

Strengthening Quality Management in Zimbabwean Film Industry

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Abstract

The people in Zimbabwe prefer Western / Indian / Nigerian films than the local films, which is mainly due to the poor content of the local production. The lack of quality is also hindering Zimbabwean films to enter the global market. This article investigates methods and mechanisms of strengthening quality management in the Zimbabwean film industry in order to produce quality films that can be competitive in the global market. It was observed that the Zimbabwean film industry has inadequate leadership, film structure and policies. The industry has been operating without any proper national policy, thus there is a lot of illiteracy concerning quality management, resources for improvement or innovations and lack of planning on operations of the film industry. Henceforth, it is essential to explore the industry, seek strategies of continuous improvement of producing quality films that satisfy the consumer's expectations. Film industry in most of the countries, such as Nigeria, has been contributing economically over the years; however, Zimbabwe is one of the nation that has not been able to fully explore and benefit from the film industry. Thus, the Zimbabwean film industry must establish quality management team and implement management practices to improve the quality of its production and become sustainable.

Keywords

Digitalization, quality management practices, film industry, Zimbabwe

1. Introduction

In the first two decades of independence, the film industry in Zimbabwe exhibited its potential for growth by producing quality films like *Jit* (1990), *Neria* (1992), and *Flame* (1996), some of which were the highest-grossing movies. The current economic situation has limited the activities of the Zimbabwean film industry; hence, most of the filmmakers are making their films on a very tight budget. In order to cut the production cost, Zimbabwean filmmakers have now adopted the approach of working in small crews and started using mobile phones for digital video capturing (Mboti, 2016). This is resulting in the production of low quality films and losing local audiences. The quality of the films is also being compromised by the selection of poorly written scripts and lack of story lines, which do not even relate to what the society needs. New generation filmmakers somehow are lacking filmmaking skills and knowledge. Furthermore, film institutions and organizations in Zimbabwe such as Zimbabwe International Film Festive (ZIFF), African Script Development Fund, and Zimbabwe Film and Television School of Southern Africa (ZIFTESSA), are not being able to contribute much towards the development of the film industry. Zimbabwe has only one broadcasting television (ZTV) service and it has not been able to move towards digitalization yet, which has been limiting companies in making quality films.

Zimbabwean film industry needs to change on how they make films in order to be promote local production and compete with quality international productions. The 21st century technology has introduced several media sources and created a global village for film industry. With the introduction of technology, there has been some major changes in film industry in term of the equipment and software used to produce and market films. Due to the globalization of film business, it has become very crucial for film industry to stay abreast for the competition through standardizing products and constantly try to meet the customers' needs through quality films. Filmmakers in Zimbabwe are failing to produce quality films that are competitive enough to enter global market, so there is a need for strengthening quality management in film industry.

According to Goetsch and Davis (2010), quality is determined by customers and is often dynamic, hence the management has to ensure that the goods produced or services provided has to continually exceed the customer's expectations. Quality management emphasizes on achieving ultimate goal of satisfying customer expectations with high quality output. Quality management is based on continuous improvements (Dean and Bowen, 1994); hence, continual improvement should be a perpetual objective of an organization because it is the key to quality production. Quality management provides guiding principles to improve competitiveness of products / services and organizational performance to satisfy the customers' needs (Jaafreh and Al-abedallat, 2013). For an organization to be successful, the employees have to be flexible to changes making the product or the company improve from one level to another. Naor et al. (2008) embarked on flexibility to change in order to meet the customer needs. It is crucial for the film industry to be flexible in standardizing their productions and find ways of satisfying the customers in order to be competitive and penetrate the global market. All this is possible only if the quality management of every production company in the industry improve its operations or production processes.

Organizations use a set of quality management practices, collectively known as total quality management (TQM), to produce high quality outputs and improve organizational performance (Lakhal et al., 2006). According to Lakhal et al. (2006) and Jaafreh and Al-abedallat (2013), several studies have been conducted to investigate the impact of quality management practices on organizational performance showing both positive and negative results. However, majority of the studies reported positive impact of quality management practices on performance (Jaafreh and Al-abedallat, 2013). Figure 1 presents the seven major quality management practices used for the evaluation of performance of an organization.

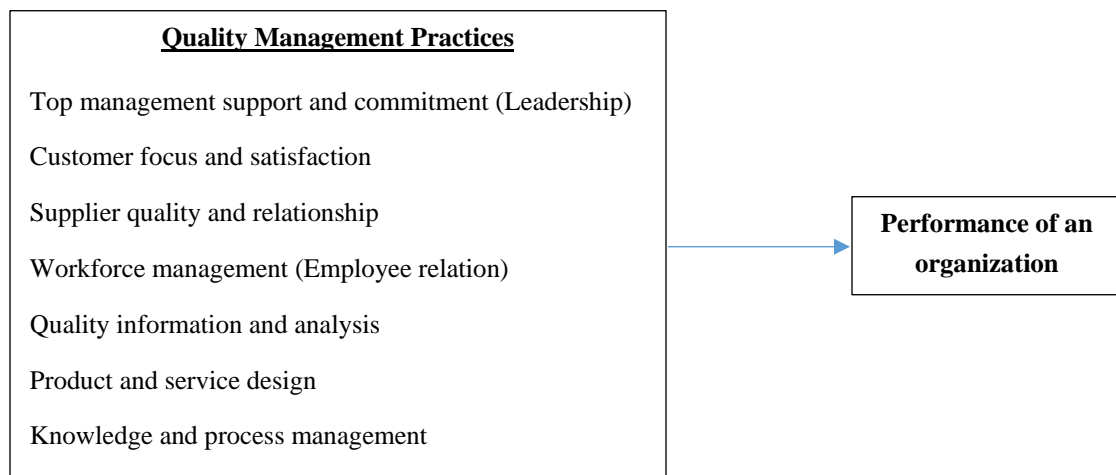


Figure 1. Quality management practices (Flynn et al., 1994; Lakhal et al., 2006; Jaafreh and Al-abedallat, 2013; Sadikoglu and Olcay, 2014)

Top management make strategies to ensure that the organization achieve quality of products and services. Leaders ensure efficient use of information and sufficient communication within the organization, and support staff development (Sadikoglu and Olcay, 2014). They inspire by setting up challenging visions and provide people with training to achieve the goal. They also create a friendly working environment to establish trust and motivate staff to work freely and contribute with new ideas and designs.

Customer relationship is essential as it may determine the success or failure of any organization. The primary objective of any industry is to satisfy customers and make every effort to exceed their expectations. It is important for organizations to communicate with their customers and learn what they really want. Industries need to involve customers during the production processes in order to improve the quality (Sousa and Christopher, 2002). Film technology is dynamic and so are the preferences of audience (Goldsmith and O'Regan, 2005), hence filmmakers should conduct regular research on film consumers, understand their needs, and demands (Napoli, 2003). The industry needs to carefully monitor suggestions and feedbacks from their clients, this will enable the industry to improve the quality of their performance, increase sales and be competitive. The industry needs constant and repeating audiences for it to be successful. The online interaction with customers using website provides customers with a wide range of services such as when and where the film will be premiered, a platform for viewers to share their opinions, and ideas on the movie trailers (Goldsmith and O'Regan, 2005).

The quality of products / services purchased from suppliers influence the performance during the production process (Jaafreh and Al-abedallat, 2013); hence, it is important for industries to purchase high quality products / services from reliable suppliers. Filmmakers should know the details of every film equipment because if there is a lack of communication between equipment suppliers and the organization, it is likely that filmmakers would purchase wrong or outdated equipment. Therefore, it is important to have good relationship with supplier to receive right equipment on time for the production of quality film.

Workforce is the driving force for the success of any company. Careful management of workforce includes recruiting qualified personnel, advocating teamwork, and providing quality oriented trainings (Flynn et al., 1994). It motivates staff empowerment and involvement, thus creates a conducive working environment for the film designers, technicians and actors through a better coordination. The workforce management should establish unity and pave a way for direction in achieving the goal of producing quality films and satisfying audience.

Quality information enables the production of quality films, which includes timely flow of accurate information and quality feedback of the staff performance. It is important for information to flow within all staff members, as it will assist them to make the right choices and development in making film (Randolph, 1995). Quality feedback helps organizations to achieve their ultimate goals (Flynn et al., 1994).

A product / service of an organization is differentiated from its competitors through its quality. A weakly designed product may even result in a failure and huge financial losses (Flynn et al., 1994). Hence, it is important for a film industry to produce quality films without flaws to be competitive. During the process of filmmaking, the designers design and re-design concepts in the process of drafting and rendering. The quality management coordinates and ensures that all designs intrinsically link with story portrayed in the film.

Process management involves reducing variations to improve quality of the processes, which results in the increased quality of the product (Jaafreh and Al-abedallat, 2013; Sadikoglu and Olcay, 2014). Quality management enables to find effective ways that are productive and requires less time during the process of making a film. Much focus will be on implementing effective methods using the right resources to improve the activities of the organization. There is a need to evaluate risks, detect possible errors and quickly resolve it before it affects the customers, suppliers or other parties.

This paper sought to find ways of strengthening the quality management in the film industry, such that the Zimbabwean film industry will improve the quality of its films to compete with the global market and meet the expectation of both local and international audiences. This paper also explores the issues that have been hindering Zimbabwean films industry in producing quality films.

2. Methodology

Secondary sources, such as journals and articles, were used to review documents on film industry and its operations and quality management. Un-structured interviews were conducted with few Zimbabwean filmmakers and audiences to collect general information on the quality of Zimbabwean film production. The information collected were used to understand the challenges encountered by Zimbabwean film industry in producing quality films. Furthermore, some case studies were also reviewed to identify challenges and problems associated with the Zimbabwean film industry.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Quality Management Practices

Quality film is crucial to attract the audience. In order to improve the quality of films, it is essential to have a quality management team that controls the quality of operations and processes of film production units such as casting of right performers, employing qualified designers, technicians and director. Failure of fulfilling task from anyone of the film unit may spoil the final product. One of the prominent filmmaker in Zimbabwe elaborated that Zimbabwe needs professionals in the field because current people in the film industry, including those who commission work, do not understand their role and do not even understand the importance of specific responsibility. As a result, most companies end up producing poor quality films. The production of film involves collaboration of different units, therefore teamwork is very important and it is vital to form qualified quality management team to monitor the methodological activities during the production and distribution of film in order to improve the quality of film productions and services. The quality management team should ensure the blending of skills or areas of specialty of different filmmakers with different views, creativeness and experience to make films, hence there is a need to strengthen the quality management or establish one for the production of good quality films.

Quality management must be strategic and thrive to produce superior quality products and services. The quality management team is there to ensure that changes made in the systems and processes of making a film result in a high quality film. One of the area that the quality management team has to strengthen their skills is in research. According to Mahaka (2017), the first thing that needs to be done during film production is to come up with a realistic budget that will enable the whole filmmaking process. The budget will determine the period of pre-production to post-production and stuff to be relinquished without compromising the quality. It is important for filmmakers to conduct an audience analysis, as it will assist them to understand viewers' choice and design films according to the target market. The fact that Zimbabwean films do not take audience at the edge of their seats shows failure in triggering audience, hence measures should be taken to produce quality films that reflects the African society and identity. For instance, Indian movies showing traditional wedding ceremonies clearly articulates their culture, inclusion of cultural dance in Indian series or movies. The Zimbabwean film industry should learn not only from Indian but also from Nigerian films which have been showcasing their cultural and traditional values through films and this has made the industry to be recognized because of its uniqueness.

The quality management team in film companies should be firm and particular when selecting scripts for the production of films. The script is a foundation and plays a vital role to lure more viewers with brilliantly crafted story. Scripts or content development has been one of the challenging issues in the quality of Zimbabwean films. Most filmmakers fail to write stories which are intriguing. Filmmakers should be creative in articulating their stories that goes beyond viewer's imagination and expectations, and should align these stories to real life situations. Viewers need to be inspired by quality productions in order for the industry to secure its stability and be recognized. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the quality management team to ensure that an intensive research has been done on the target market audience focusing on their discourses, interest and ensure that their needs are met.

It is also important to accumulate highly organized designs before the film production starts, which encompasses all departments (Zu et al., 2010) because the director together with other managers will have several meetings with the designers and try to incorporate all the designs for the making of the film. Once a detailed plan is ready on paper, it then becomes essential to conduct rehearsals of the production. The process management emphasises on the significance of working with preventive measures (Sirkin and Stalk, 1990; Cheah et al., 2011), this allows flaws to be noticed earlier and be rectified and eventually reduce production costs (Zu et al., 2010). In alignment with producing good quality films, this is the most effective way compared to controlling and correcting a production that has been released to the public. This will increase sales with time and the quality of the product (Cheah et al., 2011). The success of the film industry depends on the ability of quality management team who are expected to constantly redesign and collaborate the works of artist, film technicians and designers in order to produce quality films.

Filmmakers must understand that it is the quality and not the quantity of films that counts for the film industry to be successful. It is very critical to strengthen quality management in order to improve the quality of films and increase the sales. The increased revenue will empower the film crew with information and trainings on new equipment. The

introduction of digitalization in the country means the need of training for all technicians, experienced or not, on how to handle the equipment in order for employees to improve their competences. According to Zu et al. (2008), effective training and improvement in the production results in increased turnover and sustainability in a company. Thus, empowering employees with knowledge on new technologies for film production will help build a strong foundation for the Zimbabwean film industry and will motivate employees to work hard and obtain better results. A well trained film units will provide personnel who are effective and efficient in their respective roles to produce high quality films, which will result in satisfied consumers and a sustainable film industry.

Trainings motivate employees to be creative and innovative as they will be able to participate fruitfully in the process of production (Criado and Calvo-Mora, 2009). Trainings help reduce waste or mistakes during the operation process (Dow et al., 1999). Trainings empower employees to improve their confidence and increases loyalty to the organization and performance as they are equipped on how to deliver quality services. Trainings encourage communication and teamwork among employees, and make them feel responsible for the outcome of the production. It is also essential to have multi-medium platforms for information circulation and communication where employees can actively participate in and be included in decision making of the production. The quality management team is responsible to ensure that there are such support systems and motivate employees to participate in the production process (Goetsch and Davis, 2010). Training is positively related as an investment of human resource in business as it yields professional employees who are acquainted on the concepts, processes involved and quality, this helps to improve the firm's performance (Zu et al., 2008).

Another way of strengthening quality management in film industry is to involve all employees into decision making processes as it empowers everyone. The director and the producer should not only visualize the script and dictate all the designs, but also incorporate suggestions and ideas collected from all the employees. Everyone must participate in formulating ideas, irrespective of their roles as a director, a camera person, make-up artist or an actress (Robinson and Schroeder, 2004). Instead of hierarchy, the managers can motivate their employees by exchanging information, and discuss on the future plans, which will help create teamwork between the managers and subordinate (Randolph, 1995). Teamwork enables open discussion whereby knowledge and experience will be shared. This will enhance trust among the employees and there will be transfer of authority and power to resolve any existing issues as a group. Decentralization of power will secure the employees with a sense of belongingness or ownership of the production. As responsible people of the production, they will effectively prove their creativeness, knowledge and skills. Zu et al. (2010) encourages teamwork in organizations to produce high quality products.

Psychologist view empowerment as one of the motivational factors as one will feel that they have the power and control, this approach is also known and organic approach (Quinn and Spreitzer, 1997). This approach makes employees or filmmakers feel that it is within their responsibility to design a quality films knowing that their efforts will be recognized and valued. The empowerment will not only give power but will make filmmakers to develop a sense of ownership of the film, as a result one will give in all the efforts to make sure that the film is an excellent product which will compete with other quality films.

Every team player is endowed with different ideas which can contribute to the success of the organization (Robinson and Schroeder, 2004). The quality management team is responsible to prompt those ideas from people and appreciate by giving a simple recognition to the most outstanding and hard-working staff. This will motivate and create competition among the filmmakers to come up with the best ideas and designs, and this will result in the improvement of quality of films. In Zimbabwe, there is Nama awards but it still needs to increase its monetary value and compete with other awards in Nigeria and other African nations.

Goal setting and division of responsibilities will bring an understanding of responsibilities among every employees. It will result in innovative and competent personnel who will bring value in the production of a film. Goal setting will inspire to be committed to standards and to be accountable in achieving the organization's objective. It is crucial for employees to have freedom and independence of creativeness as long as they understand the organization's objectives and work in alignment with it (Shea and Howell, 1998).

3.2 Digitalization of Zimbabwean Film Industry

Zimbabwe is still conveying information using electrical signals instead of using computers which can transform contents using digital transmissions. The use of digital technology enables broadcasting more television channels

using one single frequency unlike the analogue system which can only accommodate one programme. The cost of infrastructure will also be reduced because many television service providers will be able to use one digital transmitter on site. This will create more television channels in Zimbabwe which will provide opportunity for more filmmakers to be employed and have a variety of competitive broadcasters who want to buy their products. This will force the filmmakers to produce quality films as audience will have a wide selection of programmes to watch and hence the filmmakers will be forced to produce quality films. Hence, speeding up the digitalization project is another way of strengthening quality management of the Zimbabwean film industry.

The implementation of digitalization will extensively reduce the cost of locale. Instead of shooting a film in a foreign location one can now easily photo-shop images on internet during the editing processes and successfully blend the pictures and the events of the footage which will appear as if the scene was indeed taken in that foreign location. The use of High-Definition (HD) cameras will also produce high quality films with quality pictures and sound. HD cameras use SD memory cards which eliminates the use of stock films which are expensive to maintain. This also means that there will be a reduction in purchase of the input.

Maintaining the high quality of the product is one of the major benefit of moving to digital broadcasting. Since the digital content does not degrade during the transmission process, consumers can enjoy the original quality of the product captured by the camera (quality of both the picture and sound) despite the distance from the transmitter's coverage area. There is a room for continual improvement of quality in broadcasting films for better sound and picture quality, and there are already experiments under way to improve from 3D Television to Ultra High Definition (UHD) such as 4K and 8K, which provide pristine picture and sound quality.

Through the utilization of technology, there is a possibility of introducing of e-cinema and mobile broadcasting in Zimbabwe. This will reduce delivery cost while improving dissemination efficiency of the film (Zhu, 2003). It will also enable the Zimbabwean film industry to infiltrate global audience at a lower distribution cost, and will introduce the industry to e-market. The advantage of e-market on the internet is that it increases the range of audiences at a lowest minimum cost. Hollywood companies have quickly integrated these new distribution channels and have now established themselves as multi-media corporations (Litman, 1998; Scott, 2005; Flew, 2007). The introduction of digitalization will also enrich the quality of public relations of the filmmaker with its audiences and the suppliers. In some developed countries, the film industry offers e-services like online ticketing, on-line video access and downloads which is very convenient for customers. Film websites like IbaKatv, tvnolly and najjapals in Nigeria has made it easier for customers to access films at a cheap price.

Customers influence designs of the production (Naor et al., 2008), for instance in the process of the film production, the director might incorporate some ideas generated from the feedback of audience on a movie trailer and amend the initial script to suit the majority. The use of internet will also enable viewers to participate in film making process. To improve on the quality, it is important for the marketing and sales team to collect suggestions, comments and all other feedbacks from consumers, and use the information to produce films that viewers desire to watch rather than focusing on a genre that most audience are not interested in. Lengnick-Hall (1996) emphasized on the inclusion of customers in the production process of the organization to produce better products / services. This will consequently increase sales and popularity of the film.

Some websites also offer online tutorials on how to make a film. Through internet, some film industries have managed to establish a trusting relationship with their followers where by the customers give them suggestions and feedback. These industries use that information to improve the quality of their productions, and they too offer or share basic lessons on how to make a film. This is a win-win situation because both parties have something to benefit from the exchange of information. Implementing this in Zimbabwe will result in the production of good quality films.

Piracy has become rampant effect in today's society and there is a need for possible measures which can assist to curb piracy. Government policies should play a key role in helping reduce digital piracy. They should start by supporting technological innovation such as networking protocols and multimedia encoding that may reduce or prevent illegal activities. They should further strengthen the regulatory laws on the distribution of artistic and technological work such as film, and eliminate unworthy strategies of distributing finished productions through street vendors. It should be considered a serious offense to see a person selling a DVD or CD without license. Zimbabwean film industry should have a specified place where audiences can get the film rather than in the streets, which will benefit the filmmakers to have an increased turnover.

There is also a need to have some kind of quality controller in the process of transferring the edited footage onto the DVD. The quality management team must ensure that the quality of the content on the disk has not been compromised through encoding process, and is responsible for navigation and programming of the film. The team must run tests, check subtitles and the alignment of audio and video content of the film, and quickly report about any audio dropouts for it to be rectified. The team works closely with the technical managers for testing, maintaining and upgrading all equipment and systems.

3.3 Strengthening Quality Management in Zimbabwean Film Industry

Zimbabwean film industry is struggling to deliver quality films and thus losing local audience. According to Rwafa (2012), African audiences have been conditioned to Western or Indian films, and similar is the situation in Zimbabwe where people prefer watching Western / Indian / Nigerian films instead of local production. The lack of quality in Zimbabwean films is mostly associated with the lack of: (i) skilled personnel, (ii) financial support, (iii) equipment and infrastructure, (iv) research on market demand, (v) film guild or representative body for filmmakers, (vi) well-defined film policy, (vii) enough broadcasting services. In addition, Zimbabwe has failed to digitalize and move from analogue system to digital broadcasting which have limited its growth. To overcome these barriers, the Zimbabwean film industry needs to strengthen its quality management utilizing some or all of the solutions provided in table 1.

Table 1. Strengthening quality management in the Zimbabwean film industry

Areas	Ways of quality management
Co-productions	An opportunity to collaborate with international filmmakers will enable local filmmakers to learn and be updated with the current film production practices which will assist in improving the quality of film.
Funding sources	There is a need for a reliable source of funding which will support local talents. The availability of funds will also help professional and experienced filmmakers to enhance their productions. The government should also include film industry in budget so that the local filmmakers will be encouraged in the production of quality films.
Quality information	There should be a database of quality information for filmmakers on latest equipment, funds, locales, etc.
Establishing film guilds and organizing film festivals	Organizing film festivals help bring best films from around the world in one place, this exposure will help empower local filmmakers. The tough selection procedure for the film to be selected and showcased in the festival will develop a culture of producing high quality films. Establishment of a film guild will encourage people to buy and watch Zimbabwean film products. Film guild can liaise with the government to ensure that the right people in the industry get financial support and have a concrete film policy.
Movie theatres and mobile cinemas	Building more cinema halls, theatres, drive-ins like the one in Bulawayo to premier and distribute films will encourage filmmakers to make more films of high standard. There is a need to develop mobile cinemas in rural areas to encourage aspiring filmmakers from rural areas and exchange skills to make quality films.
Training and workshops	Trainings and workshops help filmmakers acquire necessary information on production of quality films. For instance organizing workshops and technical conferences with international film industries, and introducing art of film

	making in schools. This will empower employees to improve their work and make better films.
Empower employees	It is essential to employ qualified management team and financial advisors to strategize on effective mechanism of producing quality films and develop the film industry.
Government regulations	There is a need for the government to review some regulations pertaining shareholding of foreign investors in Zimbabwean film industry. International investment also brings international expertise that can be transferred to local filmmakers to produce quality films.

4. Conclusion

The film industry in Zimbabwe is struggling to attract local audience due to the production of poor quality films which do not satisfy the expectations of consumers. This article aims to strengthen the quality management of the Zimbabwean film industry in order to improve the quality of films that can enter and compete with global market. In order to be established and sustainable, the film industry must improve the quality of films. The industry should absorb the trainees from Zimbabwe Film and Television School of Southern Africa (ZIFTESSA) and other institutes who have passion and formal training in the production of quality films. A reliable funding source should be established to fund proposals and production houses which have been evaluated to be worthy. The technological advancement has redesigned the traditional way of film production, and has resulted in the production of 3D and HD cameras which offers greater image quality coupled with different editing software that gives special effects to the film to make scenes as real as possible. It is important for the Zimbabwean film industry to take initiatives and create quality films that are beyond the customer's imagination. The Zimbabwean film industry needs to accelerate its project on digitalization and improve its quality to enter and establish itself in the global market. It is also significant to do a research on recipients of the productions and understand the genres that most people are interested in and produce what people want. The implementation of quality management tools will ensure quality films, which will result in better business, increased cash flow, satisfied filmmakers, and high customer loyalty.

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Biography

Anup Pradhan is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Quality and Operations Management under Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment at the University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa. He is NRF (National Research Foundation) rated researcher in South Africa. He is registered engineer with the Nepal Engineering Council. He earned his B.Sc. in Agricultural Engineering from Bangladesh Agricultural University (Bangladesh), M.E. in Agricultural Engineering and Systems from Asian Institute of Technology (Thailand) and PhD in Biological and Agricultural Engineering from University of Idaho (USA). He has held posts at Alternative Energy Promotion Centre, Nepal and Institute of Engineering, Nepal. His research interests include life cycle assessment, renewable energy, sustainability, farm mechanization and operations management. He has published in peer-reviewed journals and conference papers. He is member of ASABE, Gamma Sigma Delta, and Golden Key International Honor Society.

Fortunate Tatenda Mauyakufa is a young researcher and also a filmmaker, who attained her honours degree from Midlands State University in Zimbabwe. While studying in Zimbabwe, she took the initiative on rising an awareness to different communities about children in probation institutes. She further directed and produced a documentary on Blue Hills, which is one of the largest probation institutes in Zimbabwe. In 2011, she worked as a temporary teacher before eventually enrolled for her honours degree. She was an assistant facilitator of theatre and arts for the new curriculum, which the ministry of Primary and Secondary schools had introduced, under Pfumvudza Media Company. Currently, she is a regular contributor at Women Arts Festival and a member of Zimbabwean theatre. Her aim is to acquire more knowledge on film production and be involved in the global media industry. During her leisure time she watches documentaries, play tennis and go to church. She aims to pursue doctoral degree and use film as a global medium that disseminate educative information.