

Students with raised hands in the classroom

KEPLER

2014 Nominet Trust 100 Winner

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2014

BRINGING AMERICAN BA DEGREES TO AFRICA

By Generation Rwanda

Project URL: kepler.org

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- Education
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Kepler uses the newest online tools in a bold attempt to bring affordable, quality tertiary education to Africa.

Only 5% of Africans can afford university, and the rate of failure within that 5% is 60%. Kepler is setting out to massively increase the number of Africans who can afford university; and hugely increase their educational attainment when they get there.

In doing this, it will be the first university to launch solely on the basis of 'blended learning': coupling quality online tools such as edX, MOOCs and Coursera with intensive seminar-style coaching.

Tuition, which costs just \$1,000 a year, is delivered on campuses, using video-based online courses from major US universities, then students meet with tutors for 'active learning sessions' to debate the content and themes introduced online. While MOOCs offer the opportunity for 'fragmented learning', in which learners dip in and out of courses as they need, Kepler's aim is to provide a more traditional, structured degree course experience.

The syllabus builds general competencies and analytical skills in its first and second years, moving onto specialisms and more job-focused training in years 3 and 4. All students work towards a US Association and Bachelor's degree from

College for America, and later iterations will include internships with local employers.

The pilot is taking place in Rwanda, with plans to open two more campuses by 2017 then scale rapidly across Africa.

For years, Rwandan NGO Generation Rwanda has put forward the brightest young people to qualify for the Government's 'certificate of vulnerability', a recognition of poverty or bereavement caused by the 1994 genocide, through local universities, with the NGO providing support services such as counselling, health care and things like résumé prep.

Kepler sees them build on the success of this model, which saw 98% graduate. 'We want to provide a higher education experience that's internationally competitive, for a cost that's radically less than the regional competition,' says co-founder of the NGO's Kepler project Alex Hague. He describes the curriculum as 'locally relevant' and 'hardcore'.

Image courtesy of Kepler

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