

# The technical rehearsals in the preparation of the official parade of samba schools in the Carioca Carnival: a contribution on performance management for the Engineering

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**Abstract** – Activities accomplished in organization of popular events are an opportunity to investigate attributes of reflexivity developed by interplay of technical knowledge, normally acquired in formal professions, with the typical knowledge developed by experience on the event genre being organized. This happens mainly when the subjectivity is widely required for accomplishment of aesthetic and emotional effects in the organizational project, and it percolates the acts of performance evaluation. This is the case of some performance management issues characterized in the organization of technical rehearsals, which are used as a management tool for preparation of the official parade of schools of samba in the Carioca Carnival. This article provides a description of performance management issues mapped from technical rehearsals performed in the Carioca Carnival of 2006. The main objective is to show how this type of research can enhance the actions of management, both for improvement of popular event organization itself, as well as for application in other types of organizational activities. It also intends to illustrate how the comprehension of performance meanings influence the limits of the processes of reflexivity applied for analysis and understanding of organizations, where many professionals of the engineering have a role to play.

**Key words** - Analysis of organization, Carioca Carnival, engineering education, technical rehearsals, performance management.

## INTRODUCTION

Although the figures produced by the Brazilian area of entertainment are quite significant, for example, it is calculated about 1% of the Gross National Product - GNP

(R\$ 193,7 billion in 2005), in Brazil, the organizational demands in this area are still a field of activities little explored under the perspective of academic technological studies. Particularly, for the city of Rio de Janeiro, the entertainment contributed with approximately 13% of GNP of the city (R\$ 3, 21 billion), and the Carioca Carnival is mentioned as the main event responsible by this amount, reflecting strongly in tourism and other areas [1]. Due to its accentuated organizational and professional development, the Carioca Carnival became a cultural product that derives several types of organizational activities, as, for instance, in the sectors of foods, clothing and beverage. Besides, it also mobilizes a wide infra-structure of support from the public and business sectors that transcends the national borders. Among the regular activities of the carnival, the official parades of the samba schools, divided in two groups, are now responsible for the generation of a significant number of jobs for local workers, specialized or not, signifying for many of them the main annual source of income. It is considered that about 500 thousand temporary workstations are generated in the months that precede the carnival (data supplied by the state secretary of tourism of Rio de Janeiro).

Most of the workforce of collaborators, hired or voluntary, is allocated by the own carnival associations, to perform several types of activities combining "ordinary" work within the preparation of artistic effects, in which "imagined" special characteristics of aesthetic and emotional perceptions are the main expected "technical requirement" to be reached. For example, many engineers, and other professionals, participate in projects and production of allegoric trucks, stage, design of special effects, sound and image, organization of rehearsals, marketing, security, and so on. They become professionals that use their technical and artistic talents as co-responsible by the production of designed performances strategically planned by the

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associations looking at a wider context of interactions that is reproduced every year, but is unique during and after the accomplishment of the carnival.

This article is based on some results of a research developed for elaboration of a master's degree dissertation in technology, in which the events denominated "technical rehearsals", used as a management tool for performance improvement of schools of samba, assumed the main focus of investigation in the preparation of the Special Group of Rio de Janeiro for participation in the official parade of the Carioca Carnival of 2006. It provides a description of a performance management issues mapped from those technical rehearsals. The main objective is to show how this type of research can enhance the actions of management, both for improvement of popular event organization itself, as well as for application in other types of organizational activities. It also intends to illustrate how the comprehension of performance` meanings influence the limits of the processes of reflexivity applied for analysis and understanding of organizations, where many professionals of the engineering have a role to play.

#### ACADEMIC SCENARY

In Brazil, the production of cultural events is still a field of activities little explored under the perspective of technological studies. However, some academic groups announced their interest to produce multidisciplinary researches, with an epistemological perspective thoroughly identified with areas of the Production Engineering. This is the case of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, where there is a research group linked to the Course of Production Engineering that is working in some areas of entertainment. They have promoted an annual congress, seminars and reached other important results on the subject. Another research group belongs to the Papal Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro that has been financing researches on the music's supply chain, through its Instituto Gênese.

Concerned to Federal Center of Technological Education Celso Suckov da Fonseca (CEFET/RJ), where this article comes from, it possesses a research group linked to the Course of Master's degree in Technology with interest in the study of performance in several types of organizations, among them the production of cultural events. In CEFET/RJ, the researches developed on production of cultural events have been concentrated, as general line, in the accomplishment of analysis of organizations seeking to identify the techniques of performance management that are applied to different organizational processes and in the manners as the actors behave in the collaborative work. The emphasis is directed to the reception of the plurality of meanings that the performance concept can express as a driver in the representations of these processes. The larger objective is the modeling of the organization's actions of the events and the development of evaluation instruments based on the knowledge produced. Besides, in a wider scope, the analysis accomplished in several organizations also seek to identify new requirements of professional formation and technological scientific knowledge necessary to the organization of the contemporary work, feeding back the

pedagogic proposals for application in Technological Education.

#### CONSIDERATION ON THE TERM PERFORMANCE

According to Richard Schechner,

"in business, sports, and sex, `to perform` is to do something up to a standard – to succeed, to excel. In the arts, `to perform` is to put on a show, a play, a dance, a concert. In everyday life, `to perform` is to show off, go to extremes, to underline an action for those who are watching". [2].

The author also explains that

"`to perform` can be understood in relation to: 'Being' ... existence itself...; 'Doing'... the activity of all that exists ...; 'Showing doing' ... performing ...; 'Explain showing doing' ... the work of performance studies".

With this representation of "to perform" the author intends to show us that the term performance has multiple meanings, and "anything at all can be studied "as" performance. But this does not imply to conceiving performance studies, as an academic theme, dispensing theoretical treatment.

Schechner [2] also classify the carnival as a gender of cultural performance in which there happen artistic manifestations, games and other forms of social interaction "sanctioned" usually in other occasions. With this classification, the author worried in separating the genres of cultural performance of the other types of performance that happen in the ordinary work, once they are offered in places different and as complementary activities to those of the daily routine. However, the author calls the attention for the difficulty that the modern lifestyle brought to separate the genres of productive performance of those which are supposed to be not productive. Not only the modern companies are using artistic activities, rituals and management techniques of the cultural genres, in order to reach their objectives of businesses, but those genres supposed to be not productive are using performance resources of the productive work in their accomplishments. So there is a concrete fact that with the transformation of the carnival in merchandise the approximation of the models of management of both genres of performance is more realistic.

Finally, [2] highlights that "in the twenty-first century, people as never before live by means of performance". The observer should be attentive for the fact that the "actors" are using dramaturgical strategies deliberately for us to reach their objectives. Only in the context of the actions is possible to interpret and to separate some types of meanings of performances. However, to accomplish this procedure with success, it is necessary to be open to all of the significance possibilities and characterization of the construction.

In an opposite position, as a general mark, the predominant vision of the performance in ordinary management reduces the concept to a limited view of results of success or failure, defined by comparison with a preconceived pattern of decision that is tailored to support the evaluation of products, processes and people, through quantitative or qualitative indicators. Usually this framework reproduces a systemic perspective of idealization of the reality, elaborated under strong influence of the instrumental

rationality by the planners and passed to the appraisers for application. This is an inheritance of the modern epistemology, developed under a strong influence of the positivism.

However the reality of the facts and interactions are never fully coincident with their idealization and very less systematized in several aspects.

If we propose ourselves to do more detailed evaluations of performance in analysis of organization, we will always see meanings no foreseen influencing the performance idealized by rational management models, and also the insufficiency of the systemic thought. The aesthetic accomplishments and the emotional manifestations are in this significant category, no matter how much someone tries to force to the opposite.

Our objective is to make observations of cultural events taking into account their characteristics of reproduction of foreseen meanings (made visible by calculations a priori) simultaneously with the production of unforeseen meanings only possible of to be captured in the flow of the actions. The first form concerns the recognition of attributes planned for the performance, and the second to a potential of manifestation of expressive occurrences invading the events in opposition to a finished vision (idealized) of the same. The attention to that type of simultaneous interaction of meanings of the two perspectives of observation of the reality is what is intended for transformation of the performance concept in a support operator to the reflexivity.

In formal terms, the epistemology to conceiving performance is *as* a social construction that happens in the interplay of two perspectives of conception of reality:

- (i) The *modern perspective*, in the which performance answers to a reference pattern previously established, representing a "secondary experience", once the idealizations were created previously and the accomplished actions are just recovered from a previous script [3, 4] and,
- (ii) In the *post-structuralist perspective*, in which the performance is a "primary experience" of significance and the accomplished actions are answers to the course peculiar of the events, built during the presentation [3, 4].

Defined this way, the performance conception can be applied as a support operator for reflexivity in analysis of organizations that excel several views of meaning's interpretation [3, 4].

#### **THE PATTERN OF DECISION APPLIED TO EVALUATION OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN THE OFFICIAL PARADE**

The evaluation of all samba school during the official parade is accomplished through a set of criteria very influenced by the ordinary performance appraisal model, borrowed from management, although it seeks to cover the whole net of meanings produced during the parade of the samba schools. The criteria must contemplate on one hand the technical aspect and on the other hand the aesthetics and emotions of the artistic performances, and each one of the proposed requirements comprise both dimensions, once in an artistic spectacle, for common people is very hard to make their separation. However, for the managers of carnival there

are distinctions among them, because some requirements are seen as of the technical order and others as purely aesthetic. The only one, in the managers' evaluation, that conjugates both dimensions, is the criterion named "Grouping."

The set of evaluation criteria for the official parade refer to the requirements of: 1. Allegories and adornment; 2. Plot; 3. Fantasy; 4. Commission of Front; 5. Battery; 6. Samba-plot; 7. Harmony; 8. Master of ceremonies and standard-bearer; 9. Evolution; 10. Grouping.

According to the managers, the first four requirements are considered thoroughly aesthetic, and the five subsequent, technical. Due to the complexity that involves the certified appraisal, the "organizational project" rehearsed by the schools of samba, and the expectations of results of performance that they have to reach, are very dependent on the way that the managers communicate and guide their organization strategies, while looking for to the reaching of the maximum notes in all of the appraised requirements, besides the dependence of the potentials of answers identified in the actors body performing in the parade. The notes may vary from 0 to 10, but at the end almost all of them are very close to 10.

#### **THE ORIGIN OF THE TECHNICAL REHEARSAL**

One of the consequences of the modernization process that the samba schools passed in the decade of 90 was to accentuate the integration of technologies coming from the manufacturing industry and ordinary management with the technology accumulated before by the carnival associations. As result of this assimilation of knowledge, innovative work methods appeared, developed by the organizers in an odd way, however, with a common purpose: the improvement of the performance management.

In this effort, the technical rehearsal - so denominated by the organizers - appeared as an important tool for performance management. It was spontaneously created for improvement of some processes. Important parts of a parade, as the masters of ceremonies, the choreography of the front commission and the Carnival dancers' individual choreography were pioneering in using this tool to improve their performance in the avenue.

In the months that precede the carnival, the blocks of the samba schools transform in spaces destined to the simulation and the repetition of movements, rehearsed exhaustively. Not only the parts already mentioned enter in this dance in circles of the technical rehearsals, but almost the whole school starts to frequent the block, where small adjustments are accomplished seeking to the total control of the school in the day of the official parade.

In the technical rehearsals, technique, aesthetic and the emotion are balanced the whole time by the organizers, being evaluated as similar as possible with the rules applied to the appraisal of official parade.

#### **THE METHODOLOGY OF ANALYSIS OF THE TECHNICAL REHEARSALS**

What follows, for the accomplishment of the analysis of the organizations of the technical rehearsals, has as core the conceptualization of performance as an operator support to reflexivity described in previous section.

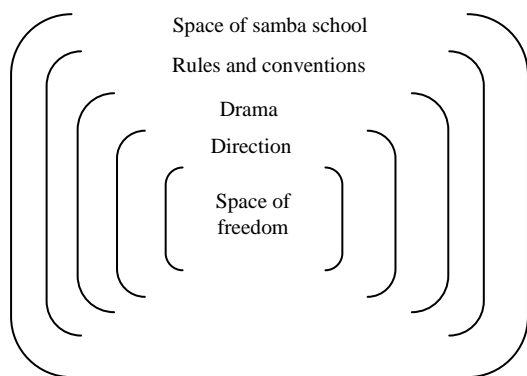


Figure 1

Besides the operator, the research also used two schemes for framing of facts and interactions (involving aesthetic and emotional accomplishments) observed during the events accomplishment. These schemes were necessary to provide a pathway to organize information for reporting alternative to the tradition of functionalism and systemic representation.

The first scheme, represented in the Figure 1, presents the model of observation of actions, adapted from [2-3], to the model of organization of the rehearsals. The second scheme, presented in the Figure 2, details the elements of the dramaturgical action, developed by John O'Toole, to be applied in the education context [5].

According to both schemes, every action happens inside any physical space that is responsible for the favorable scenery for their development. Rules and conventions, drama, direction, space of freedom orientate the logical and aesthetical-emotional lines of the procedures and evaluations that will take to the action. A real and a fictional drama settles down in the center of this articulation, at the end are the main flux of interactions that will answer for the whole complex net of sought meanings [6].

### THE COMPLEXITY INVOLVED IN THE TECHNICAL REHEARSALS

The technical rehearsals are events destined to observe, to detect problems and to find formulas to eliminate them. The evaluations of the resultant performances are obtained through different frames of observation and they can also have different focuses: they can come from the optimization of the movements and times carried out by a certain line, as well as the "measurement" of the emotion wakened up by a rhythm elaborated by the battery of the school especially for the parade and other effects. The rehearsals contain this complexity and, although, at a first glance it seems an articulation fragmented in specific observations for each of its frames, in practice the "unit" that is looked for is an only movement that contemplates the whole event; where each one of the dimensions is captured by the audience and revisited in an unique evaluation of every presented

performance. This same one objective repeats in the day of the official parade.

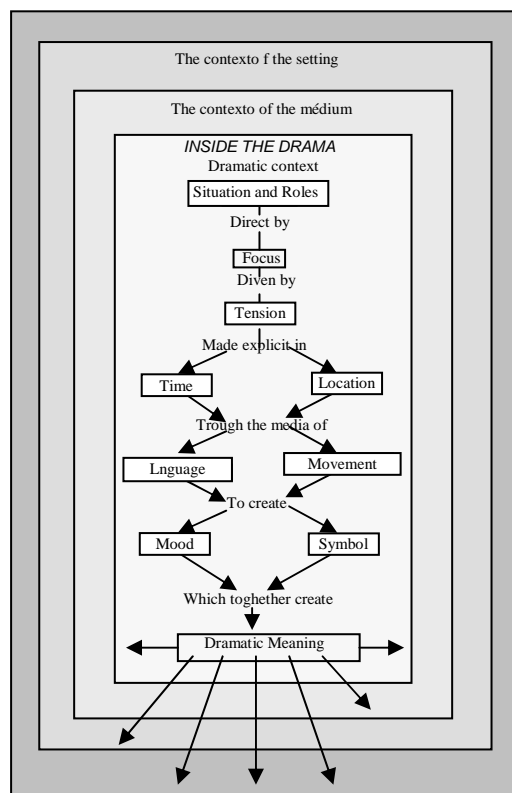


Figure 2

These rehearsals are not expression of an exaggerating attempt of reaching the maximum merit. In other words, they don't represent an intention of subduing the improvisation, such important action in the artistic manifestations. They are technically developed by the leaders of the associations that have their origin in the attempt of organizing the time-space, so that the movements can be foreseen and fitting according to the exposed needs in the parade's project.

The experienced simulations in the technical rehearsals possess the particularity never reach the ideal point, because the artistic performance doesn't understand perfection, only improvement. At a specific moment, the rehearsals are consider finished, just because the period destined to them reached the end, but, never because it was considered that the ideal was reached.

Differently of the simulations that constitute scientific experiments, that possess a clear and certain objective to be reached, the technical rehearsals of the schools of samba are just felt and modified, usually, according to the professional feeling. However, each time this happens, a text is staged, because in the conjuncture of the rehearsals there is not only the intention of trying parts of the intended parade, there are also interactions of several social groups, an organizational history that provided unique procedures, and interference of the technique in different levels. Human dialogue is the great difference in interactions and must be improved in support for all types of performance communication, "as middle for the obtaining of agreement" in interactive work "established in the horizon of the technical rationality" and simultaneously in the "reality

marked by the uncertainty, instability and non-linear changes" [7], that characterize cultural performances arisen in the world of life. .

#### **A READING OF TECHNICAL REHEARSALS THROUGH PERFORMANCE**

The technical rehearsals are always coordinated by the role of the Director's of Carnival. That leader, in most of the associations, possesses authority to command all of the relative organizational processes to the development of the artistic performance intended for the official parade. The role carried out by him has been essential to the schools and, it has been affecting directly in the results obtained in the final evaluation (Official Judgment). That leader's role appeared with the process of modernization of the carnival associations and, nowadays, just few schools opt to accomplish that work through a carnival commission.

Most of the rehearsals are made with parts considered strategic of the parade that are usually: battery, community line, children's line, baianas' line, master of ceremonies and standard-bearer and Carnival dancers' line. Front commission counts with the element surprise and, therefore, it is always rehearsed alone and just a quite reduced number of leaders have access to the choreography before the official parade.

The enumerated parts are recognized by the organizers as reference for the organization of other components, serving as guide for these in the day of the official parade. There is a consensus among the leaders that the community's line, children's line, Carnival dancers and baianas' line are able to driving the remaining of the association, once they are composed, in their majority, for people of the community, been born and created inside of the carnival universe. So doing, the responsible for the management of the rehearsals understand that once these groups are well trained, they are sufficient to address the remaining of the components to the drawn objective.

The rehearsal with the battery is used as motivation element of every performance, but it is also to simulate the move back of the same in the box (denomination of the space destined to the battery in the exhibition area), being armed an equivalent scenery to the real so that this movement can be workout. In this articulation, besides the move back of the battery, it is also rehearsed the evolution of the components in order to cover quickly the space left by the retreat of the battery towards the box.

In general, the schools accomplish their technical rehearsals in their blocks, demarcating an area that approaches the real dimensions found at the official stage of the samba (Sambódromo). Usually, the couple of master of ceremonies and standard-bearer drive the rehearsal, opening the space and getting the attention of the audience for the seriousness and the need of the procedure. The supervisors of harmony (they are professional that aid the work of the Director of Harmony) arrange the lines in the certain order established by the Director of Carnival, usually inserting the battery in the middle of the frame. Usually the rehearsals are driven without interruptions; however, they can happen since a disagreed element is noticed. What is more frequent is the Director of Carnival to accomplish an abbreviation

explanation on what it will happen, enumerating the details that he wants to perfect or emphasizing the mistakes committed in the previous rehearsal. Moreover, he is driven by all the mentioned directors, being the identified mistakes and corrected during the same, in elapsing of the action, without stoppages, besides being also motivated and collected of the components self-confidence and compatible animation with idealized them for the official parade.

The first glance reveals a rehearsal as a reconnaissance for both - components and leaders - of what will be presented in the official parade. Further observations evidence methodological aspects and more, effective improvement of intended artistic performance.

In spite of these verifications, there was still a point to be investigated: the places for rehearsals realization and official parade were quite different. What is the secret to success?

The secret was revealed through two ways: the motivation developed by the leaders, and the exercise of abstraction accomplished mainly by the components. According to O'Toole [5], the space destined to the drama is fundamental for the objective of the performance. All elements composing the space are necessary as they provide the appropriate mood to the accomplishment of the show, reaching the audience and preparing people for what will be staged. In the rehearsals accomplished in the blocks, this doesn't exist. However their components assimilate that the scenery is similar to that they will meet in the Sambódromo, that they are wearing a costume, and that, therefore, the performance being carried out will have to be equivalent to that Official one.

O'Toole [5] identifies in this staging gender the ability of actors and director to distract the audience not to "notice where it is". The piece script must be rewritten so that the physical aspects not compatible with the dramatization can be eliminated or softened. This is a fundamental point to rehearsals cases, where the directors' script must be totally adapted and procedures adopted to total compatibility, however not less severe, to the place where official parade will be staged. This jump from the real context to another fictional is fundamental for rehearsals success, once it is in the fiction that will be played the part of interest to the procedure. Only when the actors involved get used to transit between these contexts, the rehearsal acquires the necessary form to the simulation.

The rehearsal is conducted along this relational axis and, at the end; it is customary the Director of Carnival to accomplish a small speech pointing identified difficulties. In a general way, the issues come much more from affective perceptions than operational logic of the rehearsal. In other words, the interventions are much more in the sense of calling attention regarding the excitement of the components or to the rhythm of the battery rather than to lines evolution along the destined spaces. The movements' rationalization related to event aesthetics causes less frequently adjustments.

In essence, the main evaluation upon which the majority of project scope find support are organizer's and mainly Director's aesthetic perceptions regarding components motivations and evolution to a point of clearly capturing the

emotion in the script and incorporating the personally assigned role.

### THE FIELD OF THE INTERACTIONS AND REFLEXIVITY

The technical rehearsal event is a quite appropriate research object to cooperate with the development of the reflexivity process. In its context of realization there happen wide differences of tastes and evaluations, originating from the comparison between objectivity and subjectivity; instrumental rationality and aesthetic-expressive rationality and other forms of duality. But, in spite of the apparent impossibility of interaction of these dimensions, what happens is exactly the opposite, because it is absolutely necessary.

However, the interaction is produced, in a natural and spontaneous way through the reflective processes, being stimulated by the own dimensions that compose the event.

The work methodology used by the Directors of Carnival in the conduction of the technical rehearsals has as anchor the process of reflexivity, once the comparative parameters are established in subjective level.

The simulated rational part in the rehearsals (the repeated movements made in a certain time and inside of a space) quickly is reached and with relative perfection. There is in favor of that dimension the repetition, so much the one that happens in the own rehearsals as that one in the carnival parade. In other words, although always exist new elements introduced in the parades, a significant part of the event always repeats. This can be observed with clarity when the technical rehearsals are just to the adaptation of the number of performers (entrance of the lines in the avenue) to the time made available for the execution (80min.). That pattern always repeats, once the relationship is maintained.

However, a carnival parade is composed by an aesthetic side very developed, where the staging of a drama is feeding and gives the tone of the performance. Without that dimension enhanced in the exhibition, the event loses in meanings and it stops of existing, once it is indispensable to the own nature and essence. In this way, in the conduction of the technical rehearsals, where the rational dimension should join the aesthetic dimension of the show, the evaluation of the Carnival Directors pass simultaneously for both, some times contemplating one, other times the other and, most of the time, looking for to contemplate them in the same movement.

The work methodology used in these events is quite complex, because it looks for to understand in an only analysis the dimensions of performance seemingly in competition. However, in the project of the parade of a carnival association, dialectically, technique and aesthetics are shown complementary, and they should be worked under this optics. The practice, developed by the Directors of Carnival in a tacit way, informs that it is possible this interaction, although it is necessary to negotiate the partial results obtained during the rehearsals the whole time.

### FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The associations are inserted in an organizational context that can be used as example for contemporaneous organizations in general. They share an organizational universe where stability was affected by modernity and companies have more and more to face situations never met before. Not only in the entertainment area, have interactive methodologies been successfully developed to accomplish modern projects with growing complexity.

The work developed during the period destined to the rehearsals in schools of sambas is an evidence of how to accomplish modern paradigm interactions with post-modern resources. The leaders accomplish this work in a natural way, without, any explicit scientific knowledge as support. However, due to the expansion of the event and the magnitude reached now, some associations count with specialized professionals graduated in formal education that can appropriate academic knowledge to the improvement of Carnival performance.

The Carnival leaders empirically manage coexisting knowledge from different natures and teach the organizational and academic worlds a clear lesson of perception, reflexivity and great capacity to absorb meanings captured through different glances.

The paradigm of the post-modernity, which exalts the complexity and the coexistence of several tendencies, is already very well interpreted and assimilated by the leaders of the schools. Those organizations, looking like, at first, as simple organizations, show to the organizational universe that there is no larger complexity than those of a constant negotiation of competitive dimensions. However, they also show that the interplay of meanings and the interaction are possible, and more, that these are necessary in presence of the challenges of the modernity.

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