

Makerere, Chinese varsity to exchange students, lecturers

By John Agaba

Students at Makerere University now have a chance to study part of their programmes in China, after the institution entered an agreement with Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, which will allow the exchange programme.

Students will study part of their programmes at Makerere and the other part at the Chinese university. And to return the favour, students at the Chinese university will come to Uganda to study part of their programmes here, at Uganda's largest institution of higher learning.

The chance is not limited to students. Lecturers at Makerere will conduct some of their teaching at the Chinese university and vice-versa.

Prof. Barnabas Nawangwe, Makerere University's vice-chancellor, described the agreement as an "opportunity of a lifetime", which will enable students from two backgrounds to appreciate the other's culture.

He said, for now, they cannot determine the number of students who will benefit from the programme or the particular disciplines they will be mainly interested in.

But he said the programme would likely commence next academic year, which starts in August.

Guangdong is a public university, with an emphasis on foreign languages and cultures, overseas economy and trade as well as international strategies. The university is located in Guangzhou, Guangdong, towards the South China Sea coast.

The university enlists about 40,000 students of whom 3,000 are international students. It is the only university in China offering all English programmes.



Guangjun and Nawangwe after the signing of the MoU. Photo by Maria Wamala

BETWEEN THE LINES

Prof. Barnabas Nawangwe said the agreement has an "opportunity of a lifetime", which will enable students to appreciate the other's culture.

Guangdong University's president Sui Guangjun, who was present at the signing of a memorandum of understanding at Makerere yesterday, said they looked forward to the "amazing opportunity" and the potential the exchange programme has to influence learner attitudes from the two countries.

He revealed that the university had a research institute dedicated to African Studies.

The exchange programme will

last five years, with a possibility for renewal.

Chen Wei, the chief executive officer for Dongsong Energy Group, which manufactures fertilisers in Uganda, said she was happy to see the co-operation between Uganda and China continuing to soar.

"It is an opportunity to have more Ugandans study in China. And to have more Chinese study in Uganda," she said.

Dr Charles Wana-Etyem, the chairperson Makerere University Council, said more students and staff from Makerere will be able to stay and study in China where they will learn a lot.

"The programme will also help us produce more Chinese-speaking Ugandans. It is a great innovation, which will foster better relations and appreciation of the two cultures," he said.

It will also improve China-Africa relations.

He asked the Dongsong CEO to allow Makerere University students to internship at their plant in Tororo to learn hands-on how to make fertilisers.

He asked the Makerere University management and Guangdong University President to expedite objectives of the programme.

Muzamiru Mukwatampola, who represented Uganda's state minister for higher education, Dr John Chrysostom Musingo, asked the two parties not to take the agreement for granted.

"Each party should keep its end of the bargain. That way, staff and students will stand to gain lots of things, not just the exchange," he said. He commended the Chinese people for the scholarships they award to Ugandan students.