ON HANDLING A NEW TASK

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One commonly applied definition of performing a new task is “that is taken to be an activity in which meaning is primary, there is some sort of relationship to the real world; task completion has some priority; and the assessment of task performance is in terms of task outcome”.

Relating this insight of Skehan (1996) to the managerial skills and styles of the newly-promoted teachers to administrative and supervisory level, this must give insights and reminders to these people. Allan McGinnes claimed that “in handling a new task you do not have to be the smartest, or even the hardest working person in the group. What it requires is for you to be firm -- firm in your dedication to excellence even if it makes you temporarily unpopular. A good leadership when handling a new task doesn’t mean winning popularity contest.

Marx (2006) explained in his book Future-Focused Leadership significant points on how to become enlightened and committed new leaders who are capable of creating a future, and to be truly effective to an array of people and ideas, and must in turn help connect their students with the world outside the classroom.

The following are the guiding principles for connected, future-oriented leaders when handling a new task as enumerated by Marx (2006):

1. **Be curious, persistent, imaginative and have genuine interest far beyond your immediate job or profession.** People who are curious and persistent are people who will be educated for the rest of their lives.
2. **Breadth and Depth.** Some things are best taught through precept and examples. In this case, the precept is that both breadth and depth are important.
3. **Handlers of new task must connect the dots and seek common grounds.** The opinions, ideas, information are inseparable. Everything is interconnected.
4. **Analyze and learn the two sides to most issues.** The connected leader knows that all the sides of an issue must be analyzed and all deserve consideration in making decision.
5. **The future is not necessarily a straight – line projection of the present.** As educators, we need to be sure our students are engaged in future activities, and futuristic studies, so that they are capable of facing all the possibilities.
6. **Enlightenment and isolation are becoming opposites.** Quiet moments are valuable in helping to find perspective. A school head must reflect on what is happening around her. Self-discovery and spiritual renewal can help give a greater meaning to your life.
7. **Clear vision.** Visionary leaders are constantly looking for ideas and trends.
8. **Believe in Synergy.** This can spark knowledge creation and breakthrough thinking. Relationships can create synergy.
9. **Collateral opportunity and Damage.** Both deserve your attention. Look at all possibilities in a new light.

10. **Bring out the Best.** Not only for yourself but you must be a talent scout for your teachers and also students. Use your appreciative skills, understanding, analysis and responsibility.

11. **Be courageous and responsible to overcome fear and self-pity.** “A little learning is a dangerous thing”. The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moment of comfort and convenience, but where he stands in moment of challenge.

12. **Be a strategic futurist.** The need to think in terms of the future is important for educators, whose prime commitment is preparing students for tomorrow’s realities.

   Hopefully, through these pointers, the newly-hired school head will be reminded to remain flexible, courageous and full of integrity.

**References**


Marx, Gary. Future-Focused Leadership, ASCD Publications USA. 2006

Skehan, P. 1996. A Framework for the Implementation of task-based Instruction P. 38