

The role of producer in fostering creativity in *Child Star*

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File info

Received:

19/09/2025

Final Revision:

19/12/2025

Accepted:

23/01/2026

Keywords:

Animation,
Child Star,
Producer

Abstract:

This study offers a fresh perspective on the role of the film producer by examining the creative dimensions of their work, an aspect that remains underexplored in film and animation studies, particularly within the Indonesian context. The research addresses the problem of how film production is often perceived primarily as a managerial or logistical process, rather than as a creative practice. The study aims to investigate to what extent film production can be considered a creative endeavor and how such creativity is expressed in practice. To achieve these objectives, the research examines the role of the producer in fostering creativity during the idea and story development as well as the pre-production stages of the short-animated film *Child Star*, produced by ONN Studio in Tangerang, Indonesia. This study employs a qualitative phenomenological approach, using direct observation, FGD, and reflective analysis to capture the lived experiences of the producer as a creative agent within the animation production process. The findings reveal that the producer's role extends beyond financial and organizational responsibilities to include creative decision-making, narrative development, and mediation between artistic vision and production constraints. The study concludes that film production, particularly in independent animation contexts, constitutes a creative practice in which the producer plays a crucial role in shaping the final work. This research contributes to the limited scholarship on Indonesian animation and expands discussions on creative labor in animation production.

Introduction

Animation is a form of film in which even the smallest details are prepared from the earliest stages of pre-production. As a cinematic medium, animation is both complex and labor-intensive. Due to this complexity, the creative process in animation requires multiple fields of expertise with collective effort of many individuals over extended periods of time (Daulay & Kusumawardhani, 2020). Without consistency, teamwork, and clear targets, this creative power cannot be on screen. To reach the success of an animation, all crew especially producer must fully understand the workflow, as shown in Figure 1. These stages may vary and more complicated, although in the modern system organization of animation production, there are 5 fundamental stages that supported by Mykhailiukova & Antonivska (2024) explaining the same stages. Herein lies the significance of the producer's role.



Figure 1. Stages of modern animation production
Source: Own development

Within the film industry, producers are frequently confined to a narrow interpretation of their professional role, one that emphasizes project completion, budget control, and adherence to production schedules. While these managerial responsibilities are undeniably essential, such a restricted perspective often neglects the importance of film development and the broader creative dimensions of filmmaking. The role of producer is often reduced to logistical management. Moreover, many individuals entering the film industry are more inclined to pursue the role of director rather than positions such as production manager, producer, or other management-related roles. This study contributes by contextualizing the role of the creative producer within the Indonesian animation industry, a field that remains underrepresented in academic research. Specifically, it examines the role of the producer in the short film *Child Star*, focusing on the creative processes and decision-making involved in its production. The aim of this research is to provide a fresh perspective on the producer's role by analyzing the creative dimensions of their work, particularly the responsibilities often considered "creative" and the ways creativity is expressed in practice.

Creativity, defined as the capacity to invent and generate new ideas (KBBI, 2023), thus becomes central to understanding the relationship between directors and the producer's role. While directors are often regarded as auteurs credited with a recognizable style and thematic vision, producers engage in other forms of creativity, such as market research for commercial and festival contexts, cultural positioning, film research, and the identification of unique selling points for marketing. However, in the Indonesian animation industry over the past five years—marked by the growth of independent studios, increased participation in international festivals, and shifting market demands driven by digital platforms—these creative contributions by producers are often overlooked and insufficiently examined in academic discourse. This gap raises a research problem concerning how producer creativity operates beyond rigid hierarchical structures commonly found in the film industry. Creative decision-making may instead be carried out collectively, grounded in the respective responsibilities and expectations of each participant. As noted by Bordwell et al. (2020), creative decisions provide in-depth examples that deepen appreciation of how filmmakers' choices shape viewers' responses.

With such extensive functions, producers can be categorized into several types. General producer, executive producer, co-producer, field producer, associate producer, line producer, and post-production producer (Smyrnov, 2019). However, as documented in Ovsianikova's research, "the most essential aspect in the film production process is the creative producer." (Proskurina & Nikitina, 2023, p.38). The creative producer is responsible for building the creative team and selecting the individuals required for a project. Several key functions of the creative producer can be identified as seen in Figure 2: the strategic function (assessing the potential, relevance, and cultural value of a work), the expert function (analyzing market situations and trends), the organizational and administrative function (recruiting necessary team members and managing the team), the social and psychological function (fostering a cohesive and supportive team environment), and the distribution function (developing strategies for marketing, promotion, screenings, and budgeting) (Proskurina & Nikitina, 2023).

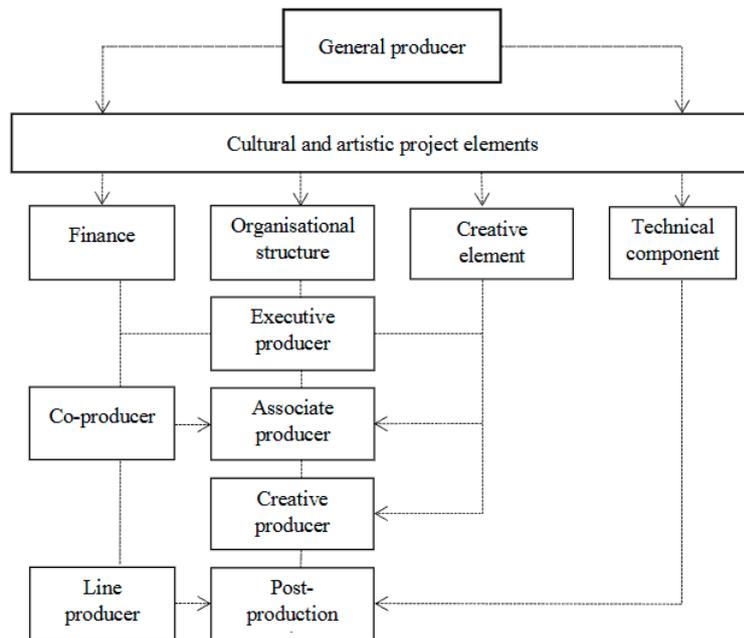


Figure 2. Types of production subordination hierarchy
Source: Proskurina & Nikitina, 2023

Over the past five years, the Indonesian animation industry has undergone significant transformation, characterized by increased public visibility, commercial success, and international recognition. Projections show that the animation market is expected to expand, with an annual growth rate (CAGR) of about 7.2% (Adri, 2025). The success of animated feature films such as *Jumbo* (2025), which attracted millions of viewers and received extensive media attention, marks an important turning point for Indonesian animation, which had previously been dominated by television series and digital platform content. These developments demonstrate the growing potential of animation as both a cultural product and a commercial industry in Indonesia. At the same time, the expansion of independent studios and the increasing circulation of Indonesian animated works in international festivals have intensified market competition and creative demands, requiring more strategic and adaptive production practices.

Within this evolving industrial context, the role of the producer becomes increasingly complex and creative. Producers are required not only to manage resources and production pipelines but also to participate actively in idea development, narrative shaping, cultural positioning, and market-oriented decision-making. However, despite these shifts, the creative contributions of producers in Indonesian animation remain largely underexplored in academic discourse, which tends to prioritize directors or studios as primary creative agents. This research addresses this gap by examining the producer's creative role during the idea and pre-production stages of the short animated film *Child Star* by ONN Studio in Tangerang, Indonesia. By focusing on this case study, the research highlights how producer creativity operates in an independent animation setting, offering insight into how creative decisions are negotiated, articulated, and realized within contemporary Indonesian animation production.

To date, there has been limited scholarly discussion addressing the role of producers in the Indonesian animation industry. Recent journal articles have predominantly focused on the aesthetic and representational dimensions of animation, such as studies on local cultural elements in Indonesian animated works from 2014–2018 (Wikayanto, 2019), the design of a two-dimensional animated film based on folklore in *Terima Kasih Dewi Sri* (Yasa & Netera, 2023), and analyses of the development of animation styles in Indonesia and globally (Audi, 2024). While these studies provide valuable insights into visual identity, narrative construction, and stylistic evolution, they tend to position animation

primarily as an artistic product rather than as an industrial practice shaped by complex production processes. Consequently, the roles of key production agents—particularly producers, who mediate between creative vision, production strategy, and market considerations—remain largely overlooked in academic discourse on Indonesian animation.

The animated film *Child Star* (2024) is a project produced by ONN Studio, production house based in Tangerang, Indonesia. *Child Star* is a short hybrid animated stylized movie about the complexities of cultural behavior or norms in Asian families especially actions that go towards the “golden child” from the projecting parent. The story follows Robin (9), a rising child star, feels trapped in his house, longing to join the laughter of children outside. His attempt to sneak out sparks a wild chase with his over-strict mother (30), leading to an emotional confrontation. As Robin navigates the complexities of an Asian family’s social culture and the effects of fame on him, the film gently explores the impact on relationships, specifically the mother and son relationship, and how cultural ego plays a big part in an Asian household. his film explores both sides of the coin (parent and child) about how it feels to be in these types of environments. This study investigates the role of as producer of *Child Star* within the Indonesian animation industry, a field that remains underrepresented in the creative processes and decision-making involved in the creation of *Child Star*.

Methods

Qualitative research methodology is one of the most effective approaches for capturing and understanding the complexity of an event or phenomenon (Trochim et al., 2016). This method enables the collection of in-depth data that carries meaning, allowing for the identification of potential issues, the uniqueness of the research object, and the significance of events, social interaction processes, and the construction of phenomena (Sugiyono, 2019). Based on the research objectives, introduction, and literature review, a qualitative approach is therefore considered the most appropriate method for this study. This research adopts a phenomenological paradigm, which seeks to explore and understand lived experiences as perceived by individuals directly involved in the phenomenon under investigation. Creative decision-making, as conceptualized by Bordwell et al. (2020), is employed as the analytical framework to illustrate how creative decisions shape the filmmaking process, particularly from the perspective of producers in animation production.

The scope of this study is limited to the development stage, with a specific focus on the roles and responsibilities of the creative producer in the short-animated film *Child Star* produced by ONN Studio. The analytical approach employed in this study is functional analysis. Following Ricciardelli, Shanahan, and Young (2020), data collection is conducted primarily through the researcher’s observational analysis. In addition, focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with all crew members involved in the *Child Star* production at ONN Studio to capture collective perspectives and collaborative creative decision-making processes. Secondary data includes the researcher’s production documentation, as well as relevant news sources and academic journals.

Result and Discussion

The Result and Discussion section presents the main findings of the study and interprets their significance. The results highlight key aspects of the producer’s role hand in hand with “creativity” in *Child Star*, particularly in relation to creative decision-making, team collaboration, and development management. The discussion then connects these findings with existing literature, offering a critical comparison and situating the study within the broader context of animation research and industry development.

Result

Vision, Mission, and Role Allocation

In the idea & story development process, the vision and mission were aligned to maintain the collaborative unity and no miscommunication of ONN Studio. Given the high aspirations of the project, the producer was required to understand every job role in animation. For example, since there was only one producer, I assumed multiple hierarchical roles simultaneously: general producer (in charge of project culture and artistic elements, as well as finances), line producer, executive producer (organizational structure), creative producer (creative elements), and post-production producer (technical components). Naturally, some of these responsibilities required support, leading to the assignment of overlapping roles, such as:

1. Gabriel Amelia Sunjoto, assistant producer
2. Cheryl Jemima Nataya, financial bookkeeping

The role assignment process was determined based on portfolios, skill sets, and members' interest in a particular role. Portfolios and skill set strongly reflected individual personalities, such as willingness to learn new things and professionalism. After passing the document stage, interviews with prospective members were necessary to assess the atmosphere they could bring into the team. Discussions with the three core pillars, director, concept artist, and producer were also conducted when selecting team members.

Idea and Story Development

During the brainstorming phase, the producer was responsible for scheduling productive meetings. In the meeting, director going to present several premises, loglines, and treatments, allowing all members to voice their ideas. In the decision-making process, the producer relied on artistic style to make creative decisions. The producer served as the final arbiter in case of tied votes and, beyond that, carried significant influence on idea selection through to execution. Ideas proposed were presented by the producer through SWOT analysis, thereby controlling the team's direction once again.

Child Star Documentation

This document functioned as a managerial and creative blueprint, ensuring coordination across departments. It exemplifies how a producer's input extends beyond logistics, acting as a creative framework that influences artistic and technical decisions. All the research are combined into production book, proposal, and pitch deck which deign mainly by producer and contain the list below.

1. Producer's Statement

The producer's view plays a crucial role in selecting film festivals that align with the film's cultural themes and artistic vision. Producer's statement as shown in Figure 3 ensuring that the film resonates with audiences by grounding it in the cultural context of Tionghoa-Indonesian families. This approach emphasizes that the producer's responsibilities include interpreting amplifying narrative relevance and making strategic choices that position the market within both local and global cultural audience.



As the producer of “Child Star” my one year is dedicated to this project. I feel a deep gratitude to my team and experience I never want to exchange with anything. Through this animation, I can literally express something I can’t talk about so openly with my parents, while understanding a mother’s emotion.

From the first pitch, the complexity of Tiong-Hoa & Indonesian culture behind the story is something that catches my attention. It's awkward in this type of household showing that we care for each other. The burden and responsibility that somehow planted deep inside us since we were little, makes us owe our parents. It's not a bad thing. But our little self can't handle that kind of complexity and turns into more sophisticated guilt after we grow up.

Taking the perspective of the caretaker made us realize the treatment received before we do is rather similar. It's not their fault we can't say “I love you” or “I'm sorry” so bluntly. Parents can change that by breaking the stereotype, but we can start it first.

Figure 3. *Child Star* producer statement

Source: Personal documentation

2. Value Proposition

An animation generally has 3 selling point serve as value proposition as seen in Figure 4. In *Child Star* relatability is the first point. Familial bond is something that most of us have and can relate to, it is a strong force to move people’s hearts or even lives. We also bring up topics that are focused specifically TiongHua-Indonesian Families and the culture surrounding the parent and child connection which can forge a stronger connection between audience and our story. According to Learoyd (2021) “No matter what form it takes, family is a theme that holds some sort of connection for most viewers. When transferred into animated form, it is something that gives us an understanding of our relationships and ourselves.”

Second is stylized animation style. Our animation style combines aspects of 2D and 3D animation together to make a stylized look. This film also uses dynamic angles and movements so that it is appealing to watch. Third, rewatch value. This film uses alot of symbolism to support our story and meaning. This gives the opportunity for audience to re-visit the film to find new things and details.



Figure 4. Value proposition

Source: Personal documentation

3. Setting

The producer made many creative decisions in shaping the setting of *Child Star* as seen in Figure 5. With only six team members working on the film, the director focused primarily on the story, while the producer contributed by grounding the narrative in mise-en-scène—making the fictional story more realistic and strengthening both relatability and rewatch value. *Child Star* is set

in 2004, which adds a personal dimension as the director drew inspiration from his own childhood experiences. The 2000s also marked the rise of child actor popularity in Indonesia, highlighted by films such as *Petualangan Sherina* (2000), *Bendera* (2002), and *Laskar Pelangi* (2008). In addition, this period closely followed the post-1998 tragedy, which spread hostility toward the Tionghoa-Indonesian community and instilled fear among parents. This social backdrop explains the portrayal of the overly strict mother who refuses to let her son go outside for any reason.

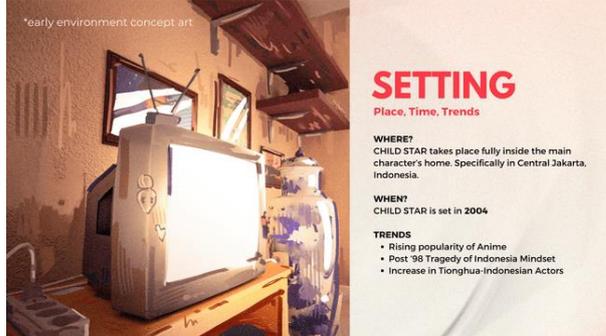


Figure 5. Setting

Source: Personal documentation

4. Market Research

The primary goal of *Child Star* is to be showcased at film festivals, with a particular focus on audiences in Asia, especially Indonesia. The film's value proposition centers on relatability, as it explores family dynamics shaped by trauma bonding—an experience that resonates strongly within many Asian households. To ensure this theme connects effectively with its audience, the producer must analyze comparable successful films, using their strategies as references to refine the story and strengthen the overall concept of *Child Star*. This market research as shown in Figure 6 divided into four, that is story similarities, style inspiration, settings similarities, and setting inspiration. This help producer to determine our target audience which is young adult to adult in age of 18-24.

Sinaga (2025) indicates that 81 percent of the Indonesian population is active on social media. Social media users are predominantly from Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012. The platforms most used by Generation Z (ages 11–26) are YouTube (78%), Instagram (75%), TikTok (65%), Instagram (62%), X (44%), and Facebook (47%). The survey also showed that Indonesians media consumption isn't dictated by a single platform, but rather spans flexible formats, including screen, audio, and interactive formats. This contributes on how producer make content planning regarding the visual and formatting as lead marketing.



Figure 6. Market Research

Source: Personal documentation

5. External Guidelines for 2D Animation in *Child Star*

After all the research and idea become a story, the team going to have pre-production meeting to discuss pre-production step and pipeline according to director's treatment. The producer is expected to be able to understand all production pipeline in order to explain how to carry out inbetweening, clean-up, and coloring. The producer is also expected to answer external questions raised during the session or in future collaborations. In the event of any miscommunication from external parties, the producer is required to assist the director in clarifying the animation technicalities (assistance).

Selected external collaborators who join ONN Studio receive a study lecture. This begins with an introductory session held exclusively with the producer and director. In this session, the producer presents an overview of *Child Star*, including its premise, logline, synopsis, and treatment. The film's distribution goals (festival circuit) and its core values are also explained to strengthen the external team's engagement with the project. After becoming familiar with *Child Star*, external collaborators are introduced to either the cleanup guide or the in-between guide, depending on their assigned role. The producer also explains the animation theories applied, the specifications for final outputs, the software used, and the methods for carrying out each job role. Character sheets are provided with line-ups, expressions, and notes to facilitate the external team's work.

6. Pre Production

Auditioning and casting represent the phase in which the producer is most actively involved. Selecting the appropriate voice actors who align with the characters plays a crucial role in reinforcing the *mise en scène* of the animation (Babalola, 2023). The expectations for clear communication, both from the producer and among all team members, must also be consistently maintained to ensure the clarity and coherence of the animation's vision.

Discussion

The initial stage required the producer to undertake creative decision-making while simultaneously fulfilling the roles of both creative producer and executive producer. Recruitment was primarily based on portfolio assessments, complemented in some cases by external verification through surveys with production houses that had previously collaborated with the candidates. Positive feedback supported the selection process, which ultimately led to the establishment of ONN Studio.

The recruited team has since demonstrated effective communication, fostered within a supportive and collaborative environment. Instances of miscommunication were resolved collectively, and the members consistently maintained a professional standard of work. Overall, the recruitment decisions proved to be appropriate and contributed to the strong foundation of ONN Studio.

The brainstorming phase consumed considerable time; therefore, the team decided to conduct it swiftly and well in advance of the semester. The method used for selecting ideas and stories was appropriate, yet the first chosen draft proved to be inefficient and contained too many subtopics. Its visuals—ambitious, highly symbolic, and far outside the team's comfort zone—were unsuitable for a 5-minute animation with a 4-month production schedule. In hindsight, stronger assertiveness in rejecting the idea would have been beneficial.

Following further discussion, the producer and director agreed to revise the concept entirely. Each group member was then asked to contribute three new ideas, which were subsequently voted on by ONN Studio. The director's concept, titled *Child Star*, was ultimately selected. Despite this progress, development planning remained insufficient. The timeline and workflow should have been established at the outset to facilitate smoother development of both the narrative and concept. The premature meetings caused the story to become unnecessarily convoluted. This challenge, however,

became a learning experience, providing valuable insights into the stages of production and the importance of making creative decisions gradually and strategically.

Examples of early creative decisions included the selection of design elements and color palettes that would later define ONN Studio's visual identity. Furthermore, the studio's logo and name were finalized under the producer's direction, with design contributions from Vincent Alexander and Cheryl Jemima Nataya. These steps increased confidence in making subsequent creative decisions, such as casting voice actors, approving re-recordings, selecting external collaborators, and reinforcing the production timeline.

The guideline was developed based on prior experience in executing clean-up and coloring. During the process, the author was able to integrate additional references, details, and content that were not included in the initial character guide. The guideline also demonstrated the technical process of inbetweening in relation to provided keyframes. Positive feedback was received from external stakeholders, indicating the practical usefulness of the document.

In addition, a study lecture session with external participants required the team to revisit the artbook and pitch deck. The session was designed to present the intended vision of *Child Star* through textual and visual materials. This stage was particularly challenging due to cultural differences between Tionghoa-Indonesian perspectives and broader audiences. The explanation was structured sequentially, covering the logline, visual style, treatment, and conclusion, in order to ensure clarity and coherence.

Conclusion

The producer bears a greater obligation to oversee and synthesize the entire artistic process that brings an animated work into being. Inevitably, the producer becomes an active participant in the creative process, supporting, sustaining, and facilitating the realization of animation as a collective artwork. Each producer is different, and every film presents its own unique set of challenges. There is no universal guide to production; instead, it is the producer's ability to adapt to the specific needs of a project and collaborate effectively with the creative team that brings a vision to life.

The contribution of this research lies in its focus on the Indonesian animation industry, which remains underrepresented in existing scholarship. By situating the role of the creative producer within the context of ONN Studio, the study highlights how cultural identity, hybrid 2D–3D stylization, and limited resources demand a producer who is adaptable, detail-oriented, and artistically engaged. Attention to the smallest production details illustrates how the producer fosters collaboration and motivates the creative team, reframing the process not simply as a task constrained by deadlines but as a collective work of art.

Ultimately, this study suggests that reimagining the producer as both an artist and a manager is crucial for the development of the Indonesian animation industry. In the case of *Child Star*, the producer's hybrid role enabled the integration of cultural narratives, creative ambitions, and production realities. This model offers a framework for future animation projects in Indonesia and beyond, where the producer's creative decision-making is central to transforming collaborative efforts into meaningful works of art.

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