Support of the Excellence Scholarship BEBUC

in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

A unique and sustainable system for the renewal of excellence at national institutions of higher education (DRC)

1. Motivation

In every society, education must play a central role. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), however, suffers today from a terrible lack of young academics. Given the fact that the average age of the university professors in the Congo is significantly higher than the low life expectancy there, university education will be endangered in the coming years. Moreover, one of the repercussions of the political crisis that shook the country in the 90s was that the international visibility of the Congolese academic institutions almost disappeared, especially as to
scientific research and education. Since then, many efforts have been undertaken to reverse the trend and to support national higher education. With this in mind, the excellence scholarship program BEBUC (Bourse d’Excellence Bringmann aux Universités Congolaises) was initiated, with the main objective to contribute to the rejuvenation and quality improvement of university professors and, thus, to alleviate the lack of academic staff.

Excellent professors can provide the country with well-educated and efficient workers. BEBUC encourages young academics by supporting the implementation of sustainable structures: libraries and laboratories, where important fields of research are developed that meet the needs of the Congolese society.

2. The Project and its Objectives

The young academics are offered an ethical framework that stimulates competitiveness towards excellence. The main activities in connection with this aim are:

2.1. The BEBUC scholarship program

Each year, about 25-30 new bachelor, master, and re-entry BEBUC scholarships are granted to particularly brilliant students, but also to pupils of some secondary and primary schools. The beneficiaries are selected according to a strict, competitive, impartial, ethical, and transparent procedure. The candidates are pre-selected according to their files and then finally accepted based on their presentation at the blackboard in front of an evaluation committee consisting of academic staff from the Congo, Africa, and Europe. Applications of girls are highly encouraged, but excellence remains the main criterion.

For their PhD studies, BEBUC scholars are expected to compete for international scholarships, but are even then still mentored by BEBUC.

Presently (2017), BEBUC supports 187 scholars at 16 Congolese universities and nine schools.

2.2. The training of the scholars

To be competitive at an international level, BEBUC provides a framework where the scholars practice and improve their English skills, since it is the working language. They are offered English courses with a TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) certification and are generously granted the status of guest students at the University of Würzburg, with free access to its electronic library. They also profit from the guidance of tutors (excellent assistants recruited at Congolese universities) and benefit from the individual mentoring by the members of the BEBUC Directory Board, in the form of:

- scientific tools to write research projects correctly;
- advice on their academic careers;
- advice on good communication;
- access to international scientific research networks;
- access to industrial networks such as FEC (Fédération des Entreprises du Congo), providing workshops and exchange platforms for internships.

2.3. The return to the Congo

Through effective publicity, BEBUC shows the scholars the perspectives and possibilities of building a sustainable academic career after their return to the Congo.

- The scholars learn and apply mechanisms to obtain financial aids for their research.
- Researchers who come back to their home institutions in DRC, while waiting for their nomination as professors, are granted BEBUC re-entry scholarships, which supplement their salary and help them establish their independent research work.
- They are supported at different administration authorities (ministries, education offices, etc.) to accelerate their nomination as assistant or professor.
- Furthermore, national structures of research in the form of Centers of Excellence are created.
2.4. Promotion of ethics, excellence, and interdisciplinary working skills

The scholars are organized in institutional communities. Their activities comprise:

- Institutional elections: The scholars of every institution vote in a democratic way each year for a speaker and (according to the number of scholars in the respective institution) for one to four vice-speakers. These speakers form a Speakers' Council, and elect a Prime Speaker among them. The aim is to learn how democracy, ethics, organization, and personal commitment work within a community.

- Implementation of an ethics committee: The objective is to inform the BEBUC Committee about possibly unethical incidents concerning university institutions, scholars, or the BEBUC community.

- Organization of interdisciplinary seminars in English: Everyone, including the pupils, regularly present current topics, which they prepare from their fields of study. By these seminars, BEBUC wants to encourage scholars to establish a future collaboration in view of complementary disciplines.

- Organization of excursions within the country: The aim is to create a feeling of togetherness and to strengthen their rooting in DRC.

3. Results

The model of BEBUC works, as documented qualitatively and quantitatively:

- Presently 187 pupils and students are being supported by BEBUC, among them more than 35% of girls. They are located in 16 universities and 9 schools: in the west (Kinshasa, Kikwit, Mbanza Ngungu), in the south (Lubumbashi), in the center (Mbuji-Mayi and Kananga), in the east (Butembo, Bukavu, Goma), and in the north (Kisangani).

- Having been supported by BEBUC during their bachelor studies, their average age when they start their master studies is about 26 years (versus above 30 years for candidates from outside BEBUC).

- BEBUC scholars are, in general, among the three first (if not the very best) of their class (out of an average of 200 students), here some examples:

  o Collège Alfajiri in Bukavu and Mt. Amba in Kinshasa – state exams 2016: the two best results of the entire Congo in their specific subjects were achieved by BEBUC scholars;
  o Faculty of Agronomy UNIKIN – bachelor 2015: the three best were BEBUC students;
  o Faculty of Medicine UNIKIN – bachelor results: the best (out of more than 600 students!) was, over several years, a BEBUC scholar;
  o Faculty of Pharmacy UNIKIN – the first two BEBUC master scholars in pharmacy obtained a great distinction (82% and 84%), which had never been given in the past five years.

- Three agronomists obtained – even twice – an award from the GIZ (Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit).

- 15 BEBUC scholars received PhD scholarships from international organizations.

- The six first BEBUC professors have been installed at UNIKIN and UCB.

- Universities and students trust BEBUC: In 2017 applications for BEBUC scholarships have significantly increased.

4. Who are We?

BEBUC was initiated in 2008 by Prof. Gerhard Bringmann (Würzburg) and Prof. Virima Mudogo (Kinshasa), who, together with their team, pursue the development of BEBUC with creativity and visionary power. In 2009, the NGO Förderverein Uni Kinshasa e.V. (FUNIKIN, www.foerderverein-unikinshasa.de) was founded. It counts meanwhile nearly 1,800 personal and 51 institutional members from 53 countries world-wide.
5. Who Supports BEBUC?

- His Excellency the Minister of Higher Education of the Congo;
- His Excellency the German Ambassador in the Congo;
- the President of the University of Würzburg, the rectors of the participating Congolese universities (UNIKIN, UPC, UK, UNIKIK, UCG, UOR, ULGPL-Goma, ULGPL-Butembo, UCB, UOB, UOM, UNILU, UNIKIS) and secondary schools;
- the Fédération des Entreprises du Congo (FEC);
- the personal sponsors (god-fathers, god-mothers);
- the foundation Else-Kröner-Fresenius-Stiftung;
- the foundation Holger-Pöhlmann-Stiftung;
- the personal and institutional members of the NGO.

6. What Can You Do?

The scholarship program – sponsor a young Congolese ...

- $240 per year for a pupil ($20 per month)
- $720 per year for a high-school student ($60 per month)
- $1,440 per year for a bachelor student ($120 per month)
- $3,500 for English courses combined with professional training for a student entering master studies (four months)
- $20,000 in total for two years for a master student abroad ("sandwich" master student Congo-Europe or Congo-US, or student at an excellent African university)
- $45,000 for a medical student, training abroad ($15,000 per year)

... or support us building up further BEBUC infrastructure, or finance BEBUC-related projects!

We will be pleased to provide further information.

www.foerderverein-uni-kinshasa.de

Support the NGO

You can become a member of UNIKIN and support the scholarship program BEBUC by transferring your donations to our bank account (a notification of donation will be issued):

LIGA Bank
IBAN: DE44 7509 0300 0003 0103 09
BIC/SWIFT: GENODEF1M05
Tax no. 257/108/32016
For Congolese donors: Please inquire about our bank in DRC.

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