



This month, we celebrate Teacher's Day and Children's Day. It is a good time for us to reflect on Learning and Innovation.

The Government is working hard to spur innovation and enterprise among our people. One key focus is on our young. I would like to share 3 observations about the nature of innovation and enterprise with you.

A man was crossing a river in a boat when his sword dropped into the water. He calmly marked the spot on the side of the boat where the sword fell off. When the boat reached the other side of the river, he searched for his sword in the water around where he had made the mark. Of course, he could not find it because the sword went down in a different part of the river. He was out of touch with reality.

The world we live in today and for the foreseeable future will be a very changeable, dynamic one. Nothing stays put for long. **There is no fixed formula to constant success. So besides teaching our young to be gutsy, bold and full of initiative, we must also teach them to be flexible, adaptable and realistic.** Then they will not be like that man in the boat, making the wrong moves because his assumptions were invalid.

The second vignette is about how Thomas Edison invented the light bulb. Did you know that Edison failed over 9,000 times before perfecting the light bulb?

One of his favorite sayings was, "**Genius is 1 percent inspiration, and 99 percent perspiration.**" Innovation and enterprise are seldom about glamour and glory. They are often about hard work, perseverance and overcoming setbacks to pursue a worthwhile purpose in life

My final anecdote highlights the point that **innovation is not necessarily complex. Often, it concerns the ability to simplify and make life more convenient and more easily understood by all.**

A powerful nation sent a spaceship into orbit. Its astronauts found their pens could not work properly because there was no gravity. The authorities spent a lot of money researching a solution. After months, they invented a sophisticated device that worked perfectly in gravity-free space. But then news came that the rival nation that found a much cheaper solution: they used pencils.

This made-up story stresses the importance of learning to use common sense.

Happy Lifelong Learning!

HENG CHEE HOW
MAYOR
CENTRAL SINGAPORE DISTRICT