Article

Higher-Institution-Based Film Festivals as a Vehicle to Improve Student Production Quality and Form University–Industry Connections

Yong Liu [1], Mayyer Ling [2] and Florin Nechita [3,*]

[1] Design and Creative Industries Programme, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Bandar Seri Begawan BE 1410, Brunei; yong.liu@ubd.edu.bn
[2] English Studies Programme, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Bandar Seri Begawan BE 1410, Brunei; mayyer.ling@ubd.edu.bn
[3] Faculty of Sociology and Communication, Transilvania University of Brașov, 500036 Brașov, Romania
* Correspondence: florin.nechita@unitbv.ro

Abstract: This paper will be focusing on discussions on how to use small-scale, higher-institution-based film festivals (including film competitions) as a vehicle to motivate students who are majoring in media and screen production to improve their production quality for both module assignments and competition-targeted special projects. Moreover, this paper will argue that, by inviting industry representatives to be involved in judging and commenting on student works, such small-scale film festivals organised by higher education institutions over time may grow into a platform that not only recognises and supports budding directors, screenwriters, actors, and actresses in Brunei but also acts as a playing field in which novice filmmakers can connect with experts, exchange ideas, acquire valuable skills, and enable further collaboration in the future. Based on first-hand data collection, an analysis, and semi-structured interviews of the multiple parties involved, our discussions cover how to launch the production process for screen-practice-based education, how to organise module assignments to fit the themes of specific film festivals/competitions, and how to overcome the challenges facing students working in a multicultural production team, etc. Two higher-institution-based film festivals, i.e., PRISM UBD Short Film Festival organised by Universiti Brunei Darussalam and the Dracula Digital competition, a mobile-phone filmmaking competition run by Transilvania University of Brasov, Romania, are used as analytical case studies.

Keywords: PRISM UBD Short Film Festival; higher education; significant learning experiences; university-industry connections; Dracula Digital competition

1. Introduction

In April 2018, the 1st Edition of the PRISM UBD Short Film Festival was hosted by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD). The one-day festival showcased over 40 student works from all major media genres (animation, documentary, experimental, fiction, and public service advertisement). The 5th Edition of the PRISM UBD Short Film Festival concluded in December 2022, and for the first time, the festival was screened as an official event included in the ASEAN University Network of Culture and the Arts (AUN-CA).

The organizers see PRISM as an outlet to showcase students' creative products in the form of short films for the public and as a way to invite jury members consisting of directors, screenwriters, actors, and actresses to provide feedback to student filmmakers. When their works are selected to go further to international competitions, some students also have the opportunity to work with production houses to polish their films and obtain real-life experience in the field. The festival enriches students' learning experiences and promotes an avenue of dialogue between students, industry experts, and academics. The connection

between theory and practice is refined through film festivals, which have the potential to improve the transferability of knowledge. Students, in theory, are able to translate their theoretical knowledge into technical abilities, with the guidance of academics and industry experts.

This paper aims to explore how small-scale, higher-institution-based film festivals (including film competitions) can motivate students to improve their production quality for both module assignments and competition-targeted special projects. Our empirical study focuses on the PRISM UBD Short Film Festival in Brunei Darussalam as the main research target, which is compared with the Dracula Digital competition—a mobile phone filmmaking competition organised by the FANZIN Association and the Zile și Nopți (Days and Nights) magazine with the support of the Faculty of Sociology and Communication, Transilvania University of Brasov, Romania. We will use the significant learning experience paradigm (Fink, 2013) to characterise the learning experiences of students who take part in the film festival by making their short films for module assignments and the Dracula Digital competition, along with all the short films screened in the five editions of the PRISM UBD Short Film Festival [1].

Under the significant learning experience paradigm, this paper further argues that by linking higher-institution-based film festivals such as PRISM to local screen industries and media outlets, the festival organisers who are also university educators may use such small-scale film festivals as a crucial apparatus to fulfil their pedagogical goals to meet the needs, demands, and standards of the screen industry.

1.1. Study Context: PRISM UBD Short Film Festival

The PRISM UBD Short Film Festival was initially organised as a showcase of works created by students in the Design and Creative Industries (DCI) and the Professional Communication and the Media (PCM) programmes at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS), Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD). It was hoped that the feedback from the invited juries would provide insight for students on how they can tap into the ever-expanding screen industry in Brunei. The first PRISM Festival was held on 21st April 2018, with over 40 short works showcased on the day, including all the major media genres (animation, documentary, experimental, fiction, and public service advertisement). Fewer than half of the total works (18 titles) were selected for the programme lineup in the morning screening, whose audience included three professional filmmakers as commentators for the students' works. The festival served as a screening platform for the selection of works to be submitted to film festivals elsewhere. Several works from the first PRISM were submitted to the 11th Shanghai Student Film and Television Festival (SSTVF), which was a sub-programme of the Shanghai International Film Festival held in June of the same year in Shanghai, China. Among the total 560 submissions to the festival worldwide, two PSAs made by UBD students, titled *Gamer Girls* and *Muslim or Non-Muslim*, bagged the Short-list Award in the competition category of Best Public Service Advertisement. The SSTVF organiser and jury members of the PSA competition were impressed by the UBD students' conceptual creativity and the cultural uniqueness and diversity expressed in their short visual works [2].

The 2nd PRISM witnessed an improvement in the quality of the shorts submitted by students as well as an expansion of its support network and interest from industry experts. The repertoire of guest juries also expanded from only production houses to performing arts studios, as well as professional photography and videography companies. In this edition of PRISM, the short film *Suara* was selected to represent Brunei and compete in the 3rd Southeast Asia Video Festival for Children (SEAVFC) 2019. *Suara* made both Brunei and UBD proud by becoming a runner-up in this regional video competition, as it is the first Bruneian work to make it to the top two finalists in the SEAVFC's three-year history. Another short film from the second edition of PRISM, *Bunga*, was officially accepted and screened in the Australia Now ASEAN Competition at the 29th Flickerfest International Short Film Festival from 10th to 19th January 2020 in Bondi Beach, Sydney,

Australia. Flickerfest is Australia's leading Academy®-accredited and BAFTA-recognised international short film festival. *Bunga* was the sole representative of Brunei to compete with other short films which were mostly made by professional filmmakers from other ASEAN states in Flickerfest 2020.

The 3rd PRISM had an even more diverse profile of jury judges from various institutional and professional backgrounds ranging from both government and non-government agencies to production houses, media agencies, directors, and actors. Aside from screening short films by students, a roundtable discussion was also conducted in the afternoon. The discussion focused on bridging the gap between local creative industries and higher education institutions and was attended by UBD FASS academics as well as representatives from the media industry [3].

PRISM has grown to become a platform for exposure to students' works, recognised both locally and internationally. For example, three UBD student films, *Suara* (2019), *Bunga* (2019), and *Anak Ayah* (2020) were selected to be part of the ASIA RISING 2021: Showcase of Short Films from Universities in ASEAN, China, Japan, and Korea online screening. The event was scheduled from 1 to 9 April 2001 and organised by the Centre for the Arts, National University of Singapore (NUS). Meanwhile, in February 2021, two UBD student-produced short films, *Bunga* and *Suara*, as well as three public service advertisement (PSA) works, *Cyberchondria*, *Dispose Responsibly*, and *Texting* were selected to be aired on RTBGo VOD Exclusive, along with a 10-min special feature titled *Behind the Scene* about the 3rd Edition of the PRISM UBD Short Film Festival. Later that year, Progresif Media (an online streaming platform that features Bruneian-produced content) also picked up six short films made by UBD students and published them on the Progresif Media app and website. The selected six short films were as follows: *Anak Ayah* (2020), *Bunga* (2019), *Suara* (2019), *Voyager 2100* (2019), *Abang* (2019), and *Laila* (2018). In addition, seven short films created by DCI students in the FASS, UBD were selected to be showcased in the Crosslight Film Festival organised by ASEAN University Network on Culture and the Arts (AUN-CA) in July 2021. Out of the total of 20 selected short films from nine Asian universities in eight countries to showcase in the 2021 AUNCA Crosslight Film Festival, about one-third (i.e., seven short films) were produced by UBD students. Five out of the seven selected UBD short films, including *Bunga* (2019), *Suara* (2019), *The Seventh* (2019), *Broman* (2019), and *Anak Ayah* (2020), were previously screened in the third edition of PRISM.

Due to the second wave of the COVID pandemic in Brunei, the premiere of the 4th PRISM UBD Short Film Festival was held online through the FASS UBD official YouTube channel, which accumulated nearly 2500 views over one weekend. There were over 150 individuals registered as part of the audience for the premiere, including those from local creative and media companies as well as registered viewers from abroad, such as from Australia, Malaysia, Qatar, and Singapore. This edition was organised in collaboration with Progresif Media—the largest online streaming platform that features content in Brunei. Following the awards ceremony, the winning titles were published on the Progresif Media platform as paid content through a revenue-sharing agreement with the respective UBD student filmmakers [4].

In the latest 5th edition of PRISM, the film festival became one of the official events included in the ASEAN University Network on Culture and the Arts Network (AUN-CA). Under the AUN-CA umbrella, the festival witnessed short film submissions from Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali, Politeknik Brunei, the National University of Singapore, and De LA Salle University-Manila in the Philippines. Following the success of online screening in the previous year, the 5th Edition of PRISM was held both offline and online. PRISM has evolved into a platform that not only recognises and supports budding directors, screenwriters, actors, and actresses in Brunei but also acts as a playing field in which novice filmmakers can connect with experts, exchange ideas, acquire valuable skills, and foster fruitful collaborations in the realm of cinematic art.

1.2. Theoretical Framework: Significant Learning Experiences

The idea of significant learning experiences stems from the need to define and characterise students' experiences in a meaningful way. Fink (2013) argues that educators want students to do more than just memorise course content [1]. In the same vein, he also argues that educators should be ambitious in their plans for students and should include a learning experience that influences the lives of the students and others around them. There are two major components to this paradigm: (1) students experiencing various kinds of learning, and (2) students being able to connect their courses to real life. In other words, in the significant learning paradigm, students acquire the foundational knowledge that is required in their modules and can translate their knowledge into practice, transcending the boundary between what is supposed to only be a classroom-based activity to an experiential one that will benefit the students.

The details of these two components of significant learning experiences are summarised in Figure 1 below:

1.	**Foundational Knowledge**
	Understanding and remembering
	• Information
	• Ideas
2.	**Application**
	• Skills
	• Thinking (critical creative and practical thinking)
	• Managing projects
3.	**Integration**
	Connecting:
	• Ideas
	• Learning experiences
	• Realms of life
4.	**Human Dimension**
	Learning about:
	• Oneself
	• Others
5.	**Caring**
	Developing new:
	• Feelings
	• Interests
	• Values
6.	**Learning How to Learn**
	• Becoming a better student
	• Inquiring about a subject
	• Self-directing learners

Figure 1. Taxonomy of significant learning.

In Figure 1, Foundational Knowledge refers to the learning process that we are familiar with in the education sector, in which students are taught specific information or ideas. In a university setting, this would refer to the foundational theories and principles relevant to the modules taught. In films, this would include many film theories and the principles

of cinematography. Application refers to what students do with the knowledge acquired. Students could learn new skills based on the principles of cinematography, engage in critical or practical thinking upon encountering issues, or learn to manage projects as part of group work. Integration, on the other hand, is the connection drawn between various learning points in the modules and different experiences in students' realities. In the context of the current study, this would be situations in which students can connect a camera angle to how it makes them feel and reflect on when this resulting feeling occurs in their own lives. Human Dimension occurs when students learn something about themselves or others, giving them a new perspective of themselves and others. This dimension could occur when students must communicate with their peers to discuss the implications of what they have learned from the modules on themselves or others. Next, Caring happens when students develop new feelings for what they learned, and a newfound interest in certain aspects of the modules. Fink (2013) argues that feelings fuel students with the energy to learn more about the aspect they are interested in, and without it, 'nothing significant happens' [1] (p. 36). Finally, Learning How to Learn refers to students learning about something that was not directly taught in the modules. For instance, while their modules focused on aspects of filmmaking, students might also learn how to pitch their ideas effectively. All six categories of significant learning have interactive relations with one another in a learning environment and they are not hierarchical.

We argue that the film festival promotes significant learning experiences for students as their learning experience goes beyond memorisation and the acquisition of theoretical knowledge. In this paradigm, students' learning experiences encompass continuous problem-solving, decision-making, and critical thinking throughout the process of making their short films and preparing for the film festival. In other words, the film festival provides an ideal platform for the six categories of significant learning to interact.

2. Literature Review

Film festival studies have been popular and ample for over four decades, but have rarely been aligned with higher education studies. In the early 1990s, Nichols (1994) described his experience of attending the Iranian cinema retrospective programme at the 1992 Toronto International Film Festival; he reported that as 'the tourist, we depart with the satisfaction of a partial knowledge, pleased that it is of our own making' [5] (p. 27). Nichols further used Iranian cinema as 'a reference point' to examine the function of international film festivals 'within a global traffic': 'The international film festival, and the new directors and new visions offered by it, affords an ideal opportunity to enjoy the pleasures of film's imaginary signifiers' [5] (p. 17). Over two decades later, Valck, Kredell, and Loist (2016) argued the use of multiple frames to expose the different mechanisms operating within and throughout festivals to differentiate the different parameters between film festivals [6]. They also pointed out the different sizes of and specific genres within film festivals: 'Next to the major and well-known film festivals stand a multitude of medium-sized, small, and tiny festival events, and examples of genre-based film festivals include animation, short films, experimental cinema, and student films' [6]. According to their classification, the analytic object of this paper—the PRISM UBD Short Film Festival—may be categorised as a small-sized film festival focused on student short film screenings.

In terms of function, Iordanova (2015) considered the 'film festival as an industry node', developing from an exhibition operation to a key player in the film industry and society at large with multiple functions, such as production financing, networking, and distribution [7] (p. 8). Stevens (2018) also noted the complexity of film festivals and emphasised the interdisciplinary principle of film festival studies [8] (p. 55). In addition to Iordanova (2016)'s emphasis on the 'transnational essence' of film festivals [9], Stevens (2018) contested the 'transmedia experiences' crystallised in film festivals: 'What the critical conception of film festivals as transmedia experiences offer, then, is a way to understand the inter-relation of the social and cultural as inherent and important qualities in the encounter with films that festivals provide' [8] (p. 55). The 'transmedia experiences' of film festivals

bring them into the foreground as a primary socio-cultural platform. Therefore, Fischer (2013) claimed, 'the majority of film festivals do not make money and the idea that a film festival is a profit-making venture is fundamentally flawed' [10] (p. 40). In summary, although there are multiple economic and commercial functions of film festivals, their social, cultural, and even educational functions and much more relevant values are equally essential and worth investigating.

We can discuss the idea of film festivals such as PRISM considering the more well-known notion of experiential learning, which is more relevant and readily applicable to university settings. Derived from the idea that students learn from doing [11], i.e., experiencing trials and errors, scholars such as Gentry (1990) cautioned that, while we cannot deny we do learn through experience, unguided experiential learning can lead to erroneous learning instead [12] (p. 9). Erroneous learning can be avoided with guidance from lecturers and more importantly, from industry experts in the field of filmmaking. The comment sessions supported by these filmmakers and media professionals following all the screenings of student short films throughout the five editions of PRISM are evidence of such a properly 'guided experiential learning' process functioning in a university environment. Such a learning process is only working through, and relying on, a successful collaboration between higher education institutes and local screen industries.

Addressing the successful collaboration between universities and industries, Edmondson et al. (2012) observed: 'Individuals with an understanding of both academic and business worlds are considered the driving force behind successful partnerships' [13]. Universities must involve people with networking and managerial skills to attract industry partners. At the same time, academics with industry backgrounds are an additional advantage as they tend to be more willing to cross boundaries to collaborate with people in other areas of expertise. Therefore, universities need to redefine their mission to include collaborations with industry [13]. Grincheva (2021) also affirmed that 'industry engagement has long been recognised in higher education as an effective tool to facilitating learning while leading to successful post-graduation employment' [14]. Furthermore, work-integrated learning delivered through course design better prepares students to enter the workforce and meet the demands of employers [15] (p. 3). Since its inception five years ago, PRISM has been designed and utilised as both a screening platform and a career bridge for 'facilitating learning' and preparing UBD students in creative media majors to better meet the needs and demands of Brunei's screen and media industries.

Film festivals provide an avenue for significant learning to take place, as there is a direct connection that can be drawn by learners between what is learned in the formal delivery of the module and the outcome (i.e., the premiere of short films in the film festival) with guidance from peers, lecturers, and industry experts. Throughout the process of film production and attending the premiere, students interact with each other and their lecturers as well as industry experts for insights and inspiration. The high frequency of interactions could theoretically develop a sense of community [16] and perhaps also a sense of belonging in students [17]. This sense of community includes both learning communities in the university setting as well as the communities in practice with members of the industry, whom all share a common interest, and both types of communities are equally important and relevant to student filmmakers [18].

Finally, the international cooperation between PRISM and the Dracula Digital competition in 2022 can be theoretically framed under the project-based learning (PBL) concept. PBL is an educational approach that emphasises hands-on projects and real-world problem-solving, and it is effective in developing critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity skills, based on the ideas of John Dewey (1897) [19]. Extracurricular PBL initiatives have become increasingly popular in higher education and some of these kinds of projects have been developed in the past at Transilvania University of Brasov together with international partners. The results of the Leo AdCamp project and the Transilvania Creative Camp (TCC) 2016 demonstrated the benefits of PBL for students' academic outcomes, skills, and competencies in providing opportunities for students to apply theoretical knowledge,

develop practical skills, and engage with real-world problems [20–23]. They also facilitate intercultural communication, community engagement, and social responsibility. Therefore, universities should continue to invest in extracurricular PBL initiatives that promote creativity, innovation, and social impact.

3. Materials and Methods

For this empirical study, we adopt qualitative content analysis approaches based on all textual data relevant to the five editions of PRISM between 2018 and 2023 and semi-structured interviews of both UBD student filmmaker participants and Bruneian media professionals who acted as jury judges in the third edition PRISM. The interviews of student participants include first-hand, written answers from the main creators of a few screened short films and second-hand interview transcripts of eleven UBD student filmmakers who appeared in an RTB-produced ten-minute documentary featuring the third edition PRISM titled *Behind the Scenes*, which was webcasted on RTBGo in 2020. The interviews of Bruneian media professional judges are written texts acquired via direct email communication between the respective judges and one of the authors of this paper. All the textual data related to the five editions of PRISM have been collected over the years from the digital platforms of two major news outlets in Brunei—*Borneo Bulletin* and *Media Permata* as well as front-page news stories published on the official UBD website and UBD FASS 2020 Newsletter Stories published on the FASS faculty website. All of the above qualitative data, along with the direct comments on some of the screened short films from the media professional judges during five editions of PRISM, are used to conduct an in-depth investigation and content analysis.

3.1. Data Collection

The main data for the current study are the film-making curriculum offered in the Design and Creative Industries major at Universiti Brunei Darussalam and semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted with some of the student filmmakers and industry experts who were participants in the third edition of PRISM in 2020. The questions included general feedback on PRISM from both student filmmakers and media professional judges. For students, the questions primarily revolved around their experiences of attending PRISM and what they learned from the comments offered by the media professional judges and whether attending PRISM impacted their future creative careers. For festival judges, the questions focused on their overall impressions of the quality of participating student short films, what aspects of the student productions they were mostly satisfied with, and what aspects they considered to need substantial improvement in future productions. Finally, for both students and jury judges, we asked their suggestions in terms of how to make the next edition of PRISM better.

3.2. Data Analysis

The curriculum content was classified into one of the six categories in the paradigm: (1) Foundational Knowledge, (2) Application, (3) Integration, (4) Human Dimension, (5) Caring, and (6) Learning How to Learn. The separation of these categories was not always possible as they tend to co-occur with one another.

4. Results

4.1. Significant Learning Experience in PRISM

4.1.1. Foundational Knowledge

The first category in the significant learning experience paradigm is Foundational Knowledge. In this category, students are expected to understand and remember information and ideas that are delivered in the classroom. It is the cognitive domain of learning, and it is the first element that is found in most learning experiences. The students who took part in PRISM were given foundational knowledge of filmmaking through their respective

modules and were assessed formatively through quizzes and/or assignments as well as summatively through semester-end examinations.

4.1.2. Application

Application, the second category, occurs when students are engaged in intellectual or social activities with their peers as part of their formal learning curriculum. Students who engage in PRISM are expected to work with others, in groups or pairs, to produce their films, including micro-ones, such as commercials and public service announcements. Student filmmakers apply their Foundational Knowledge in the process of producing their films from storyboarding, casting, and screenwriting to post-production and screening. The students become active participants in the learning process in this category.

4.1.3. Integration

The third category, Integration, is particularly prominent in PRISM as student filmmakers actively participate in managing the production process and negotiating with peers along the way. Students are expected to encounter issues throughout the film production that require them to critically assess the situation and produce viable solutions. Issues on budget, having the right equipment, and decision-making are some of those most frequently experienced by student filmmakers. In this category, students learn to connect their Foundational Knowledge with their production activities and vary their Application according to their desired filmmaking goals.

4.1.4. Human Dimension

Throughout the process of production, students learn about themselves and their peers. This kind of learning allows students to interact more effectively with their peers and express themselves better over the course of their working relationship. Human Dimension brings the significance of human connection into the learning process, encouraging interaction with others and a new understanding of the students themselves. This can be observed in situations in which students reach a eureka moment, realising that they have skills that they did not know they had. For example, PRISM student filmmakers may find out that they would have been able to communicate their ideas better if they had used visuals such as storyboards, or other students may find that they can use empathy in resolving conflicts satisfactorily with their crew members.

4.1.5. Caring

The next category, Caring, is reflected in a student's motivation and eagerness to learn. Students who took the filmmaking modules were aware that their works would be screened in PRISM and also undergo a selection process for regional and international film festivals. Therefore, the students tended to already have a budding passion for or interest in filmmaking. In PRISM, when students are presented with options for film genres or their preferred roles in the production team, the opportunity to make these decisions is a means by which they can express what they care about. Some students are still undecided, but they still choose a genre or a role in which they are interested.

4.1.6. Learning How to Learn

Finally, Learning How to Learn takes place when students reflect on their journey towards the PRISM screening. Admittedly, the module contents and delivery can be limited in terms of the knowledge that can be transferred and the time that lecturers can devote to teaching. Students who experience the process of filmmaking themselves in PRISM tend to have a more personal learning journey. This means that student filmmakers have the opportunity to navigate their learning and satisfy their curiosity about aspects of filmmaking that might have not been covered in the delivery of Foundational Knowledge.

Figure 2 summarises the significant learning experience categories evidenced in the PRISM UBD Short Film Festival. Students tend to more effectively use the Foundational

Knowledge they learned in the university setting and apply production techniques (Application) in making their short films through Integration and communication (Human Dimension) with their fellow crewmembers based on their mutual Caring about their creative project. Finally, when their short films are screened in this small-size, institution-based film festival, all the student filmmakers know some professional filmmakers who act as jury judges and commentators and sit in the audience, along with their fellow students and their lecturers, as well as their family members and friends. The mixed groups of audience members comprise the friendliest audiences from and across the two kinds of communities, who are all Caring about their creative works and willing to provide their genuine reactions during the screening as well as constructive and straightforward feedback after the screening. Through observing and perceiving the multiple, genuine reactions from such a mix of people in the audience during the screening, as well as listening to and thinking about the friendly, constructive, and straightforward comments from the media professionals immediately following the screening, the student filmmakers can learn something not directly taught in the classroom. Such a Learning How to Learn experience, as the last component of significant learning experiences, eventually prompts the students to better digest their Foundational Knowledge, apply production techniques (Application) learned back in the classroom, and consolidate Integration skills and a Caring attitude in the Human Dimension for their next production project.
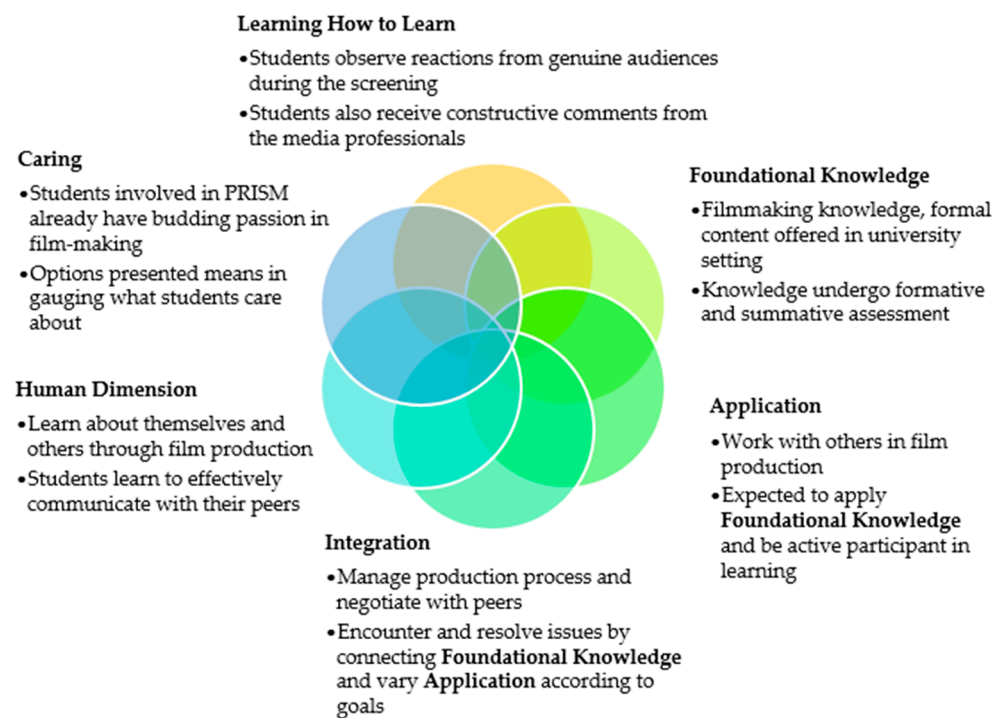
Learning How to Learn
- Students observe reactions from genuine audiences during the screening
- Students also receive constructive comments from the media professionals

Caring
- Students involved in PRISM already have budding passion in film-making
- Options presented means in gauging what students care about

Foundational Knowledge
- Filmmaking knowledge, formal content offered in university setting
- Knowledge undergo formative and summative assessment

Human Dimension
- Learn about themselves and others through film production
- Students learn to effectively communicate with their peers

Application
- Work with others in film production
- Expected to apply **Foundational Knowledge** and be active participant in learning

Integration
- Manage production process and negotiate with peers
- Encounter and resolve issues by connecting **Foundational Knowledge** and vary **Application** according to goals

Figure 2. Interaction of significant learning experience categories in PRISM.

Overall, the student filmmakers have had positive PRISM experiences. The manifestation of the significant learning experience categories in PRISM can be observed in the following interview excerpts from PRISM participants. One student filmmaker, whose two short films were screened in the third edition of PRISM, stated the following with an incredibly positive and inspiring attitude towards his future creative attempts [3]:

Even though I did not win the competition, I did receive a great response from the audience. With the positive response, it did motivate me to make another horror film for the next UBD PRISM . . . Moreover, after joining this competition, I am planning to submit both The Phone and Bilik No.14 to Brunei Film Blitz 2020, which will be held in December 2020. Muhammad Haziq Al-jum Bin Hj Jefri Alsalas (Director of *The Phone* and *Bilik No.14*)

Another participating student filmmaker of the third edition PRISM elaborated on how he learned through observing the audience reception of his short film and by watching other fellow filmmakers' short films during the screening [3]:

> *What motivates me the most about participating in filmmaking is the reactions that I expect to get from the audience . . . UBD's 3rd Edition PRISM Short Film Festival provided me with the opportunity to see the audience's reactions first-hand towards a short film I made. I have to admit, I had a good laugh and I was definitely pleased to know they enjoyed it. Aside from that, the festival also introduced me to a whole list of new ideas and I was also able to pick up on new techniques used by other filmmakers.* Muhammad Farhan Nizam Bin Zaini (Director of *Haunted*, winner of Best 3-Minute Smartphone-made Mini Cinema Award and People's Choice Award)

Zaini also indicated his hope that 'UBD will continue to arrange short film festivals in the future as they are very beneficial, especially among aspiring filmmakers like myself' [3]. Similarly, another winning student filmmaker, Affendi, whose short film *Lethal League* was the award winner of the Thriller and Horror competition category, expressed the same goodwill and more ambitious expectations for the Festival: 'We look forward to a future where PRISM develops into a grander scale in hopes that it will give a platform for aspiring creators and filmmakers to gain exposure and showcase their talents to the wider public' [3]. With a little bit of shock after an unexpected win, Affendi not only showed his gratitude to PRISM but also revealed the 'secret ingredients' behind his success and gave passionate advice to other younger-generation filmmakers in the following remarks [3]:

> *It was honestly unexpected for all of us that we would win the Thriller & Horror category for PRISM UBD Short Film Festival; but we are nonetheless sincerely grateful as we had poured all our hard work and effort into making this project . . . With that said, to all the aspiring creators and filmmakers out there, know that nothing is impossible when it comes to film-making if it's a burning passion of yours. Make as many films as you want and pour all your heart into it!* Muhammad Fikri Fathullah Bin Haji Affendi (Director of *Lethal League*, winner of Best Thriller & Horror Award)

4.2. PRISM and the Bruneian Screen Industry

Again, the consolidation of significant learning experiences via small-size, higher-institution-based film festivals such as the PRISM UBD Short Film Festival is highly hinged on the important collaboration between UBD and the screen industry in Brunei. Because of the small population of the sultanate located in Southeast Asia, Brunei's tiny screen industry has been regarded as 'in its infancy stage' [24,25]. However, it is burgeoning and contributed considerably to Brunei's domestic economy during the COVID-19 pandemic period (2020–2021) when international travel restrictions created a temporary 'closed system' in a rare interchange of production-based activity beyond the border [26] (p. 30). The 3rd and 4th editions of PRISM took advantage of this temporary 'closed system' in consolidating and expanding PRISM's connections with more inward-leaning Brunei screen industry members amidst the bids of major Bruneian media outlets, such as RTB and Progresif Media, which were launching their respective over-the-top (OTT) platforms.

As indicated earlier, both the 3rd edition of PRISM and the student short films premiered in it received more media exposure and distribution opportunities than before on both RTBGo, RTB's then newly launched OTT platform, and Progresif Media, Brunei's leading online streaming platform for domestic content. Not only did an RTB producer produce a 10-min documentary about the third edition of PRISM entitled *Behind the Scene*, which was exclusively aired on RTBGo along with two PRISM-screened short films, *Bunga* and *Suara*, as well as three PSAs made by UBD students [27]. Progresif Media also picked six UBD student short films from three editions of PRISM and webcasted them on both the Progresif Media website and app under pay-per-view deals signed with the six student filmmakers, respectively. This was the first time PRISM successfully facilitated the commercialisation of a batch of UBD student works for publication on Brunei's leading online

streaming platform for domestic content and also the first time UBD student works were broadcast on Brunei's national broadcast [27]. As a result, students not only benefitted from the established connection between higher education and the burgeoning Bruneian screen industry but also received payoffs for their hard work and creativity in completing their module assignments to an excellent standard. Moreover, students gained more confidence and motivation for better conducting their future creative projects via significant learning experiences inspired by participating in the PRISM UBD Short Film Festival.

Figures 3–7 below illustrate the different genre categories for the UBD student short films screened in each of the five editions of PRISM. In particular, Figure 5 indicates the most popular competition categories for the selected short films screened in the third edition of PRISM, because the first wave of the COVID pandemic in Brunei caused the festival schedule to be delayed from April to November 2020. More student films were produced and submitted to the third edition of PRISM due to the schedule delay caused by COVID, resulting in more competition categories, such as Thriller & Horror, Comedy & Family, and PSAs, within the total six categories, which attracted unprecedented media attention from both RTB and Progresif Media [3]. With the highest number (9) of invited media professional judges on the jury panel and the highest number (27) of the short screen works shown in the festival, the third edition of PRISM not only established a connection between the UBD festival organisers and the screen industry in Brunei but also paved the way for the commercialisation of UBD short films to be published on Brunei's major domestic media outlets. The five UBD student works webcasted on RTBGo and later the six UBD short films published as VOD content on Progresif Media following the third edition of PRISM indicate the overall improvement in the quality of UBD student screen works—even amidst the first COVID pandemic wave in Brunei—as a consequence of the previous bond built with the screen industry in the initial two festival events.
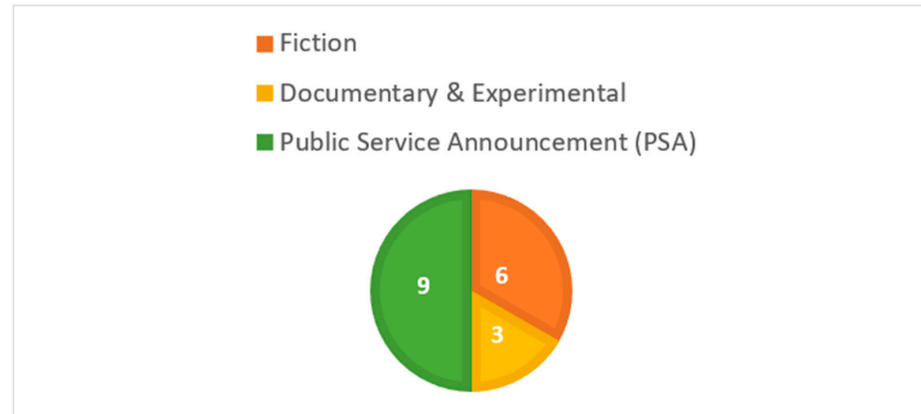

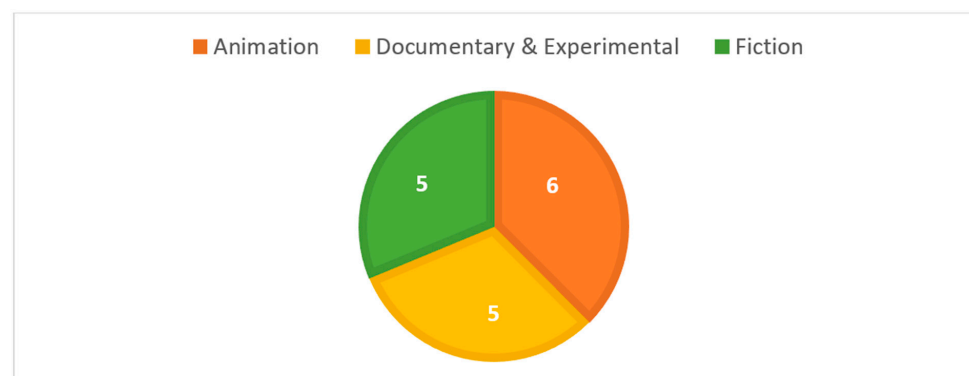**Figure 3.** 1st Edition PRISM film genres.
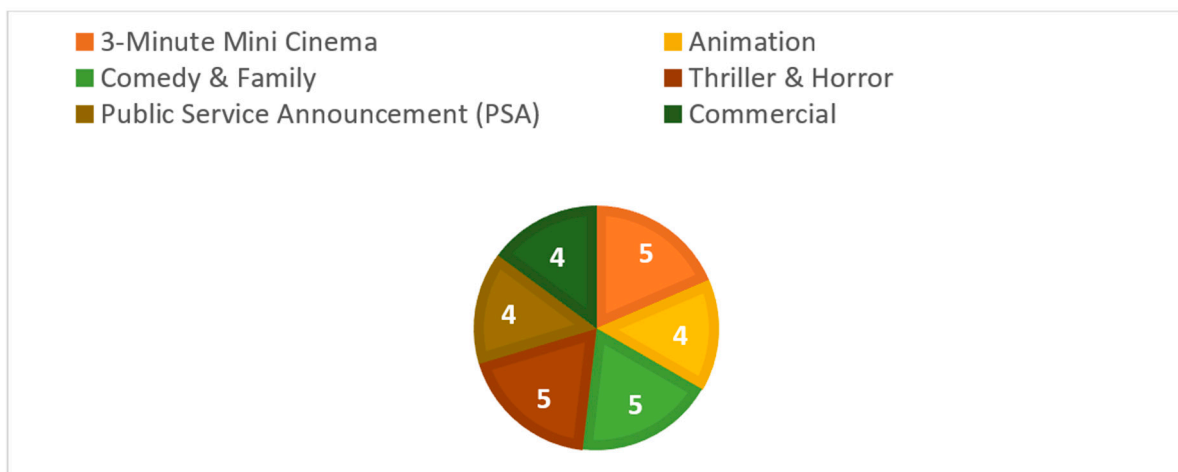

Figure 4. 2nd Edition PRISM film genres.

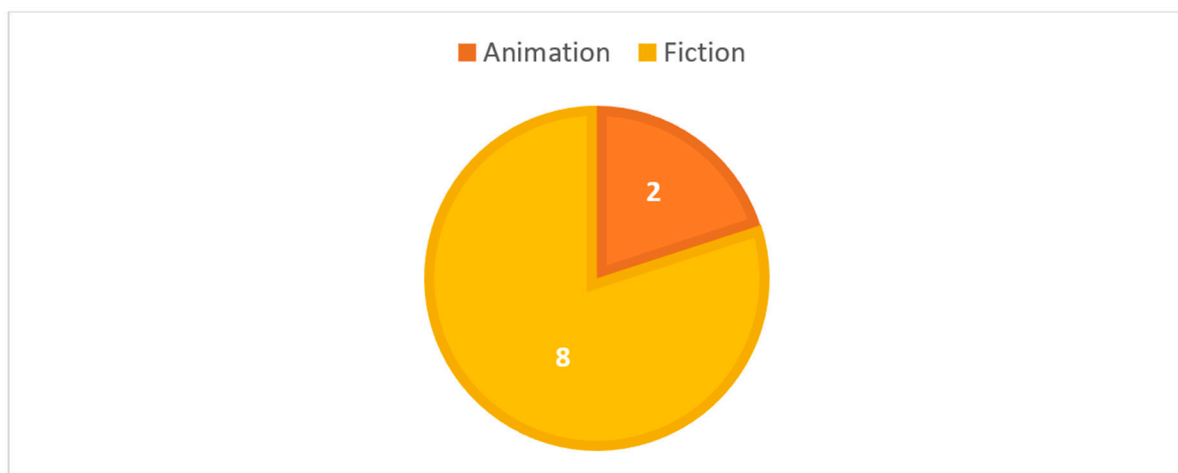**Figure 5.** 3rd Edition PRISM film genres.

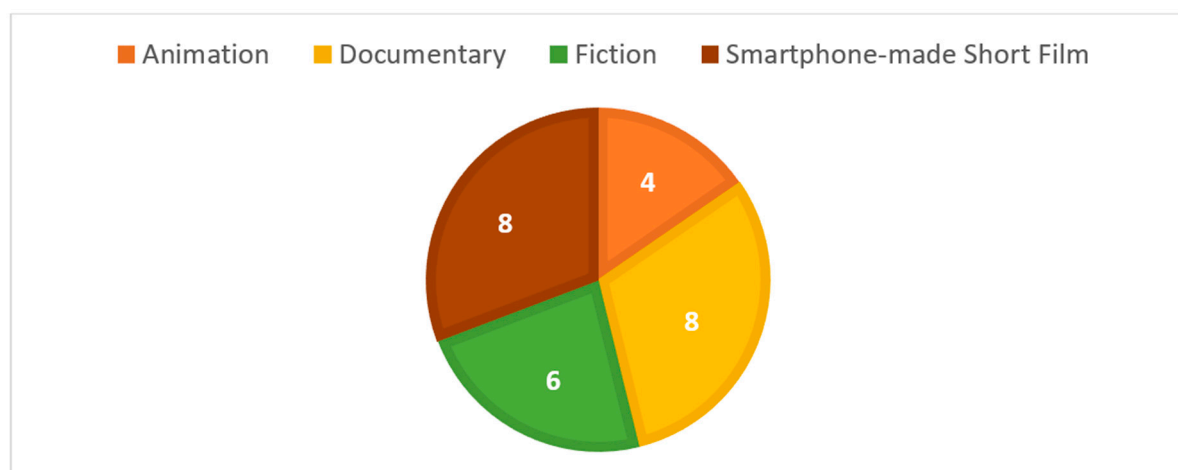**Figure 6.** 4th Edition PRISM film genres.

Figure 7. 5th Edition PRISM film genres.

The importance of such a bond between UBD PRISM organisers, the Bruneian screen industry, and media representatives was further substantiated in the following 4th edition of PRISM. The connection among UBD PRISM organisers, the Bruneian screen industry, and media representatives is clearly demonstrated through the visual representation showcased in the posters of all five editions, as depicted in Appendix A (Figures A1–A5). Figure 6 and

Appendix C (Tables A1–A5) both indicate that only 10 student short films in two genres (eight fiction and two animations) were in the 4th edition's screening lineup. This is because the second wave of the COVID pandemic was widespread in Brunei during the entire academic semester before the 4th edition of PRISM, which was scheduled in November 2021. To demonstrate that PRISM is a bedrock for student filmmakers and budding creatives to have a sustained platform to showcase their works during the lockdown restrictions caused by the pandemic, the PRISM organisers decided to go online for the 4th edition for the first time [4,28]. As evidenced in Appendix B, both Brunei's screen industry and the Authority for Info-Communications Technology Industry of Brunei Darussalam (AITI)—Brunei's official info-communication regulator and policymaker—showed their tremendous support for the 4th edition of PRISM. Among the total seven members on the jury panel, there were two AITI senior managers, four local media professionals, and one academic from a local art institute. The seven juries worked together online and selected an array of awards for Best Short Film, Best Cinematography, Best Performance (for actor and actress), and Best Editing, from the ten total screened short films.

Referring to the formation of the jury panels in each edition of PRISM (Appendix B), except for the first edition, which was a non-competitive festival, in the second through fifth editions, the majority of the jury members were dominated by local media professionals and local filmmakers. Even in the first non-competitive edition, the three guest commentators were all local professional filmmakers, and they offered their straightforward and candid feedback following the selected programme screening to the student filmmakers who had just presented their short films made in their production modules. This tradition of professional feedback has been maintained and, since the second edition of PRISM, has been reinforced by the jury formation of media professionals and filmmakers to select award-winning films. Student filmmakers have benefited substantially by screening their films in the festivals and receiving both media professionals' comments and judgments simultaneously, which motivates them to further improve their skills and the quality of their films. For example, the two best short film award winners in the 4th edition PRISM, *Not Toaster* and *Disconnected*, both went on to be selected to screen in next year's Asia Rising 2022 online screening organised by the National University of Singapore (NUS) in April 2022 and the 8th Asian University Student Film Festival organised by Xiamen University, China in November 2022. *Not Toaster* also won the Best Short Film Award under the Institute of Higher Learning Open Category in the inaugural Brunei Content Festival in June 2022 [29].

Another benefit of a close bond between higher education and business and industry through the PRISM UBD Short Film Festival is also evident in the cooperative partnership between PRISM and Progresif Media, which stemmed from the fourth edition and was extended to the fifth edition in terms of the student short film exhibitions. As mentioned earlier, the fourth edition of PRISM was completely online due to the second wave of the COVID pandemic. Based on an agreement between the PRISM organisers, Progresif Media, and student filmmakers, all of the ten selected short films premiered on the UBD FASS's official YouTube channel, followed by a two-week online screening on the Progresif Media website and app for which the public could register to watch them for free. Then the registered viewers were eligible to vote for their favourite short film to win the People's Choice Award (10 student short films in 2021). Such an extended online exhibition of the ten PRISM short films, along with the online voting scheme for the People's Choice Award, on the largest streaming platform for domestic content in Brunei boosted the number of viewers of the fourth edition of PRISM considerably and facilitated the fourth PRISM to tremendously succeed as its first online edition. In the most recent fifth edition of PRISM, both the premiere and the award ceremony were in-person, while the online screening period on Progresif Media was three works before the award ceremony date for more registered viewers to watch the total of 26 short film titles and vote for their favourite film to win the People's Choice Award. Therefore, Progresif Media not only substantially helped the first online edition of PRISM [4], but it also facilitated the first successful hybrid mode

of both in-person and virtual screenings for the fifth edition of PRISM [30]. In this win–win situation, Progresif Media received quality UBD and international student short films to be webcasted on their streaming platform for a longer period of time, thus increasing the number of viewers during the three-week online screening of the fifth edition of PRISM.

4.3. International Co-Operation and Significance

The Dracula Digital competition is an official programme of the Dracula Film Festival (DFF), which has maintained its original focus on the horror and fantasy genres since its inception, distinguishing itself from other film festivals by emphasising the competitive aspects of revitalising international film scenes. The festival also has an educational aspect, with the mission of bringing the general public closer to the world of filmmaking and cinema, encouraging creativity and innovation among young cinephiles. The festival's mission and values are rooted in promoting film education to the masses, rather than solely focusing on generating significant revenue. Despite its eerie theme, the DFF is known for creating a warm, enjoyable, and inclusive environment, in which young film enthusiasts can explore their creativity and hone their skills.

The Dracula Digital competition is a section of the DDF dedicated to short films made with smartphones. In 2015, the Faculty of Sociology and Communication at Transilvania University of Brasov began collaborating with Zile și Nopți (Days and Nights), the organiser of the DFF events. Initially, students from the Communication and Public Relations programme served as volunteers, while three professors created an evaluation questionnaire for the event. The partnership between the two organisations has since expanded under the agreement that two groups of first-year students enrolled in the newly established Digital Media programme at the Faculty may participate directly in the final competition of Dracula Digital every year.

The first time UBD students participated in the Dracula Digital competition was in October 2020 when the COVID pandemic swept across the world and most international travel was cancelled worldwide. Two groups of UBD students remotely participated in the smartphone filmmaking competition in the horror, scary, and mystery genres by submitting their respective short films via YouTube links from Brunei. Both films were selected among the six finalists to attend the final competition and, eventually, *Image* won the Dracula Digital 2020 Trophy [31]. One month later, the other participating film, *Haunted*, won the Best Smartphone-made Mini Cinema Award and the People's Choice Award in the third edition of the PRISM UBD Short Film Festival, which was the first to set up a competition category for smartphone-made shorts.

Two years later, with UBD FASS's financial sponsorship, three UBD students formed a production crew and travelled to Brasov, Romania to participate in the final competition of the Dracula Digital 2022. Although they did not win the Dracula Digital trophy again for UBD, their performance of making their preliminary submission together in Brunei, and more importantly, their cross-cultural experiences of working with their Romanian peers during the production overseas, precisely demonstrated most of the six elements of significant learning experiences.

There was a total of seven short films from UBD submitted to the preliminary selection of the Dracula Digital competition in 2022, along with the work co-produced by Bruneian and Romanian students in the final competition. Eight shorts later competed for the award for the Best Smartphone-made Short Film in the fifth edition of PRISM. In a word, the cooperation between PRISM and the Dracula Digital competition not only provided significant learning experiences in a cross-cultural context for UBD students but also enabled the third and fifth editions of PRISM to diversify their competition categories by adding the Smartphone-made Short Mini Cinema/Film category, respectively. Establishing international cooperation between small-scale film festivals and competitions stresses the importance of how the festival organisers can facilitate their students to deepen and widen their significant learning experiences with more diverse special projects and practical production opportunities. The cooperation between the Bruneian and Romanian

students working together on one production project to deliver for the final competition in Dracula Digital 2022 also exemplified the project-based learning (PBL) concept. Universities around the world may collaborate on special projects and facilitate students from different backgrounds to embark on intercultural communication, community engagement, and social responsibility by investing in extracurricular PBL initiatives that promote creativity, innovation, and social impact.

5. Conclusions

Significant learning experiences provide a valuable framework for observing and gauging the value of the PRISM UBD Short Film Festival and the Digital Dracula competition in addition to the curriculum students receive in a university setting. Despite the small-scale operations of PRISM, the film festival provides an ample platform to link local screen industries and media outlets, the festival organisers, educators, and students, drawing a lot of media attention as shown in Appendix D. Students and educators are also able to align their pedagogical goals with the demands and standards set by the industry. However, the insights included in this paper were informed by two small-scale film festivals, PRISM and Digital Dracula, and this limited input is the first limitation of the study. The inclusion of more small-scale, higher-institution-based film festivals would be beneficial in validating the findings of the current study.

As for the connection between universities and industry, despite the proven benefits and reciprocity for the respective parties, we do have to recognise the presence of alignment or misalignment in the understanding and expectations between industry and higher education as they can be potentially problematic. In their study of academic–industry relations between a pharmaceutical company and a university, Vedel and Irwin (2017) found that while collaborations can happen between the two agencies at a certain point in time, misalignment can still happen as the two agencies have different institutional goals to achieve [32]. Collaborating agencies need to set their boundaries and expectations before collaborations to carefully maintain the existing relationship. We have not, however, been able to obtain the perspective of the agencies who have collaborated with PRISM, especially on their boundaries and expectations, and this is the second limitation of this study. Therefore, a future study on the relationship between higher education and business agencies via institution-based film festivals such as PRISM might be necessary to take a more holistic approach and consider multiple perspectives from both sides of the cooperation as well as their respective boundaries and expectations.

The second limitation stems from the methodology used in the study, which is a qualitative content analysis with a subjective dimension [33]. Another methodological limitation stems from the fact that the first and second authors of the paper were actively involved in PRISM, and the first author also coordinated the Bruneian teams at Dracula Digital, while the third author was involved in Dracula Digital. Although the study provides hypotheses for a future representative sample approach, it is important to acknowledge that the teachers are both the subjects and authors of the research texts. This captures the dual nature of the constraints on their own involvement in PBL projects and the significant learning experience paradigm.

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Data Availability Statement: The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Appendix A Posters for 1st to 5th Editions of PRISM

Figure A1. PRISM 1st Edition Poster.

Figure A2. PRISM 2nd Edition Poster.

Figure A3. PRISM 3rd Edition Poster.

Figure A4. PRISM 4th Edition Poster.

Figure A5. PRISM 5th Edition Poster.

Appendix B Juries for Past PRISM Editions

PRISM 1st Edition Commentators

- Adam Groves, Visual Dimensions Production
- Harlif Hj Mohamad, Regalblue Production
- Nurain Abdullah, Regalblue Production

PRISM 2nd Edition Juries

- Amy Cheong, Relentless Entertainment
- Hanifi Juffri, Infinite World Company
- Harlif Hj Mohamad, Regalblue Production
- Nurain Abdullah, Regalblue Production
- Sabiqun Said, Infinite World Company
- Siti Kamaluddion from Origin Artistic Management

PRISM 3rd Edition Juries

- A'aqiil Ahmad, Filterworks Productions
- Abdul Zainidi, Brurealism Picture
- Aminah Metali, Radio Television Brunei
- Charlotte Lim, Progresif Media
- Dhimas Ananda, Origin Artistic Management
- Harlif Hj Mohamad, Regalblue Production
- Mimi Rahzia, TV and film actress
- Nurain Abdullah, Regalblue Production
- Olivia Ong, Progresif Media

PRISM 4th Edition Juries

- A'aqiil Ahmad, Filterworks Productions
- Abdul Zainidi, Brurealism Pictures
- Dr Alex Fischer, Mahakarya Institute of the Arts Asia
- Farid Azlan Ghani, Authority for Info-Communications Technology Industry of Brunei Darussalam
- Mariah Zaharaa, Oddbox Pictures Sdn Shd
- Rosnani Hj Md Yussof, Authority for Info-Communications Technology Industry of Brunei Darussalam
- Shiekh Idham, Lailatul Shazanas Studio

PRISM 5th Edition Juries

- A'aqil Ahmad, Filterworks Production
- Dr Kathrina Hj Mohd Daud, Universiti Brunei Darussalam
- Glorife Soberano-Samodio, De La Salle University (The Philippines) and ASEAN University Network on Culture and the Arts
- Mary Loh Chieu Kwan, Centre for the Arts, National University of Singapore
- Rosnani Hj Md Yussof, Authority for Info-Communications Technology Industry of Brunei Darussalam.

Appendix C Film List from Past PRISM Editions

Table A1. PRISM 2018 1st Edition Film List.

Genre	Titles
Fiction	Ghost Voices (10′30″) Greed (11′23″) Sedetik Aku (10′01″) Nikmat (13′) The Move (10′10″) The Masked Man (12′02″)
Documentary & Experimental	Laila (6′) Life as A Photographer (6′) Home (8′)
Public Service Advertisement (PSA)	Muslim or Non-Muslim (4′59″) Kapih (3′) Girl Gamers (3′27″) Lifesavingbn (3′) Priority (3′13″) Beauty Awareness (2′53″) Body Goal (3′) Celebrity Live Video (3′17″) Define Normal (2′39″)

Table A2. PRISM 2019 2nd Edition Film List.

Genre	Titles
Animation	Father's Love Letter (1′02″) Abandoned (1′39″) Rain (2′06″) Tata and the Worldly Needs (1′45″) Sunflower (1′19″) Vagaries of Loss (2′59″)
Documentary & Experimental	50-50 (6′45″) Anything but Yours (9′28″) Hear Me Out (8′13″) The Kingdom of Disappearing Treasures (9′30″) Tranquillity (6′)
Fiction	A Mistake You Made (10′22″) Daily Lives of Uni Boys (9′26″) Paper Heist (14′55″) Sedetik Aku (10′02″) The Story of Alex (7′22″)

Table A3. PRISM 3rd 2020 Edition Film List.

Genre	Titles
3-Minute Mini Cinema	Haunted (3′12″) Kampong Ayer (3′09″) Little Prince (3′09″) Voyager (3′09″) Image (3′15″)
Animation	Gone Hunting (2′55″) Alluring (2′51″) The Chase (3′05″) Dengki (3′19″)
Comedy & Family	Bunga (9′28″) Suara (6′) Anak Ayah (10′49″) Pesanan (8′19″) We Deliver (12′)
Thriller & Horror	Broman (10′) The Seventh (8′) Lethal Level (12′) The Phone (6′51″) Bilik No. 14 (14′)
Public Service Advertisement (PSA)	Cyberchondria (47″) Dispose Responsibly (59″) How to Stop Burning (53″) Texting (1′)
Commercial	Faux iPhone (1′01″) Hot Honey Chicken Burger (50″) Sweater & Hoodie (1′) Special Makeup Artist (36″)

Table A4. PRISM 4th 2021 Edition Film List.

Genre	Titles
Animation	Absurdity of a Flower (6′19″) The Ah-Venturers (11′09″)
Fiction	About Wabak (10′09″) Crescendo (6′31″) Disconnected (6′36″) Façade (18′18″) Kelindahau (5′30″) Nadia. (9′59″) Not Toaster (10′11″) Suaramu (10′02″)

Table A5. PRISM 5th 2022 Edition Film List.

Genre	Titles
Animation	86 (1′36″) The Adventures of Sweet and Sour Candy (3′25″) I Grew Up Playing (2′31″) The Origin of Gold River Village (3′41″)
Documentary	Symbol of Faith Part 1 (5′44″) Symbol of Faith Part 2 (5′01″) Kain Tenunan (6′07″) The History of Syariah Building (5′01″) 25th Anniversary of LSDC-Street (18′40″) Dermaga Deraja: The Royal Wharf (5′01″) Journey to Dermaga Deraja (5′05″) Paws Up (17′02″)
Fiction	Abo KayKay (26′39″) Granted (14′40″) Hati-hati Dengan Mata (12′20″) Lingering (10′46″) Spark (7′55″) Stalked (9′02″)
Smartphone-made Short Film	3 AM (3′) I Am (2′38″) Kebaya Merah (2′42″) Level 2 (2′48″) Malap (2′24″) Sosok Hitam (2′43″) Unlimited Call (3′05″) Menanti (3′)

Appendix D Local Media Coverage of PRISM

4th Edition PRISM UBD Short Film Festival 2021 Announces Winners on Virtual Awards Show: https://fass.ubd.edu.bn/news/prism4-awards.html

4th Edition PRISM UBD Short Film Festival 2021 Announces Winners on Virtual Awards Show: https://progresif.com/4th-edition-prism-ubd-short-film-festival-2021/

4th Edition PRISM UBD Short Film Festival: https://ubd.edu.bn/2022/03/29/4th-edition-prism-ubd-short-film-festival/

5th Edition PRISM UBD Short Film Festival 2022 announces Winners in Closing Ceremony: https://fass.ubd.edu.bn/news/prism5-awards.html

5th Edition PRISM UBD Short Film Festival 2022 Closes, Announces Winners: https://ubd.edu.bn/2022/12/10/5th-edition-prism-ubd-short-film-festival-2022-closes-announces-winners/

5th PRISM UBD Short Film Festival Opening Screening Premieres in Pro Chancellor Arts Centre: https://fass.ubd.edu.bn/news/prism5.html

5th PRISM UBD Short Film Festival Opening Screening premieres in Pro Chancellor Arts Centre: https://ubd.edu.bn/2022/11/19/5th-prism-ubd-short-film-festival-opening-screening-premieres-in-pro-chancellor-arts-centre/

10 Student Short Films Premiere in the 4th Edition PRISM UBD Short Film Festival: https://fass.ubd.edu.bn/news/prism4.html

Curtains raised on PRISM UBD Short Film Festival: https://borneobulletin.com.bn/curtains-raised-on-prism-ubd-short-film-festival/

Festival showcases local filmmaking talents: https://borneobulletin.com.bn/festival-showcases-local-filmmaking-talents/

Judges impressed with UBD students' cinematography skills: https://borneobulletin.com.bn/judges-impressed-with-ubd-students-cinematography-skills/

Local talents on show at film festival: https://borneobulletin.com.bn/local-talents-on-show-at-film-festival/

Not Toaster wins best short film: https://borneobulletin.com.bn/not-toaster-wins-best-short-film/

PRISM Short Film Festival: https://fass.ubd.edu.bn/news/prism.html

PRISM UBD Film Festival 2nd Edition: https://fass.ubd.edu.bn/news/prism2.html

PRISM UBD labuh tirai: https://mediapermata.com.bn/prism-ubd-labuh-tirai/

PRISM UBD Short Film Festival 3rd Edition: https://fass.ubd.edu.bn/news/prism3.html

Progresif Media Shines a Spotlight on Student Filmmakers From The 4th PRISM UBD Short Film Festival: https://progresif.com/progresif-media-for-4th-prism-ubd-short-film-festival/

Three UBD short films selected for online screening: https://borneobulletin.com.bn/three-ubd-short-films-selected-for-online-screening/

Tiga filem pendek ciptaan pelajar UBD terpilih: https://mediapermata.com.bn/tiga-filem-pendek-ciptaan-pelajar-ubd-terpilih/

Tonjol kreativiti menerusi pembikinan filem pendek: https://mediapermata.com.bn/tonjol-kreativiti-menerusi-pembikinan-filem-pendek/

UBD short film festival winners named: https://borneobulletin.com.bn/ubd-short-film-festival-winners-named/

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