

The Role of Film Policies in the Growth of Kenya's Film Industry: Case Study of Film and Stage Act – Cap 222

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Cite: Githinji, K. W. (2020). The Role of Film Policies in the Growth of Kenya's Film Industry: Case Study of Film and Stage Act – Cap 222. *The University Journal*, 2(1), 71-80.

Abstract

This paper examines the role of film policies in the growth of the film industry in Kenya, analyzing and reviewing the current Film and Stage Plays Act – CAP 222 and a suggested draft of the Nation Film Policy in 2015. The prime motivation of the paper is to propose how the proposed Nation Film Policy in 2015 could assist in the growth of the film industry in Kenya. Information in this research will be obtained from primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through a content analysis of the current and proposed Film and Stage Plays Act – CAP 222. The secondary data will sources include; journals, internet, and books from the library. The film policy is a proposal to ensure the film is a beaming key in the creative industries. The Government recognizes the film industry as a key growth and acknowledges a need for developing a Policy and strategies for interventions and development in promoting growth in the film industry.

Keywords: Film, Policies, Film industry, Film and Stage Plays Act – Cap 222, Film Growth, Film Unions

Introduction

The film is a creative industry that grosses millions of dollars in Hollywood. Countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Egypt, and South Africa film industries are prospering. The film industry will succeed when the policies made by the Government tend to support the filmmakers. Film policies are supposed to make the working environment of the film industry in Kenya workable. Some of the issues arising from the current Kenyan film policy from Films and Stage Play Act (Cap 222) enacted as an Act of Parliament in 1962 include the licensing issue and fees. In order for filmmakers to earn a living from their work, their licensing fees need to be reduced and this will make production costs go down.

A proposed National Film Policy was drawn, and it consisted of various stakeholders from the industry including filmmakers. The policy was supposed to improve the film policies in Kenya but until now since 2015 nothing has been done concerning the issue. The paper is a reflection of the current Films and Stage Play Act (Cap 222) and the proposed National Film Policy, and some of the suggestions that have been made in improving the quality of the Film industry in Kenya. The history of Film in Kenya is also covered to show where the industry came from and how the changing of the film policies can make the industry move further. As much as there is so much discussion pertaining to the policies, if it is not changed, it begs the question, “Are there other solutions apart from changing the film policies?”

Literature Review

Film has become a powerful tool for culture, leisure, education, and the governments wishing to drive development agenda. The Film industry in Kenya is critical on three levels; economic, political and social. The industry plays a vital role in communicating ideology, information and ideas. (*National Film Policy*, 2015)

The economic level, the industry turns over billions of dollars and creating jobs for millions throughout the world. The film industry generates jobs to companies dealing with pre-production, production and post-production, crew and cast agencies, set-design, prop suppliers, equipment-hiring and manufacturing, inclusive of marketing and distribution. Jobs created indirectly in supporting industries such as banking, transport, hospitality and insurance.

Political level, it provides a forum for discussion and debate as well as crucial information for citizen's participation in community life. Culturally, the film industry is a contributor to the nation's cultural life and continues in developing and shaping Kenya's national identity.

The social level, Kenya's iconic film industry showcases the creativity and talents of producers, actors, writers, post-production professionals and directors. Film is a platform to nurture and build people's cultural diversity. Film is about cultural diversity, location and people telling our own story.

History of Film in Kenya

In the early 1900s, filmmaking first started in Kenya, which was characterized through the coming of the colonial administrators, missionaries and game hunters. When the film cameras landed on Kenyan soil it created a shift in the cultural and social structure of the society in Kenya. The first cameras landing in Kenya were brought by game hunters, tourists, and explorers wishing they were going to record their adventure for their own personal consumption. The 26th President to the United States of America, Theodore Roosevelt, on September 14th, 1901, and March 4th, 1909, a recording was made of his escapade. He chose to take a trip of five months and got a British wild photographer Cherry Keaton, who knew the terrain well enough (Mungai, 2012). The footage was compiled for the entire film leading to the first documentary to be produced in Kenya also in film history since the camera invention by Lumiere brothers in France in the 1890s.

The 1920s, a documentary *Africa Speaks* was produced which is an expedition of East and Central Africa it opened the viewers to territories not seen by foreigners or fellow Africans. A Metro Goldwyn Mayer (MGM) Production, Production was shot in 1931 dealing with the business of animal trophy stories succeeding in Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania, which became a commercial Kenyan feature film. The Bantu Educational Kinema Experiment (BECE) program, established in 1935 was geared in the propagation of the superiority of the European lifestyle and culture, while Africa is degraded in the process. BECE program was disbanded, in order to create room for the formation of the African Film Unit in 1939.

20th Century film production, the *Snows of Kilimanjaro* was shot in 1952 in Kenya, was shot with a high population of hippopotami pointing Lake Naivasha as one of the locations. The story looks at the captivating wildlife and interaction in the locals speaking Swahili, as they take a boat round East Africa and tracking the Kilimanjaro, which is considered the tallest mountain in the equator with a snow cap (Mungai, 2012). The *History of Film in Kenya* is a 1970 film compilation documentary that was made by Barasa Nyongesa and many television

stations were interested. It was still in the 1970s, filmmakers documented the history of freedom fighters and all individuals in Kenya who assisted in attaining independence. There was always focus on Mzee Jomo Kenyatta and his numerous policies and philosophies which he introduced and he advocated for covertly.

In 1970, a film on Maasai Heritage was produced ‘*Imaashoi Ol Maasae*’ that meant ‘people of the red ochre’ it is a 45-minute documentary narrated depicting the culture, origin, and lifestyle of the Maasai people from a European perspective. Film Unit Production made a 30-minute documentary *The Tender Ones* focused on children’s growth, upbringing and development in different areas of Kenya. It was scripted, produced and directed by John Sibi Okumu and Gilbert Githere (Okiuma & Mugubi, 2015). In 1952, *Mau Mau* film as made when the British declared the State of Emergency in Kenya with the intention of vanquishing the ‘*Mau Mau*’ uprising. Anthony Howarth and David Koff production made a 48-minute documentary film in 1973, which was narrated Musindo Mwinyipembe a BBC journalist from Tanzania.

Allan Root and Joan his wife, shot Safari using an Air Balloon in 1976 capturing the aerial view of Mount Kilimanjaro and the aerial photography was done from a hot air balloon. A 30-minute compilation of a documentary *The Busy Leader* made a commemoration of a decade leadership of a Jomo Kenyatta presidency. The documentary was copyrighted by Voice of Kenya now Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) in 1978. In 1981, *The Rise and Fall of Amin* were shot in Nairobi, depicting the terror in Uganda through the rule of President Idi Amin Dada who ruled from 1971 to 1979 and considered the third President of Uganda. It was directed by Sherad Patel, and he was also among the cruelest leaders in Africa (Okiuma and Mugubi, 2015).

It was around 1981, there was the formation of Film Production Department (FDP) now Department of Film Services (DFS) came into existence, due to the need of regulation and censorship of all audio-visual and performing content which intensified. The mandate was grounded in an Act of Parliament – Chapter 222 of the Film and Stage Plays Act consented on November 22nd, 1962 and started to operate on October 1st, 1963. The mission provides for controlling of making cinematography films, for the licensing of stage plays, theatres, and cinemas; and for purposes incidental there too and connected thereof. It changed to Kenya Film Classification Board (KFCB), whose core function is to enforce, rate and monitor films before they are released to the public for viewership (Okiuma & Mugubi, 2015).

In 1989, *Saikati* film was made by Ann Mungai about a young Maasai girl who has been betrothed to the chief’s son. She runs away to Nairobi to live with her cousin and goes to school to pursue her education. Ann Mungai made a 60-minute docudrama *Wekesa at Crossroads* in 1986, it's followed by *Promise of Love*, *Tough Choices*, *Pongezi*, *Usilie Mtoto wa Africa* and *Hope Beyond Tears*. Wanjiru Kinyanjui made a film *Battle of the Sacred Tree* in 1995, an 82-minute comedy of an independent Kikuyu girl Mumbi defying social conventions and walks out on Mwangi her abusive husband (Diang’a, 2005). Jane Murage Munene produced *Behind Closed Doors*, a 2002 feature film voicing women undergoing violence silently, and Mrs. Jabali is the center of the story.

Enough is Enough, a production by Kibaara M’ Kaugi was released in 2005 and looks at the contribution of women in the fight against colonialism in Kenya. *Me and Mo*, 2006 nostalgic compilation documentary by the one and only son Salim Amin. Mohamed ‘Mo’ Amin perished in an airline from Ethiopia hijacked by terrorists and crashed at the Indian Ocean. In 2008,

From *A Whisper*, a feature film by Wanuri Kahiu based on the real-life events in the two bombings of the US Embassies in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi (Diang' a, 2005). *The First Grade* is a movie seeking correction of past injustices and the production is 103 minutes long. It is about an ex Mau Mau freedom fighter who is 84 years old and fights for his right to go to school and get an education that could never afford. *Something Necessary* a film about Anne woman struggling the time of the post-election violence in 2007, claiming her husband's life, the son's health and leaving her farm in ruins. Ng'endo Mukii made a short animated film in 2012 *Yellow Fever* grappling with issues of bleaching of the skin which is becoming rampant among men and women of the black race.

In 2012, Jinna Mutune produced *Leo*, a little boy who believes he is a hero, with supernatural abilities thus earning him torture and bullying. Ekwa Msangi-Omari wrote *Taharuki* and Kia Barbee co-produced it, a television drama inspired by real-life events (Okioma and Mugubi, 2015). *The Dance for Wives* (2009) by Paul Ekuru is a love story of Sangoma Mkenya who is a photo-journalist who falls in love with a beautiful lady, Nola Mapenzi. *The Rugged Priest* (2011), is the memory of Anthony Kaiser, whose body was found in central Rift Valley along Nakuru-Marigat road. Albert Wandago produced *Naliaka Is Going* and directed by Brutus Sirucha depicting Kenyan problems of education, poverty, unemployment, and early Marriage. In *My Genes* (2009), a documentary produced by Lupita Nyong'o on the stigma borne by albinos and its 78 minutes (Okioma & Mugubi, 2015).

Methodology

Primary data were obtained through a content analysis of the current and proposed Film and Stage Plays Act – CAP 222. The source of secondary data included journals, the internet, and books from the library. The film policy is a proposal to ensure film in the beaming key in the creative industries. The Government recognizes the film industry as a key growth and acknowledges a need for developing a Policy and strategies for interventions and development in promoting growth in the film industry.

Discussion of Findings

Importance of the National Film Policy

The film industry has a huge potential in the contribution to the vision 2030 economic pillar in terms of wealth creation and jobs in the distribution and production of films. It also includes the generation of tax revenues and foreign exchange. It has led to the contribution of the political and social pillar of vision 2030 through films which lead to promotion of national values, aspiration, and cohesion of the Kenyan people (National Film Policy, 2015).

The National Film Policy were developed with the following justifications:

- a) Building the national brand
- b) Increasing the economic growth
- c) Promoting of Heritage and National Culture
- d) Promotion of Integration and National Cohesions
- e) Promotion of Tourism

Kenya Film Classification Board

Kenya Film Classification Board was formerly known as Kenya Film Censorship Board, established in 1939 and an enacted Films and Stage Play Act (Cap 222) enacted as an Act of Parliament in 1962 - ensuring that screening of films to the public is in line with culture and national aspirations. The mandate of the board includes video business registration, film

classification, inspections of video and public materials. The board's offers services such as the issuance of certifications to exhibitors and distributors, clarifying and amending new films as per the Kenya Communication Act of 2008 of the Films and Stage Plays. The Board gives guidelines in the classification and examination of films, follow up on broadcasting, exhibiting of film distribution ensuring that no film is broadcasted or exhibited privately or publicly unless the broadcast is examined and certificate approval is issued (Cradle, 2019). Each film submitted to KFCB is supposed to be reviewed and placed into a classification rating such as:

- a) General exhibition (GE),
- b) Parental Guidance (PG),
- c) 16 and 18/A.

The rating and classification are based on the following aspects below:

- a) Amount and frequency of violence (crime)
- b) Amount and frequency of sex, horror, and nudity
- c) Amount and frequency of drugs, tobacco, solvents, and alcohol
- d) Amount and frequency of profanity, religion, and community
- e) On violence and crime in films, the Board checks on excessive blood; dismembered or disfigured limbs and bodies; prolonged images of dead or seriously injured people; explicit cruelty or violence towards human beings or animals; celebration or glorification of crimes.
- f) On sex, obscenity, and nudity, the Board rates nudity, exposure of fondling of female breasts, human or animal sexual organs and explicit images of sexual activities or pornography.
- g) On horror and the occult, rating takes in account films that glorify or encourage horror and occult; instill fear or revulsion about the consequences of not following such practices.
- h) Films that justify, Promote, encourage or glamorize use or misuse of drug-related product, smoking, tobacco, and alcohols are also classified.

The vision of the Kenya Classification Board is to be a world film content regulator. As for its mission, it's to safeguard national norms and values through efficient, effective and professional film regulatory services.

Section 12 (2) of Film and Stage Plays Act Cap 222 stipulates No class of film will be distributed, exhibited or broadcasted, either privately or publicly, unless the Board has examined it and given a certificate of approval in respect thereof.

The Board does not work on its own but there are laws that support its functions such as The National Cohesion and Integration Act, 2008, The Sexual Offences Act, 2006, Penal Code Cap 63, The Constitution of Kenya 2010, The Alcoholic Drinks Control Act 2010 and The Children Act Cap 586 Laws of Kenya. The mandate of the Board is empowered by the Kenya Information and Communications Act (KICA) of 1998, Cap 411A was included in the Act of 2013. The Board also is mandated by the Kenya Communication regulations 2009 Section 34 (1) (a) it ensures content depicts, contains scenes or are of the language intended for an adult audience are not aired during the watershed period (5 am to 10 pm). Watershed is the time in radio and television schedules after which adult material can be broadcasted later. Any movies or programmes classified by KFCB as Parental Guidance (PG), General Exhibition (GE) or

rated 16 is aired during this period. Rating of 18 are strictly aired after 10 pm and are for adults only. Adverts are rated unsuitable or suitable for the watershed period due to their uniqueness.

Film and Stage Play Act (2012), Section 15 of Cap 222, the Board examines every film, imposing age restrictions of viewership and giving of advice to the consumers as they have regard to the protection of children and women.

KFCB is also mandated to rate films, during examination the intensity and frequency of all the classifiable elements are put into a scale of 0-5. The scale is as follows; General Exhibition (GE) - Low impact classifiable elements, Parental Guidance (PG) — Mild impact classifiable elements, 16 — Moderate impact classifiable elements, 18 — Strong impact classifiable elements and Restricted — Extreme impact classifiable elements.

In the 1970s, films in Kenya were of better quality because of large Asian and white population in Kenya. The Kenya Censorship Board had a full-time officer the only position in East Africa which was on a voluntary basis. The role of the Kenya Film Censorship Board was classifying films and cutting out offensive parts that were considered to have material containing nudity and violence. Due to low viewership, there was one film society based in Nairobi and it covered the whole film society in East Africa. University colleges of Makerere and Dar es Salaam had smaller film societies which survived until 1961 and 1962 and they became independent.

While assessing the Kenyan film industry at its centenary in 2009, Simiyu Barasa looked back and forward and declared: While the dizzying heights of Hollywood and Bollywood have not been reached by Kenyan filmmakers, the journey looks bright and exciting. This excitement has taken one hundred years to grow since the first images of the country were captured on tape in 1909 by Cherry Keaton, a wildlife photographer who filmed the American President Theodore Roosevelt when he came on a wildlife safari in Kenya in 1909. The resultant film, 'Theo in Africa' was screened in 1910 (Barasa, 2011).

Social media is applications and websites enabling users to create and share content or they participate in social networking. It includes; Facebook, Youtube, WhatsApp, Tumblr, Twitter, and LinkedIn. KFCB is facing the challenge of controlling the content on the digital platform. The four challenges KFCB is facing online content include; Self-regulation for unregulated internet, inadequate infrastructure to assist in monitoring content which is distributed online. Lack of a global approach to rules due to cultural and belief differences, for instance, aired content by Canada is not the same as in Israel. Finally, new technology renders the current legal framework inadequate.

Proposed of the Mandate of Kenya Film Classification Board

The new mandate of the Board as adopted and proposed by the Presidential Taskforce on Parastatal Reforms shall be;

Issuing of film regulation licenses in ensuring content consumed adhering to the national. Moral and cultural values. Classifying and examining all films using the National Film Classification Guidelines of children protection from consumption of adult content. Monitoring broadcast content consumption and advising the counties on violations of media thus their lives and businesses being impacted. Harmonizing and developing county policies in informing the development of national policies on pornography and film consumption. Formulating of classification guidelines, regulations, policy and standards for the film industry (National Film Policy, 2015).

Updating and maintaining the National Classified Films Catalogue for use by counties; maintaining the database of film exhibitors and distributors countrywide in monitoring and curb circulation of pornographic films across counties. Benchmarking on best practices from varying countries in informing counties and helping in the review of adoption and policies of best practices.

Film and Stage Plays Act – Cap 222

It is an Act of Parliament which controls making, an exhibition of stage plays, cinematograph films, theatres, and cinemas; for purposes incidental thereto and connected therewith. While making films, no films are to be made within Kenya for sale or public exhibition outside or within Kenya without receiving a license from the KFCB. The board must approve and the subject follows the conditions and terms of a filming license issued by the licensing officer.

A film license application is made through the licensing officer in writing which is accompanied by a full description of scenes and dialogue, also include whether there is a part of the film to be made outside Kenya. If any subtitles, descriptions, texts, titles or other parts of the film is in another language other than English they should be a translation. The licensing officer offers the license once he approves the documents provided adhere to the film regulations.

The licensing officer is obliged in his discretion, refuse or issue filming once the application has been made. He or she may issue it to subject on conditions that a police officer or an inspector, be present at the film making and to such other conditions he may think fit. Any alterations or additions to be made on the text, scenes or synopsis of a film with respect to the filming license have been issued. The subject must write to the licensing officer seeking permission to make the addition or alteration, and the application must be accompanied by the film license. If the alteration or addition made is not in English, it must be translated.

The licensing officer may by writing exempt provision of any part or class of film, this is in reference to the person or class of persons making the film. KFCB consists of; a chairman appointed by the Minister, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry for the time being responsible for the matters relating to communications and information, the Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, the Chief Executive Officer and Eight members appointed by the Minister by virtue of their experience and knowledge.

No film shall be exhibited to the public or distributed unless the subject is registered as a distributor or exhibitor by the Board and issued with a certificate. The films that are distributed, exhibited or broadcasted, privately or publicly, unless the Board has examined the film, and issued a certificate of approval. Any subject who exhibits any films in opposition of the subsections he shall be found guilty of the offense.

Every application for a certificate of approval shall be made to the Board and it is accompanied by the entire films and a copy of the poster used to be displayed publicly. The poster should contain a full description of the verbal and visual content. The certificate of approval involves approval of public display subject to alteration or deletion and the board can also refuse to approve the film for public display. Films unsuitable for children can be ruled as adults only, or it can be rated as unsuitable for children under the age of ten years or sixteen years. The issue shall issue a certificate of approval subject to the condition that children are not supposed

to watch the film. Any person guilty of an offense under the Act shall be liable to imprisonment or paying a fine liable to a fine not exceeding one hundred thousand shillings. A person convicted or is found guilty for instance; shooting films without a license or not adhering to the Act as a filmmaker.

Proposed Film and Stage Plays Act – Cap 222

The Act provides regulation of broadcasting, creation, distribution, possessions, and exhibitions of films in Kenya. The Act is established by the Licensing Officer and the Kenya Film Classification Board (KFCB). Their roles involve; examining films with the purpose of classification; imposing restrictions of age on viewership and giving consumers advice with regards to children and women protection against sexual degradation and exploitation in films and the internet.

The major challenge in enforcement and implement of the Act is the imposed penalties being low which doesn't serve to deter, there have been numerous amendment of the Act leading to the interpretation of the Act difficult, definitions being outdated and the Act being outdated due to the technological advances (National Film Policy, 2015).

The policy made calls for repealing of the Film and Stage Plays Act, Cap 222 and the policy recommended:

- a) Establishment of the Kenya Film Commission, its mandate and function of development, marketing, and management of the Kenyan Film Industry.
- b) Provision of the establishment of a Classification Board, its mandate and functions of examining, regulating, and classifying audio-visual content.
- c) Provision for the sustainable and regulation of films and film services and activities.

During the International TV and Film Market at the Kenyatta International Convention Centre in Nairobi, the ICT Cabinet Secretary, Joe Mucheru said, "The government is working on a film policy which is supposed to spur the growth of the film industry." The statement clearly indicates film policies spur growth in the Film Sector (Mukara, 2019).

The highlights of the policy include; the establishment of a national film fund catering the tax and financial credits, incentives and rebates for the film industry (Mukara, 2019). The Policy encourages and enhances partnerships, public and private areas in film. It strengthens the collaborations with the other countries and the county governments in filmmaking through co-production treaties allowing for facilitation and promotion of cultural exchange (Mukara, 2019).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The National Film proposed draft was made in 2015, but up to 2019 none of the issues that have been highlighted have been tackled or taken into consideration. Countries such as Nigeria, South Africa, and Ghana have progressed in the Film industry because of the Film Policies that favour the filmmakers and create an environment they can work effectively. The paper covered the importance of policies and how it can help grow the film industry in Kenya.

Since 2015, after the proposed National Film Policy was drafted nothing has changed or done, regards to this. According to Cabinet Secretary Joe Mucheru of ICT he mentioned "The government is working on a film policy which is supposed to spur the growth of the film industry." (Mukara, 2019).

Funding is crucial in the film industry and the licensing fees for both local and international filmmakers needs to be reduced. Countries such as Morocco and South Africa have recognized the importance of film and the revenue it brings in. Hence, Hollywood filmmakers go and shoot film ‘The Mummy’ acted by Tom Cruise was shot in Namibia. This brings a lot of revenue for both the country and also creating jobs for the locals.

According to an article by CNN (2017), Morocco is Africa’s little Hollywood because it is an environment that seems safer to them. A country like Morocco has welcoming rates for the Hollywood Filmmakers and it is now considered as Africa’s little Hollywood. Morocco has a vibrant film industry of its own, making plenty of skilled workers available to the foreign companies, which cut costs by only bringing the key staff from the U.S (Morlin-Yron, 2017).

In an article from *Sunday Nation* (2018), Film directors who spoke said there had been no in the film industry and it disappointed them to see films shot in Tanzania or South African yet some of the events happened in Kenya.

In comparison, in South Africa, filmmakers are given tax rebate of up to 25% to shoot their films there. So if they fulfill required guidelines to shoot in South Africa, then, they get a percentage of their money back, plus they get the chance to support black-owned businesses.

Kenya Film Commission was launched and the government pledged the following:

- a) security of the actors,
- b) crew and equipment and
- c) provide a suitable tax incentive package including relevant rebates,
- d) waiver of government-related fees including those relating to filming, national parks and heritage sites.

These are some of the things that had been promised and are yet to happen. As much as the filmmakers want to grow and be at par with other countries, these may take a while since the policies are yet to be changed.

Borrowing from other countries and industries, they tend to be successful because filmmakers have a union. If the filmmakers spoke with one voice, then change would happen, just like journalists and musicians act.

Filmmakers who have gone ahead or the veterans should teach the upcoming filmmakers in the industry on how to succeed without having to depend on the Government for support. Currently, there are workshops that are being held for free to train filmmakers in different areas such as scriptwriting and film marketing and distribution. The idea is to make sure that the films made in Kenya are good for the international market and secondly, the filmmakers should learn how to tell their own stories rather than having people come from other countries come and tell it.

It would be good if further research and recommendations can be done about the importance of a Union in the industry.

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