

COMPARISON OF IBEROAMERICAN FILM EDUCATION AND INDUSTRY PROFILE IN THE RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES

CILECT RESEARCH PROJECT

Report (May 2003)

1. INTRODUCTION

The research Project presented by Universidad UNIACC, with the support of the Universidad de Sao Paulo and the Universidad de Buenos Aires, was approved by the General Assembly of CILECT on April 2002 in Melbourne. The complete development of the project should be finished early 2004.

In mid 2002 the Mexican school CCC joined the project and the Spanish school ESCAC got interested as observer.

The core of this research is the analysis of the impact that film industry and market should have on film education. Particularly relevant is the analysis of distribution and deal making strategies that make possible professional film production.

The project's goal is to deliver specific proposals that, based on such research, will allow a substantial improvement of film education, with strong emphasis on economic and legal elements that make possible professional production and distribution. That goal will be specified through some curricula proposal and production parameters.

The artistic and technical aspects of film education will strongly benefit from this wider understanding on film industry works.

The final conclusion will be specific recommendations that the project will deliver to CILECT, in order to improve teaching and production processes in film schools. It will also suggest actions to promote international cooperation between schools, in terms of teaching, production and distribution.

2. THE PROJECT'S FOUNDATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT

The initial point of view that UNIACC had when it proposed the project was the comparison of existing film education and industry profile in some countries. This comparison shows some evident weaknesses:

- When finishing their film education most students have not learned how the economic and legal processes are essential in developing and managing any professional film project, mostly in the distribution subject.
- School film production has very a tiny real market and films produced show significant differences with most requirements that industry demands.

- Film schools do not cooperate collectively to make the best use of opportunities emerging from industry, as for development and distribution of their own product.

Therefore the Project is specifically oriented to improve the students understanding of this kind of problems and to create an appropriate attitude among schools professors and executives.

In the initial discussions of these ideas two meetings have taken place with the participating schools. These events have made possible the definition of the project's goal and limits, along with its potential impact.

A first meeting, occurred during the "Fábrica Audiovisual" (Audiovisual Factory, August 2002) of the Universidad de Buenos Aires, led to the definition of the project's goals and possible outputs. The schools gathered there concluded that the main result of this research should be some curricula and other educational elements that could allow a substantial improvement of film learning, as a consequence of the better understanding on how professional industry works. They also agreed the production of some documentary that could help the project's promotion through professional exhibition jeans. They also agreed in the development of some specific production prototype that could allow a successful schools collaborative effort including distribution solutions.

A second meeting, occurred during the 2nd International Student Film Festival of the Universidad UNIACC (Chile, December 2002), established a new discussion on the initial goals and the evaluation of the project's progress. To improve the communication level of the participants of the research, the schools agreed on the set-up of a web site where the project progress and comments could be permanently uploaded and revised. An audiovisual synopsis of some interviews on industry executives already produced was disregarded as an official result of the project. Additionally the participant schools agreed on the importance to including the property rights and co-production information within the project content, considering the possibility of some future international collaboration of schools when producing and distributing some product created on the academic level. It was concluded that a division of labour would benefit the overall progress, agreeing on individual responsibilities:

- UNIACC is working on the market research and gathers opinions from industry executives on the project's subject, including legal information on property rights and co-production laws.
- UBA is working on the development of some curricula and related educational recommendations.
- USP is working on the case study inside Brazilian market being this country one the biggest markets in the world.
- CCC has committed in working on the development of some production prototype that could allow international collaboration, for future production in a second stage of the academic research.

Other participant schools will collaborate in the overall analysis of these proposals.

3. METHODOLOGY

Based on the initial goals, revised during meetings and further discussions, the methodology for the Project has been divided in four stages:

- a) Information gathering method on the market and industry reality.
 - ⇒ Bringing together data on how independent film market is structured and which are its current trends.
 - ⇒ Selecting, at local scale, some study cases related to school production or projects alike, which have been successful in accessing professional international distribution.
 - ⇒ Bringing together opinions from industry executives about the required characteristics that any school product should meet to access professional distribution.
 - ⇒ Bringing together opinions from industry executives about weaknesses that film education currently has to allow future professional filmmakers to successfully develop project within this industry segment.
 - ⇒ Bringing together information on legal aspects related to property rights and international co-production treaties that eventually schools should deal with in order to collaborate on student film production and distribution.
- b) Development of proposals related to curricula, student production and promotion of the project results.
 - ⇒ Specifying themes on distribution and other industry activities on which any improvement of film education should be based.
 - ⇒ Researching the schools approach to existing curricula on distribution and international production collaboration.
 - ⇒ Creating and discussing curricula alternatives related to distribution and other key industry issues.
 - ⇒ Developing some production prototype that will facilitate cooperation between schools and establish conditions to produce students films with better access to distribution.
- c) Discussion of proposals inside schools faculty and executives.
 - ⇒ Defining, at local scale, events where this discussion can take place.
 - ⇒ Defining events where participating schools shall agree common points of view.
 - ⇒ Promoting invitations to non participating schools that could benefit from the project's outputs.
 - ⇒ Writing definitive recommendations and suggestions in terms of curricula, school production and promotion of results.
 - ⇒ Writing specific proposals to improve schools collaboration.
 - ⇒ Writing specific recommendations in terms of school production.
 - ⇒ Writing specific suggestion for the promotion of results and the best use of these outputs.

4. STATUS

Up to date (May 2003), after almost one year of progress since the CILECT approved it, the following aspects have been achieved:

a) Gathering of information on market and industry:

To understand the independent film market trends, UNIACC has made the following actions:

- data that represent the indie market structure,
- direct interviews with key local production and distribution executives,
- phone/Internet interviews with similar executives on top positions of the international market,
- interviews available on Internet and libraries.

⇒ A few study cases are being researched in Chile, selected from local features recently released in theaters, produced inside schools with box office success. This research is being developed as a Thesis work.

⇒ In Chile we are developing a method that make possible comparisons between opinions from executives (on education weaknesses) with the real experience of recently graduated students.

⇒ In Chile we are collecting and processing information on property rights and coproduction laws/treatises that establish parameters for international collaboration. This research is being developed as a Thesis work.

⇒ In Brazil they are collecting information about the local market and industry, their relevant trends and product requirements.

b) Developing educational proposals:

⇒ UBA is created experiences on curricula analysis and adding to current teachings topics related to distribution and industry.

⇒ At the same time, some specialized advanced programs are being created to improve professional training.

c) Discussion of basic proposals:

⇒ In December 2002 UNIACC proposed a budget model and some questionnaire on the interest on the project. Participating schools have been requested to deliver suggestions in the short term. At the same time, the budget will be sent out to CILECT as soon as participating schools give their input. The questionnaire will be sent to other schools that get interested in the project.

⇒ CCC has recently open a Yahoo free webpage (<http://mx.groups.yahoo.com/group/cilectiberoamerica/>) that shall facilitate instant availability of reports and suggestions. In a first stage, the site is accessible only to the participating schools.

⇒ UNIACC has started weekly sessions with the film faculty to create discussions on the content and scope of the existing proposals.

⇒ UBA and USP have proposed the Project for official discussion inside some events of these two schools (August and September 2003).

⇒ CCC has proposed developing an idea to produce a collaborative school film that will facilitate cooperation, feasible for international distribution.

⇒ CCC has proposed developing a documentary idea as a promotional tool for the Project.

5. CONCLUSION

In the current stage of development, is it already visible the huge potential of the Project to improve some essential aspects of the educational reality of film schools:

- a) Expansion of content related to economical and legal aspects of professional filmmaking.
- b) Expansion of collaborative activities between schools, both in education and production.
- c) Updating of the existing curricula.

Within this context, is it essential to promote school participation in the Project, so they can contribute with their specific expertise and benefit with the results.

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- ⇒ In Brazil they are collecting information about the local market and industry, their relevant trends and product requirements.
- b) Developing educational proposals:
 - ⇒ UBA is created experiences on curricula analysis and adding to current teachings topics related to distribution and industry.
 - ⇒ UNIACC has recently created new curricula for the undergraduate film school that strongly incorporate issues on distribution, executive production, property rights management and industry deal making. At the same time, some specialized advanced programs are being created to improve professional training.
- c) Discussion of basic proposals:
 - ⇒ In December 2002 UNIACC proposed a budget model and some questionnaire on the interest on the project. Participating schools have been requested to deliver suggestions in the short term. At the same time, the budget will be sent out to CILECT as soon as participating schools give their input. The questionnaire will be sent to other schools that get interested in the project.
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