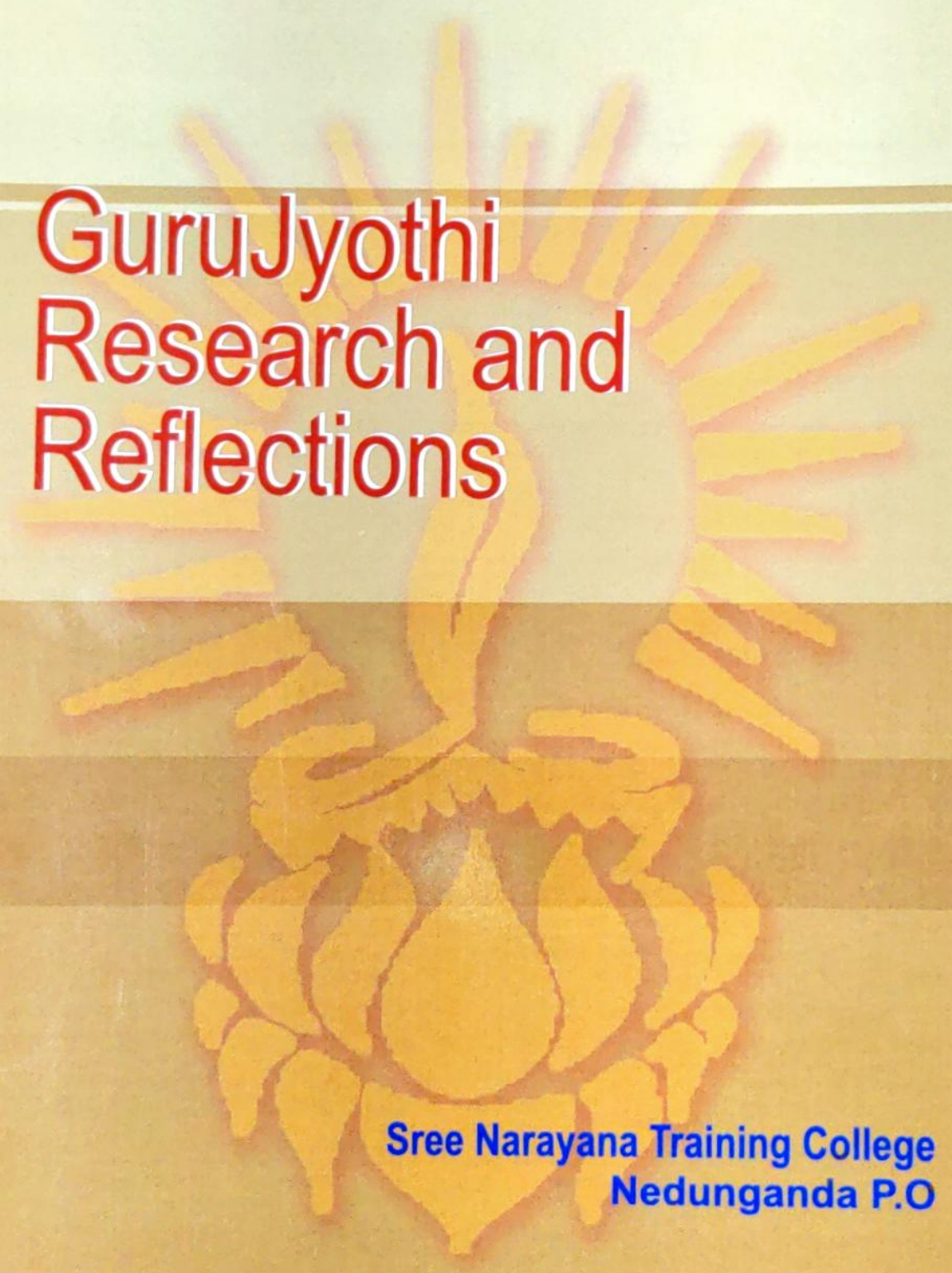


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CONTENTS

An Exploration on the Application of John Kotter's Eight-Step Process of Successful Change in Education Viji V. & Dr. Benedict K Y.	8
A Study on the Pro-Environmental Behaviour of Secondary School Teachers Lakshmi.S & Dr.Sam.V.Daniel	13
Awareness on Environmental Pollution in Higher Secondary School Students in Idukki District Rejithamol E.K & Dr. Maya S	17
Human Rights Awareness Among Tribal Women in Idukki District Princy Peter & Dr. Maya S.	22
Relationship Between Attitude Towards Science and Achievement in Environmental Chemistry on the Topic Ozone Layer Depletion Among Secondary School Students Shemeena Hussain & Dr.Maya S	26
Attitude of Science Teachers Towards inquiry Training Model Deepa. S	33
Inter Personal Intelligance, Intra Personal Intelligance and Positive Thinking of Secondary School Students in Kendriya Vidyalayas Vimal Kumar P.G.	39
Analysis of Academic Performance to Mental Stress and Social Status of College Female Athletes Divya S. R & Dr.K.BijuKumar	46
A Profile of Financial Management of Rural Families in Varkala Taluk Dr. Sheeba.P	50
Attitude of Secondary Level English Medium Students Towards Malayalam Anuja C.S & Dr. Malini P.M.	57

An Exploration on the Application of John Kotter's Eight-Step Process of Successful Change in Education

Viji V. & Dr. Benedict K Y.

Abstract

Education is to be made pertinent to the needs of the 21st century. It is natural that people face with radical changes in life. But the difference lies in how they tackle the situation by encountering effective ways to deal appropriately with problems and challenges. This involves appropriate emotional control, approval of the real world, plotting out an action plan, and ultimately adopting defensive methods to cope with future problems. This becomes possible only if they build in a sense of understanding of the situation and act smarter. When faced with a change from the regular stream, some people develop the ability to tackle the situation, while others do not. John Kotter's eight-step process of successful change envisages the hierarchical stages included in the process of effective problem-solving in organizations by coping up with the situation when we encounter a significant change in the existing system. This paper explores the impact of Kotter's steps when applied to the educational system. It navigates through the eight steps of successful change in the light of the current educational pattern, which requires a drastic change and renovation. The paper signifies that by employing these steps, the individuals facing the change acquire the capability to manage the circumstances with empathy for others, thereby inspiring and leading them. The investigator also created infographics on the biography of John Kotter as well as on the eight-step process of successful change.

KEYWORDS: Education, Change, Problem-solving, John Kotter's eight-step process of successful change, Educational system, Infographics.

Introduction

The present education system is disconnected from the real world. It fails to prepare children equipped to face the external world. The system gives emphasis to train children for rote- memorization and makes them excellent repeaters. The system

manufactures lazily trained and feebly motivated students, with limited job outlooks. For these students, success signifies earning money through any channels. This education is not capable of developing leadership qualities in students. It does not highlight nationalism or humanity, thereby moulding the new

generation who has very little or no value for our tradition and culture. It only coaches children as job searchers with low value patterns. This results in the shaping of a new generation of learners who are not equipped to face the hardships of life. They collapse and become emotionally unstable at failures and are not prepared to meet even a small change in the regular stream. In 1996, John Kotter, in his book 'Leading Change', explored the actions of individuals to transform their organizations. By pursuing the 8-Step Change Model defined by Dr. Kotter, organizations can prevent failure and handle the change in a skillful manner. By refining their ability to change, organizations can strengthen their likelihoods of success, both today and in the future, thereby coping up well in an ever-changing world. 'Our Iceberg is Melting' is a strong illustration of Kotter's Eight-Step Process of Successful Change charted in his book 'Leading Change'.

Statement of the Problem

An Exploration on the Application of John Kotter's Eight-Step Process of Successful Change in Education

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze the application of John Kotter's eight-step process of successful change to the educational scenario.
2. To create an infographics based on John Kotter's eight-step process of successful change.

Methodology

John Kotter's eight-step process of successful change envisages the hierarchical stages included in the process of effective problem-solving by coping up with the situation when we encounter a significant change in the

existing system. The eight steps for managing change, defined by Kotter, which we should follow if a change initiative in a system is to succeed, can be effectively applied to an educational platform. Accordingly, the steps can be described in the hierarchical order as follows:

Step 1: Create a Sense of Urgency

In any organization, a change can be initiated and effected only if there is a felt need in the whole system. A sense of urgency has to be developed around this need for change, which creates the trigger and accelerates the process. It is natural that people face with issues in life. But the difference lies in how they tackle the issue by encountering effective ways to deal appropriately with it. This becomes possible only if they build in a sense of understanding of the situation and act smarter. In order to bring about a favourable change, the individuals involved must be primarily informed of the goals and objectives of the change. They should identify its need, relevance and the potential impacts, examine various opportunities and develop future scenarios through productive brainstorming sessions.

Step 2: Pull Together the Guiding Team

Once the need for an urgent change is recognized, we have to assemble a group with the power and energy to lead and support a collaborative change effort, by putting a carefully selected group in charge of guiding the change. This may include educational experts, administrators, teachers, students, parents and other staff. The people have to be assured about the necessity of the change. This often takes strong leadership and visible

support from key people within the system. We have to ensure that there is a powerful group with leadership skills, credibility, communication skill, authority, analytical skills, and a sense of urgency for guiding the change.

Step 3: Develop the Change Vision and Strategy

The next step is to find a practical vision of a better future. The different concepts and solutions have to be meaningfully linked so as to frame an overall vision that people can grasp easily and remember. The outlined vision helps us to navigate the change effort and develop strategic enterprises to attain that vision. The variety of patterns of mental abilities is well recognized today, yet little has been done to develop sufficient conditions aimed at adapting teaching to this diversity. Instructional strategies and learning materials can be designed to provide options and flexibility for harmonizing students' particular patterns of abilities. Indeed, any strategy for change must match with the diverse factors affecting the education system, the interactions of its parts, and the complex interdependencies within it and with its environment. Schools need to make sure that they have the proper vision where all those issues are concerned. For this, it is essential to clarify how the future will be different from the past, and how you can make that future a reality. The vision should be simple and made positive so as to make more sense.

Step 4: Communicate for Understanding and Buy In

The vision is now to be communicated so that as many others as possible understand and accept the vision and the strategy. This communication of vision has to be done on a daily basis in making decisions and solving problems so as to remind people and keep it

fresh on everyone's minds. We should ensure whether our staff and students are really prepared for accepting the changes. A well-planned communication of the vision helps people feel positive about the change and lessen the impact of resistance. It also allows people involved in the change to become more committed to it. This gives them confidence that the change is real and critical, and that they will be given enough time and the appropriate training to learn how to use the change successfully. It also gives people guidelines so they know exactly what is expected of them and how to focus their efforts for maximum success, which can help them to feel part of the change process and bring eventual success.

Step 5: Empower Others to Act

An important step towards successful change is the creation of support, which can be done in two ways. This includes removal of the obstacles to change, change systems or structures that pose threats to the achievement of the vision, such as systems or ways of thinking that people have become accustomed to and offer tools so people can act according to the vision. We need to empower every person to take responsibility for his or her own decisions and the consequences. The initiatives of people have to be recognized and rewarded so as to maintain their motivation. We must ensure that the tools, resources and processes to take action are available, accessible and appropriate. We must thus remove as many barriers as possible so as to make the vision a reality.

Step 6: Produce Short-Term Wins

Short-term wins create some visible, unambiguous successes as soon as possible. These give people a chance to experience

directly and see evidence that the sacrifices and changes are worth it and that success is possible, which is more effective than verbal arguments. They also create the credibility needed to change existing systems, structures or policies that run counter to the long-term vision. So we must consistently produce, track, evaluate and celebrate volumes of small and large accomplishments – and correlate them to results. These short-term wins will help schools change their climates for the better and help us move forward. By implementing short-term wins that are clearly successful, visible and clearly related to the change effort, the guiding combinations maintain the momentum for change. The contributing people who help to meet the targets have to be rewarded.

Step 7: Don't Let Up

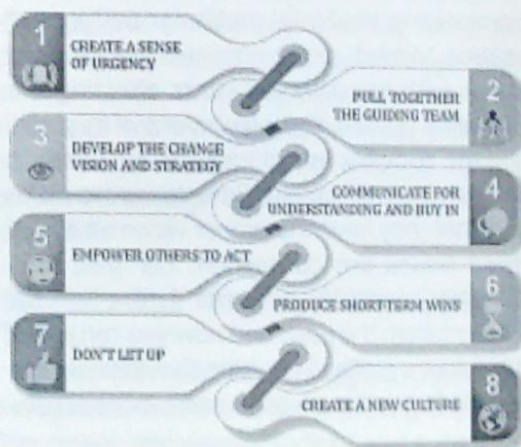
We should never let up until the new way of life is firmly established. It is easy to quit during our present situation. High stakes testing can suck the life out of the best classroom and the negative talk about education can as well but we cannot let up. We must keep moving forward to create positive school cultures. We have to work harder and faster after the first successes and be relentless with initiating change after change until the vision is a reality. Each success has to be considered as an opportunity to build on what went right and identify what we can improve.

Step 8: Create a New Culture

Finally, to make any change stick, it should become part of the soul of the system. The values behind our vision have to be visualized in routine work. It is a tough challenge to create a new culture as the perception of people is deeply rooted in their past. It also requires a

shift in our thinking about education. This new culture of learning can augment learning in nearly every facet of education and every stage of life and determine the ways in which the team makes decisions and solve problems. We have to hold on to the new ways of behaving, and make sure they succeed, until they become strong enough to replace old traditions. Changes would be affected only by rising above stubborn, hard-to-die traditions. We need to recreate our positive school cultures. We must articulate the connections between the new behaviours and awaited success, and develop the means to ensure leadership development and succession. We have to strive hard to ensure that the change is seen in every aspect of the system.

The infographics created based on John Kotter's eight-step process of successful change is shown in figure 2.



John Kotter's process of successful change

Conclusion

Our educational system is at risk. The present scenario demands an immediate and drastic change in the entire educational pattern.

It is definitely stressed and it is more important than ever to create the sense of urgency that the schools need to change. It is high time to implement effective success formulae in the classrooms, so as to bring about a paradigm shift in the 21st century education. We should craft and use a significant opportunity as a means for exciting people to sign up to change the existing educational system and help them to see the need for change and the importance of acting immediately. Learners should find clever means to handle changes and produce better results. For this, we need to recreate our positive school cultures. We must formulate the connections between the new actions and anticipated success, and develop the means to confirm leadership development. Learners can sustain their actions confidently only by improving their ability to change. Without the capability to adjust continuously, they cannot flourish in an ever-changing world. Thus we have to devise an effective instructional framework to equip the learners to adapt well to the changing scenario.

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