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An investigation into the management and operations of four different theatre companies in Trinidad and Tobago: kith & kin production company ltd. Crazy catholic production company, the Richard ragoobarsingh and ricardo Samuel production company and drama: making a difference production company.
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ABSTRACT

This thesis offers an in-depth investigation into the management and operation of four different theatre companies in Trinidad and Tobago: Kith & Kin Production Company Ltd; Crazy Catholic Production Company; the Richard Ragoobarsingh and Ricardo Samuel Production Company; and Drama: Making a Difference Production Company. The managers of each company were interviewed individually to assess management styles, operation structure, successes and challenges. Participant and non-participant observations were also conducted to give in-depth, insider accounting of an event or production.

The findings show a range of management styles with the more structured approaches resulting in steady growth of the company. Operation procedures also differed depending on the unified goals of the company. Familial relationships within three of the four companies had to be managed properly to ensure smooth operational procedures. Each company highlighted similar challenges of funding and sourcing of venues for productions, and also optimism of the continued role of theatre in Trinidad.

The reflective nature of this study is connected to my new understanding of various perspectives from persons within my own family production company, which provided insights for me as a participant in the Theatre Arts to facilitate my own success and continued reflections in the future.

KEYWORDS: Theatre Production Company, Management Style, Operation Structure, and Reflection.
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CHAPTER 1- INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The history of theatre companies in Trinidad and Tobago can be traced back to 1826-1831 when there were: “five theatres, three amateur theatre companies, one professional English touring group and one professional French lyric company”1. The first local theatre company was The Little Carib Theatre established in Woodbrook in 1948 by Beryl Mc Bernie as a folk dance and theatre company. This was followed by the development of the Trinidad Theatre Workshop (TTW) in 1959 by noble laureate Derek Walcott and his twin brother Roderick Walcott. It is important to note though, that the Trinidad Theatre workshop was initially housed in The Little Carib Theatre and that Dereck Walcott worked closely with Beryl Mc Bernie before and after its founding. Today, the country houses a number of different local theatre companies, but the exact number is undocumented. According to The National Drama Association of Trinidad and Tobago, “Unofficially, there is a theatre season, which runs from after Carnival to early August and then continues from October to December. Most theatre performances take place during these periods.”2 (n.p.)

This research paper is an in depth investigation into the management and operation of four different theatre companies in Trinidad and Tobago: Kith & Kin Production Company Ltd, Crazy Catholic Production Company, the Richard Ragoobarsingh and Ricardo Samuel Production Company and Drama: Making a Difference Production Company. Thus this research aims to provide a comparative study of four theatre companies in Trinidad and Tobago with an emphasis on management and operational challenges.

1 Interview with Freddie Kissoon in the Newsday, Saturday, June 29 2013
2 National Drama Association of Trinidad and Tobago (NDATT) website, April 20 2017
**BACKGROUND**

My family currently runs a small scale theatre production company, Kith and Kin Production Company Ltd. We previously had minimal training and experience in producing shows and so have been faced with many difficulties along the way. I have a huge family and a number of us are involved some way or the other in the arts. One year, to raise funds for my sister to go away on scholarship, we decided to put on a show. It was such a success that we decided that this effort needed to evolve into an actual company. By the third show (which was the biggest), we invited a dance director from outside to come in and help us. She was very strict and it made me realise how much structure and formalities we were lacking as a family group. However, we also reflected that we did not enjoy the process as much as we did for the previous shows we had done. This propelled me to think along the lines of investigating how other established production companies are managed in an attempt to understand how to balance personal relationships and professional conduct in order to become successful. From this study I can share the knowledge acquired; not only as a guide for my family’s company on its path to growth, but also with other young people who are interested in getting involved in theatre production.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Based on the broad aims of this study, this paper aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the differences in management among the four theatre production companies?

2. What are the similarities in management among the four theatre production companies?

3. How have these differences/similarities impacted on the success of the companies?
4. What are the operational challenges faced by each of the companies?
CHAPTER TWO- METHODOLOGY

To conduct qualitative research one would study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 3; Creswell, 36). In this study, data collected was used to interpret and compare the management of four different types of theatre production companies. These companies’ managers were interviewed to make sense of their perspectives on challenges associated with theatre management and its operation in Trinidad and Tobago.

To study these companies in their “natural setting”, I observed each company’s interaction as they each prepared for a production. For Kith & Kin I did participant observation, since I was also involved in the event, but I did non-participant observations for the other three companies. I paid particular attention to management of the cast and crew and the process of the drama.

Qualitative research aims to remove the distance between the researcher and the research being conducted, a situation that Miles refers to as “local groundedness” (23). Being a member of the Kith & Kin Production Company, I already had emic knowledge of the management processes and relationships. I had previously attended shows put on by the other three companies, but I did not have “local groundedness” on how they were run. I removed the “distance between the researcher and the research being conducted”, not only through the interviews with each manager but also by participant and non-participant observation. I participated as an assistant event manager on the day of the performance of Les Twins Trinidad by Kith & Kin Productions. I was a non-participant observer on the set for Men are Dogs by the Richard Ragoobarsingh and Ricardo Samuel Production Company; Cinderella by the Crazy Catholic production Company and the Daily radio show of the Drama Making a Difference Production Company. I was thus able to
collect data via “observations that yield thick description [and] interviews that capture direct quotations about people’s personal perspectives and experiences” (Patton 41)

Finally, to analyse the data qualitatively, I “coded” similar perspectives from the four interviews and organised them into common themes, noting similarities and differences. I also wrote in-depth descriptions of what I noticed on the days I did the participant/non-participant observations, and again analysed these data logs for similarities and differences in approaches to management styles and process operations. Finally, since qualitative research takes into account the researcher’s own interpretation of phenomena, I wrote personal reflections focused on my own understandings of the concerns of my research questions at various points in the study.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (FOR PRODUCTION COMPANIES):

1. How many productions have you managed throughout the company’s existence?
2. Is every performance event guided by a standard set of management rules?
3. Is the chain of communication clear/direct within the company? Is the hierarchy made clear to all the people involved in the company?
4. How do you maintain this structure within the company?
5. What works well for the management of the company?
6. What are some of the difficulties faced when managing a production?
7. Is there a clear unified goal among the stakeholder of the company? What is it?
8. Do you conduct evaluations at the end of each production?
9. Do you think that the production company has experienced growth over the years? How so? What part has management played in this growth?
10. How can the private sector/general public/government assist in the development of local
theatre to make the job as manager more productive? -
CHAPTER THREE- LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature looks at previously published works that are pertinent in acquiring an impartial understanding of the concerns of this study. The literature falls under four classifications: the history of theatre in Trinidad and Tobago; how to start a theatre and produce plays; the role of the manager in theatre production companies and challenges faced by theatre companies locally and internationally.

In *The Emergence of a National Drama in the West Indies* by Errol Hill, we gain insights of the inception of theatre in the West Indian setting. In Trinidad, the history of theatre companies dates back to the 1920’s when the capital town of Port of Spain housed a total of three theatres and five performing companies. With minor exceptions, the content performed was foreign: “they said little or nothing about Caribbean life”, and this appropriately served the, “thin upper crust of society.” Hill (15) goes on to describe a more current theatrical setting in Trinidad. He says that the drama has begun to depict representations of local life, there has been no discussion on the applicability of the inherited form of drama and conditions of physical performance on our native life. Does this foreign template retard our advancements in the theatre causing management to be far more challenging? This book is therefore valuable to this study as it allows the researcher to conduct well-informed interviews.

The literature, from which the theme of how to produce plays is extracted, provides theoretical formulae that lead to the production of a play, theatre or non-profit theatre corporation. They assume that by following the guidelines written, an organized course is concretized. Carina Roberts, in her book *Producing Plays (1997)* dissects in five chapters, the various elements required to produce a play, while paying particular attention to Christian plays being staged in a
church setting. Roberts introduces us to “The Art of Play Production” describing the initial stages of a director choosing a play and auditioning actors. The next step outlines the “staging of the play”, which describes the different roles required to organize a play and its venue. Costume, music and lighting are then looked at with respects to colour, textures, shapes and making sure the play is always visible. The final chapters of the study relate to publicity and the job of the business manager. It deals with the formation of a publicity committee that would drive ticket sales and provide information to patrons.

Similar to Roberts, Lindsay (1959) writes on starting a theatre in his book, *How to Start a Theatre*. He uses his experiences and clear examples to validate the procedures he outlines. His literature is introduced with a reoccurring standpoint, “the creative group must have leadership”. That is to say, a structured chain of command must exist in any successful theatre. In an article entitled, *Job Description of a Company Manager for a Theatre* (n.d.), the job of the production manager is defined. The manager’s primary obligations, business and communication responsibilities and organizational skills are described. From dealing with contracts and budgets to the nurturing of the personnel and facilitating of the Marketing committee. The article describes the job of the manager thus: “They take care of the day-to-day operations so that the artistic team, including a production’s director and its actors, can focus on the production itself.” These books allow the researcher to understand the internationally accepted formal structures of a theatre, upon which comparisons of the four production companies are made.

Theatre companies face a number of limitations. Three of these are: a lack of appreciation of the art form, insufficient funding and difficulties in sourcing venues. In an article published in the Guardian Newspaper entitled, *Developing the Community with Theatre Arts* (26/04/2011),
Ralph Campbell, an established theatre practitioner from Trinidad and Tobago speaks about developing a youth community theatre in his home town of Morvant where there is a “professional theatre managed by young people who are professionally trained in theatre arts…” He goes on to outline the challenges he anticipates. He highlights that theatre is not taken seriously in Trinidad and Tobago and it is a ‘shaky career’ to have as a result. Another challenge Campbell faces is pessimistic preconceived notions toward his project. He describes this as “the backwardness in people and their thinking- that the project may just be another rise and fall.” Rebecca Novick describes the challenges faced with her theatre company in the article, ‘Please, Don’t Start a Theater Company! Next-Generation Arts Institutions and Alternative Career Paths’ (2011). She zealously founded the Crowded Fire Theatre Company in San Francisco, with high hopes of becoming successful, and later found that there had been increased saturation in the industry with decreased audiences and funding. She came to the realization that the structure of the theatre must be transformed or it will suffer in the generations to come. She argues that: “The proliferation of small theatre companies sits at the intersection between the necessity to imagine different structures for making theatre and our field's failure to provide career paths for the next generation of artists.” In addition to the challenges aforementioned, Victoria Snaith outlines the issues she encountered, trying to gain recognition as a new theatre company, in the blog post Problems faced by New Theatre Companies: Venues. (2014). She came across the problem of “the vicious circle” when sourcing a venue to stage performances. She points out that this cycle occurs when a venue will only showcase a companies’ work if it has been performed elsewhere and they have seen and approved the standards. The problem arises when all other venues have similar policies and results in new companies having to resort to unconventional venues. Having detailed, background
information on operational challenges faced by companies, the researcher is able to construct interview questions that would be relevant to companies structured similarly.

The compilation of literature provides a relevant source of information that encapsulates the current and past conditions of existing theatre companies locally and internationally. It serves as a form of pre-production planning for the current study that sheds enlightenment on the inception of theatre companies in Trinidad and Tobago, the stages and complexities of building a theatre company, the role of the company manager and the challenges faced by theatre companies.
CHAPTER FOUR- FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives a summary of each interview conducted with the four managers of the four production companies: Kith & Kin Production Company Ltd, Crazy Catholic Production Company, the Richard Ragoobarsingh and Ricardo Samuel Production Company and Drama: Making a Difference Production Company. It also discusses in detail each company’s production process based on one rehearsal/event that I attended as either a participant or non-participant observer. I identify two limitations after having collected and analysed the data. Finally, the table at the end, correlates the findings of the data to my research questions.

1) KITH & KIN PRODUCTION COMPANY LTD

Interview with manager

Ms Nicha Selvon-Ramkissoon is the current manager of Kith & Kin Productions Ltd (K&K). She explains the creation of the company in 2009, when she was on maternity leave, as a family endeavour to raise funds to send a family member abroad to take up a dance scholarship. This production, Family is Everything was so successful, that the family company was eventually registered and over the past eight years two other dance theatre productions were written and staged at various venues, and other smaller undertakings like original choreographed dances, character appearances, workshops etc. were done over the years. Kith & Kin entered into two separate partnerships for two productions, the latter being last November when they partnered with  

3 Full interviews in the Appendix.
Liquid Matters Studio to host a dance show and workshop with the internationally acclaimed *Les Twins*.

In terms of management style and guidelines, Nicha says that K&K operates under a laissez-faire/democratic management style since every member of the team is either a relative or close friend. Since these friends and family either work or study in the arts it is easy to get talent together for a production, but it is difficult to have a disciplined order of operation. The company is not operated on a full time basis: members come together only if someone proposes a project of interest. The chain of communication and hieratical structure in the company is not always clearly defined. Nicha is always in charge of management tasks such as organising rehearsals, venues, sponsorship and script writing. She is also the point person for partnerships and dealing with personnel outside of K&K. Another company manager, Lisa is in charge of costuming, props and staging. Other members are mainly performers in the production. Because of fluid roles among members, compounded by the familial relationships, structure is not always maintained. Nicha expressed how difficult it is to manage rehearsals both among Kith & Kin members and especially when cast is also outsourced. Late-coming, excessive “liming”, and absenteeism are often problems faced during production process. In the end, shows are usually of a high quality, this is perhaps because participants often express their appreciation of a stress-free, non-threating, creative environment. According to Nicha this represents a dichotomous reality, since she usually feels stressed during pre and post production.

Nicha says that there is a clear unified goal that was agreed upon eight years ago and that continues as the basis for the existence of the company. She explains:

Kith & Kin was originally conceptualised as a creative space for the young people in the family to engage in artistic pursuits: theatre, dance, music, painting/drawing/graphics,
coming from a very creative family, we have had to carve our own niche to allow our members full artistic expression, while using their talents to help each other as well as the community at large. Not only have we been able to assist our own members to take up various scholarships abroad, but also proceeds from two of our productions were used to build a playground for an Early Childhood Center in the Cunupia community, as well as to contribute to building upgrade for a primary school in the Fyzabad community.

Evaluations are conducted informally at the end of each production: they look at quality of performances and audience feedback. Reflections of each performer on how he/she felt about the production is an integral part of the evaluation process. Nicha believes that the company experienced rapid growth in its first five years, but then productions slowed down primarily because many of the members were quite occupied with work and school. Nicha addressed the high costs of venue rentals, costuming, staging and the difficulty of getting sponsorship even from government agencies designed for the arts like the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts; Creative TT etc.

Participant Observation of Event: Les Twins Trinidad

On November 12th, 2016, I arrived at the Tacarigua sporting facility at 8:00 am, for the Les Twins Trinidad event hosted by Liquid Matter Studios and the Kith & Kin Production Company Ltd. The event comprised of two local dance workshops, performances by local music artistes and a dance workshop and performance by the international hip hop dancers Les Twins. For the first time Kith & Kin (K&K) took on a venture that was outside of its comfort zone of mainstream theatre and hosted an event on dance performance and tutoring. They also teamed up with Liquid
Matter Studios (LMS) who were the main organisers for recruiting the artists and advertising the event, with Kith & Kin responsible for hosting at the venue for the day. As hosts, K&K was responsible for providing food and drinks for the performers, manning the ticket booth, and giving general guidance to the patrons of the event.

The event was scheduled to begin at 9:00 am, however it actually started at around 11:00 am. At 9:00 am, the LMS events manager made an appearance on the compound. My job for the day, as a member of K&K, along with two other members of K&K, was to operate the ticket booth. We went to the events manager to get a run through of what she needed us to do as we had no pre-production meeting regarding our job descriptions. She let us know the different packages offered and the coloured bands to wrap on persons’ hands differentiating which person paid for the various packages offered. She also indicated to us: people who had to bring in money, people who paid online and people who paid and did not have a ticket to present. By 9:00 am people started showing up and approached us with questions like “What level of dance will be taught in the dance workshops?” or “What time will the twins be coming?” We responded according to the timetable that we were given, but of course everything was running behind schedule. By the end of the first two local workshops, people were left waiting around for the musical entertainment, who showed up two hours late. LMS constantly called to find out cash flow information and if things were running well. I told them on more than one occasion that they should return as people were waiting and that K&K could not host effectively without the proper flow of information. One member of LMS who was scheduled to perform, cancelled her performance. At this stage, we three members of K&K decided to collaborate with the MC to entertain the crowd with a dance off competition where the prize would be an extra pizza we had. This did the trick and by the time the dance battle was over, the music artistes showed up to perform. People kept inquiring about food since food
vendors were supposed to show up, however, this was not the case and people had to rely on a small shop located in the back of the building. People showed up asking for the events manager as they had different roles to perform, but were left feeling disoriented as there was no guidance on what to do.

Two hours late on the agenda, Les Twins finally showed up with LMS and gave a stellar performance and workshop that left people giving positive remarks about the event with the exception of the long waiting periods. When asked why they stayed away during the event, LMS explained that Les Twins were reluctant to operate until final payments were installed. My crew and I left at the end of the event exhausted.

2) RICHARD RAGOOBARSINGH/RICARDO SAMUEL PRODUCTIONS COMPANY

Interview with manager

Ms. Lisa Bain is the company manager of the Richard Ragoobarsingh and Ricardo Samuel Production Company. With her heavy load of responsibilities I was limited to a telephone interview with her. Being with the company for 20 years, she was able to paint a clear description of the ins and outs of the running of the company. Throughout the interview, she reiterated the point that ‘everyone knows what they have to do, they get it done and they go above and beyond.’ She described the high level of professional actors she works with (Richard Ragoobarsingh, Glenn Davis, Penelope Spencer, Debra Boucaud-Mason, Corrine Browne, Ria Ali, Leslie-Ann Lavine, Aaron Schneider, Zo-Mari Tanker, Cecilia Salazar etc.), that leave her with little overseeing of their responsibilities. She specifically mentions that one of the main things that she must see to is that the actors adapt to the different requirements and guidelines of the auditoriums they perform
in. In other words, she considers them highly competent employees who can be trusted to make independent decisions. Because the company has been in existence for 20 years, the chain of communication is clear and direct to all of the members of the company. If an actor cannot make it to a rehearsal, they inform the stage manager, who reports it to the producers; if it becomes an ongoing problem, it is reported to Ms Bain who would send out a warning to the actor who usually has an acceptable excuse, as the actors are invested in the company and only seek to ameliorate its success.

When asked about the unified vision and goals of the company, Ms Bain says that the members seek to give theatre patrons the best quality shows. They expect that when the audience members leave the auditorium they leave feeling like they’ve gotten their monies’ worth. She says that she knows that they have achieved this goal based on the feedback they receive from patrons which have never been negative or critical. Ms Bain points out that cooperation with company members has driven their company to success and this she can class as one of the qualities that make up a successful company. She says that the leadership roles within the company respect each other, each person’s contribution is valued at meetings and they work together as a team. She also indicates that in her opinion, God has a major role to play in the success of the company.

When questioned about the operational challenges of the company, Lisa doesn’t take a second to mention the high costs of advertising; the leading newspaper, The Express, is completely overpriced, and they receive no sponsorship from the government, she says that: ‘we really don’t get a good deal from the government and we have to rally ourselves on our own to make our name known.’ She describes another major challenge as having to adapt foreign plays to our local setting. When they are pressed for time and cannot produce their own script as they sometimes do, they resort to foreign plays and it poses as a challenge to adapt these plays. Perhaps the lack of modern
options from local playwrights seems to be the issue in this case. When asked about post production evaluations, Ms Bain says that they don’t conduct them in a traditional sense with a standard meeting, but they base their calculations of success and failure on the audience turn out. The Richard Ragoobarsingh and Ricardo Samuel Company has experienced growth over the years with the huge effect that technology has had on management. With social media, Ms. Bain has been able to reach a wider audience when marketing their shows and this has allowed them to publically grow. When asked how the government can make the job of a theatre company manager easier, Mrs Bain says that apart from grants and sponsorship, they can rent out the national auditoriums at subsidized prices.

**Non-Participant Observation: Rehearsal for *Men are Dogs***

I arrive at 4:45pm on Tuesday 7th February, to the Necessary Arts building where the rehearsal for *Men are Dogs* by the Richard Ragoobarsingh and Ricardo Samuel Company (RRRS) is set to take place at 5:00pm. I leave and return at 5:35pm worried that I am now very late. On entering the compound I meet an old gentleman smoking a cigarette. I immediately explain to him who I am and my tardiness, he replies, “You should know theatre people never on time.” He directs me inside into a very small room with mirrors and I immediately feel settled and welcomed by the warm greetings and relaxed environment. I am introduced to the ten members of the cast and crew present and shortly after they carry on their usual rapport with each other.

A main actor exclaims, “You know I don’t have a script for this play, I’ve never had one, only the first time we’ve ever performed it.” After she says this I learn that they are redoing an old performance. Three actors get onstage in the open space in the centre and start to perform. I feel
that they have a sense of maturity, professionalism and are driven by a strong sense of purpose. When running the play, the actors remind each other of what was established with regards to stylistic movement and pronunciation. All the other members of the production remain quiet on the sidelines while performance is taking place. One of the directors, Richard Ragoobarsingh is also one of the main actors on stage. The other director, a lady, is eating lunch, working on a props list and subtly directing at intervals on the sideline. The stage manager and assistant stage manager also sit on the sideline prompting when the actors forget their lines. They do this job efficiently responding rapidly when in need. I learn that the man sitting quietly next to me is the writer/producer of the play, and he offers me role descriptions of the people present. I realise that throughout the first run through the directors have very little to say and at the end, the actors evaluate themselves saying that “the spark, rhythm and flow are not yet there”. They then decide collectively when the next rehearsal will be for preparation of the final performance on Saturday. They reluctantly agree to meet on the upcoming Friday and mention how sacrificial this will be for them, as they never rehearse on Fridays. At 7:20 pm they decide to run the play again and I show myself out.
3) DRAMA MAKING A DIFFERENCE PRODUCTION COMPANY

Interview with manager

Mr. Andre Dillon is the company Manager and theatre director of the Drama Making a Difference Production Company (D M.A.D Company). I was afforded the opportunity to sit down and conduct an interview with him and I was made privy to the management style of his company and the challenges it faces. D M.A.D. Company has been in existence for 10 years, doing an average of 3 ‘rip ticket’ shows per year along with various school shows and workshops. The company can be characterised by its familial nature and openness to evolution and growth. The company that it is today started off as a drama group which morphed into a charity to help people’s causes that later grew into a company. With a strong sense of spontaneity Andre says “I’m thinking every three years we morph into something else and we are now starting to solidify who we are.” Andre mentions that as a company, they sometimes feel uncertain as there isn’t much previous knowledge to lean on in the area of theatre management and he states that any work being done in theatre today can be considered pioneer work. As a result of this, the only place to seek help is from outside perspectives which goes against the cultural aspect of theatre. The structure that they follow as a company is described as “learn your lines, find your characters within the next two weeks and plenty things could happen.” To this he adds that they are on the right track with goals of set rehearsal scheduling and sticking to a budget. In the company’s sixth year, they sought the help of an organization called Veni Appwann who assisted them in becoming a viable company.

When asked if the chain of communication existing in the company is clear and direct, Andre quickly confesses to being the cause of a lot of the ambiguity with regards to communication. He explains that his creative mind becomes a hindrance and he “talks in metaphors”, he does not often describe his ideas clearly and this frustrates the members of his
company. However, they are slowly growing to understand each other more and more. When I heard this I was inclined to then ask if a middle man who is less artistic could handle the communication within the company and he then went on to add that last year, they were advised by Veni Apwann to create an executive team, which they have done. The executive team translates his created creative jargon to the rest of the team. He does however point out that the new system is in the teething stage and difficulties do arise as the executive team makes the process of communicating longer and more cumbersome. To maintain the familial structure within the company, the members often go on retreats. He states that the family aspect of the company works well for management because there is a sense of trust, comfort and understanding among one another that makes the process enjoyable and easier. However this familial structure does prove to be a double edged sword as ties cannot be cut as easily and excuses fly by more frequently. Andre says, “As a family, I would always understand where you are coming from and I can’t really fire you.’ In addition to the aforementioned challenges, Andre describes the difficulties that arise with a lack of finances as the majority of their funds go toward charity, so to rectify the problem they have started applying for grants. Andre paints the clear unified goal of the company to be ‘provoke thought to stimulate change’. However, he says it is still murky as it is intangible, and because you cannot touch it, people forget the concept of why they are doing this in the first place.

In Andre’s opinion, for there to be a successful theatre company, one must love what one does and it cannot feel like work. In addition to this, the actors must be seen. The manager must make sure that an audience comes out to see the produced work because if you have a show with only 50 persons in the audience, the actors will become disenchanted. Andre says that after performances they conduct sit down post mortem meetings, sometimes they do it between shows so that they can improve before the final performance.
Andre describes the growth of the company in reference to a growth in clientele. Over the years they networked with people from Government ministries, schools and churches. Their marketing skills improved with the increased popularity of social media he humbly inserts that there is a lot more room to grow. Andre goes on to describe the relationship between management and a successful company. The manager keeps an account of the running of the business and therefore, quantifies the growth and highlights areas that need improvement. With this documentation, the company can pay attention to doing more of what needs to be done or transform what is being done poorly like tightening your budget to raise profits.

Andre makes it clear that the private sector doesn't know they can get involved in drama. The private sector is always interested in how they can benefit from a proposal. He says that the manager can have all his books audited so that when he goes to the private sector, he can propose that, for example, if you invest $100,000.00 in my company, you can write off $150,000.00 in your books in terms of tax, as stated by the government. This is only made possible if the manager’s books are audited. The manager has to make sure that his financial statement is up to par so that investors could want to work with the company. Many a time people in the theatre world don't have their books in order so when they make their proposals it turns into a “hand to mouth” situation of “give me lil something here a lil something there”, Andre says, and adds, “mind you I was one of them.”
Non-Participant Observation: Rehearsal for D M.A.D. radio show

I arrive at St. Augustine Secondary school for a rehearsal scheduled to start at 5:00 pm and end at 7:00pm. I meet Andre, the director and manager of the company, planning an event with his secretary. I am pointed in the direction of a relatively small classroom filled with tables and chairs, where the actors and members of the company engage in very loud and casual discourse. I observe that there are four females and two males, one of whom is attired in a secondary school uniform. I go to the corner where they are all seated and I introduce myself. I immediately feel warm and welcomed. At 6:13 Andre walks into the classroom to begin the warm up. We walk onto the field outside the classroom. While walking out Andre tells me that he usually sets aside the first half hour of rehearsal time for a meet and greet where the actors talk amongst each other and tell their stories. The warm up takes up the first hour of the rehearsal. They play theatre games. They play the ball game where the ball must remain up in the air as they hit it around in a circle. The goal is to reach 25 hits and they make it to 32 after 23 minutes of trying. To reach the 32 hits they had to work together as a team and share methods they thought would work. One girl suggests: “Don’t add too much force to the hit, keep it small”; another says, “relax the mind”; another person suggests, “the ball is your life don’t let it fall.”

After accomplishing the first theatre game they start the second, which is a storytelling game they’ve called, ‘Allyuh remember when?’ After a while I notice that the director actively participates in the games. One person comes into the centre and starts with an idea of what a memory could be about. The rest of the actors turn into the characters in the world and act out improvised scenes from the memory. I realise that some of the memories brought up are actual memories the team has shared as they come out of the characters and talk about it after. They were given the responsibility to bring these games to class and after seeing how well they worked for
the rehearsal; they were instructed to document the games. At 6:39pm they get into a discussion. They talk about how the games they played is applicable to their practice as actors. After the warm up/ theatre game session we retreat back into the classroom to go through the script for their upcoming daily radio show performance. Andre asks them to take out their scripts and the excuses come flooding in. Whether it be no data on the phone to access the softcopies or that they are “saving trees…just for today” they resort to sharing scripts. They run through the excerpt and when the rehearsal comes to an end, Andre instructs the cast members to breathe. They then discuss upcoming rehearsals and are reminded to consider those who have exams. At this I make my exit at 7:10pm.

4) CRAZY CATHOLIC PRODUCTION COMPANY

Interview with the manager

Ms Cindy Narine is the Crazy Catholic Production Company manager. The company has been in existence for 15 years and they’ve done an estimate of 30 productions. Their management style can be characterized by its relaxed nature. In fact some questions she had to refer to her husband since he manages some aspects of production. She claims though that the members of the company understand their roles and the roles of each other, and the chain of communication is clear and direct. Ms. Narine states that the company does not do formal written contracts with their actors. Once the actors come into the theatre they are made aware of what the company expects of them and the agreements between employer and employees take the form of a verbal contract. There tends to be a lenient relationship between the manager and the employees/ company members. They openly communicate with the actors and always try to be understanding when people can’t make rehearsals, however they try not to be too flexible. Ms. Narine describes a situation in which she depicts her leniency. Two members of the cast for their upcoming play
Cinderella are also contracted to work with the Carvalho theatre production company so she must frame the rehearsal schedule around these actors so that they can perform in both shows.

Ms. Narine shares that most of the members of the company are family and their unified goal as a company is to provide a space that brings families together. She says that children grew up on their theatre. When asked about evaluations of performance, Ms. Narine explains that the leadership looks over the records of the play and determines where improvements are necessary. The Crazy Catholic Company has experienced tremendous growth says Ms. Narine. They started off with humble beginnings as a smaller company called Love and Laughter. The acting she described as amateur acting developed with more rigorous training.

With respect to operational challenges, the Crazy Catholic Company faces the problem of costly advertising, lack of sponsorship and tardiness of actors. When asked what the government can do to make the job as manager easier, Ms. Narine says that they can subsidize the extremely high costs of national auditoriums and make tech support at these facilities less costly.

Non-Participant Observation: Rehearsal for *Cinderella*

I arrived at the San Juan Parish Hall at 8:00pm on a Wednesday night for a rehearsal scheduled to start at 7:30pm. The space was filled with around 20 ranging in ages. Both the director and manager were present attending to 4 actors in the centre of the space. The director, Mr. Sheldon Narine, calls one of the lead actors forward who also happens to be his son. The director seemed to be planning out the sequence of events spontaneously. The director and manager discuss lighting openly. All the other cast members stand around the side-lines eating and “liming” loudly. The manager announces that there are light snacks provided for the cast. I quickly get a run down of the events from the daughter of the manager. She says that they began with a prayer, they were
given a basic rundown of what is planned for the night and they proceeded to dive straight into the script. I notice that the director calls for silence on the wings, and the cast does not respond to his request. He then calls out for Kerry to quiet the people in the ‘wings’. I also observe that the manager contributes to the direction of the play as a stage manager would. The manager Ms Cindy Narine then asks that she and I step outside to conduct an interview. Her husband then doubles as stage manager and director. By the time the interview ends, the rehearsal also comes to a conclusion. The cast is told when the following rehearsal would be and anyone who would have trouble making it is told to discuss it with the manager when the rehearsal ends. With this, I make my exit.

**LIMITATIONS**

1. All four production companies were based in the East-West Corridor. Due to time constraints, I could not research companies in South or Central Trinidad or in Tobago. This wider geographic scope, may have offered another perspective on theatre company management.

2. Not all interviews were conducted in the best manner. One environment was not conducive to focused discussion (Crazy Catholic) and another had to be done over the telephone (Richard Ragoobarsingh Production) after several unsuccessful attempts to meet in person.
Table 1 showing Findings according to Research Questions and Coded Data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH QUESTIONS</th>
<th>KITH &amp; KIN</th>
<th>RR &amp; RS</th>
<th>D.M.A.D</th>
<th>CRAZY CATHOLIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Differences and Similarities in Management Styles</td>
<td>Laissez-faire</td>
<td>Structured authority</td>
<td>Structured authority</td>
<td>Structured authority</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>Non-interchangeable roles</td>
<td>Executive team</td>
<td>Interchangeable roles of husband and wife leadership team</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Fluid roles</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Impact of Management Styles on Success of Company</td>
<td>Some hurdles during production process due to laissez-faire approach.</td>
<td>Production process more organised and momentum sustained.</td>
<td>Production process more organised and momentum sustained.</td>
<td>Interchangeable leadership roles within family arrangement works for this group.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Leadership roles not often defined.</td>
<td>Well defined leadership roles.</td>
<td>Well defined leadership roles.</td>
<td>Some improvement in acting/ performance on account of training.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Productions usually of high quality; community outreach part of outcomes; company growth</td>
<td>Popular company with wide audience base.</td>
<td>Success in “Drama evoking thought to make a difference.” through workshops and other productions.</td>
<td>Company continues to grow as a popular family theatre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational Challenges</td>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>Space</td>
<td>Poor participant dispositions at times.</td>
<td>Funding</td>
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<td></td>
<td>stagnant at this stage.</td>
<td>Company continues with theatre for entertainment.</td>
<td>Adapting foreign plays to local setting.</td>
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CHAPTER 5- REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Throughout the course of conducting this research, I have developed a keener sense of the realities of theatre production in Trinidad. Much like a good theatre performance, I am now able to use the stories of other production companies to reflect and command the transformation of my own family company. By doing this research, I live vicariously through each manager’s experiences as they navigate their companies’ production processes.

One major eye opener for me was seeing through the lenses of the manager of my own family company, and recognising that I too have contributed in the past to making management difficult. I am more aware of what it means in qualitative research to remove the “distance between the researcher and the research being conducted.” What a difference perspective makes!

Success in theatre production in Trinidad it seems depends on unified goals and a committed cast for a company. A clear chain of command reduces ambiguity and keeps a structure pre and post production. The findings show a range of management styles with the more structured approaches resulting in steady growth of the company. Kith & Kin Productions represented one end of the spectrum of a laissez-faire approach with stagnated growth, while Richard Ragoobarsingh/Ricardo Samuel Productions represented the other end of the spectrum with a highly structured approach and professional, committed cast resulting in continuous output. Operation procedures also differed depending on the unified goals of the company. This is in keeping with the literature, since Lindsay (1959) argues that “the creative group must have leadership.” The production manager’s role should not be a fluid one, as one interviewee
complained of feeling overly stressed, again the research shows that the job of the manager should be distinct: “They take care of the day-to-day operations so that the artistic team, including a production’s director and its actors, can focus on the production itself.”

It came as no surprise to me that the literature highlighted problems of venue and finances for international theatre companies, and the managers of the four companies in Trinidad expressed the same sentiment. Each company manager spoke of the need for more involvement by the government agencies to assist in sponsorship and advertising of the companies. Two of the companies (K&K/ D. M.A.D.) further identified community outreach as part of their goals. Each company though expressed optimism for the continued role of theatre in Trinidad in the future.

I started this research to investigate how other established production companies balanced personal relationships and professional conduct in order to become successful. The reflective nature of this study was important for my understanding of various perspectives from persons within my own family production company as well as those in other production companies. I noticed that three out of four of the production companies are made up of family members. This can become a major problem if management roles are not clearly defined, and if members take for granted their familial relationship. As a participant in the Theatre Arts, this is a crucial lesson to facilitate my own success in the future. I feel that this research has given me a chance to see the importance of a variety of perspectives including my own personal reflections, and has supplemented my academic studies in Theatre Arts.
References

Kissoon, Freddie. “Theatre- the Early Years.” *Trinidad and Tobago's Newsday*:


*National Drama Association of Trinidad and Tobago (NDATT)*. Discover.tt, n.d.


"Developing the Community with Theatre Arts" The Trinidad Guardian Newspaper.


APPENDIX
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTIONS

The Richard Ragoobarsingh and Ricardo Samuel Company interview with Lisa Bain

How many productions have you manage throughout the company's existence?

For 20 years they have performed numerous performances over 100 before too many to even count

Is every performance guided by a standard set of management rules?

More or less. The only thing that is different is whichever auditorium they visit because every auditorium is different because they are professional most times they know how to work around any problems that may arise in the event f one does happen to arise.

Is the chain of communication clear or direct with in the company?

Yes it goes without saying it because the company has been in existence for 20 is everyone knows what they have to do and they get it done and they go above and beyond.

How do you maintain the structure within the company?

Basically doing what needs to be done and get it done our man thing is really to get advertising in terms of the hardest thing in a production company is to get your ad sponsored. It's the only keep back at times. It is the only major point .

Do people respect rehearsal times?

Because they are very professional at what they do, if someone cannot come to rehearsal, of course it would be indicated to the stage manager. The stage manager might change depending on what show we are doing and they actors. There are always back up stage managers. and everything is reflected to the producers of the show Richard ragoobarsingh or Ricardo Samuel. In terms of rehearsals those are the people to report to. Or the director.
Do you think the actors maintain this level of professionalism as a result of the rules set by the company or is it that they.

What were some of the initial rules or practices?

It's not really rules as our company knows what they have to do. Our company, Richard Ragoobarsingh and Ricardo Samuel productions, our standards are the highest because we are rated as one of the top companies in the country. So really and truly we set the standards above all. You are called to a reading and we expect the best from you.

What are some of the difficulties faced when managing a production?

Advertising. That is the major thing in The Script. When you decide to do a show you then have to decide the script and of course the adaptation of making it local. Some of the plays are written locally. Richard Ragoobarsingh and Ricardo Samuel do also write scripts but when time is against them they take foreign plays and adapt it to our local dialect.

Is there a clear unified goal among the stakeholders of the company?

Giving theatre patrons the best quality shows—their goal. When you leave the auditorium you should leave feeling like you've gotten your money's worth or beyond that. Their quality of theatre is always high. What do you define the high quality of theatre? Receiving positive feedback from people. They receive positive reviews from social media. It's not just a money-making venture. They care about the entertainment of their patrons.

What are some qualities that make up a successful production company in your opinion?

Cooperation with company members. They all work as a team. I would say one in terms of the group of people that we work with which include Deborah Buccoo Mason, Richard Raj will busing, Ricardo Samuel and myself Lisa been and maybe a few others that come together because you know you respect the people over the years you don't shoot of anybody. This is what brings to the table everyone's comments of valued. Everyone is a team we were together.

do you conduct evaluations at the end of each production?

No, not in that sense. Well, we would know what didn't work in the sense of a production with the attendance of your house.
Do you think that the production company has experienced growth over the years and how soon and how has the management contributed to the growth over the years?

Definitely, one in the technology company has set the ballpark in terms of going out there in terms of media we have always been as I said being number one is hard so we always have to think outside of the box to be number one and you have to really reach the people that need to be reached and that's where my job comes in with going above and beyond with advertising television magazines I go above and beyond to make sure people know who we are. At the end of the day. Branding is what it's called.

What is the link between management and the success of the production company in your opinion?

We work together as a team and everyday we do our call. It is also God for myself in running the company. I can't answer for the producers but for me God is more important than anything else.

What are some of the challenges faced by your production company?

Advertising we don't get sponsorship from the govt, theatre companies on the whole it's hard to get anything started because our major thing is advertising via newspaper ads whether it and that is very costly express is the number one newspaper in our country and to put an ad in the express is really overpriced. Companies really don't get a good deal from the govt we really have to rally on our own in going and making a name for ourselves.

How can the private sector assist in the development of local theatre to make the job as manager easier?

It is a lot to pull a show together theatre gets nothing. Theatre is a part of our culture

Govt Sponsoring

our productions and giving grants. The rental of the auditoriums are costly. A lot of companies get sponsored from the culture sector. Carnival pan they get sponsored.

Drama making a difference André

How many productions have you managed throughout the company’s existence?
I can give an average-On average they do 3 rip ticket shows per year (rehearsals, costuming and auditorium)

They also do a lot of street theatre, improve theatre, workshops and school shows for the past 10 years

Is every performance guided by a standard set of management rules?

- No. We would like to. If they were guided by set rules it would be in line with rehearsal scheduling, sticking to a budget. After six years they sought the help of veni Apwann who helps small organization to become viable and they gave us some pointers but the funny thing about it is we are a theatre company and a theatre company has a feeling of not knowing what to do as they don’t have that history in Trinidad that they can lean on for previous knowledge on the matters they may have. Because of this they may have to rely on foreign knowledge, which may not be applicable as the cultures are different. So we ourselves have a thing that we do learn lines and make sure and find your character within the next two weeks and plenty things could happen. But in terms of management we are starting to align ourselves with a strict budget. They are starting to book venues way in advance and find sponsors. There is a lot to do with spontaneity sometimes he may just pop and say ‘aye lewe just do a show’

We didn't plan to become what we are. So it was a drama group that grew into a charity to help people with causes, that grew into a company so I'm thinking every three years I find we morph into something else. And we are now starting to solidify who we are.

Chain of communication clear, direct?

No and that is all my fault, sometimes I talk in metaphors, my creative mind hinders the flow of communication. Sometimes I would have the vision and not communicate the vision clearly to the people and that frustrates them. All in all I think they are starting to understand me and I am starting to understand them.

Do you think a middle man who is not as artistic as you would solve that problem?

For eight strong years I have managed the company and last year coming out of Vinny Apwon their training we have an executive management team. So the management team would hear my blah blah blah blah blah and they would translate to communicate it to the rest of the team. We are teething with that at the moment, sometimes I would need this now and they would think that they have two weeks to play around with ideas but it's working.

How do you maintain the structure in your organization?
So we have a challenge we are a drama company but we are also a drama family. So the family aspect you know you can there are blurred lines what we tend to do is go on retreat on the retreat remind us of who we are because we don't want to lose that family aspect but the retreat but also project where we want to be to do what we want to do we have certain goals so yes we are family but but we have to achieve you certain goals in a certain timeframe

Now you mentioned family so I'd like to know what are the disadvantages of being family like? If any?

Yes there are disadvantages. The major disadvantage with family is that I would always understand where you're coming from I can't really fire you so I can't fire you you know what I mean I had so many things to do today And work was really exhausting I had this that and the other I've forgotten to send the email to the sponsors, all right do it tomorrow. No... no you needed to do it last week

What works well for the management of the company?

For me what works well as is the same family thing because I could be truthful and comfortable and then I would I would know that you are giving me all that you could and trust that you would and I know that you have my best interest at heart so I can trust in my members because we are tight knit like a family. Trust gives you a leeway And propels the company forward

What are some of the challenges faced with managing a production?

In addition to what I've Aforementioned, finances because because we don't have any sponsors and majority of our funds go towards charity so you find out if you are 90% of the money that comes from ripping a ticket goes towards charity so for funding put on the show or if it is to give the money away. So finances can really be a problem but now we have started applying for grants.

Is there a clear unified goal among the stakeholders of the company?

The clear unified goal is still Murkey. It is intangible and that's the problem, because you can't touch it you lose the whole concept of why you are doing this in the first place. But it ought to be to provoke thought to stimulate change.

What are some of the qualities that make up a successful production company?

People must love what they are doing. It cannot be work. You must be passionate. You must be committed. In addition to this, you also need for them (actors)to be seen. You don't want to do something
and it is under the rocks so you as the manager must make sure there is an amp audience must market properly. Because if you have a wonderful show with only three people in the audience your actors will feel disenchanted.

Do you conduct evaluations at the end of each production?

We have something called post Mortem which we must take more seriously what we also should do is a small form, and let people write down their opinions, just simple statistics: what you think about this, food, performance, your performance, the people that you work with, this that and the other. And do a general census. Snaps fingers, got an idea from you But we do have sit downs t discuss improvements. Sat we would have a show Sunday, before again we have a small post meeting and then the week after that we run a whole post on the entire show.

Do you think the production company has experienced growth over the years? If so, what part has management played in this growth?

So we started Off in st Augustine secondary school, and after 3 years we had to move from st Augustine to school of education for venue accommodation and patron's comfort. After two years at so we moved as it was too small. So then we moved to lrc. And right about now if we do a show and market properly, we would sell out lrc for two nights. And that's 400 so there is that type of growth. We grew in terms of clientele. We have lots of people from govt ministries and schools and churches stuff like that asking us for our services. We grew in marketing and making people aware of us with the use of social media. We are the only drama company that does a radio drama every day of the week and this is probably the third year and there is plenty more room to grow.

What is the link between management and the success of the company?

If you fail to prepare prepare to fail and if you can't really see what you are managing if it just there and it's happening you can't really see your growth and the company would just trickle downwards because You can't really quantify okay I was here and now I'm here Management would show you where u are failing and would point to where your successes are if you want to continue your successes you pay attention to what you do if you want to reverse the failing to success you have to evaluate. Simple thing like the radio show, they don't pay us now mind you what that is a big radio station and dem ain't paying alyuh? ... we get to run our adds for free so it is a bartered situation. So when we are doing that I can't just go and spend 400 every week it takes 45 mins to record one week of airtime. Let's take an hour and a half and put in two sessions. So we do two weeks in one session. You buy one set of foodbudgetting. Yes it's nice on the surface but when u start looking at ok how can we do better here how can we become more efficient how can we get more for less.
What can the private sector or general public or govt assist in the development of local theatre to make the job as manager more productive?

Everything. I think what the question should be is what does the manager need to do to get the private sector involved? Because the private sector doesn't know they can get involved in drama. Now u go by somebody and tell them I'm doing this that and the other and the first thing the private sector wants too know is what is in it for me? Now the manager can have all his books audited so that when he goes to the private sector I can say private sector hear is the real scene if you put I 100000 in my company, you can write off 150000 in your books in terms of tax, the government say. You can write that off the only way that could happen is if my books are audited so the manager has to make sure that his financial statement is up to par so that investors could now want to work with you. Many a times theatre people don't have this thing in order so when you go it's always a hand to mouth, give me a lil something here a lil something here, mind you I was one of them. Try to show how you can push the private sector product So unilever was once our sponsor and we had a show that was set in a salon. Called shadow, All of unilevers hair products were used in this salon. They went to courts and used their repurposed furniture to produce their set. They both gained.

Cindy Narine Crazy Catholic
The company has been in existence for 15 years
They’ve done probably 30 productions over the years

Is every performance guided by a standard set of management rules?
Um yea basically

Chain of communication
I believe so we are kind of a more relaxed kind of company though but yea everybody knows who everybody is in the company.

Maintaining the structure within the company
They don’t do contract work. Once they come into the theatre we let them know what they expect. More of a verbal contract.

Works well for management
To communicate with the artist’s actors
Always try to be understanding people can’t always make rehearsals all the time and life happens Try not to be too flexible but we have to bend sometimes take for instance 2 of our actors that are in our next production Cinderella they are also in Carvalho’s production so we have to be able to work out schedules to accommodate them doing both shows.

Difficulties faced.
We hardly ever get sponsorship its really difficult to get sponsorship
Tardiness of the actors
Advertising is pretty expensive so we resort to what really works like fliers, word of mouth and social media.

Clear unified goal?
Not really everyone is kind of
The stakeholders involved are mostly family. It is a family company. Yes, we disagree on some things but yea basically we are on the same path. Because we are a family theatre we try to bring families together. We provide that opportunity to happen. We focus on the idea of togetherness. They have been told many times that kids grew up on their theatre. And people remember our theatre because they remember their parents bringing them and they create an entire memory. For them.

Qualities successful company
Let me let my husband answer that one’

Evaluations
Among ourselves yes the leadership. We record our plays then look at it to see where we can improve.

Has the company experienced growth over the years? How so?
What part has management played?
Grown tremendously
They started off as a smaller company called love and laughter. We had a lot of amateur actors then. Now what we do is we try to train the actors before they come into production. So in that aspect our acting has become better has improved. In other ways a lot of people now know about us. So we have now become a family name. so they have improved in that area as well.

Do you all have ongoing rehearsals whether or not there is a scheduled performance?
We have rehearsals for performances. This year we have about five performances and it takes us about 3 months to prepare one show. Right now we have 2 happening at the same time because we have one this weekend then one Easter weekend. So we have simultaneous rehearsals going on.

Private sector assistance
Sponsorship-
Government assistance
Provide the spaces for us at a more manageable cost extremely high costs to rent the spaces. Make the tech and everything in the spaces maybe for free or at a lesser cost. Subsidise things for them.