

# 無中生有

wu2 zhong1 sheng1 you3

Former governor Chris Patten accused the Hong Kong government of bringing universities to heel because their students “strongly supported the pro-democracy protests in 2014” on the orders of Beijing.

The Education Bureau quickly issued a strongly worded response, saying: “The current practice of the chief executive being the chancellor of the government-funded universities precisely stems from the then governor Patten’s decision.”

So, it said, Patten’s claim about the SAR and Beijing government is, among other things “無中生有” (wu2 zhong1 sheng1 you3).

“無” (wu2) “without,” “nil,” “nothing,” “中” (zhong1) “in,” “inside,” “middle,” “生” (sheng1) “to produce,” “to give birth to,” “有” (you3) “to have,” “to exist.” Literally, “無中生有” (wu2 zhong1 sheng1 you3) “to make something out of nothing.”

It means “purely fictitious,” “fabricated,” or, as is put in the English version of the statement: “Totally

## Idiom by Lon Yan

groundless and a sheer fabrication.” When someone makes false allegations against you, you may counter by saying the allegations are “無中生有” (wu2 zhong1 sheng1 you3).

People who “無中生有” (wu2 zhong1 sheng1 you3) often do that with the aim of “無事生非” (wu2 shi4 sheng1 fei1) – “to make trouble out of nothing,” “to be deliberately provocative.”

So you can make your response to unfounded allegations stronger by using both the idioms – this is “無中生有” (wu2 zhong1 sheng1 you3) and you are “無事生非” (wu2 shi4 sheng1 fei1) – sheer fabrication aimed at stirring up trouble!

**Terms containing the character “生” (sheng1) include:**

生存 (sheng1 cun2) – to exist, to live

生意 (sheng1 yi4) – a business, a trade

生效 (sheng1 xiao4) – to become effective

生產 (sheng1 chan3) – to produce, childbirth