

The  
Economist

## Bullish in a China shop

Jan 7th 2015, 11:08 by B.R.



*Kalok*

*Chan, who became the dean of the business school at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) in November, thinks that Hong Kong is uniquely placed to act as the gateway between the Chinese mainland and the West*

**How important are your links to China?**

CUHK was established 51 years ago to promote Chinese culture. So we often use Chinese as the language of instruction and there is a lot of demand from China. But now the world is becoming more globalised, there is a need for China to know about the world. At the same time there is a lot of interest from the West about China. We can become the gateway for both sides to meet.

**We recently suggested that last year's democracy protests, and their criticism of the Communist Party, could put off mainland students from applying to Hong Kong schools**

In Hong Kong there are differences of opinion on the way things are being conducted. This is a new experience for mainland students. They have not seen things like this in China. So they may have a prior opinion, but on the other hand, some mainland Chinese might appreciate that under [one country two systems](#), Hong Kong does enjoy freedom of

expression and demonstration, and that is something they may appreciate in the longer term. So it is not going to have a major effect on the flow of students from mainland China. It is a good thing for them to be exposed to.

**Will the battle for democracy have any effect on the governance of the school?**

The governance of the school is independent from the political system. I would not imagine that after 50 years the governance will change. It gives the institution a high integrity.

**How do you assess the competition from the growing number of mainland Chinese business schools?**

We welcome the increase in business education in China. The fact we have more programmes means more opportunity. As China prospers it needs high-quality business programmes that provide a comprehensive learning experience and global exposure. We have seen the rise of local business schools and those from outside China—such as from the UK and US—setting up campuses and providing a much richer choice for students. But for Hong Kong and CUHK we have a great tradition and foundation to do that. I feel optimistic.

**Are there particular strengths the business students returning to the mainland need?**

There are specific skills—finance or accounting for example. But mostly it is mindset: gaining exposure. The major difference between studying the same subject just within China [or at CUHK] is the training to cope with diversity and the capacity of the global mindset. Most students go back to the mainland. That means that they will have more students familiar with the global marketplace. That will have an effect on its talent and business landscape.

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