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# Strategic Challenges in Organizing Educational Commemorations: Insights from the 50th Anniversary of the 25th April Revolution in Portugal



**Abstract:** - This study focuses on the organization of the 50th anniversary commemorations of the 25<sup>th</sup> April Revolution in Portugal, specifically examining all events held at a higher education institution. The central challenge lies in designing a cultural program and addressing the strategic complexities associated with planning and executing these celebrations. Employing a mixed methods approach, the research combines document analysis, direct observation, and an analysis of visual communication materials to provide a comprehensive understanding of the organizational framework and strategies employed.

Key findings include insights into event coordination, stakeholder involvement, and resource allocation. The study also delves into the narrative and historical significance of the 25<sup>th</sup> April Revolution. Successful commemoration within an educational context necessitates meticulous planning, robust stakeholder engagement, and innovative visual communication techniques. This research contributes valuable insights for organizing large-scale commemorative events and underscores the essential role of strategic communication in enhancing overall impact and visibility during such celebrations.

**Keywords:** 25<sup>th</sup> of April Revolution, Educational Events, Freedom, Higher Education, Portugal.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Background

The Revolution of 25 April 1974, known as the Carnation Revolution, marked a crucial turning point in Portugal's history. It was the end of a 48-year dictatorship, which paved the way for democracy and various social and political reforms. The revolution is celebrated annually as a symbol of freedom and change, and its memory is essential to Portugal's national identity. During 2024, the commemorations are particularly relevant because the 50th anniversary of the Revolution is being celebrated.

The aim is to address the design of commemorations in a higher education institution aimed at a wide audience such as undergraduate and master's students, academic staff members as well as the community in general.

Commemorations in an educational context play a fundamental role in preserving historical memory. They help keep the memory of significant events alive and educate new generations about their impact and importance. Through such commemorations, students can better understand their history, develop a sense of identity and citizenship, and recognise the importance of the democratic values and human rights that the revolution promoted.

As Cruzeiro says, the commemorative phenomenon, despite belonging to the vast and complex field of collective memory, adds to its common characteristics' others of such importance that they often make it autonomous in relation to manifestations of the same constellation (Cruzeiro, 2014).

### B. Research Problem

Organising a commemorative event in a large-scale academic context, such as the 50th anniversary of the 25 April Revolution, presents several strategic challenges. These challenges can include logistical issues, such as event coordination and resource mobilisation, as well as pedagogical concerns about how to effectively convey the historical significance of the revolution to new generations.

Another relevant challenge, on which this article focuses, is creating a programme of activities that is both diverse and attractive to the audience. This context must be adapted to the needs and interests of today's students, using approaches that discuss current problems and not just facts based on the past. However, a critical reflection on the past seemed relevant to us, addressing not only the positive aspects of the revolution but also its challenges and the lessons that can be applied in the present.

To realise these objectives, a strong commitment was made to the event's visual identity.

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### C. Objectives

The main aim of this article is to explore the specific challenges faced during the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the 25 April Revolution at a higher education institution in Portugal. Through a detailed analysis of the planning and execution processes of these events, it aims to identify the main difficulties encountered and the strategies used to overcome them and ultimately arrive at a cohesive and attractive final programme.

Furthermore, this study aims to provide practical contributions and recommendations for the organisation of future commemorations in an academic context. Based on the experience gained in the case study, it will be possible to develop more effective and efficient approaches for similar events in the future.

With this structure, the article aims not only to analyse the challenges faced in commemorating the 50th anniversary of the 25 April Revolution, but also to contribute to the development of more effective practices in organising events in an academic context that preserve and celebrate historical memory.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Educational commemorations in an academic context

Educational commemorations have been the subject of several studies that emphasise their role in preserving historical memory and shaping cultural identity and citizenship awareness. The literature suggests that such commemorations offer unique opportunities for learning, where students can interact directly with history and gain a deeper understanding of the events and values that have shaped the society in which they live (Frost & Laing, 2013). In addition, such events can promote social cohesion and community participation, with future results in society, by involving multiple actors in a collective effort to celebrate and reflect on the past (Roeschley, 2019).

In the academic context, commemorations are seen as pedagogical tools that can enrich the curriculum and provide multidisciplinary learning experiences. Studies indicate that incorporating historical events into educational activities can improve students' understanding of the importance of historical events, contributing to better coexistence in society (Kromydas, 2017). Furthermore, the literature points out that successful commemorations are those that manage to balance celebration with a critical analysis of the past, encouraging students to question and reflect on the historical and contemporary implications of the events celebrated (Frost & Laing, 2013).

### B. Historical Context of the 25 April Revolution

The Revolution of 25 April 1974 is a significant milestone in Portuguese history, representing the end of almost half a century of dictatorship and the beginning of a period of profound democratic, social as well as economic transformations. Known as the Carnation Revolution, due to the soldiers' use of carnations as a symbol of peace, the revolution was notable for being relatively peaceful and for having broad popular support (Rezola, 2006).

The revolution resulted in the fall of the authoritarian Estado Novo regime and the establishment of a democracy that brought with it civil liberties, significant social reforms as well as the decolonisation of Portugal's overseas territories. The literature emphasises the importance of the 25 April Revolution as a catalytic event that redefined national identity and paved the way for Portugal's integration into the European Community (Sousa, 2000). Commemorating this event in educational contexts is crucial to ensuring that new generations understand the importance of democracy and human rights (Assmann, 2012).

## III. CASE STUDY: THE COMMEMORATIONS OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF 25 APRIL AT A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION IN PORTUGAL

### A. Planning the Commemoration Programme

The design of the programme for the commemorations of the 50th anniversary of the 25 April Revolution is a central element in ensuring that the event achieves its commemorative and learning objectives. A well-structured programme should include a variety of activities that address different aspects of the revolution, involve diverse audiences and use multiple approaches to communication.

As the aim was to go beyond the traditional discussion of the historical and political event, the approach was broadened to include the arts, literature and education, as well as other forms of expression that were influenced by freedom in Portugal.

The programme, which ran throughout April, was divided into lectures, coffee & talk, exhibitions, workshops, poetry and music.

- *Lectures*

Two lectures were organized on different days. One was on the subject of “Another look at freedom of expression”, where the speakers, a professor of law and a designer, discussed copyright protection and posters during the revolution, respectively. The massive use and dissemination of posters was unprecedented in Portugal until that time. Most posters were produced in the context of cultural and civic dynamization campaigns (Roque, 2019). According to Rodrigues (2001), These posters mainly emphasised the aesthetic function of the poster, to the detriment of its primary function, which is to communicate.

Another lecture was given by a member of the Portuguese Parliament, on the subject of “Freedom, yesterday and today”.

- *Coffee & Talk*

Three coffee & talk sessions were organised with different personalities from society. The aim was to have a frank and open discussion, in an informal setting, on topics that promote freedom. The first debate was between an actor and artist and a professor of labour law. The second debate featured a journalist and a lawyer. The third debate was between a former minister and a former member of the Portuguese parliament.

- *Exhibitions*

Freedom of expression manifested through art took place in two distinct moments. On the one hand, a sculpture called “Forms of Freedom” was unveiled at the opening session, as a living testimony to the history and struggle for freedom in Portugal. On the other hand, there was a collective exhibition of the posters that had been produced as part of the workshop “Music and the posters of April”.

- *Workshops*

The entire academic community had the opportunity to take part in a free collective painting workshop of a canvas evoking the values of April, i.e., freedom, equality and democracy. The second workshop was led by a graphic designer in which participants were able to create their own posters with phrases referring to the intervention music of the Carnation Revolution period. Intervention music is the concept most generally used to describe one of the fields of Portuguese popular music characterised by the use of poetry and action music, associated with a specific period in Portuguese history centred on the April 1974 Revolution (Côrte-Real, 1996).

- *Poetry & music*

At the opening session of the celebrations, poetry was recited on the theme of freedom. Students, teachers and staff took part. The spirit of political protest was evident in the poems, some of which were later disseminated to music. (Côrte-Real, 1996).

Another important moment of artistic expression was a guitar and voice concert in which songs from the Portuguese revolutionary songbook were performed. These are songs associated with the political and cultural intervention movement in the period before and after the Revolution (Côrte-Real, 1996).

- *Distribution of carnations*

At all the events organised over the course of a month, carnations were handed out to participants as a symbol of the peaceful revolution that marked the transition from a dictatorial regime to a democratic one in Portugal on 25 April 1974.

*B. Visual identity of the event*

The focus on the event's visual identity was fundamental to creating a cohesive brand that would create memories for the commemorations of the 50th anniversary of the 25 April Revolution at a higher education institution. A well-designed visual identity helps to convey the values and importance of the event, as well as making it easier to recognise and promote the activities.

To develop the visual identity, the following elements were considered:

- Logo: The event logo should be a visually striking symbol that corresponds to the spirit of the revolution. The strength of the typographic elements was sought by using red, which refers to the flag of Portugal and the colour of the carnations that symbolise the revolution. A play on numbers was used between 50, 25 and the commemorative dates, as a way of highlighting the anniversary and at the same time serving as an informative element. This informative approach, especially for younger people, is emphasised by the reference to the dates 1974-2024.



Fig. 1 – Logo

- Promotional Materials: The visual identity was applied consistently to all promotional materials, namely invitations, posters, leaflets, banners and social media posts. Visual cohesion ensures that the event is easily recognisable and creates a unified experience for the audience.

It is worth highlighting the placement of a large outdoor screen with the logo, which enables effective communication with the public and identifies the venue. This is a communication strategy aimed at connecting the internal community with the external community.



Fig. 2 – Banner exterior

Two types of posters were produced: a generic one and a detailed one. The first is intended to arouse interest in the event and the second is for information purposes, detailing all the events on the programme.



Fig. 3 – Generic Poster



Fig. 4 – Detailed Poster

#### IV. CONCLUSION

This study presented the strategic challenges in organising the commemorations of the 50th anniversary of the 25 April Revolution in an academic context, through an analysis of the historical context, planning, commemorative programme and visual identity of the event. It started from the central theme that the 25 April Revolution is an extremely important event in the history of Portugal, and its commemoration would be a unique opportunity to preserve historical memory. The main challenges included coordinating logistics, creating content for the programme and attracting an audience interested in the event. The study highlights the need for an integrated approach between event planning and the execution of such commemorations to guarantee their educational and cultural impact.

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