

Evaluation of the 25 January Revolution from the Perspective of Change Management

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Introduction

Although Many people broadly believed that Egyptians were no longer able to rebel or even protest and that Egyptian youth was completely absentminded to stay away from the worries of their country and everything related to mind and politics, the youth of Egypt has undeniably made one of the most significant Egyptian uprisings after 30 years of deadlock and frustration.

The 25 January Revolution publically unveiled the regime's political and economic corruption and guided the people to protest peacefully against a regime that marginalized, ignored and tried intentionally by all means to underestimate their magnificent potential values. Finally, Egyptians made use of their new communication media (social communication tools) to lead a democratic transformation process of a real change that can eventually fulfill a political, economic and social reform for bread, freedom and social justice.

Statement of the Problem

The revolution is not only a goal, but it is also a means that should ultimately lead to a national goal. Such national goal should be clearly represented in a political, social and economic progress in the Egyptian society. Moreover, the success of the revolution in achieving this goal depends mainly on the existence of good management as well as investing the energy of the youth. As a matter of fact, the current Egyptian situation shows that if the revolution has primarily targeted a radical change in the political, social and economic life of the Egyptian society, then this change would not have succeeded in achieving this goal. Consequently, the researcher believes that the main reason for this is the failure to follow the scientific method for management change.

This study is trying to discuss the most important reasons for the failure of this change through an evaluation of the 25 January Revolution from the perspective of change management using Kotter's (1996) 8-step change model.

Objectives of the Study

This research aims at

1. Shedding light on the causes of the 25 January Revolution.
2. Defining Kotter's 8-step process of leading change.
3. Evaluating the 25 January Revolution by Kotter's 8-step change model.
4. Understanding lessons from this experience.

Questions of the Study

The objectives of this study can be mostly achieved by answering the following questions:

1. What is the need for change, targeted by the 25 January Revolution?
2. Would a proper scientific method for change management be applied If the 25 January Revolution targeted a positive change,?
3. What are the lessons learned from this experience?

Research Premises

To answer the above questions, the study extensively tackles the following topics:

First: Causes and goals of the 25 January Revolution in Egypt

Second: Definition of Kotter's model for successful change and its steps as a model for evaluating the revolution

Third: Evaluation of the 25 January Revolution according to Kotter's model for successful change

The following are some details about the previous points:

First: Causes and goals of the 25 January Revolution in Egypt

Different causes related to political, economic and social conditions of the Egyptians' life, the researcher believes, were the real reasons which paved the road for the 25 January Revolution.

- **Emergency Law (Law No. 168 of 1958)**

This law has been in force since 1967 except for 18 months in abeyance in the early 1980s. According to this law, the authority of the police expanded, constitutional rights suspended and surveillance imposed.

The law widely restricted any non-governmental political activity such as the organization of demonstrations, unlicensed political organization and official ban on unregistered financial donations.
- **Cruelty of Many of the Egyptian Police**

This can be considered one of the main indirect causes of this revolution. Under the Emergency Law, Egyptian citizens suffered a lot of injustice and violation of their human rights represented in the way of arrest, jailing, killing and etc.
- **Hosni Mubarak's Presidency**

President Hosni Mubarak has ruled Egypt since 1981. His government came under severe criticism by the media and local non-governmental organizations. In fact, Mubarak's rule has a major impact on Egypt's economic and social deterioration as well as a significant decline in the level of education and health, high unemployment rates and the wide spread of crime all over the country.
- **Corruption and Poor Economic, Social and Political Conditions**

Transparency International, the global civil society organization that monitors and fights all types of corruption including political corruption, reported in 2010 that Egypt scores 98 out of 178 countries listed in its Corruption Perception Index.

By the end of 2010, about 40% of the population has been under the poverty line, i.e. the average individual depends on a national income equivalent to about 2 dollars a day and many of the population survive on subsidized goods.
- **Overpopulation and High Poverty Rates**

Statistics indicated that Egypt increases a child every 23 seconds representing 1.5 million a year. This huge rise forms a great pressure on Egypt's resources unless there is a wise government that can take advantage of this overpopulation. In addition, most Egyptians live near the banks of the river Nile, in an area of about 40,000 km (15,000 mile), the only agricultural land in Egypt.

Furthermore, this overpopulation has been marked with an economic deterioration resulted from the state's unsuccessful policies that didn't take advantage of the rise in the labor force. Accordingly, the Egyptian society divided only into 2 layers. The first layer is a minority (owns everything) representing about 2% of the people and the second one is a majority (owns nothing) representing about 80% of the people. This regime is known as an oligarchy regime, a regime in which the minority controls and monopolize the rights of the working people. It is also known as (monopoly capitalism) in which businessmen and investors try to take the helm of the country for their own good and control its institutions and authorities, being either legislative, executive or even judiciary.
- **People's Assembly Election**

The election of the people's Assembly was held just 2 months before the outbreak of the revolution. The ruling NDP won 97% of the council's seats without any real room for the opposition leaving people in frustration. This election was stigmatized as fake election since it contradicts with the impression of the real Egyptian street and violates Egyptian judiciary rights of supervising elections. Unfortunately, the regime shelved judiciary verdicts stating the illegality of some constituencies.
- **Bombing of the Saints Church in Alexandria**

The bombing of the Saints Church is a heinous terrorist attack took place in Alexandria amid Christmas celebration of Oriental churches. The first 20 minutes of

the new year witnessed 24 dead (including Muslims) and 97 wounded. In fact, this attack is the first of its kind in the history of Egypt.

- **Tunisian Popular Revolution (as part of the Arab Spring Movement)**

The popular revolution in Tunisia broke on December 18, 2010 (about 38 days before the 25 January Revolution in Egypt, aka Rage Revolution) to rebel against bad social, economic and political conditions and in solidarity with the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi

In less than a month, the revolution managed to depose the Tunisian President Ben Ali (who ruled the country for 23 years with an iron fist). In fact, the success of the Tunisian revolution illustrated that the strength of the Arab peoples lies in their demonstration and in moving out to the street and also shows that the army cannot turn out to be the regime's tool to suppress the people, but it is a force that supports its people. Unquestionably, this revolution gave a glimmer of hope to the Arab peoples to change their long-living regimes and to realize their aspirations.

- **Bouazizi Phenomenon in Egypt**

On January 18, 2011, a week earlier than the Egyptian revolution, four Egyptian citizens self-immolated themselves individually to protest against their bad living, economic and political conditions. Another citizen sew his mouth and set in front of the Journalists' Syndicate, demanding the resignation of the former Health Minister Hatem El-Gabaly as an example of self-immolated Mohamed Bouazizi, who sparked the revolution in Tunisia.

Second: Definition of Kotter's (1996) Model for Successful Change

After a thorough literature survey, the researcher trusts that Kotter's Model is the most relevant and most appropriate reference to guide the evaluation exercise of the Egyptian revolution. The model can better help to answer the questions of the study as it discusses the goals and causes for change, the implementation phase of such change, the cultural change and the appropriate conditions for sustainable change.

Kotter believes that successful change requires the existence of good change management which depends on 8 steps. These steps can be clearly shown as follows:

Step One: Creating Urgency

Creating a sense of urgency around the need for change through fighting against excessive self-satisfaction and through comparing successful models.

Step Two: Forming a Powerful Coalition

Assembling a group with enough power to lead the change. This coalition must have the right composition, a significant level of trust and a shared objective. The four qualities of an effective coalition are

- A. Position Power:** Enough key players should be on board so that those left out cannot block progress.
- B. Expertise:** All relevant points of view should be represented so that informed intelligent decisions can be made.
- C. Credibility:** The coalition should be seen and respected so that the coalition's pronouncements will be taken seriously by other employees.
- D. Leadership:** The coalition should have enough proven leaders to be able to drive the change process.

Step Three: Developing a Vision for Change

Creating and developing a vision for change (decentralization of education) and its expected goals to convey a clear picture of what the future will look like.

Step Four: Communicating the Change Vision

In this regard, the vision (message) should gain an understanding and commitment. So, in communicating this vision, there are things to keep in mind. In fact, the vision should use

- A. Images and mental models
- B. A variety of methods to contact

- C. Repetition
- D. Leadership by example
- E. Two-way communication

Step Five: Removing Obstacles

Although an individual could have the will to make the change (the application) successful, there might be barriers against this success. These barriers can be classified into

- A. Organizational (organizational structure- responsibilities- roles)
- B. Legislative
- C. Bureaucratic
- D. Technological (lack of skills)
- E. Resistant to change

Step Six: Generating Short-Term Wins

This is an important issue for creating the change success. This step can help in

- A. Reducing anxiety and distress associated with the change
- B. Maintaining and reinforcing the morale of all the parts involved
- C. Weakening skeptical views against the success of the change
- D. Supporting momentum

In this regard, we should not be confused between the wins (long-term) and the completion of the change process because they only serve as a milestone on the road and not the end of the road.

Step Seven: Consolidating gains and Producing More Change

A change can be effective if it

- A. Focuses on the vision
- B. Establishes priorities
- C. Has powerful leadership
- D. Limits excessive satisfaction of previous performance
- E. Shows a proof that the new change is working
- F. Works for continuous improvement

It should be noted that we should not rush to declare the success of the change until it turns out to be a transformation so as to be sure that everything will not be as in its previous status.

Step Eight: Anchoring New Approaches in the Culture for Sustained Change

As a culture change can take a long time to occur, we need to

- A. Demonstrate that the new way is superior to the old
- B. Persuade people who refuse to change
- C. Reinforce supporters of the change with incentives and rewards including promotions
- D. Involve all institutions of the society (media- educational- religious-national) to anchor the change as a part of the culture.

Third: Evaluating the 25 January Revolution by Kotter's 8-Step Change Model

Step One: Creating Urgency

This step has been significantly accomplished. It involves the cause of the revolution that created a sense of dissatisfaction with the society's political, economic and social conditions. It also includes the role played by communication media to inform the community about what is happening in other societies (their rights, standards of living and consumption patterns).

Step Two: Forming a Powerful Coalition

This stage didn't find its place on the ground. There was no leader to assemble the community and synchronically, a plethora of political movements emerged to the surface. The 6 of April movement and Kefaya movement were among these political movements side by side with a group of young people across the social network sites, Facebook and Twitter such as (We are all Khalid Said, Rasd Network and the Youth of Muslim Brotherhood).

Most of these movements lack leadership and the ability to assemble the community. In addition, they got support from barely credible and disreputable people which had a

negative impact on the community.

Step Three: Developing a Vision for Change

As matter of fact, there was a clear vision for a revolutionary change and that was apparently symbolized in the revolution's slogan "Bread, Freedom and Social Justice". Bread refers to the right of all people to eke out a living. Freedom refers to the freedom of speech and opposition. Social Justice refers to the right of having a social-economic system that can work on reducing the large economic discrepancies between the different layers of the community. Actually, pro-revolution people shouted this slogan reflecting the existence of a clear vision for all people.

Step Four: Communicating the Change Vision

This step has been adequately crowned with success. Communication technology played a significant role in calling for the revolution especially Facebook and Twitter. Political activists made use of such social communication networks to communicate with each other so as to share and disseminate their ideas.

On January 25, the Egyptian Police Day, there was a call for a huge demonstration. The choice of this day has a great effect in terms of message and meaning. As for the message, it was particularly guided to the ministry of interior by protesting against its oppression methods. The media participated in communicating this message through news bulletins, reports, political talk shows and soup operas. As for the meaning, it finally turned into a revolution that most of the youth and all sects of the Egyptian society took part in it.

Step Five: Removing Obstacles

The achievement of this step didn't find its path to life and many change barriers were not tackled scientifically such as

1. Laws and regularities that hold back people's ability to practice democracy in all the walks of life.
2. Regulatory culture of institutions as well as change-unsupportive society culture.
3. Unawareness of the concept of democracy and the misunderstanding between some concepts and negative practices (chaos).
4. Fear of unknown led many people to accept the status quo.
5. Lack of capacities to meet the requirements of change (development, advancement and the rise of living standards)
6. Resistance made by those who have already made gains (material and moral) in the pre-revolution era so as not to lose gains.
7. Struggle for power by political movements who didn't pay attention to the goals of the revolution.

Step Six: Generating Short-Term Wins

This step hasn't been achieved. The 25 January Revolution didn't yield any short-term wins for Egyptians as a reward for their patience and sacrifice to achieve the vision of the revolution and to weaken all skeptical views. On the contrary, economic, social and environmental conditions apparently deteriorated with security turmoil resulting in problems and suffering.

This situation frustrated millions of Egyptians to the extent that many of the pre-revolution citizens pin their hope on the return of the clock back to the pre-revolution era.

Step Seven: Consolidating gains and Producing More Change

This step has not been achieved because the following procedures were taken consecutively as follows:

1. Constitutional changes
2. Parliamentary election
3. Presidential election
4. New constitution drafting

As these steps were not properly arranged, many problems contributed to letdown the achievement of the revolution's goals.

It was better to arrange the previous procedures according to the following

consecutive order:

1. New constitution Drafting
2. Parliamentary election
3. Presidential election

In the wake of the step-down of the former President Hosni Mubarak, pro-revolution citizens rushed into celebrating the success of the revolution assuming that they won and accomplished what they desired although the vision and dream of the revolution (Bread- Freedom- Social justice) have not crowned with success yet. As a result, there were a laxity of determination and a decline of many political movements and the disintegration of its bonds.

Step Eight: Anchoring New Approaches in the Culture for Sustained Change

This step has not been crowned with success yet. The concept of diversity and the acceptance of the other and his/her opinion are far away from the Egyptian culture. Besides, many citizens conceptualize that democracy means absolute freedom and non-compliance, which led to the occurrence of factional strife and more chaos. In addition, most of correction attempts such as fighting corruption in traffic, health and environment fields failed due to the practice of the old exercises as a reflection of anti-change societal culture.

To conclude, from the above-mentioned, the researcher can make a note of a number of success and failure associated to the 25 January Revolution in Egypt. According to Kotter's Model, the Egyptian revolution has been succeeded in significantly highlighting the urgency for change. Moreover, there was a clear vision for a revolutionary change symbolized in the revolution's slogan "Bread, Freedom and Social Justice". Besides, there was a success in communicating the change's vision. Nevertheless, the 25 January Revolution failed in forming a powerful coalition to lead such change; change barriers were not tackled in a scientific method. In fact, the 25 January Revolution didn't yield any short-term wins for Egyptians, didn't consolidate gains or produce more change and didn't anchor new approaches in the Egyptian culture for a sustained change.

Learned Lessons:

Although there was a need for a clear vision change, there are some steps that should have been taken into account. These steps are

1. Forming a powerful change-leading coalition. The absence of such coalition led the revolution to have unfinished goals and to aggravate conflicts between the different political parties.
2. Removing obstacles that accompany any successful change, restrict its success and block the chances of its success (a situation that those in charge of the revolution didn't have).
3. Gaining short-term wins by the revolution's transitional government to reinforce people's will, to prove that the future is going for the better and to weaken skeptical views against the success of the revolution.
4. Building change on consistent interim steps to protect the change so as not to look like a fragile baseless towering building that might collapse from a minor vibration.
5. Rushing not into declaring the success of the revolution so as to prevent the laxity of rebels' determination and the return of the old status quo.
6. Absorbing change as a part of the society culture by modifying the beliefs, principles and values that enhance such change so as to ensure the sustainability of change and stability.

Recommendations:

The 25 January Revolution is a very courageous initiative en route for rising up the Egyptian society. Since the 25 January Revolution has primarily aimed at a radical change in all aspects of the Egyptian society, there must be a proper scientific method that can appropriately manage this new change and fulfill both the success and the sustainability of its goals.

According to the results of this study and the application of Kotter's 8-step change model, the study recommends the following:

1. Forming a powerful coalition to achieve the goals and principles of the revolution and to
 - Lead the application of the revolution's goals

- Monitor performance and correct mistakes
- In addition, there are also several tasks for such coalition which should include
- a. Influential leaders to polarize pro-revolution people and influence neutrals to face those who resist the new change
 - b. Management directors to achieve the goals of the revolution (planning-organizing- guiding- supervising)
 - c. Influential backers to support others in removing obstacles and providing role models and to take part in improving and communicating the vision of the revolution to all segments of the society.
2. Removing obstacles to implement the goals of the revolution by
 - Reviewing laws and legislations that hold back people's ability to practice democracy in all the walks of life
 - Revising and developing the regulatory and societal culture of the institutions to make them supportive to the change.
 - Informing citizens about the concept and importance of practicing democracy
 - Dealing with a scientific method with those who resist the new change.
 - Offering (with proper allocation) physical, financial and human potentialities to meet the requirements of the new change.
 - Emphasizing through all communication channels on giving priorities to the public interest over the private one.
 3. Creating short-term wins through
 - Restoring security
 - Improving infrastructure
 - Improving living standards and monitoring prices
 - Applying the minimum and maximum limits of salary
 - Improving public services (hygienic, educational, social, environmental, etc.
 4. Adopting consistent interim steps to build on. These steps should be consecutively organized as follows:
 - New constitution drafting
 - Parliamentary election
 - Presidential election

These steps should be accompanied by informing citizens about the importance of political participation
 5. Absorbing the new change as a part of the mainstream culture through
 - Ensuring that change is a means for reaching better conditions
 - Focusing on successful models of revolutions
 - Fighting fictions, proverbs, wrong practices and examples that enhance the adherence to everything old and replacing them with those supportive to the thought of change
 - Encouraging and inspiring change and development.

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