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The entrepreneurial self:

Becoming a freelancer in Singapore's Film and Television industry

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The Institute for Adult Learning (IAL) aims to contribute to the competitiveness of Singapore by developing an effective, innovative and responsive Continuing Education and Training (CET) sector that is able to meet the needs of industries and the workforce. It achieves this by raising capabilities, catalysing innovation, and leading research in workforce learning.

Centre for Work and Learning, IAL

The Centre for Work and Learning undertakes research that seeks to understand better the processes and practices of learning design, teaching, learning and assessment in and across different settings and the implications for practice and policy. The changing nature of work offers different kinds of opportunities for learning and development, thus our research includes the study of work and work environments and learning and development within these settings.

In brief, our research employs a range of methodologies designed to deepen understanding of the ways in which contexts enhance and limit learning and development opportunities. Our approach is to engage practitioners in the research process and thus develop a community of practitioner researchers.

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Executive summary

Singapore's creative sector continues to grow in terms of its contribution to gross domestic product, from three to six per cent, despite the sector's small size. The sector is potentially well placed as a site for artistic production for domestic and regional consumption. Hence the importance of understanding how those working in the industry develop and grow so as to enable them to seize upcoming opportunities.

Working in this industry largely revolves around tender or contract-based projects typified by alternating periods of frenetic activity and quiet. This "boom and bust" business cycle has produced a highly competitive industry. Within the Singaporean Film and Television industry, anecdotal evidence suggests that some 70 per cent of the workforce are freelancers.

This qualitative study focuses on freelancers in one part of the creative sector, the Film and Television industry. The purpose of this study is to understand how freelancers in the industry learn and develop, and in the process, the ways in which they develop their identity. The concept of identity is important as what you identify with influences and drives what you seek to learn. It also highlights what one needs to *be* in order to be a professional in the chosen vocation or profession. We also address the question, how can the learning of freelancers in this industry be supported? The study also seeks to understand why people in this sector tend not to attend training.

We interviewed directors of local production houses, government agencies, educational institutions, industry peak bodies, directors, producers, camera personnel, key grips, sound technicians, editors, writers and a makeup artist (n=24). In addition, a reference group discussion made up of industry stakeholders (see Appendix A) (n=16) validated our findings and added further data.

The seven major findings of the study are:

1. Freelancers enjoy freedom, choice and control over their work, but also face the constant challenge to position themselves, provide for their own insurances, manage contractual arrangements and cope with uncertainty of payment, long working hours and highly fluid boundaries between home and work.

2. The integration of craft, aesthetic and entrepreneurial skills are what makes a successful freelancer in this industry. The way film and television freelancers

interact, the effort they put in on the set, the quality of their work as well as their highly developed entrepreneurial skills are what get them work.

3. Freelancers in film and television identify first with their craft and secondly as a freelancer. This is important as what you identify with directs what you seek to continuously learn and develop.

4. Aesthetic skills are generally under developed in film and television. For new entrants, entrepreneurial skills are also lacking. Technical skills appear to be well developed and catered for.

5. Learning in this industry segment is very much self-directed, and because learning is prompted through work, successful freelancers tend to be self-sufficient in their learning. This is because they are reflective and exercise well-developed metacognitive skills. This has implications for the ways in which these workers can be supported to continuously upgrade themselves.

6. Opportunities for challenge and development require involvement in international productions as local free-to-air productions are labelled as being of poor quality. These are lacking in challenge essential for learning and development which areimportant for the industry's growth.

7. The limited institutional dialogue and collaboration to identify and address industry issues are seen as preventing the industry from moving forward.

8. In-country free-to-air productions are heavily reliant on MDA funding, an indicator of the industry's reliance on MDA funding.

The following recommendations for the industry are elaborated in Chapter 5.

A) Skills development

Recommendation 1

Shift from a supply-driven approach for skills development to a demand-led approach deeply rooted in the industry, with a consideration for its production

processes and its trajectory, and is reflective of the ways in which people in the sector learn.

Recommendation 2

Pre-service programmes should explore possibilities for developing work-based programmes that reflect the realities of practice in the industry.

B) Pedagogical enhancements

Recommendation 3

The industry should address the issue of differences between local and international best practice, and the resulting resolution should inform the curriculum for pre-service qualifications, continuing professional development initiatives and workplace learning interventions.

Recommendation 4:

The industry should identify select industry personnel as learning facilitators and confer on them accreditation and reward for this role.

Recommendation 5

Learning facilitators should receive support to develop skills in learning conversations and effect a gradual release of responsibility.

C) Role of industry in mediating learning and development

Recommendation 6

Develop an industry-wide set of standards used by PET and CET.

Recommendation 7

As skills development is closely tied to business and work opportunities, bring relevant industry stakeholders together to address strategic directions for the

industry and create a conducive and dynamic business/ workplace environment for all.

<u>Recommendation 8</u>

An industry-led body should assume responsibility for skills development in the industry which involves recognising industry learning facilitators and industry assessors, and providing for their development and reward.

1.0 Introduction

Globally, the creative arts are considered by many to be on the leading edge of the transition from a manufacturing to a knowledge economy. Crafts such as theatre, painting, sculpture, writing, film and television are seen as renewable sources of talent and intellectual property to be mined both economically and culturally for the benefit of nation states (Ross, 2008). Reflecting this trend, Singapore's creative sector has seen a shift in value from three to six per cent of gross domestic product, with funding and infrastructure initiatives in place to raise these numbers even higher (Kong, 2011).

With a relatively small population of around five million people, Singapore's creative arts sector is commensurately small. However, given the country's central location in Southeast Asia, its economic prosperity, cultural diversity and status as a market and transport hub, it is well placed as a site for artistic production for domestic and regional consumption. Within the creative arts sector, the Film and Television industry is a representative example and the focus of our study. Working in this industry largely revolves around tender or contract-based projects typified by alternating periods of frenetic activity and quiet. This "boom and bust" business cycle (Kong, 2011, p. 56) has produced a highly competitive industry which, as characterised by one market analyst, is 'about the survival of the fittest' (Malepart, 2005, p. 5). Within the Singaporean Film and Television industry, anecdotal evidence suggests that some 70 per cent of the workforce are freelancers.

It is within this hyper-competitive environment that we find a typical enterprise core of business principals and managers and a cohort of project-based craftspeople who are engaged for work periods ranging from days to months, but rarely on an ongoing or permanent basis. The research literature refers to these workers as freelance, casual, contract, temporary, "permatemps" and non-standard workers, among other terms (Brophy, 2006). These various terms suggest the recent emergence of the phenomenon and its lack of consistent definition within the industry. Within the literature, there is a clear division of opinion and evidence on the value of this new

and growing form of work. One view considers its episodic and uncertain nature as creating a new class of precarious or contingent workers who experience anxiety and uncertainty because of inconsistent income, reduced benefits (such as sick and recreational leave and access to a retirement fund) and unclear career progression. A contending view regards these workers as the vanguard of an emerging group of flexible and motivated temporary employees who choose to work both flexibly and creatively at times and sites of their own choosing. In an age of flexible capitalism, this is considered the direction in which entire workforces are heading (Allan, 2002).

Whether these types of workers are considered precarious or flexible, it is apparent that most formal provisions for lifelong learning and career enhancements are designed for workers in stable, ongoing employment with one employer as opposed to many. This brings us to our main point of interest which is to understand how these non-standard workers acquire their practice-based skills and identify with their work. This report, therefore, seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. In what ways does the experience of contingent work contribute to or constrain the learning of these workers?
2. How do contingent workers identify with their work and how does this influence learning opportunities?
3. How can the learning of contingent workers be supported and enhanced?

In attempting these questions, we consider the close link between learning and identity formation apparent in the questions: 1) What do these workers need to be to get work? and 2) How do they learn these things?. Answering these questions will enable us to support non-standard workers in their efforts to be and remain competitive, and enhance their long-term employability. Answers to these questions also have implications for both pre-service and continuous learning opportunities. Identity is developed through the day-to-day practices and activities we engage in (Wenger, 1998). However, although we have a core identity, identity is also context dependent (du Gay, 1996). Thus identity and learning differ in different sectors and

different working arrangements; this is an important consideration for the design and structure of learning and learning provision.

1.1 Industry context

Before addressing the research questions, it is important to understand the context of the Film and Television industry in Singapore. Historically, the small Singaporean Film and Television industry was dominated by the Singapore Broadcasting Authority (SBA), a state-based institution. Employment was more permanent and workers learned their skills on the job under the guidance of experienced personnel. As a result of restructuring in 2001, the Media Corporation of Singapore (MediaCorp) was brought together from previously semi-separate SBA entities in television, broadcasting and radio. It was from this time, under the umbrella of MediaCorp's monopoly, that production houses proliferated, and caused the shift to what in the industry is called freelance work. To address this trend, there has been considerable funding directed to filling the gap in educational institutional infrastructure for the industry. Funding, though, for local productions through the Media Development Authority (MDA) tends to be modest compared to that for international production houses. To meet budgets, smaller production crews are used so those hired need to occupy more work roles. Combined with the growing availability of small jobs (e.g. weddings and corporate work) and a simultaneous lack of bigger projects, freelancers often juggle multiple jobs to cover the "feast or famine" nature of available work (Kong, 2011).

In addition to on-the-job training and work experience, educational institutions provide pre-employment film and television training. Polytechnics such as LaSalle-SIA College of Arts, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA) and the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) provide a range of programmes. The Singapore Media Academy (SMA) also offers a similar combination of programmes, nearly all of which develop television, film and theatre skills. In 2010, the Workforce Development Agency (WDA) and the national manager of competency-based CET Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQs), in partnership with SMA, introduced the Creative

Industries Apprenticeship Scheme (CIAS). According to Kong (2011), in a comment on a possible disconnect between pre-employment education and the industry and the need for more CET provision, “these initiatives [e.g., CIAS] recognise the fact that the normal routes of academic success are insufficient to develop the full potential of future participants of the creative industries economy, and need to be substantiated with practical experience.”

1.2 Methodology

This study adopted qualitative methods to collect data from workers operating in the Film and Television industry in Singapore. One-hour semi-structured interviews (n=18) with cameramen, video editors, sound recordists, gaffers, key grips, makeup artist, producers, directors and owner-operators of two production houses were conducted and transcribed. In addition, government agencies (n=6) were interviewed to provide further industry context and insights. Online sources such as *Mandy.com* and *Linkedin* were consulted. The selection of interview participants was a mix of purposive and convenience sampling, that is, initial interviewees were selected through snowballing, and once we had entered the industry enough to gather our own interviewees, we selected to ensure we had a representative sample of roles undertaken within the industry. We also deliberately sought interviews with women to balance the gender bias in the industry that was reflected in our interviewees. All informants were guaranteed anonymity and the report uses pseudonyms. Interview transcripts were then analysed by the team of researchers who looked for common themes. NVivo software was used to organise the data into these themes.

In addition to interviews with freelancers in the Film and Television industry, a reference group was held to illuminate the findings from the perspectives of multiple industry stakeholders. These stakeholders were from the Ministry of Manpower (MOM), MDA, WDA, Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Temasek Polytechnic, ITE, SAE Institute, NAFA, NTU, National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) Legal Services, NTUC Learning Hub and IAL (see Appendix 4 for details). This was significant as bringing industry stakeholders together enabled them to hear first-hand the voices,

experiences and issues of those they may not have direct contact with. It also helped to deepen or extend networks which is important in developing influence and reach (Appendix 3). With deep, extensive knowledge and industry experience, reference group members collectively added depth and also credibility to our findings.

1.3 Summary

Singapore's cultural industry is a growing sector within the economy. The creative arts, in particular, have been prioritised by the government as a site for future growth, an increasing skills base and its capacity to further contribute to the nation's non-manufacturing GDP. This priority reflects a managed trend to shift the economy from a manufacturing to a service sector and human-capital-driven marketplace. Within the creative arts sector, the Film and Television industry is a representative example and the focus of our study. The shift to a human resource intensive and knowledge industry base has brought with it some unexpected challenges further complicated by a contemporary global revolution in employment patterns. Within the Film and Television industry, these employment patterns are episodic or contingent, even precarious, which we suggest create additional and complex challenges for workers to acquire and maintain the lifelong skills necessary for remaining competitive and professionally satisfied within the sector. This challenge, too, extends to the policy makers and educators who seek to offer support and informal and formal learning activities and programmes to bolster the growth of the sector. Through our research, we hope to understand these new work patterns, and how they may be supported through appropriate and relevant learning strategies, whether instigated by workers, enterprises, policy makers or vocational educators.

The remainder of the report is divided into five sections. In the next chapter, we consider the relevant research literature that outlines issues related to contingent work, including its meaning and its connections with ongoing learning and training aimed at supporting workplace and lifelong skilling. Next, we present and analyse the data gathered from our interviews and the reference group meeting. The following chapter makes use of the insights gathered through the literature review to

discuss the findings. And the final two chapters are the conclusion and recommendations for action.

2.0 Literature Review

To better understand the emergence and nature of contingent or freelance workers within Singapore's Film and Television industry, we present a brief overview of some of the key issues generated through the research literature. The body of literature referred to focuses on contingent work in general as specific literature on such workers within the Film and Television industry is minimal. In particular, we seek to understand the contesting definitions of contingent work, how the nature of contingent work shapes workplace identity and its associated practices, and how these impact on formal and informal learning. (For the full literature reviews, see "Ephemeral Work and Workplace Identity" in the *New Millennium*)

2.1 Contingent workers

Globally, there is an increasing growth of workers who are not permanent employees (Kalleberg, 2009; Curtain, 2001, Felstead & Ashton, 2001; Evans & Gibbs, 2009). These workers cover a range of categories and the nomenclature to describe them varies according to the type of work and working arrangements they have. At one end of the spectrum, we know these workers as part-time, casual employees, self-employed (e.g. trade workers), contract and sub-contract workers, and at the other end of the spectrum, we have freelancers, consultants, franchises, etc. These different terminologies reflect different kinds of relationships with employers and different degrees of precariousness (Kalleberg, 2009). However, what these workers hold in common is that their work is contingent on the work of others.

Casual workers tend to work in low-skilled, low-paying occupations, are less likely to participate in training than permanent employees and have limited opportunities for career advancement (Curtain, 2001). However, the supply side argument suggests that workers choose contingent work because it provides for autonomy, risk and greater potential rewards compared to the routineness and security of permanent

jobs (Evans & Gibb, 2009). Evans and Gibbs (2009) suggest that this argument actually only applies to a small number of contingent workers who are, more often than not, male and highly educated. These workers are well positioned to manage their own risks. The majority of casual workers prefer to work full time and have more security unless they have care-giving responsibilities or health problems.

MOM statistics show that in 2010, 35 per cent of Singaporean workers, excluding foreign workers, are precarious workers. This is a significant proportion of the workforce, although lower than in other countries. However, it should be noted that MOM statistics do not give figures for casual/ on-call workers. The nature of the categories and variables used do not enable us to obtain industry-specific distributions of contingent workers.

2.2 Identity, learning and context

Unlike permanent workers, contingent workers constantly move across organisations, work with different teams and undertake different aspects of work within their field of expertise. Permanent workers have opportunities to align their goals and search for personal meaning within the cultural norms and forms of conduct of the company they work for (Du Gay, 1996). Freelancers, however, stand apart from these norms, including aspects of identity such as individual responsibility and personal accountability that are often shaped by company norms (Cote, 2006; Gotski, et.al 2010). How then do these different working arrangements, the context of the industry and the national agenda mediate the identity formation, development and learning of contingent workers?

Learning and identity can be said to be on the same side of a coin with the flip side being the context, both situated and wider contexts; you cannot have one without the other. However, this analogy indicates a static state at a moment in time when, in fact, identity, development and learning are dynamic. For example, as contingent workers move between sites of practice, they think and feel their ways in occupational and social identities, necessitating different modes of knowledge recontextualisation as well as a capacity to develop and maintain “mobility capital” or

the ability to transition from one job to another (Forrier, Sels & Stynen, 2009). Knowledge recontextualisation, including attitudes, values and beliefs lead to longer term and ongoing recontextualisation in the learner/ adult professional (Evans, Guile & Harris, 2009).

Identity has multiple facets depending on context, and thus there are both visible and invisible aspects of identity depending on the perspective of the observer(s) and power relationships. Much literature emphasises the importance of identity realisation through undertaking different roles (see Identity Theory) and developing identities through doing work tasks competently (Stryker 1980, Brockmann, 2011). The role of individual agency and co-participation are important in the development of occupational identities through doing the work (Billett, 2008).

There are also different forms of identification that individuals can have, including flexible and resistant (Kirpal et al, 2007) and those negotiated by employees, contributing to, reinforcing or perhaps changing corporate and/ or vocational practices. Goffman (1969) also distinguishes between “face” identities that people adopt while maintaining role distance, and Felstead, Fuller, Jewson, and Unwin (2009) emphasise that occupational/ work identities are always performed. Goffman’s (1968, 69, 71, 72) stance is that social interaction is governed by rules, and social values and norms then shape social identities. This is not the “self-identities” developed by writers such as Erikson (and his successors) but identities shaped by society and aligned with social categories such as an occupation or a profession, that is, occupational or professional identity.

Personal identity and social identity are inextricably linked, and are often reflected in the types of borders– near and far, positive and negative – individuals place between themselves and their non-work lives (Campbell Clark, 2000). The work collective can have a major impact on an individual’s functioning in the workplace, often in ways that are not readily apparent to the individual or the collective itself.

Wenger argues that we produce our identities through the practices we engage in (and we also define ourselves by those we do not engage in) (Wenger 1998, p.164). We define ourselves through lived experience in multiple communities of shared practice, what we think and say about ourselves, through our history and future

plans, our learning trajectory. Identity relates to social learning, combines competence and experience, and develops our “ways of knowing” (Wenger, 1998). It determines what matters to us, with whom we share information and who we decide to trust. It also recognises multiple memberships of practice communities and boundary crossing (Wenger 2000). The limitations of this concept are that it underplays the role of individual agency and of power differentials. It does not fully explain engagement in learning in practice, nor how beliefs about learning, knowledge and power shape that learning. These limitations are also indicative of what is beyond the situated setting and the ways in which wider socio-economic contexts impact on learning and identity. “Any identity is basically relational to its conditions of existence, any change in the latter is bound to affect the former” (Du Gay, 1996, p.184).

As contingent workers face and experience greater risk, often resulting in occupational health and safety issues for them (Evans & Gibb, 2009), they are less likely to access and participate in training (Felstead and Ashton, 2001; Curtain, 2001), and tend not to work alongside other workers they can learn from on the job. How do these workers maintain currency and continue their professional learning? Owen and Bound (2001) found that Australian contractors working in alliances need to recognise their own and others’ strengths and weaknesses, that metacognitive strategies and cultural understanding are critical in contractor alliance work. These authors suggest that technical proficiency for contractor alliance members is maintained through a combination of vocational education and training courses, working with others and learning from them, actively seeking information and talking with others.

In a study on how Australian seasonal agricultural workers (who are low-paid workers) learn, Kilpatrick and Bound (2005) found that these workers relied on learning from each other. However, where follow-up was structured and consistent, workers reported that they learnt the job thoroughly and product quality was generally much better. Chan (2011) observes that recognition of expertise comes “not only from workplaces but from a wider circle of family, friends, peers and external organisations including industry training organisations (ITOs), industry organisations and training establishments” (p.107). Thinking and feeling one’s way

into a professional/ occupational identity may be facilitated by such practices as learning conversations and sharing war stories. This has particular relevance for contingent workers. Given constantly changing relationships with employers, co-workers and peers, how do these workers connect and interrelate given multiple employment locations and relationships? It is important to understand contingent workers' professional/ vocational identity formation because such identity is fundamental to the "how" and "why" of workplace practice. Are we able to develop existing and/ or new programmes to support identity formation in ways that enhance productive and satisfying workplace lives?

2.3 Summary

This section has presented a guiding discussion on the challenges of defining contingent work and workplace identity and their relationship with learning. It is apparent from the literature that there are challenges for working as a contingent worker. This is reflected partly in the lack of a clear terminology or definition to describe the phenomenon. We do know, however, that the non-permanent or non-standard employment patterns described require a different way to understand the relationships between worker and workplace. In effect, there has been a decoupling of individuals and their skill sets from ongoing or continuous relationships with any one employer or enterprise. This also means a decoupling of workplace identity which is quite distinct from the traditional learning and peer support that such arrangements provide. This has profound implications for "becoming" a worker in industries such as Film and Television. If a continuous employment relationship is absent, how is professional knowledge and learning generated, shared and practised? How are supporting peer group and peer group networks created and utilised? What measure do contingent workers use to judge or compare their performance? Does working on multiple sites affect, support or change individual identities as professional workers, and if so, how? How different are contingent worker identities from those of workers in ongoing or continuous employment, and what does this mean to individuals, enterprises and educators? While not all of these questions are to be addressed in this brief report, we endeavor to highlight the

significance and implications that the shift from ongoing to contingent work has for education and training. These will appear in Chapter 5.

3.0 Findings

In this section we present key findings that emerged from interviews with freelance workers in Singapore's Film and Television industry and the meeting with the reference group. These data provide an understanding of the experience of working as a freelancer which offers an idea of how identity and learning may be shaped by this work. This section is followed by findings that have implications for the development of these workers' capabilities and skill sets. While not exhaustive, we believe the ideas presented represent the most significant findings of the study.

3.1 The experience of working as a freelancer[1]

Freelance employment in the Film and Television industry offers a range of advantages related to greater freedom in managing and selecting work as well as enhanced scope for creative freedom. Freelance film directors may have the opportunity to work on a diverse range of films and engage with different genres as well as learn from a broader group of mentors. Freelance employment can even act as a fast track to work as director. Cameramen may also benefit from the opportunity to work with a diverse group of colleagues on a wider range of sets. Gail, a freelance producer, described the advantages of increased individual agency and personal freedom associated with freelance employment in the following terms:

> It means you are free! In a big way, yes you are free. And at the same time, you have a higher level of awareness. You are aware of a lot of things. You are aware of your power as well. When you are a full-timer, you feel quite powerless at

[1] Appendix 1 includes two case studies of craftspeople who exemplify many of the points made in this chapter

> times. But as a freelancer, you do feel that you have a bit more power. A bit more control.

Freelancers also have to contend with various disadvantages related to a lack of guaranteed employment, a heavy work load as well as the potential hazard of late payments. Bala, a cameraman, revealed, “There are times I don’t see my family for six, seven months…I’ll be back ten in the evening, off to work at four in the morning for six months.” Gavin, a soundman, revealed that his competitive service fees extended his work schedules:

> And because of my networking and also my pricing, because I don’t price myself out of the market, I have lots of jobs. So when I work more than five or six days in a row, the stress comes in – because each working day, I am away from home for about fourteen hours. Twelve hours on the job, two hours travelling, more or less.

The “permeability” (Campbell Clark, 2000) of boundaries between work and home is especially pronounced among freelancers in the creative sector as a result of their willingness to work long hours in order to guarantee a steady flow of employment. As Kevin, a freelance director explained, “as a freelancer, you are only as good as your last job”. Similar to other respondents, he revealed that his willingness to be exploited in the early stages of his career led to an especially burdensome work schedule:

> But when I was directing, I was very poor when I started. And the payment come late. Because there’s no regulatory body in Singapore to say, to help us. There’s no union. So basically I, to get into the industry, I had to undercut myself. Undercut, I know this production company is sort of like, raping me up. But I let them rape me. Once again, no choice, because you got to get in you see.

Lack of regulation and union involvement meant that late payments are an occupational hazard. Kerry, a key grip, revealed that

> ...the biggest one [challenge] would be getting payment sometimes. Because quite a few companies, there’s no black and white. But we said thirty days, sometimes takes three months, sometimes six months, sometimes one year. Sometimes, some people don’t get paid at all.

Related to pay are issues about the types of work available in the local market. Our data and the stories of the reference group members show that the quality of free-to-air programmes is considered by the industry to be rather poor. Like many of our interviewees, many of the reference group members made a direct link between the issue of quality and funding. It was also reported that the wages of some professionals in the industry have not increased in the last ten years, although it was noted that some professionals and para-professionals managed to secure appropriate, respectable rates in the industry. In relation to quality work and reasonable remuneration, it was also strongly pointed out that the clientele needs to "upgrade as well". They should have reasonable expectations and not expect work to be done gratis or for very low rates, or within impossibly short timeframes. They should also be more discerning and reject low quality work as it impacts on the whole industry.

In order to cope with this dynamic and uncertain work environment, freelancers have to possess and learn to develop a range of dispositions, work ethics and tacit competencies (in addition to sector-specific technical knowledge and expertise) that are essential to mitigating risk and developing a successful career trajectory.

3.2 Passion for and willingness to work hard

Having a passion for work as well as a willingness to work hard were cited as key factors underpinning the establishment of a positive reputation in the Film and Television industry. Kevin, a freelance director, referred to the "lighted bulb" syndrome to describe those "hundreds of directors who came out and fade away." His response to these challenges is to invest heavily in his work and create the best quality films his resources and abilities allow, "That's how I blow the competition out of the water. By putting in 110 basically."

Victor, a freelance producer consultant, outlined the importance of having a passion for creative work which underpinned the successful development of his career in this sector:

> For me, I think the biggest push was my real interest in wanting to be in the industry. And the real interest to want to start from somewhere and be a whether you call that apprentice or an assistant that worked from the ground up. I think that is the best way to learn…. And then with passion, it drives you to actually want to be better, want to move to become better, want to be known, want to win awards, want to basically get more reputation, and that's what it starts with, passion.

The punishing work schedule also necessitates a willingness to, in the words of Gavin, a soundman, "swallow a lot of pain. The more pain you swallow, the more popular you'll get." Stamina and endurance are combined with a degree of performativity in the form of a willingness to stifle grievances that arise out of onerous working conditions. As Gavin further explained:

> And always remember…never put on a long face on the job. Even if you've been scolded or you've had a fourteen hour day, you still have to put a smiling face because you're a non-salaried worker. Because if you're a salaried worker, you could scold your boss. You could use whatever words you want. But as a non-salaried worker, do not forget that your pay could be withheld.

Recognising and paying deference to chains of command on sets is important for building a reputation that will help maintain regular work. This is part of the day-to-day exercise of judgement and self-management that is integral to the freelancer's role. The presentation of the "smiling face" can also be seen as part of a social process (which Coté (2006) describes as image projection and Ziehe refers to as learning to "stage oneself") that occurs in contextually specific ways. For freelancers moving between contexts and negotiating different expectations on a daily basis, this involves a high degree of what they sometimes describe, revealingly, as "malleability", a term which refers to materials that have the property of being able to be hammered into shape without breaking or cracking.

3.3 Developing awareness of the implicit norms and values that underpin work

In a working environment that is characterised by lack of regulation, union involvement and codified working practices, freelancers' capacity to read implicit rules of engagement (Gotski, 2010) and tacit norms and values that underpin social relations is especially significant. As mentioned above, freelancers are willing to price their work competitively in order to ensure a steady flow of employment. However, a tacit consensus among freelancers dictates how low this pricing should be. Kevin outlined the hidden workings of an invisible union among technical crew:

> The tech crew are easy people. Why? Because the tech crew has an invisible union going on. I don't know how this happened but it just happened throughout the years. They managed to unite in an unconscious, I mean, way, right, such that there are standard rates for group. $250, I think. After 12 hours or after 10 hours, 1.5 OT. Then after that, for camera assistant, $300. If you are more experienced, $400. For cameraman, $400 above. If you are TVC cameraman, $1800, $1500 and things like that. They have an invisible union, nobody goes below that rate. Very seldom. If you go below that rate, you will be frowned upon, very much so by others in the industry. So I know you spoil market, I won't work with you. Let's say I'm a gaffer. A gaffer hires a couple of groups. Basically, he's higher in the hierarchy. I won't hire you because you have nice work. It happens as well, so they have an invisible union.

An implicit code of practice also underpins the management of clients among cameramen. There is a tacit understanding that certain clients belong to certain cameramen, and that covering work for colleagues should not lead to stealing these clients, but should instead reinforce the existing ties between clients and cameramen. As explained by Mano, "And when I go over for Bala's job, I won't steal the client but I will also make sure I take care of the client so that the client is happy with me, because if the client is happy with me, the client is happy with Bala because he sent an able replacement."

3.4 Managing social relations

Networks are vital for accessing work opportunities, managing workload and providing learning opportunities. Howard, a freelance video editor and trainer, revealed that:

> In Singapore, we are very aware in a sense that the industry is so small. Everyone knows everyone. I've been in the industry long enough that a lot of people know me. So it's a lot of word of mouth. And these days, we have internet to help us. But my job is still 99 per cent through word of mouth. In fact, I'm comfortable to work with people that I don't know. I prefer to, whoever who call me, I will always ask them who recommend, you know, my name to you. I prefer to work with people of track records as well. So a lot of my contacts are through word of mouth.

Similarly, Victor, a freelance producer and consultant, revealed that:

> I think this industry is people industry, so in that sense, knowing who and knowing people are absolute critical. And of course, I think, more importantly as well, is having the community network that you know, because a lot of work is by word of mouth. You get to know this person or whether this person is good or not through hearing from another producer, another colleague of yours in the industry, and that's so critical, which is why I think it can be quite scary as well because bad word of mouth can destroy you as well.

The development of networks takes different forms, depending on job-specific and personal considerations. Workshops, events and screenings can act as important forums for networking and information sharing among film directors and producers. Some directors utilise social networking sites and YouTube to showcase their work. In other cases, film directors and producers prefer to base their networking on the cultivation of ties with a small number of colleagues. For example, Victor, a freelance producer and consultant, revealed:

> You got to PR a bit, drink a little, things like that. But it's more of, I don't do it, I'm not very good at it. I don't even have my personal website, even this many years

> in the industry. I don't really have that infrastructure in place. I know people but not that much. But I do… I think, I guess I have my ways.

Production and technical crew tend to be more prone to base their networks on the development of trust with a small number of colleagues. Gail revealed:

> I think Singapore is still very much like the China Asian style where networks are very important. It's really about who you know. Sometimes it's not about who is the most capable to do the job. It's about your network. So they have a brotherhood, especially for the camera crew. So when you hire a cameraman, you agreed to a gaffer, meaning the people who does the lighting and who lay the cables. You have to get his own crew of gaffers. You cannot get from anywhere else. Otherwise the cameraman will not work. So it may not be the best for the work, for the job. But they are a group.

However, the formation of such networks is also underpinned by the practical need to provide more effective and speedy working conditions on set rather than merely to protect the needs of informal interest groups. There is a preference for working with a familiar group of people as there is no need to give long explanations of particular requirements due to a common understanding of styles, strengths and weaknesses and preferred modes of working.

While networking is clearly vital for building a reputation to get work and also to work more efficiently, it also has additional implications for learning. Using networks for learning appears to be differentiated between those "below the line" (technical crew) and those "above the line" (producers, directors, writers). Technical crew form small, tight groups that share techniques, information and aesthetic aspects of the craft. These groups are sometimes the same ones that work together. Although they know most of those who practise the same craft in the industry, they only trust and share within a small group. Above-the-line professionals tend to take part in formal, structured events and network activities such as those organised by Six Degrees[2].

[2] Six Degrees is a government initiative that provides an online space for creative workers to network, often through professional development activities.

The formation of networks also appears in some cases to be based on ethnicity, for example, for those working on Tamil- or Chinese-speaking productions.

3.5 Developing a flexible attitude toward work

Freelancers are required to develop a flexible attitude towards work, responding to shifting work patterns as well as undertaking multiple roles on set. Soundmen, for example, are frequently required to help out with lighting or double up as the grip and cameraman. Howard, a freelance video editor and trainer, outlined the freelancer's flexible mode of psychology in the following terms:

> The fact is if you compare a freelancer versus a full-timer, when the full-timer gets laid off, the psychology is in a huge panic mode. What's next? How am I going to find the next job? There are a lot of worries that sometimes can be unnecessary. But a freelancer has trained himself or herself to be malleable in all kinds of situation. The next thing that come to the mind of the freelancer when a job is called off: so OK, next job. I will look for the next job. So in a big way, I feel that freelancing is a good training. It makes you see the world in a more realistic sense. And you are more fair to yourself and fair to others as well.

Howard described this flexible state of mind as being "cultivated over time". He described himself as a naturally "stubborn" person who has been forced to cultivate a flexible disposition through the necessity of working in a variety of different work environments:

> It's definitely a state of mind that is cultivated over time. You won't be so malleable at the very beginning of your freelancing career. But as time goes by, the more you work in different environments, the more you come to an understanding that you have to change to fit yourself into different environments. There's no point complaining that we don't have this, we don't have that. Every company you go to is very different and no company will change for a freelancer. So you change for them and not the other way around. So it was something that took me a long, long, long while, to cultivate myself to be malleable. But it's a very precious experience definitely.

3.6 Recontextualising knowledge from informal and formal learning

Skills development in the Film and Television sector is based primarily on various modes of informal learning. Mentoring provides an important channel for the ongoing development of technical expertise as well as the nurturing of the aesthetic and intuitive dimensions of work in this sector. Kevin, a freelance director, revealed that he was reliant on a mentor who allowed him to reconcile his creative dispositions with the instrumental demands of the film industry:

> … he sort of taught me how to achieve that, how to shoot things in a factory way, in a way. I mean, not only that, besides that, he taught me artistic stuff as well. Writing and stuff like that. I learn but it's not formal teaching and things like that. It's more of watching him work, dialogues with him and stuff like that.

Similarly, Nasser highlighted his reliance on a mentor to develop the intuitive and aesthetic aspects of his work:

> And he's the only guy who can explain to me from A-Z and even more if I just ask him a simple question. He don't just tell you how to read, he tell you the nuance of it. He tells you all the little things that is not in the books, through his experience and through his knowledge.

Victor underlined the prevalence of informal mentoring in this sector and expressed an ethic of willingness to share and pass on information that was widely upheld by other freelancers:

> I think we all have mentors in the different stages of our career. You always look, see, observe… I mean, I don't really have one mentor that I consider mentor in that sense. I really learn on the ground with different kind of like, you know, feel of things, and that kind of condition who I am today. But I have been mentor to many people, because I enjoy, actually, sharing and I enjoy exchanging, and I work on a larger ground than a specific group.

Respondents spoke of at least one and often a number of people who were important in their development. These mentors were always experienced people

whose trust the mentee had earned and who willingly taught the mentee about the craft and being successful in the industry. Respondents met their mentors when they had to work together on site, through networking events and other activities or, occasionally, the mentee deliberately approached a mentor. The reference group further emphasised the importance of mentorships, shadowing and apprenticeships as effective ways to learn.

Other important sources of informal learning include mimicry, experimentation and self-study by accessing internet forums. Cameramen learn about the latest technology by reading the relevant manuals as well as viewing demonstrations on YouTube. Cameramen also develop their sensitivity towards light and aperture through trial and error. Helping each other out on site provides opportunities for practice and learning about other roles (e.g. lighting, key grip, sound) as well as watching and evaluating the potential of new team members.

All these features entail the capacity to access knowledge and skills from diverse channels and recontextualise them (Evans et al, 2009) in a variety of work settings. For example, Nasser who worked as a key grip described how his job entailed drawing on and adapting a knowledge of physics in order to experiment with new camera angles (such as the suspension of the camera by a rope):

> …you need to know a lot about physics actually. Sometimes, when producers or directors or cameramen, of course they want to get the best job possible, but of course they always think safety first. So I have to put my physics knowledge into it.

Mano, a cameraman, described how he developed his craft by observing and adapting the work of a small number of fellow cameramen:

> That's the only way I learn, because I'd never got the opportunity to go and work as an assistant to Bala or to other cameramen and all that. So the only other way I can learn is, okay, Bala shot this program, I go and watch the program. I sit down and watch and all that. Bala has a certain style that I know and another friend of mine, because I'm very close with two cameramen. So both of them have their

> own individual style, and by watching these two, the good and the bad thing is, I have a mix of that two styles, I have a mix of that two styles.

This type of informal learning has the additional advantage of allowing Mano to cover more easily for the select group of colleagues as a result of his familiarity with their favoured styles. Chandra, a soundman, highlighted the capacity to think on your feet as an essential ingredient of becoming established as a soundman:

> It's a job where you have to think on your feet. You have to work things out in your head, you know, like why we are having this problem. So you have done this thing, your acoustics, you have done this thing, your equipment. Now if you haven't done a course or if you don't know the equipment, you just went to Sim Lim and bought the equipment, and say now you're the soundman, you're dead. You're real dead.

A generational distinction can be traced among freelancers. Those who are more experienced tend to attach greater significance to the intuitive and craft dimensions of their work and privilege the benefits of on-the-job training over formal education. Mano made the distinction between "old school" and "new school" creative sector workers, the latter basing their expertise largely on their pre-service training:

> ...there's always a conflict of interest between the old school and the new school guys because we learn things the hard way and we learn things while doing it and, how to say,… with given resources...Too much of learning from the books cuts out on their creativity.

The reference group expanded on the existence of this divide by sharing that the old school included experienced professionals and para-professionals who learnt on-the-job, many of whom do not hold relevant qualifications. The new school are those typically younger entrants who enter the industry with pre-service training from the polytechnics, institutes of technical education (ITE), private institutions or university. It was expressed that ITE graduates develop strong hands-on experience; polytechnic and university graduates were described by some interviewees to have unrealistic expectations, with many wanting and expecting to be directors or producers, and some of them do not wish to experience the exploitation their seniors

experienced or earn their stripes the hard way. This has implications for possible mentoring arrangements and support from experienced personnel. The observation was made that apprenticeships require willing apprentices and masters.

Such sentiments suggest a difficulty in recontextualising knowledge acquired through formal learning into the work environment. Experienced freelancers commenting on this hold a similar view about the inadequacy of formal learning. Kerry expressed a sceptical opinion of the knowledge of polytechnic lecturers, “Definitely, the real learning takes place on the job. The lecturers themselves haven’t been on the field before.” Similarly, Bala, a cameraman, remarked in relation to film schools:

> I always wonder what they’re taught in there because when they come out before that and after the three years when they get the diplomatheir diploma, certificate, so when they’re out in the market they know nothing. I’m very surprised. I’m very very surprised.

Interestingly, the polytechnic lecturers who attended the reference group expressed that this is not entirely true as many of them deliberately undertake industry projects in order to ensure the relevance and currency of their knowledge and skills.

There is also a widespread sentiment in the reference group that internships need to be more effectively planned and tailored to the demands of the industry. The current state of many internships includes the use of interns (unpaid or paid at $500 per month) being given full responsibility for projects, with no access to support or mentoring. Not only is this highly stressful for the interns, but also exploitative and unethical. Only a minority of graduates from the polytechnics manage to stay in the sector. Staying power and effective enculturation into the norms and values are important factors in facilitating sustained employment in the sector. As Victor (freelance producer and consultant) observed:

> So they [the universities and polytechnics] cater to different needs, and again, the challenge is, often than not, when you do all these courses, they become flavour of the month. Everybody is doing it. So you generate too many similar kind of group of talents, so to speak, or people coming out from polytechnic. And the market somehow cannot support all of them in some way, and that could result in

a lot of them actually migrate to other different areas and we kind of lost them in the process, which is a pity because we do lose a lot of good people from polytechnic and university to other areas when they realise that they could not find a full time job."

Anecdotal evidence from the various participants and polytechnics in Singapore has also raised the issue that the current attrition rate of graduates from the polytechnics and universities is high, with a spill-over rate of 70 per cent[3]. The reference group raised concerns over the loss of new entrants to the industry and of the need for seniors to recognise the opportunities to pass on their craft. Apprenticeship is one way of passing on and developing expertise in the industry. This is a form of pre-service training and learning. Mentoring provides opportunities in apprenticeships and for the continuation of developing expertise. The role of a guild or association is to give recognition to those who provide mentoring and to link up new entrants or those wishing to expand into different roles with experienced personnel.

3.7 Summary

These key findings illuminate the nature of freelance work in the Film and Television industry in Singapore. Of greater interest for this study are the insights offered on what constitutes the professional identities of these workers as they negotiate

[3] This may have resulted from three current practices: first, participants have noted that while the media industry is small in Singapore, there are currently at least three courses in polytechnics producing graduates, not including the graduates from the universities. As the current demand is relatively small due to the size of the industry, an overflow has almost been inevitable. Second, while students may have a sense of the media industry from their internships, National Service makes it difficult for male graduates to acclimatise back to the industry after completion. Third, as the institutions have limited time to provide graduates with a foundational technical and creative knowledge for the media industry, certain "above-the-line" positions are preferred based on ambition and gender, such as directors and writers, compared to cameramen and video editors (senior polytechnic course manager).

diverse environments and manage different groups of people, and how they build these identities through the various learning strategies they come across. The following chapter discusses these findings.

4.0 Discussion

This discussion draws on the findings to illustrate the components of film and television freelancers‘ professional identity as well as their ways of knowing how to operate in this industry. As discussed in the Introduction, the concept of professional identity and its importance to learning can be simplified into two questions: 1) What do these workers need to be to get work? and 2) How do they learn these things?. Section 4.1 discusses what these workers need to be in order to get work and section 4.2 addresses how they learn what they need to be or become.

4.1 Crafting a professional identity

From the findings presented in the previous chapter, what constitutes the professional identity of freelancers in the Film and Television industry of the creative sector? How do freelancers present and define themselves in the workplace in a manner that makes colleagues and managers feel confident that they are working with or employing a competent and reliable worker? From the data, we have identified that the professional identity is multi-layered, as would be expected.

In broad terms, we can classify the professional identity of these workers as having a craft component and a component that exists beyond their craft, which we call the entrepreneurial self. The craft component refers to their major area of expertise, e.g. director of photography, producer, sound recordist, key-grip, editor, etc. When craft work is being exercised, when the technical and aesthetic come together, “there’s this satisfaction” (Daniel); there’s a certain beauty in what we do, a truth, a universal truth…people connect to it” (Ming). The relationship between technical and aesthetic knowledge and skills is symbiotic. Technical skills alone do not make a cameraman.

The entrepreneurial self is needed to ensure an adequate income through a supply of work. Knowledge of the importance of reputation, rules of engagement, and how to manage relationships, for example, becomes important. Freelancers need to be

aware of cultural practices, so they do not unintentionally offend, and of policies, so they know what is banned in Singapore. The importance of these types of knowledge for being successful as a freelancer cannot be underestimated, and are thus given more detailed attention below. Table 1 breaks these aspects of craft and entrepreneurial self into disposition, and knowledge and skill.

Table 1: Components of professional identity

	Craft	**Freelancer**
Disposition	• Commitment • Passion • Persistence • Can-do attitude (problem solver)	• Hard worker (give 100%) • Malleable[4] • Team worker • Seek information about client and project • Continuous learner
Knowledge and skill	• Technical • Aesthetic	• Manage relationships • Time management • Networking • Workplace safety and health • Contractual knowledge and management • Quickly read different environments • An understanding of implicit rules of engagement • Learning to learn • Performativity in response to implicit codes of practice • Forms of self-marketing (whether through targeted networking or self-promotion through the internet) • General knowledge

[4] Malleability was mentioned by most of the freelancers we interviewed. It is a dispositional trait developed over time and critical for being able to continue in the industry. As Hannah explains, each situation is different – different people, physical environment, project requirements, ways of working, styles, standards and so on. “Everything is different so you need to readjust … in a very short period of time. No one will pay you one day to sit down there and understand the whole system.” (Hannah)

Some of these features mark out established freelancers and forge boundaries between those who are established in the field and those who are outsiders. In this sense, one “becomes” an established cameraman, key grip, etc., based on the inculcation and display of dispositions (such as commitment and passion for work) as well as the exercise of relevant knowledge and skills. The development of these dispositions, skills and knowledge are therefore important not only in ensuring successful work practices, but also in signalling expertise and establishing authority. This boundary-marking dimension is also especially significant since official certification and licensing of expert practitioners are largely absent. However, in a context of “reflexive” (Giddens 1990) knowledge production, there is also an ongoing process of “becoming” a freelancer through critical reflection on shifting work practices as well as the associated values, norms and dispositions.

4.2 Ways of knowing

This section discusses the ways in which freelance film and television workers learn the professional identity components mentioned above. As we have seen, respondents shared with us the many, mostly informal, ways they acquired new knowledge and skills. We call these approaches “ways of knowing”. Freelancers tend to learn on the job, through doing the work, whether through acquiring new knowledge and skills or recontextualising the old and familiar. Many of those we interviewed are established in the industry, and only a small number held formal qualifications directly relevant to their work. What learning on the job means is layered; it requires the continuous learning dispositional trait and both on- and off-the-job strategies. The work itself provides multiple opportunities for learning as described in the rest of the section and indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: Ways of knowing

How freelancers learn		**Where freelancers learn**	
Learning strategy	**Explanation of strategy**	**On the job**	**Off the job**
Being mentored	Learning of craft and/ or appropriate freelancer dispositions, knowledge and skills with the support of a mentor (past or present) over time. There is an element of care in the relationship.	√	√
Role models	Looking up to, following and critiquing the work of those the freelancer admires and respects	√	√
Observing	Watching how people do their work. Watch films/ programmes and other products and critique. "See" through the eye of the camera, lighting, sound etc.	√	√
Questioning and discussion	Exchanging / sharing / listening to tips, techniques, insider news and equipment knowledge, and clarifying questions with mentors, peers, project team members and on online forums, etc.	√	√
Using networks	Using networks to seek help with problem solving. Attending occasional social face-to-face gatherings to exchange information.	√	√
Obtaining information independently	May involve any or all of the above. Self-initiated and directed, often through the internet – forums, Google, Facebook, etc. – but also face-to-face exchanges and reading magazines, books, manuals	occasion-ally	√
Practice	Work on new skill(s) or task(s) or equipment(s) on and off job site in order to improve proficiency.	√	√
Doing the work	Undertaking paid and occasionally unpaid work. The structure and requirements of the work provide opportunities for learning and for building experience and expertise.	√	-
Formal learning	Seminars, workshops, short courses	-	√

Doing the work offers rich opportunities to apply many of the strategies listed in Table 2. A script becomes an artefact for dialogue by working through it with the project team and/ or producer, for example, discussing how the lighting or grip work will be done. Problem solving how to achieve a certain effect with limited budget (such as a suicide jump from a high building) and sharing with another camera operator techniques for using a new camera are examples of work providing affordances for learning. More mundane examples include a new assistant director learning from experienced others how to complete paper work, thus learning about the process of production work. New equipment on a set is an opportunity for all roles to learn about it and its possibilities. Different genres develop specific skills. For example, live television events demand effective teamwork as pre- and post-production crews as well as distribution personnel work together in a high pressure environment. For a video editor, news training trains him to watch footage at a fast speed. Documentaries require a more deliberate and creative approach, generally developed by working with overseas production houses.

What is common to all these strategies is practice-based “learning to learn”. For example, one respondent spoke about reading how *Lord of the Rings* was filmed. Similar examples were given where freelancers can have an opportunity to learn what others look for, critique and pose questions about. Such experiences contribute to freelancers’ skills in knowing what to look for and listen to when on set or watching a program or film worked on by others. Another respondent spoke about mimicking what they see, but adapting it according to the freelancer’s own skill set and expertise, the style of the producer, required standards, budget and other practicalities. In such ways, freelancers develop their own style and deepen their expertise and repertoire.

The theme of long hours and yet the need to maintain currency is, in part, about access to opportunities for ongoing development, but also relates to the stage of life and industry experience. As indicated in the literature, contingent workers tend to be able to access very little structured learning experiences. Rather, these workers exercise considerable agency in maintaining technical currency through their equipment suppliers and the use of social media such as Facebook and YouTube. Their aesthetic, creative development appears to rely on opportunities to do the work

and working alongside others with creative talent who will mentor them for the life of the project, or over longer periods if the mentor is a local. The qualities and participative experience of the mentor as well as his availability appear crucial.

For freelancers in Singapore's creative sector, reflection has become a "general pedagogic stance" (Edwards 1998, p.386) that is vital to the effective navigation of shifting work patterns and a fast-changing technological environment. But not only do individuals need to be reflexive, so too does the governance of the infrastructure that supports the industry. De-standardised and flexible working patterns call for greater reflexivity on the part of institutions and individuals as well as a greater emphasis on learning (Edwards 1998, p.382). The recursive examination of social institutions, practices and ideas that characterises reflexivity in the contemporary era (Beck 1992, Giddens 1990, 1991) has important implications for learning in educational, work and personal contexts (Edwards 1998, Edwards et al 2002).

The dispositions, knowledge and skills of the entrepreneurial self are largely tacit and shaped by the specificities of workplace settings, and therefore cannot be easily abstracted from their social context and taught in training institutions. They are, however, integral to the development of "knowledgeable practice" as freelancers come to act through attuned judgment. Developing knowledgeable practice is a continuous process that takes place through multiple recontextualisations requiring us to develop a non-linear conception of the development of expertise and identity. Engagement in networks and negotiation across boundaries are central to the long-term occupational development of freelancers.

4.3 Summary

This discussion puts forward the idea that the professional identities of film and television freelance workers are multi-layered, including both a craft component and a component we have labelled the entrepreneurial self. It is the combination of these elements that helps a freelancer succeed in the industry and continue to get work. What freelancers in the Film and Television industry need to be in order to get work are two essential integrated elements, a craft element and an entrepreneurial

element. While there was some commentary on attaining technical skills through formal training, it was largely argued that the aesthetic and entrepreneurial dispositions, knowledge and skills are not easily attained without doing the work. Working across diverse environments, with different networks of people, and learning to learn through reflective practice appear to be crucial for understanding how to work in the creative industry. Learning through work is essential for learning *how* to be and in developing both craft and entrepreneurial mastery. These findings require us to understand work as learning (Zuboff, 1998).

5.0 Implications and recommendations

The previous two chapters provide deeper insights and new understanding into

1. the ways freelancers manage the constant need to position themselves, provide for their own insurances, manage contractual arrangements and cope with uncertainty of payment, long working hours and highly fluid boundaries between home and work, all of which qualify the freedom, choice and control of freelancing.

2. the qualities needed to succeed as a freelancer in this industry. Skills and knowledge of the craft, sense of aesthetics and entrepreneurship are all needed. Freelancers identify first with their craft and secondly as a freelancer. However, the different knowledge and skill sets are all important and are integrated in practice. The way film and television freelancers interact, the effort they put in on set, the quality of their work as well as their highly developed entrepreneurial skills are what get them work.

3. the ways in which freelancers in film and television identify with their craft and with being a freelancer. This is important as what you identify with directs what you seek to continuously learn and develop.

4. the skills which are under developed in film and television. These are aesthetic skills and, for new entrants, entrepreneurial skills. Technical skills appear to be well developed and catered for.

5. the self-directed way in which freelancers in this industry segment learn, in particular, how their learning is prompted through their work. They are largely self-sufficient in their learning, as indicated by their use of social media. They are also reflective and exercise well-developed metacognitive skills. This has

implications for the ways in which these workers can be supported to continuously upgrade themselves.

6. the opportunities for challenge and development in the industry which are contingent on getting quality projects. Currently, quality projects require involvement in international productions as local free-to-air productions are labelled as being of poor quality. These are lacking in challenge important for learning and development which are essential for the industry's growth.

7. the industry infrastructure which is in need of development. There is limited institutional dialogue and collaboration to identify and address industry issues. In-country free-to-air productions are heavily reliant on MDA funding. These issues must be addressed in order for the industry to move forward.

The implications of these findings will be discussed from a) a skills development perspective, b) a pedagogical enhancement perspective and c) the ways in which industry mediates learning and development.

5.1 Skills implications

Recommendation 1

Shift from a supply-driven approach for skills development to a demand-led approach deeply rooted in the industry, with a consideration for its production processes and its trajectory, and is reflective of the ways people in the sector learn.

Recommendation 2

Pre-service programmes should explore possibilities for developing work-based programmes that reflect the realities of practice in the industry.

We can identify two groups with different needs to be met in different ways. One group has those already in the industry and the second group has those undertaking formal studies to gain entry into the industry. In the second group, there are

reportedly a high number who cannot find adequate work, and whose expectations differ from the realities of the industry.

For the first group of workers already in the industry, the skills needs vary somewhat between the different roles. Our data does not allow us to comment definitively on this, but in broad terms, the roles that require strong exercising of aesthetic skills (e.g. writers, directors, directors of photography, video editors) need opportunities to be nurtured. It is clear that in-country free-to-air productions do not provide these opportunities. Developing these skills requires access to involvement in quality productions, which our interviewees reported are available through working on international productions.

Another aspect for those already in the industry is the depth of knowledge of the whole production process and the skills, standards and problem solving involved. Although there is evidence that technical crew help each other out, they and other roles do not necessarily have a deep knowledge of the whole production process. This is the reason international production houses do not engage Singaporeans in their productions. The roles and skill sets used in international production houses is integrated and more holistic than Singaporean production houses which tend to segregate their skills sets and roles. The ways in which the production process is undertaken has pedagogical and curriculum design implications as discussed below.

For those undertaking pre-entry qualifications, there is considerable evidence that suggests they would benefit from supported work-based placements. For those with polytechnic qualifications, the internship at the end of their academic program does not allow for the gradual development of confidence and skill in a real working environment. A structured work-based programme that “moves” between work placements and an institutional education with a curriculum that reflects the disciplines and realities of film and television production would be more adequate. Such a programme is likely to go further in helping graduates with realistic career expectations to sustain themselves in the industry. The Media Practice Foundation Degree offered by School of Media in London College of Communication, University of the Arts London, is an example. Members of the teaching team in this Foundation Degree are active in the industry, and are able to give learners access to their

networks. This “supports learners to develop vocational identities and roles” and contributes to a high level of contract-based employment upon graduation (Evans & Guile, 2013, p.28).

Most pre-service educational institutions for this industry have established simulated environments which allow for learning through trial and error, where mistakes can be made in a safe environment. An addition to this environment is the need to move from predictable to more unpredictable tasks within real working environments in order to learn about the complexities of working life (e.g. time, budget, power relations, norms of interacting, unwritten rules of engagement in the industry, the importance of positioning yourself every moment you are on set). This is one way of teaching technical and aesthetic craft and entrepreneurial skills in an integrated way. A step to prepare students in the move from predictable to increasingly unpredictable tasks is to build focused real world activities into the curriculum. Nunez, Vendrell and Ryan (2013) call such approaches, which deliberately builds real-world activities into an institutional curriculum, reality-based focusing events. A real-world focus is reflective of practice as it happens; it means that different types of skills (e.g. technical and aesthetic craft and entrepreneurial skills) are not taught separately but are integrated and assessed together.

Above all though, the small size of the industry and its highly competitive nature, based predominantly on supply of labour on a contract basis (engaging freelancers), highlights the need to move from a supply-driven approach for skills development to a demand-led approach. A demand-led skills development approach needs to be deeply rooted in the industry, with a consideration for its production processes and its trajectory, and is reflective of the ways in which people in the sector learn. Such an approach requires dialogue between stakeholders (discussed in Section 5.3 on industry implications) as well as government agency support for new initiatives. A consequence of a move to a demand-driven approach is the deviation from predominantly classroom-based provision for those already in the industry. For pre-service provision, it has implications about combinations of skill sets, reconsidering the graduate outcomes and attributes and developing a curriculum that is inclusive of work-based learning and assessment, thus movement between the educational institution and work.

5.2 Pedagogical implications

Recommendation 3

The industry should address the issue of differences between local and international best practice, and the resulting resolution should inform the curriculum for pre-service qualifications, continuing professional development initiatives and workplace learning.

Recommendation 4

The industry should identify select industry personnel as learning facilitators and confer on them accreditation and reward for this role.

Recommendation 5

Learning facilitators should receive support to develop skills in learning conversations and effecting a gradual release of responsibility.

An obvious major implication is that learning and development should be grounded in the work of film and television production. Before proceeding further, we need to clarify what we mean by workplace learning. First, we need to recognise that freelancers in the Film and Television industry work across many sites and projects. Secondly and more importantly, "a limited understanding of workplace learning as being about the transmission of skills or inculcation into routine processes of work" (Evans & Guile, 2013) is *not* what we mean when we talk about workplace learning. What we mean by workplace learning in this context is

> *Learning that takes place by being part of and therefore engaging in the activity of work through opportunities for practice, and receiving guidance and support as well as contributing*. (Bound & Lin, 2011)

Above all, it is a *process* which is informal, incidental, practice-bound, based on experience, shaped by the work tasks and context in which the learning takes place, and shared with work teams and communities (Virtanen, Tynjälä & Collin, 2009). Learning is embedded in the productive processes of work. As Zuboff observed

some 25 years ago, it is no longer reasonable to think of learning and work as activities that exist separately.

> *Learning is no longer a separate activity that occurs either before one enters the workplace or in remote classroom settings. Nor is it an activity preserved for the managerial group. The behaviours that define learning and behaviours that define being productive are one and the same. Learning is not something that requires time out from being engaged in productive activity; learning is the heart of productive activity. To put simply, learning is the new form of labour. (Zuboff, 1988, p.395)*

Because the context of work is different from a classroom and because the knowledge used at work is different from the discipline-based knowledge often taught in educational institutions, we need pedagogies suited to the forms of knowledge used at and across multiple work sites. These will differ from pedagogies used in a classroom; although similar strategies can be used, they will be practiced differently. In the case of film and television freelancers, these pedagogies and curriculum design need to be deeply rooted in the ways in which they learn and within the sites in which they learn. The ways in which they learn are through observation, use of social media and through informal dialogues with colleagues or through using artefacts, such as a film they greatly admire as a medium for reflective and reflexive practice.

It is clear that classroom training is not only an opportunity cost, but also fails to reflect the ways in which freelancers in this industry learn. Where there are structured sessions off the job, these also need to be networking events. Our interviewees made suggestions such as having shared sessions where those whose works have received national and international recognition share their experiences, the problems they have encountered and how these are resolved. Another suggestion was for groups to come together to deconstruct the technical and aesthetic aspects of a production. Coming together for sharing sessions, whether face-to-face or through social media or a continuing dialogue supported through social media, happens to a limited extent already. Also, Six Degrees already

provides a range of continuing professional development sessions, although it was referred to by very few of our interviewees.

The ways in which the productive processes and the work are designed have implications for curriculum and program design and pedagogy. Programmes and continuous professional development tend to reflect current practices and the context involved. It is thus necessary for the industry to review the way work is designed in the local industry with reference to the differences with international productions. If Singaporeans are missing out on opportunities to take part in international productions because they do not have the knowledge and skills required, and also because of the lack of regulation in relation to employment of locals (as our data indicates), this raises the questions:

- To what extent does the design of local work reflect international best practice?
- Does the Singaporean industry want to emulate or better international best practice?
- If so, what are the skills required to fit the design of the work that reflects international best practice.

Making changes will require skills development of those in the industry and has implications for curriculum design of pre-service programmes. If changes are not clearly signalled and planned for, then it is likely that interventions related to skills development will maintain the status quo, seeing a continuation of the issues highlighted in this report.

Having noted the broader issues in relation to pedagogy (which cannot be separated from its context), we can now move to suggestions for specific pedagogical approaches and delivery. One approach is to use industry learning facilitators (Evans, Guile, Harris & Allan, 2010). These people would be identified by the industry as experts and could offer mentoring, opportunities for observation and “learning conversations” (the role of these industry learning facilitators is elaborated in Section 5.3 on industry implications). Learning conversations expand capacity

through dialogue. The learner articulates developing understandings to others, is challenged and stretched through engaging in learning conversations. The facilitator guides the conversation to make the learning process conscious while deepening knowledge. It is a meta-learning or a learning to learn process. It is a two-way process within a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1998) that allows both learner and facilitator to learn, resulting in more purposeful approaches on the part of the learner, along with expanding learner's knowledge and putting it to work (Evans, Guile, Harris & Allan, 2010). Thus learning conversations can deliberately build and extend the reflective and reflexive practices of the learners, identified in this study as an important aspect of self-development for film and television freelancers.

Another strategy that would be an integral aspect of learning conversations is "gradual release". Gradual release is not new, but is being used in new ways, to gradually develop confidence, knowledge and skills. It is a gradual release of responsibility to the learner. This teaching and learning strategy requires a coaching or mentoring arrangement or a work-based supervisor or a lecturer from an educational institution to work with the learner/ freelancer. The gradual release strategy can work well for pre-service learners attached to an educational institution or a new entrant who is being mentored or coached in a workplace or freelancing team. More experienced freelancers may find the gradual release strategy helpful when learning, for example, about the whole production process. .

Drawing on our new knowledge of how film and television freelancers learn, learning conversations and gradual release could be supported by the appropriate use of social media and, where appropriate, be linked to learning activities such as those suggested by our interviewees.

5.3 Industry implications

Recommendation 6

Develop an industry wide set of standards used by PET and CET.

Recommendation 7

As skills development is closely tied to business and work opportunities, bring relevant industry stakeholders together to address the strategic directions for the industry and create a conducive and dynamic business/ workplace environment for all.

Recommendation 8

An industry-led body should assume responsibility for skills development in the industry which involves recognising industry learning facilitators and industry assessors, and providing for their development and reward.

In the discussion above, there are a number of references to and implications for the ways in which the industry stakeholders collaborate and establish an ongoing dialogue. For example, the research project, Reference Group Discussion, highlighted the unethical practices of engaging students without or with little pay and leaving them with responsibility for whole projects with no or very limited support. Such practices have implications for the trajectory of interaction between educational institutions and other industry stakeholders. Trust needs to be built between industry players.

Recent NTUC engagement with freelancers in the industry and other stakeholders is promising, and holds within it the potential for ongoing industry-wide dialogue that should extend beyond pay, insurance and conditions. It is difficult for freelancers to be represented, as NTUC advised at an industry session organised by Six Degrees on 11th September 2012. However, NTUC did provide a number of options for gaining representation. At a professional level, the Association of Independent Producers Singapore (AIPRO), founded in 2003, represents producers. Our interviews also presented stories of a number of different groups, including writers, in the early stages of becoming organised on a professional basis. There is a need for all industry stakeholders from MDA to professional and union bodies, educational institutions and relevant government agencies such as WDA, to come together to address the strategic directions of the industry. Issues that need addressing in order to develop and grow the industry would form part of the dialogue. These include

encouraging practices that allow for production houses to engage close to or fully 100 per cent non-Singaporeans (other countries have a legal requirement that a percentage of those engaged be nationals), reviewing the ways in which production is organised compared to international practices, formulating industry standards, creating access to ongoing development for people in the industry and assessing and improving the graduate outcomes of pre-service qualifications. This is an opportunity for the Ministry of Education (MOE), WDA and their accredited providers to work together to develop an industry-wide set of standards and graduate outcomes, and with it, transparent pathways within the industry.

For skills development, it is critical that Singaporeans have access to opportunities to be engaged in quality productions. This is not just an issue of MDA funding on which the local industry has become very reliant. It is also an issue about what acceptable standards are and, hand in hand with that, what is acceptable remuneration. This is a core issue that must be addressed in order for other solutions to work effectively.

An industry body representative of all players in the industry, or an industry-sanctioned body, could also be responsible for the recognition and appointment of industry learning facilitators, the development of the pedagogical skills of these facilitators and ensuring they are rewarded appropriately. Different facilitators will obviously have different areas of expertise and different approaches and personality traits. It is important that both facilitator and the person who needs guiding have a final say in the suitability of the match between them. Industry learning facilitators are valuable because they are aware of the challenges, have many “war stories” to share and understand the cultures and ways of working in the sector. They implicitly bring together different forms of knowledge and are able to explain in ways that are easy to understand. Learning from their experiences and mistakes is a powerful way to learn (Evans, Guile, Harris & Allan, 2010).

A separate research study could be conducted into the ongoing continuous professional development needs of the sector. For example, the need for aesthetic skills has been identified in this report. Above all, whatever is provided needs to be built around the ways in which these industry personnel learn. This will see a move away from classroom-based provision.

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Appendix 1

Contingent Worker Reference Group Members' List

On 4th July from 12pm-5pm @ IAL Conference Room Level 5

No	Organisation	Title
1	MOM Manpower Policy & Planning Division	Assistant Director
2	MOM Income Security & Policy Division	Senior Assistant Director
3	WDA CPSD	Assistant Director
4	WDA QAD	Deputy Director
5	AIPRO	President
6	Ngee Ann Polytechnic (Academic Planning and Management) School of Film & Media Studies	Deputy Director
7	Temasek Polytechnic (Academic Quality) School of Design	Senior Manager

No	Organisation	Title
8	Media Development Authority	Manager, Strategy Development & Industry Analysis
9	Media Development Authority	Assistant Director, Industry Strategy
10	Media Development Authority	Manager, Industry Operations
	Media Development Authority	Senior Manager, Strategy Development and industry Analysis
11	ITE (Academic Quality & Manager, Design & Media Curriculum	Deputy Director
	ITE College Central, Filmmaking	Section Head
12	SAE Institute (Creative Media Education)	Head of Academics
13	NTUC Centre (Legal Services Department)	Assistant Director, PME Unit, NTUC
14	Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (Department of Design and Media)	Lecturer, Department of Design and Media

No	Organisation	Title
15	Nanyang Technological University (College of Humanities, Arts, & Social Sciences)	ADM, Associate Chair Academic