

EVENTS MANAGEMENT FOR THE THEATRE ARTIST: AN EXAMPLE OF JOS METROPOLIS

YAKI DANIEL MUSA

University of Jos

AND

ELIZABETH GIFTY IDOKO

University of Jos

ABSTRACT

In recent years, there has been a significant surge in the establishment of event centres and the demand for professional event managers. This growth is driven by increasing social interactions and technological advancements in today's world. Events serve as vital social activities that unite people across religions, cultures, and communities, encompassing a wide range of occasions such as birthday parties, political rallies, funeral ceremonies, inaugural lectures, sports events, family and class reunions, romantic dates, baby showers, housewarming ceremonies, and weddings. Given their significance, events have become an integral part of modern life. However, the fast-paced nature of contemporary urban living has made event management essential for seamlessly coordinating gatherings while bridging diverse social backgrounds. This increasing demand has transformed event planning into a commercially viable enterprise. Consequently, theatre artists and other creative professionals must acquire foundational knowledge in event management to position themselves competitively in this entrepreneurial field. This paper explores the fundamental aspects of event management, covering organizational strategies, financial planning, blueprint development, and event execution. It outlines key considerations through the framework of the 'Ws' (Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How), emphasizing the critical questions that must be addressed to ensure a successful and well-coordinated event.

KEYWORDS: Concepts, Events, Management, Concerns, and Theatre.

INTRODUCTION

As long as human beings exist, there will always be the need to socialize; people must always come together, and there must be someone to organize this coming together. The stories by moonlight, the dancing competitions, the wrestling competitions, initiation ceremonies, new yam festivals, and other festivals were all

social activities that sought to bring people together after a hard period of the farming season. For instance, the market square was usually the venue. Chris Nwamuo, in describing the concept of theatre administration, noted that ‘‘It began when man decided to unite an audience, his neighbours, fellow villagers, townsmen, members of his community, or tribesmen to watch his performances, or talent shows. This administrator served as a middleman between the artist's audience and the community (31-32). However, with urbanization and modernization, so much has changed in terms of structure, content, and facility. The theatre art administrators today are involved in office routines, hiring of new technicians, fostering contracts, public relations motivations for staff, discipline supervision of marketing programmes, welcoming guest artistes, administration of buildings and facilities, box office routines, visits to magistrate courts and police stations to answer charges, obtaining licenses and clearance for performers, checking the bars, making detailed estimates, applying for grants, ensuring comfortable seating arrangement for audience, checking proper banking of monies and planning for a new theatre season (33-34). This task is enormous.

There is an increasing and urgent need to reposition and arm theatre artists with basic skills to strategically stand and run events and event centres. Due to the ever-increasing hustle and bustle nature of human existence, there is an increasing need for people to ‘‘hang out’’ to socialize, but not enough time to plan and organize these events. Event centres are increasing in number, size, and functionality. Event centres that have only facilities for halls are now being replaced with new ones that have lounges, bars, swimming facilities, underground structures for clubbing, and after parties, etc. While such places were known as hotels, the nomenclature has changed to event centres or palaces. For instance, in Jos, the Plateau State capital, three major event centres stood out – the Hill Station Hotel, the Plateau Hotel, and the Yelwa Club, but now there are more than can be counted, springing up every event centre, Mees Palace, Crest Hotel, and Crispan Hotel. The word ‘event’ is derived from the Latin word ‘eventus,’ which means outcome, result, and success. From this epistemological meaning, three keywords can be deduced:

- i. Outcome-** the success of any event is what comes out at the end of it, the result, and its ability to achieve that which was sought to be done, the goal.
- ii. Result-** the measurement of any event is the evidence of the result
- iii. Successful** events must, at the end, have a success story; herein lies your recommendation to handle other events.

The event manager is tasked with three critical objectives: outcome, result, and success. No one is better suited to fulfill these responsibilities than the theatre artist, as every event is, at its core, a theatrical activity. However, it is concerning

that most event centres are managed by non-theatre professionals, who often relegate theatre artists to mere performers rather than leaders in event planning and execution. According to an event management handbook, “Events are a workplace for some and a leisure activity for others, ranging from family days in the local park to music festivals, firework displays, carnivals, and sporting events” (1). For the theatre artist, an event is undeniably a workplace—and more than any other professional, they are uniquely positioned to lead in event planning and management. Their training equips them with essential skills such as play production, directing, costuming, lighting, technical theatre, scriptwriting, theatre management, box office operations, and more. These competencies align seamlessly with the demands of event management, as many of these skills are already embedded in theatre curricula. Given this strong alignment, a pressing question arises: Why are theatre artists not at the forefront of managing events, particularly when the industry is so lucrative and their entrepreneurial skills are so well-suited to it?

Events can be defined as deliberately organized occasions designed to bring people together for a shared purpose. As social beings, humans inherently seek connection, and events serve as structured platforms for these interactions. They vary in scale from intimate gatherings to large-scale functions and in scope, encompassing everything from personal celebrations to professional and cultural assemblies. What was once considered an informal gathering has now evolved into a formalized event, largely due to the demands of modern life, including hectic work schedules, geographical distances, and the need for structured socialization. Even seemingly simple occasions, such as a Valentine’s Day date, are now frequently outsourced to professional event managers, primarily due to time constraints and the desire for seamless execution. Today, events span a vast spectrum, including:

- Personal Celebrations (weddings, birthdays, baby showers, funerals)
- Professional & Academic Functions (conferences, book launches, graduations, inaugural lectures)
- Cultural & Religious Observances (coronations, child dedications, festivals, thanksgiving services)
- Entertainment & Recreational Activities (fashion shows, funfairs, sports events, music concerts)

Given this diversity, the art and science of event management have become increasingly vital. This paper examines the principles, processes, and challenges involved in effectively planning, organizing, and executing these events, with a particular focus on the unique role theatre artists can play in this dynamic field.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This discourse employs Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, particularly his critique of the *banking system of education* - a passive learning model, where teachers deposit knowledge into empty student receptacles. Freire (1970) condemned this system as oppressive, arguing it perpetuates colonial ideologies by conditioning learners to accept hierarchical power structures without critical engagement. In contemporary education, this manifests through rigid curricula that prioritise rote memorisation over creative problem-solving, leaving students ill-equipped for dynamic fields like event management. The banking model's limitations are particularly detrimental in event management education for three reasons:

1. **Narrative Fixity:** Its repetitive, one-dimensional approach fails to address the multifaceted nature of modern events, which require adaptability
2. **Creative Suppression:** By discouraging critical thinking, it stifles the innovative capacities essential for theatrical event production
3. **Power Dynamics:** It mirrors the very client-provider hierarchies this paper critiques in event management structures

Freire's problem-posing education offers an alternative framework more suited to training event managers. In this dialogical approach:

- (a) The teacher teaches and the students are taught.
- (b) The teacher knows everything, and the students know nothing:
- (c) The teacher thinks, and the student thought about.
- (d) The teacher talks and the students listen – meekly.
- (e) The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined.
- (f) The teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply.
- (g) The teacher acts, and the students are acting through the actions of the teacher.
- (h) The teacher chooses the programme contents, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it.
- (i) The teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his professional authority, which he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students.
- (j) The teacher is the subject of the learning process, while the pupils are the mere objects (59).

Freire's solution to the oppressive *banking model* of education is its replacement with problem-posing education, a dialogical approach that humanizes learners by engaging their critical consciousness and creative agency. Rather than passively absorbing knowledge, students become active participants in knowledge production, transforming from mere recipients into problem-solvers. This

pedagogical shift aligns with Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*, which reimagines theatre as a democratic tool for liberation rather than a coercive spectacle. Boal critiques Aristotle's *Poetics* as emblematic of the *theatre of the oppressor*, arguing that its rigid narrative structures, particularly the dominance of plot over audience agency, mirror authoritarian education systems (Boal, 31). Just as Freire challenges the teacher-as-sole-knowledge-keeper, Boal dismantles the hierarchy between actor and spectator, insisting that theatre must empower the oppressed to reclaim their narratives. Both frameworks reject passive consumption, advocating instead for collective creation and critical intervention. This paradigm shift is especially urgent in event management education, given the field's exponential growth driven by technological advancements and evolving social dynamics. Events from weddings and political rallies to academic conferences and community festivals are inherently collaborative, requiring creativity, adaptability, and participatory engagement. Yet, traditional training often replicates the banking model, positioning event managers as authoritarian "directors" rather than facilitators of co-created experiences. As scholars like Doki Ama Gowon and Ali Sule Ako argue, rebranding pedagogical approaches in this field is not merely an academic exercise but a catalyst for social change. By integrating Freirean and Boalian principles, event management can transcend transactional service models, instead fostering spaces where communities actively shape their collective rituals:

There is the school of thought that feels that the rebranding project is seen as a colossal waste, while another school of thought feels that the crusade must be seen as a welcome development and that all hands must be on deck for its success. Before now, the concept of rebranding has been linked with marketing strategies adopted by marketers to create convincing and positive awareness of the need to patronize their goods and services by the public (40).

Doki and Ali's argument supports Freire's critique of the *banking system of education*, advocating for a shift in focus to foster innovative, problem-solving approaches. This shift aims to address the existing gaps in event management, particularly in the 21st-century era of globalization. As Boal emphasized, theatre artists must create an enabling environment for audience engagement while offering solutions to contemporary challenges. Doki and Ali further assert that:

This need for Nigeria as a sovereign nation to create the impetus for image waxing pedigree is perceived to be the only antidote to why Nigeria can be diplomatically admitted into the club of the international communities to consolidate its socio-political, socio-cultural and socio-economic growth that

could also transcend beyond the Nigerian nation with Nigerians in the diaspora being part of this re-branding crusade (40).

Event Manager recognises the need for rebranding and fostering a stronger professional identity among its theatre artists. By enhancing the program's prestige and visibility, theatre artists can better capitalise on the growing global market for events, leveraging the increasing number of event centres worldwide. Just as Nigerian music and films have gained international acclaim, reaching audiences across Africa and parts of Europe, this theatre artist must also establish their relevance on the global stage. To achieve this, a deeper understanding of the core issues is essential. Addressing the fundamental 'W' questions (Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How) will help clarify the discourse before us and guide strategic improvements.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research methodology is adopted for this study. As Mathew M., Michael H., and Johnny S. postulate, "Qualitative research involves intense and/or prolonged contact with participants in naturalistic settings to examine the everyday and exceptional experiences of individuals, groups, societies, and organizations" (28). The theatre artist does not operate in isolation; rather, they critically examine current trends, challenges, and prospects within event centres in an ever-changing world. Consequently, there is a vested interest in equipping artists with the requisite knowledge of the market space to contribute meaningfully to nation-building. On this note, the researchers adopt participatory action research (PAR) as a methodological tool to engage with this discourse.

Jason Campbell developed a research guide titled *Introduction to Methods of Qualitative Research Outline*, specifically designed to help researchers thoroughly understand different research methodologies for societal improvement. This study adopts participatory action research (PAR), an approach that directly involves both the researcher and participants in the research process. As Campbell (6) explains, PAR entails a "collective commitment to addressing an issue or problem" and incorporates self-reflection and group reflection as integral components of the research. In this framework, the theatre artist and the audience engage as equals, sharing ideas and engaging in constructive dialogue to reach well-informed conclusions. This participatory process fosters self-confidence, critical thinking, and a sense of ownership among artists, empowering them to propose solutions to existing problems. Since they are actively involved in the developmental process, including the exploration of the 'Ws' (Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How), they become invested stakeholders rather than passive observers.

On the other hand, the theatre artist expanded their creative and intellectual horizons by generating new ideas and enriching their scholarly contributions through problem-solving approaches. Participatory Action Research (PAR) fosters active artistic engagement by creating a platform for dialogue on key investment opportunities, such as wedding ceremonies, birthday parties, concerts, and event planning, enabling artists to build sustainable careers. Theatre artists adeptly captured contemporary societal narratives, which, though familiar, stimulated critical reflection, allowing them to consciously shape the envisioned future. PAR is a distinctive research methodology that prioritizes human experiences over quantitative data, emphasizing collective problem-solving and mutual engagement. As Campbell (6) notes, this approach cultivates 'ownership of or investment in the project.' Indeed, this method facilitated meaningful discourse among artists and practical collaboration with event centres, guiding informed decisions on growth and development within the Nigerian context.

BASIC CONCERNS OF EVENT MANAGEMENT

According to *The Event Planning Handbook*, event planning is the process of organizing festivals, ceremonies, competitions, parties, concerts, or conventions. This process encompasses budgeting, scheduling primary and alternate dates, selecting and reserving venues, obtaining permits, and coordinating transportation and parking (1). In his work *Theatre Management in Nigeria: An Introduction*, Ayakoroma Barclay outlines four fundamental elements of theatre, which he terms the four "Ws": what is performed (the content), the performer (who), the venue (where), and the audience (whom) (16). To remain relevant in the 21st-century event management landscape, this paper expands upon Ayakoroma's foundational "Ws" by introducing additional critical considerations. These enhanced parameters, which this study terms the "Event Bible" or "W Questions," serve as essential guidelines for contemporary event managers.

1. **What** - The content to be performed. Every event requires specific performances - scripts, musicals, improvisations, dances, etc. This foundational element determines all other planning aspects. The event manager must understand which performances suit different audiences, considering age, occasion, timing, and venue. Inappropriate content (e.g., adult humour at children's events or childish material at adult functions) compromises event quality.
2. **Who** - The performers: actors, singers, drummers, dancers, MCs, etc., who bring the event to life. Artist quality directly impacts event success. While some planners compromise quality to cut costs ("penny wise,"

“pound foolish”), professionals should always be prioritized. The 21st-century event landscape demands excellence - clients are informed and expect professional standards. Human resources are the lifeblood of any event.

3. **Where** - The venue has become increasingly crucial. Location considerations extend beyond the event space to include city, country, and continent. While digital options exist, physical attendance remains irreplaceable for weddings, graduations, conferences, and other ceremonies. Venue choice significantly affects attendance rates.
4. **Whom** - The target audience. This critical component influences all event decisions - script selection, venue choice, and artist hiring. Audience demographics and preferences should guide every planning aspect.
5. **Why** - The event's purpose. Every gathering has specific objectives. Understanding these enables informed decision-making throughout the planning process.
6. **Whose** - The event owner's identity and personality. This often-overlooked factor significantly impacts venue selection, artist choices, and overall event design. Comprehensive client understanding ensures appropriate service delivery.
7. **When** - Timing considerations. Event managers must guide clients regarding seasons and scheduling:
 - Weather implications (e.g., rainy season for outdoor events)
 - Academic calendars (e.g., children's events during holidays/weekends)
 - Working schedules (urban events typically suit weekends)
 - Time budgeting (duration appropriateness for target audiences)
 - Conflict avoidance (competing events in the same locale/timeframe)
8. **Welfare** - Catering and hospitality. Food service quality and organization can determine an event's success. Effective management ensures proper distribution regardless of quantity, well-organized small portions satisfy better than poorly managed abundance.
9. **Worth** - The event's value proposition. Every function must demonstrate clear value, both monetary and otherwise. Profitability remains a core consideration - no event exists merely for its own sake.

Pillars of Ws

To achieve a successful event, it is observed that the event planner must have a deep sense of consideration and understanding of the value of the 'Pillars of Ws' for effective event packaging, which will be discussed below:

Sponsorship: Sponsorship is a major aspect of events, especially in the 21st century. Sponsors act as the engine that powers an event. Every event—whether a wedding, funeral, conference, or product launch—requires some form of sponsorship to help cover costs, particularly operational expenses. Ultimately, sponsors must derive value from their involvement.

The Content: The event manager must prioritize the event's content, as every event conveys a message. Some event managers have faced embarrassment due to a lack of preparation or ignorance of key details.

Trend: Event managers must stay updated on global best practices and emerging trends to deliver high-quality services to clients.

Aesthetics: Aesthetics, the visual appeal of the event venue—should never be overlooked. Broken chairs, scattered waste, and a lack of decor (such as flowers or landscaping) create a poor impression. A beautiful venue attracts attendees and enhances their experience.

Utility: The functionality of event facilities is crucial. Event planners must ensure proper amenities, especially restrooms. Many venues neglect this, leading to issues like water shortages or unsightly water containers that create mess and discomfort.

Safety: Safety is a critical concern for any event. Key considerations include:

- Structural integrity (adequate exits, seating arrangements, fire assembly points).
- Crowd control (avoiding overcrowding—e.g., a hall for 100 people crammed with 200 guests).
- Equipment suitability (sound and lighting systems should match the venue size—excessive noise or poor acoustics ruin the experience).
- Obstruction-free exits (vendors should not block entry/exit points).

Medical/Health: Medical preparedness is often neglected. A lack of first aid or emergency medical personnel can have dire consequences—for example, stampedes (like the past immigration recruitment tragedy) could be mitigated with proper medical support. Since events involve large gatherings, health precautions are essential.

Security: Security should be a top priority. Obtaining permits ensures:

- Law enforcement is aware of the gathering.
- Emergency personnel are on standby (disputes or accidents can occur in any crowd).
- Local authorities (e.g., road safety agencies) are notified if roads will be affected.

- Events like weddings and conferences often overlook this, unlike political rallies, where security is standard. In today's world, with rising crime and kidnappings, proper security protects both clients and planners.

Management Skills: As Celestine Nwachukwu stated, "Management is getting things done through others" (4). This is especially true in event planning, which relies on collaboration. Theatre, for instance, requires coordination among actors, directors, technicians, and financiers (Ayakoroma 26). Strong managerial skills—planning, organizing, directing, and controlling resources—are essential for achieving event objectives (Ayakoroma 26).

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing, it is evident that the increasing demand for event planners in Nigeria and globally requires urgent intervention from well-trained, knowledgeable professionals. These experts must rise to meet the growing need for high-quality event management across diverse occasions such as weddings, birthdays, conferences, coronations, child dedications, book launches, funerals, thanksgiving ceremonies, fashion shows, funfairs, festivals, graduations, and even football events. Paulo Freire's theory of the *banking system of education* and the *participatory action research (PAR)* method used in this discourse have broadened students' perspectives, encouraging them to think critically and develop practical solutions to the evolving demands of the industry. To produce competent event planners capable of meeting 21st-century challenges, one key approach is equipping theatre artists and professionals with a thorough understanding of the *Pillars of Ws* as a foundational guide for successful event execution.

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