



Mark Wahlberg meets Mr Li Ka-shing.

IDEA

# GLOBAL CONNECTIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The LKSF has repeatedly backed global university connections. Why?

Hong Kong newspapers carried a rare picture recently – two men for whom the hard knocks of life didn't allow them to finish high school – who have been spectacularly successful. Mark Wahlberg is a huge Hollywood star with producer credits on one of the smartest TV shows of the last decade: the multi-award-winning *Entourage*, a cutting inside look at his own industry. He sat down with Mr Li Ka-shing during a break in filming of *Transformers 4* in Hong Kong.

Mr Wahlberg and Mr Li discussed the tough circumstances of their lives that caused them to leave school early. Mr Wahlberg did eventually – in September of this year – receive his high school equivalency. Quoted in *People*: "I didn't want the kids [his children] saying, 'You didn't do it, so why do I need it?'" he said. "They are all wanting to do things in their future that require an education."

Mr Li has a deep commitment to education that is manifested through the Li Ka Shing Foundation (LKSF). The LKSF has the means to support a broad range of charitable causes – and does. But education is, in particular, of interest. And not just education, but the exchange of knowledge through cross-university cooperation.

The recent contributions to bring Israel's Technion to Shantou University (STU) and the McGill-STU exchange are only the latest in a long series of supporting cross-university connections. Details about these gifts are detailed in this publication and beg the question: why cross-university tie-ups?

The connections promoted here come with no guarantees of success. Israel's extraordinary creativity and technology is legendary. Matching Israeli tech verve to China's deep academic tradition may

produce rapid progress and insights in the area of Big Data, life sciences, health systems and mechanical engineering. The McGill-STU exchange connection might produce understanding and innovation in the area of law, liberal arts and business education.

However, the fact is that no one really knows exactly what benefits will arise from these liaisons. It requires the type of informed risk-taking that HWL managers must take when outcomes are uncertain. We may not know what the results will be, but we know nothing ventured, nothing gained. The LKSF is in the rare position of being able to initiate education reforms that others cannot.

Mr Li understands this responsibility to support mankind's higher endeavours: "In this new world of fluid boundaries, the fast changing, fascinating, and transforming power of technology sometime does seem to wave like a magic wand, bringing new models and opportunities to many frontiers and generating new solutions to entrenched problems at a pace that is often hard to keep up with. Our responsibility is to invest in reforms in education that unlock that genius and enable the continuing realisation of human potential, building a knowledge rich society and securing a sustainable quality of life for all. Failing to do so amounts to a crime against the future."

Both Mr Li and Mr Wahlberg appreciate that their circumstances are extraordinary – and not easily imitated. For most, education is the key. Mr Wahlberg demonstrated this by going back to school to set an example for his children. The LKSF shows commitment by connecting the world's best centres of learning around the globe. What exactly will arise from the liaisons cannot be known – but it is certainly worth the effort. □







BIG DREAMER