

## The Year of Creativity and Innovation

Professor Tan Sri Dato' Dzul kifli Abd Razak

Comment

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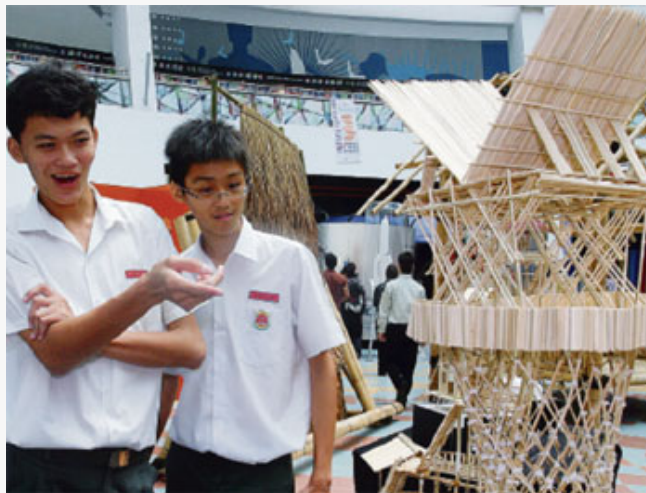
THE year 2010 has been designated as the Year of Creativity and Innovation, to be launched by the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak in the coming weeks.

Indeed, creativity and innovation are often said to be the next phase of development towards a developed country status. Only with these traits can we create new competitive advantages for individuals, societies and nations.

Human beings are born imaginative and innovative but unfortunately we have been conditioned by our environment to be otherwise.

Some put the blame on an education system that is so rigidly regulated that it does not allow for ingenious ideas to blossom, let alone introduce transformational changes as ways to move forward.

In other words, creativity and innovation must involve changes to breed even bigger, more positive changes.



An item on display during Creativity and Innovation Week at the National Science Centre catches the attention of SMK Section 1 Bandar Kinrara students.

For this to happen, it is important to be aware of what each term means generally -- beginning with CREATIVITY from the word "create":

C stands for creating change -- a quantum adjustment that is able to bring drastic improvement to the status quo if ideas are properly implemented and executed.

R is research-led, which means that creativity favours a mind that is well prepared with the appropriate data and information that could lead to new solutions or vision of the future.

E is enrichment. Invariably creativity enriches the individual, society and nation particularly if it solves problems and creates a vision. It is also about generating new excitement in the pursuit of change.

A stands for association because creativity is often sparked off by the fusion of different thoughts allowing for new entities to emerge. It requires flexibility, interaction and cross-fertilisation of ideas, instead of remaining in silos or rigid compartmentalisation.

T is technique -- that is the belief that creativity could be enhanced through certain methodology or principles such as "Six Hats" by Edward De Bono or "mind-mapping" as introduced by Tony Buzan.

E is evaluation, which is necessary to ensure that the product of creativity could be put to good use; and also leads to what is generally termed as "innovation".

The root word for INNOVATION is "innovate":

I is for indigenous and interesting ideas. Innovation is not about imitation although this is usually where it

begins. It is also not about invention per se. It could be an inspiration, a more intangible form. Innovation could also be in terms of innovative processes and adding value.

N is for newness or original ideas. It entails a new kind of thinking, or a paradigm shift that could bring about higher value and standard of living without necessarily incurring higher cost.

For example, the New Economy that Malaysia requires to move forward must be innovation-driven.

N is also for novelty -- something that is not only different but also patentable as new knowledge, which can create wealth when commercialised. It is not limited to technical aspects but includes social and cultural ones underlying it.

O is about outcomes. This is perhaps where innovation differs from creativity, which is an abstract form of innovation.

With innovation, there must be impact on whatever the target is intended to be -- largely to do with the rise of standards of living.

V is about value proposition or value chain. For a good outcome, the value proposition must be able to make a significant impact or move up the value chain by implementing the specific innovation.

A is about acceptance as reflected by the number of users who find value in the innovation and create a higher level of comfort when applied. In turn, a high level of acceptability could generate even more innovations because of new demands in terms of applications.

T is about translational process -- from dreams and creative ideas to realities and tangible products. This process could be learned and repeated by following a systematic technique.

It is not unusual for it to occur spontaneously as a "bright spark" triggering new and novel ideas.

E is about excellence in the way that it brings about significant changes -- in a highly practical way -- to soar to new heights.

In other words, creativity and innovation could be relearned through practice and awareness. It amounts to taking calculated risks, and being adventurous by questioning established assumptions that shape existing paradigms and routine ways of doing things.

It is hoped that 2010 would bring out as much creativity as possible which could then be translated into innovations to take Malaysia closer to becoming a high-income society.

\* The writer is the Vice-Chancellor of Universiti Sains Malaysia. He can be contacted at [vc@usm.my](mailto:vc@usm.my)

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