the old classic foreign films in teaching. Thus, appreciation of the cinema was in foreign films not in the local films among students, despite the fact that there are Filipino films that have been awarded locally and internationally.

This part presents the suggested solutions from the academic sector to address the present problems of the film industry. From the scale of 1-5 having 1 as the major solution down to 5 as the least solution. The highest rank in terms of the solution is to provide high-quality training to those who will constitute the backbone of the profession. This represents the need to educate students who will be the future workforce in the industry to be more creative.

The succeeding table presents the perceived solution to the problems:

Proposed Solutions	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Patronize Filipino films	1.8	Major	1
Legislation for the protection against film piracy	2.15	Above A.	2
Support from government in terms of tax exemption/reduction	2.17	Above A	3
More training and seminar programs for movie workers	2.25	Above A.	4
Reduction of taxes imposed on film production	2.32	Above A.	5
Support from private sector for funding	2.32	Above A.	6

Table 9
Solutions to the Problems of Film Industry

Legend:

1.00-1.79	Major
1.80-2.59.1	Above Average
2.60-3.39.1	Average
3.40-4.19.1	Below Average
4.20-5.0	Least

According to Mr. Padernal, there is a need to educate students in the language of photography. Next is offering extension activities for faculty members to share their experiences and knowledge outside the academic community. The establishment of the Cavite Filmmakers Association in 2014 is a way to promote Philippine Independent film industry in the province of Cavite by initiating film showings, film competitions, workshops and training for students and other activities which will help enhance and develop skills of its members who will constitute the backbone of the industry. This organization will likewise promote Cavite culture and develop the new breed of filmmakers that the industry is longing for. The National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) National Committee on Cinema supports “Pelikultura” which was last held in De La Salle University-Dasmariñas in

cooperation with the Cavite Filmmakers Association, is an avenue where love for films and eye for details are being enhanced among the students.

Hence, the academic sector is already doing its part in the suggested solution mentioned that ranked 1st in this category. Regarding the inclusion of film appreciation subject in the curriculum, the K12 program has already included the subject in the Grade 11-12 curriculums.

Both Cinemalaya and CinemaOne film festivals aim to develop and provide an avenue for new breed of filmmakers but centered primarily in Metro Manila. In 2009, the National Committee on Cinema (NCC), under the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), launched Cinema Rehiyon to bring the festival in several regions in the country with the hope of providing the needed support of local filmmakers (Valdoz, 2015).

SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS	MEAN	RANK
1. Provide high quality training to those who will constitute the backbone of the profession	1.725	1
2. Come up with extension activities to enable faculty to disseminate and share their expertise with groups, institutions, associations outside the academe	1.775	2
3. Strengthen the use of media education techniques(films) in the classroom	1.825	3
4. Allowing teachers and students to use the medium of film in teaching-learning process	2.025	4
5. Incorporate film appreciation subject in the curriculum	2.075	5

Table 10
Proposed Solutions from the Academic Sector

The respondents perceive the film industry as “Good” which means that there are still areas that need improvement to achieve a satisfactory mark. Findings of the study reveal that the majority of communication educators have a fair exposure to both mainstream and indie films which could possibly lead to the non-endorsement of local films for appreciation or critiquing. In terms of their exposure to the medium, it was evident that almost half of the respondents are exposed to local films through DVDs and cable TV.

Techniques	Mean	Rank
Conduct film showings and film discussions	7.44	1
Make videos, films, storyboards, scripts, etc. as part of the course requirements	7.025	2
Examine different symbolic codes employed in a particular medium, e.g., visual, auditory codes used in a film through critical analysis	6.76	3
Encourage students to support Independent Cinema or Indie films	6.54	4
Go on excursions to media institutions, film production outfits, film training schools and film centers, etc.	6.5	5
Invite guest speakers from film institutions to discuss on issues and conduct seminars on film criticism/appreciation	6.38	6
Discussion and debate on Filipino film industry and the experiences of the	6.25	7

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students in relation to watching local films		
Use a role-play to explore the nature of the occupations involved in film production, e.g., writing, directing, production designs, editing, etc.	5.89	8
Conduct surveys and use questionnaires to investigate Filipino moviegoers' habits and preferences	5.5	9
Imitate a film product in order to explore the conventions, e.g., re-enact a particular scene from a film	4.88	10
Alter the form of film product to see what effect this has, e.g., adding or omitting sound tract or visual, editing, recording sequences of images	4.26	11

Table 11
Media Education Techniques

Conclusion

Results of this study reveal that the majority of the respondents have less exposure to films and that 11 out of 40 respondents seldom watch movies. These mainstream and indie films are mostly viewed through movie theaters, cable TV, and videos at home. When watching films, communication educators put the highest premium on the aspects of story concept or screenplay.

The academic sector suggested the following solutions on the problems of the film industry as follows: provide high quality training to those who will constitute the backbone of the profession; come up with extension activities to enable faculty to disseminate and share their expertise with groups, institutions, associations outside the academe; and strengthen the use of media education techniques (films) in the classroom.

It was evident that most communication educators ranked 1st the conduct of film showings and film discussions followed by the making of videos, films, storyboards, scripts etc. as part of the course as mostly used media education techniques in the classroom.

Communication educators believe that there is a need to educate film workers and personnel and not only intensify but also promote media education in secondary and tertiary levels. Suggestions were made to strive for originality, new formulas, better story concepts and use films as tools for education and not just for its entertainment value. They believe that, in order to elevate the status of the film industry, story concept and screenplay must be given crucial attention. Media education is a great responsibility and Cavite Communication Educators agree that they are called for to propagate the importance of such in this changing society.

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