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# Impact of COVID-19 on Education in Rwanda: The Case of Kepler Kigali

Ernestine Niyobuhungiro

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**Regis University  
Regis College  
Master of Development Practice**

Advisor/Final Project Faculty Approval Form

Master's Candidate: **Ernestine Niyobuhungiro**

Capstone Title: **Impact of COVID-19 on Education in Rwanda: The Case of Kepler Kigali**

Presented in the MDP Community Forum on: **April 29th, 2022**

I approve this capstone as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Development Practice.

Jean Parker

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*Advisor Signature Jean Parker*

Name: **Jean Parker**

Date: June 21, 2022

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Georgia Babatsikos'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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*Faculty Reader Signature*

Name: **Georgia Babatsikos**

Date: June 22, 2022

## Contents

<b>Personal Statement .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Literature Review .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Data Collection Strategy .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Context .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Educational problems resulting from Covid-19 .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Struggle for balance to both students and staffs .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Mental wellness challenges and its effects on Productivity .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Financial instabilities .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Potential Solutions .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Gaps and Limitations .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Introduction to Community and Context.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Kepler Program .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Need assessment .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Stakeholder Analysis .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Theory of Change .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Data Analysis.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Program Description .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Goal and Objectives .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Activities and Partners .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Evaluation.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Monitoring and Evaluation Plan .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Implementation .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>A. Capacity .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>B. Money .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>C. Sustainability .....</b>	<b>33</b>

<b>D. Timeline .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Budget .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Recommendations to other Higher Learning Institutions.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Reference .....</b>	<b>39</b>

# Personal Statement

I work for Kepler as an academic advisor. Kepler is a non-profit organization that works in Rwanda. It is an education institution that works at two campuses, one in Kigali city and another in a refugee camp called Kiziba. Kepler is partnering with Southern New Hampshire University's (SNHU) Global Education Movement (GEM), a network that provides students in East Africa with bachelor's degrees with access to US accredited degrees. COVID-19 has impacted the education sector and its systems. As an academic advisor at Kepler, there were times where it was difficult for me to find words or strategies to help the struggling students considering the fact the pandemic has never happened before. It was a struggle to find different strategies to support students online, since online education is something that hadn't been done before. The struggle made me curious to know what is happening in East Africa and, what challenges students are facing so that I can use this knowledge to develop a protocol that can help the Kepler program and other education institutions in the East Africa region. The protocol will help students to work better, stay motivated, and achieve their goals. There are lessons learned from COVID-19 that could help strengthen teaching or advising approaches. I hope to see more progress on monthly basis with students as a result of developing this support system. This will be a protocol that will be developed and used in helping students. The document will contain recommendations that will be also helpful for other education institutions whose students might be struggling.

**Key words:** COVID-19 Impact, Higher Education, Technology, Remote Learning, Mental Wellness

# Executive Summary

The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted many areas of life throughout the world, including the education sector. The pandemic brought on many changes that impacted both students and the instructors. To better understand the impact of COVID-19 on education in Rwanda, the research was made at Kepler Kigali; an education program that offers higher learning education. To collect the data, surveys and interviews were conducted with students and staffs. Forty-seven students and 18 staff members responded to the survey. The results indicated that 67% of the students found it hard to stay motivated and 77% of staff confirmed that they struggled with mental wellness during COVID-19.

To address these challenges, I developed a program that targets students who are struggling with their academics, asking them to join a group with an academic advisor who can offer support and monitor their progress regularly. The program will be offered both online and in-person to make sure that whatever might come up, the student will still be able to access the program and the support and collaboration that they might be looking for. Students can be mandated to attend the program if they are not meeting academic expectations, but can also willingly join the program to get the motivation they might need from their colleagues, given threat so many students reported a lack of motivation. To realize this, we will be working with stakeholders including Kepler academic advisors, GEM (Global Education Movement), students and others to make sure that the program is running and helping students to achieve their academic goals.

# Literature Review

## Introduction

This literature review explores the impact that COVID-19 has had on higher education in Rwanda. The purpose of this literature review is to analyze different difficulties that both students and staffs faced during the pandemic and how they tried to adjust to the situation. This study will help create a program that will specifically help Kepler students who have been struggling with progressing academically during the pandemic. This study could help developing countries in East Africa that have similar characteristics. These countries are developing, and they went through the same hardship due to COVID-19. The primary stakeholder of this research is Kepler, the nonprofit education organization located in Kigali City, Rwanda, and the secondary stakeholders are other Rwandan institution both within and outside Rwanda. The review is going to incorporate the academic challenges that both students and staffs have been facing and investigate different ways that the challenges can be addressed in order to achieve quality education.

## Data Collection Strategy

Because of gaps in the literature in Africa about COVID-19, this study relies heavily on primary data in the form of interviews and surveys. My literature review also includes some global literature that is relevant, with the understanding that the literature from Africa is limited.

## Context

**COVID-19's impacts on education worldwide and in Rwanda**

The pandemic affected higher education learning on a level that some institutions were closed and students and educators faced the consequences of school closures and other restrictions. Since the pandemic affected face-to-face education, some institutions shifted to online education, which requires excellent infrastructure. When COVID-19 arrived, it severely disrupted the education sector, especially especially in Africa. For the continent to respond to this issue, the education institutions and the government tried to introduce online delivery. The online system requires each student to own a laptop or a smart phone, which is impossible for some students. The pressure for students to have access to technology may also be frustrating to families who can't afford to provide whatever is necessary for a student to attend class due to their economic situations. Another issue with online delivery is that some students, especially younger ones, do not have parents who can supervise their studies. Additionally, there was an issue with the quality of online learning/teaching. Most schools did not have anything in place, and the quality of instruction was low. Besides, UNESCO (n.d), reported that 9.8 million African students were struggling academically due to the closure of higher learning institutions (Tamrat, & Teferra, 2020). With the intensity of the pandemic this figure is lower and the actual figure can be higher than this.

There was also an issue with the quality of online learning/teaching. The relatively low quality of teaching was due to the fact that teachers were not trained in using online tools, which made it difficult for them to engage students in class. Most higher learning education did not have anything in place to support the online learning since the delivery of instruction was only in-person for students. For international students, COVID-19 affected their travel plans and not being able to travel prevented some students from continuing their education, and others struggled to focus on their academics due to fear. When the COVID-19 arrived, Rwanda was put



into lockdown, which had severe effects on education. Some schools closed temporally, and others permanently. These closures caused some students to delay their educations, while others had to transfer to other schools since theirs had closed permanently. As a result, learning was disrupted, and access to education and research facilities was reduced. In addition, some of the students who were working lost their jobs and their loans/debts increased. On the positive side, students were able to learn some technological skills, as well as other life skills such as hygiene, and family values as most of them were staying home (Rwigema,2021).

### **Introduction to remote learning in Rwanda**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a transition from face-to-face to online learning. Online learning faced a variety of challenges in Rwanda. For this study, students responded to survey questions about their experiences. The struggle was much harder for those who were learning mathematics and science due to lack of access to practical resources. There were also issues pertaining to lack of face-to-face collaboration, limited internet connectivity, and English proficiency, which affected communication with their facilitators. This limitation affected the knowledge given and support that students could get from their facilitators. The government has been trying to help schools to catch up by providing support through radio programs, mainly targeting primary school students. The support from the government has been helpful to those who have access to radios, but not to those who cannot afford them. Economic challenges of students from rural areas prevented them from benefiting the programs that the government was offering.

### **Lack of support for vulnerable students from poor families**

According to Bazimaziki (2020), Information Communication Technology (ICT) especially with personal computers and mobile phones, has been both a helpful tool and a source

of struggle for some students. This is because access isn't same for all the students. Online teaching has been a challenge, which has affected the learning goals while also making the process less inclusive (Bazimaziki, 2020). Online delivery isn't easy because only 24% of the Rwandan population has access to the internet out of a total Population of 12 million (CIA World Fact Book, 2021). The fraction of the population that can access the internet remains small. Although online delivery was the only option, it encountered many challenges including poor connectivity, exorbitant costs, and frequent power interruptions, which made the situation worse (Tamrat & Teferra, 2020). The gap in this literature was that there was no recommendation of what could have been improved to make the online delivery work better.

## **Educational problems resulting from Covid-19**

### **Struggle for balance to both students and staffs**

COVID-19 has made life more complicated for both students and staff. Since most schools were closed, students were required to work from home. When students started working from home, they were required to do family related activities like cleaning, cooking and other household tasks that could prevent them from focusing on academics. Observation confirms that in the Rwandan context women are the ones who do the bulk of the house chores, which affects their progress and academics (OECD, 2020). The fact that girls were affected more shows how fragile girls' education is because it can be easily disrupted, which is something that we need to pay more attention to.

To respond to the COVID-19 pandemic the schools were closed; a lockdown was implemented, and students were not able to go back to school in Rwanda. According to Bodo

(2021), most schools were closed as a result of COVID-19, which significantly disrupted the education sector. Schools were closed abruptly, and teachers, administrators, and students were all unprepared. There are still some countries that have not re-opened schools for in-person classes including countries like Uganda. According to the World Bank (2020), school closures not only a source of learning loss in the short-term, but also lead to losses in the labor force, and in economic development. Another challenge that COVID-19 presented for Rwanda's education is that the schools lost staff and students because they could no longer pay their staff, since students were not paying school fees. Kabera, the vice-chancellor of the University of Tourism, Technology and Business Studies in Kigali said that the more the restrictions of COVID-19 takes longer, the longer it will take the universities to recover from the struggles and damage that were caused by COVID-19 (Mbonyinshuti, 2020).

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## **Mental wellness challenges and their effects on productivity**

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected people's mental wellness. According to Joseph et al (2020), Rwanda was among the first countries to implement a total lockdown which required that people stay in their homes and caused some to lose their jobs. As a result of such uncertainties, many students were forced to discontinue their classes. These changes have had a huge impact on the community. The gap that I identified in the literature is that there are no suggestions of what to do to address this challenge, considering the fact the government is now focused on preventing infection and providing vaccines to make sure that people are safe. Fifty-

seven percent of Rwandans have been vaccinated in Rwanda with 40% being fully vaccinated (Our World in Data, 2021).

## **Financial instability**

COVID-19 has also impacted the economy; Africa's growth performance (3.4% in 2019) was expected to increase to 3.9% in 2020, but this was significantly affected by the pandemic. Tamrat and Teferra (2020) reported that 5% of GDP was dedicated to education before the pandemic, but this has decreased due to a crisis in the economy of different countries. They also reported that as a result of all these challenges, the productivity level for both the staffs and the students was reduced to the change in working environment. Using new tools in the learning process was the only way to address the challenges posed by the pandemic. Having trouble managing both work activities and home activities has been challenging for some, leading to reduce productivity.

## **Potential Solutions**

In response to COVID-19, remote learning was introduced to address the challenge. Remote learning was introduced in many countries in responses to restrictions to face-to-face learning. According to the World Bank (2020), remote learning was helpful in countries with suitable infrastructure, funding, and capacity to use technological tools. The issue with technology is that it requires students have access to the requisite devices and connectivity. Remote learning also created the need to train staff (educators) and students, since the systems were new and complicated for some of them.

There was also a need to promote mental and body wellness, since the pandemic was a threat in so many ways and led restrictions on social gatherings and in-person support.

Some organizations were trying to use some online ice breakers to try to keep the morale high while introducing virtual socialization.

## Gaps and Limitations

Study in this literature presented great ideas but there was not enough research done on the topic specifically in Rwanda and therefore the study will rely heavily on the second data that will be collected from the direct targeted population. Different studies have presented different ideas. However, some of them are lacking enough data to prove what they are saying, while others do not show their position clearly. Additionally, this study is somewhat limited since I was not able to access peer reviewed resources in my context, which limited the data that could have gave me some specific data. Although, the studies disagree on many points, they all agree that COVID-19 has disrupted the education sector. Since research about COVID-19 in the education sector is limited, my research focuses primarily on interviews and surveys, because there is not much research available on the education sector in Rwanda.

## Conclusion

To ensure a high quality of education, there is always a need to address the challenges that appear so that the system can work better. Addressing these challenges by looking at only one side of the problem can cause more problems. For instance, in this case moving education online without considering those who lack access to online platforms, electricity, and other support systems led to more challenges. At Kepler, the struggling students require special support that is structured because the students need more help to be able to achieve their goals. To support other universities in general, there are some recommendations that might need to be put in place to make sure that if another pandemic emerges they will be

able to handle it well and carry on with academics. In addition, the primary data needs to be gathered in Rwanda to inform the development of effective solutions at the local level.

## **Introduction to Community and Context**

The Rwandan population is 12,943,132 (Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), 2021). In 1994, there was a genocide in Rwanda, which disrupted every aspect of the country and education in different ways. Even before then, Rwandan culture was encouraging mainly males to attend school, even today the country is still dealing with this, as some parents still don't believe in the importance of a woman going to school (Cerqueira, 2018). This also brings in an aspect of how girls are expected to be the ones contributing more to house chores, which can especially affect their education during this pandemic, with where some students being required to attend classes online and do house chores as well (Plan International, 2021).

On the hand, the health care system has been trying to deal with the pandemic to see whether things can get back to normal. The regulations are now demanding that students be vaccinated at least with two vaccinations, and it was made mandatory for both high school and university students (Mbonyinshuti, 2021).

Infrastructure has had a huge impact to students during COVID-19. Accessibility of mobile phones and personal computers wasn't high, which affected some students depending on their location and the quality of infrastructure in general. According to the CIA Fact Book (2021), 4.12 million people have access to the internet in Rwanda. In 2019, only 53% had access to electricity, and the number of people without access to electricity could have increased by now. Only 48% of Rwandans in rural areas have access to electricity (CIA, 2021). Lack of

electricity affects students greatly, since during the lock down students were expected to attend classes online, or use radios or TVs, which all require electricity to plug in.

Considering all these challenges, the Rwandan government has tried to use TVs and radios to serve as the support system for students during COVID-19. Considering the case of Kepler Kigali as it is an education institution; Kepler has been trying to offer things like airtime to support in online learning in the time of working from home. The support was because a student was struggling financially while they were required to study and attend class online. All Kepler students own a laptop, which is not the case in all other universities in Rwanda.

The pandemic has impacted students differently. According to the Malala Fund (2020), in a crisis like COVID-19, girls and young women are the first to be removed from school and the last to return. Fourteen countries in African were surveyed and some girls who were surveyed said that the schools were giving them more work while they were expected to take more work to home as well which was overwhelming (Plan International, 2021).

## Kepler Program

Kepler is an education institution that partners with Southern New Hampshire University to offer education to vulnerable people in the community and the refugees. Kepler offers education to people regardless of their age, since there are refugees who get delayed by wars and other trouble. The range is between 18-40 years. Kepler has two campuses one in Kigali Rwanda, and other one in Kiziba (a refugee camp in Rwanda) (Kepler,2022).

Kepler offers different support to students to make sure that they can continue their education. Among the support system there is:

- Kepler advising team is a team that follows up with the student's learning. They help by offering the personalized learning support. The other thing is that they offer some office hours to struggling students.
- Kepler offer some financial support to have Internet because there are a lot of financial obligation during this COVID-19 time.
- There is also flexibility towards refugee students who have issues with electricity access and internet issues. Since some refugees can't access electricity and internet for their academics, Kepler had to extend their deadlines and make sure that those that are in the Camps are getting the support that they need.

## Need assessment

This study is going to be helpful in communicating the experience of education institutions in Rwanda and how people can learn from Rwanda's experience. This is also important to help people know what happened and what is happening in Rwanda considering the fact that there is lack of information.

In the assessment, there is a need to assess whether female students have struggled more than males. This will give the picture of different challenges that students might have faced during COVID-19. Looking at the culture aspect, females are the ones who do house chores and considering that most of them are working from home; they might be struggling much more with balance. Besides, this comes as a sign that gender roles played a huge role in different students' struggles.

To collect data about what happened, surveys and interviews were used to gather some information. Questionnaires were developed to help gather quantitative data through surveys and



gather qualitative data through interviews. These interviews and surveys will be sent to Kepler students and staffs who are involved in academics. This allowed them to share their experience and hence allowed me to learn from their experience.

The research will also help me to identify the blind spots in regards to gender, and the academic support that was offered. Based on my experience with academic support, I have seen how the support increases the engagement and that is something that I would like to explore and understand better.

## Stakeholder Analysis

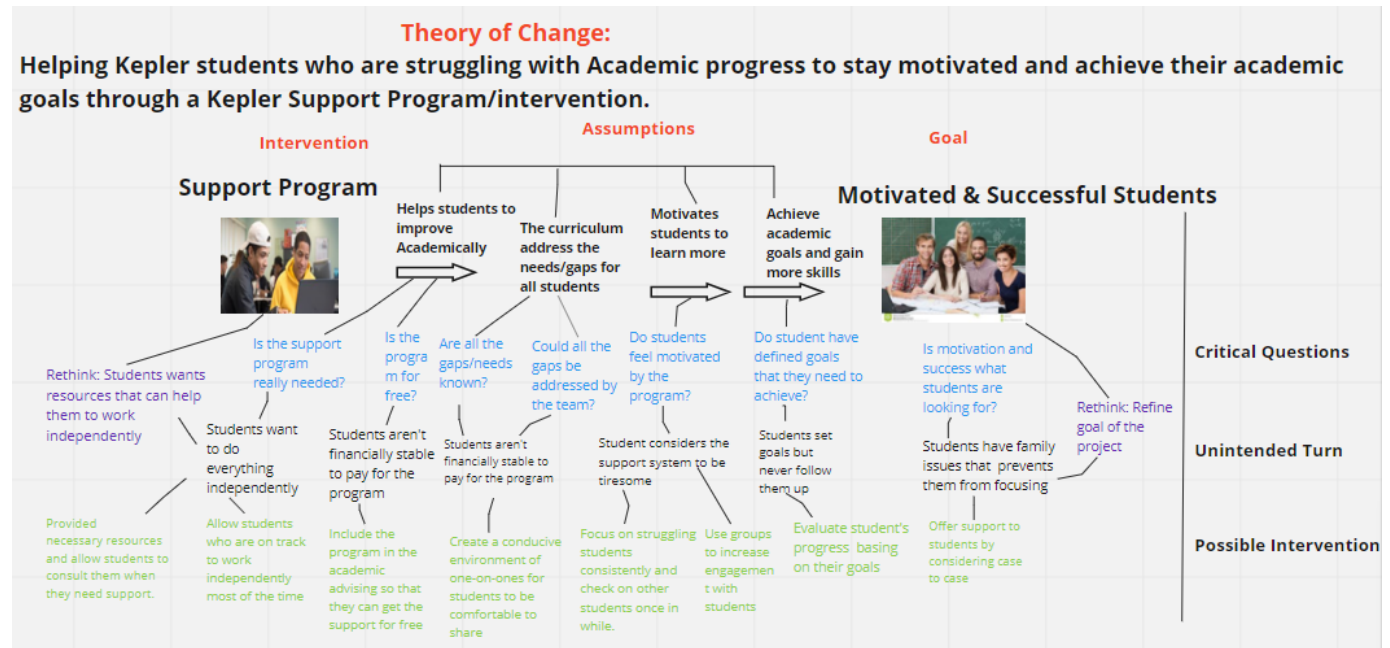
Type of stakeholder	Name of person/org. and short description	Relationship to project	Incentives, motivations, risks	How to engage
<b>GEM Hub</b>	A SNHU Program that supports venerable students to access education especially refugees	Offers Degrees, Helps in students evaluation.	Collaboration with Kepler students and academic advisors. Offering trainings to students and advisors	Building on their data given on the platform like Power BI
<b>Private sectors, Employers</b>	Employ students both graduates and those who are	Offer employment opportunities,	Collaboration with Kepler Career Team.	Basing/che cking on the

	still in the program.	and helps in the evaluation in regards to skill gaps.	Offering recommendations to the curriculum team.	feedback given to the careers team.
<b>University Students</b>	Students who are working on their projects and foundation program at Kepler.	Part of the program	Need successful ways to achieve their goals.  Create different ways to reach to their success.	Communicate to know the challenges, and solutions that can be suggested. This can be done through interviews and surveys
<b>Alumnae</b>	Graduates who are done with the academics especially those who graduated	Graduated from SNHU through Kepler program,	Offer feedback to the academic team basing on their experiences.	Requesting them data basing on their experience.

	during COVID-19 time.	Faced COVID-19 challenges		The communication will be done through an online-survey!
<b>Kepler Academic Staff (Including academic advisors)</b>	Teaching staff, careers team, and academic advisors	Design and offer support to students.  Evaluate student's performance.	Interested in improving the offered support.	Engage to get data and feedback. This can be done, through in-person interview and a survey.
<b>Government</b>	Ministry of education	Offer guidelines and they are reported too	Encourage anything that contribute to quality education  Challenges: The might questions the	Will consult online information and

		once in a while.	strategies/support offered to students as inadequate	Guidelines that can be given to Kepler.
<b>Parents/Guardians</b>	They guide and provide an involvement that allows student to work.	Offer financial support and encouragement to students.	They are interested in seeing their children achieving their goals. Challenges: Parents can discourage the students to attend the program if they do not find it supportive. If the program request students to come to campus (which isn't the case these days), they might not give them the permission to come to the campus.	A phone interview with some parents can be helpful since it can help to know how the see the support that students are being given.

# Theory of Change



We developed the theory of change chart to show interventions, assumptions and goals for students who engage with Kepler as we work towards helping struggling students improve their academics. My assumptions are that the program will helps students to improve academically, the curriculum will address the needs/gaps for all students, motivate students to learn more and that it will help to achieve academic goals and gain more skills. I assumed that the program will offer the student the collaboration that they need which will contribute to their success. The main goal will be to motivate the students to achieve their success.

My first assumption is that the program will helps students to improve academically. Students struggle to work independently and if the program will give them the chance to work together and share ideas, I assumed that they will make more progress and be more successful. With the team/advisors around to help, the students will be free to ask questions and to get the support that they might need.

Through additional support and a creative environment, the program will address the needs/gaps of the students. The program will motivate the student to learn more and hence achieve more. Graduate students will offer motivational sessions to current Kepler students as a small token of encouragement. Lastly, the students will be able to achieve academic goals and gain more skills, this is because they will have resources and more support that will engage them and allow them to learn more and achieve their academic target.

The program/intervention will be providing the support that Kepler students' needs to be back on track for them to meet their graduation requirements on time. The part of possible intervention was helpful because it gave another perspective of what needs to be done for the sake of supporting the students better. To challenge my assumptions, I thought critically about which intervention program would result in better student outcomes in addressing the students learning gaps.

## **Data Analysis**

I was able to interview 10 Kepler staff and 10 students in a group. I was able to send 2 different surveys; one was for students and another one for staff. Fourth-seven responses from the students and 18 responses from the staffs. The interview was about getting to understand deeply how the COVID-19 affected the students' progress and what the staff did to address the challenges.

The question topics for the study were about gender, motivation, academic challenges, and mental wellness. The demographic of students and staff were chosen because they represent of what students and staffs in different universities might have went through. The survey was

sent online because all the staffs and the students could access them online and the interviews were done in person.

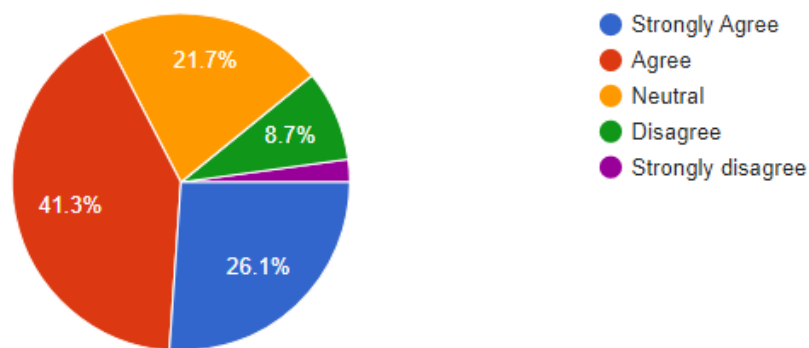
Learning about the challenges and the suggestions from staffs and students allowed me to come up with a study hall program that will be helpful in students' academics in any case of pandemic.

### **Students results**

Looking at the data, 67% of the respondent found it hard to stay motivated and during the interviews students were saying that there were multiple reasons why they weren't motivated. Among the reason that they provided, there was lack of community engagement, coping with new systems, navigating working alone at home and managing home distractions.

It was hard to stay motivated to learn during Covid 19

46 responses

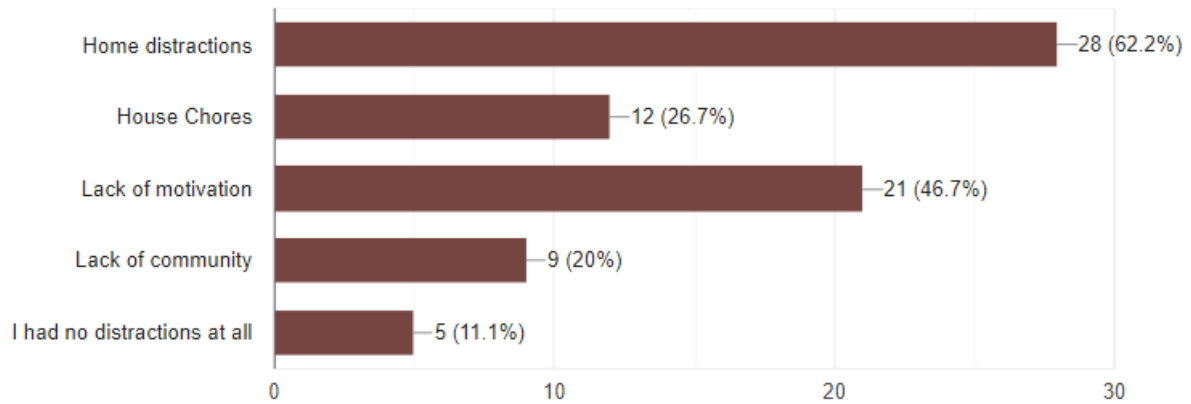


62.2% of the students were struggling because of home distractions and 46% of students were struggling because of the lack of motivation. Most of them in interviews agreed that there were some circumstances that could not allow them to focus and to be successful in their academics. This shows that it was hard for most of them and this is something that affected their

academics more.

It was a struggle to work from home because:

45 responses



### **Discussion with students**

In a group interview with the students, they did reveal that working from home was hard for them even when they were used to working on their academics alone. Females opened up about how they struggle with managing the house chores and their academics because their parents expect them to do things around the house and their course facilitators expects them to perform well and attend classes as well.

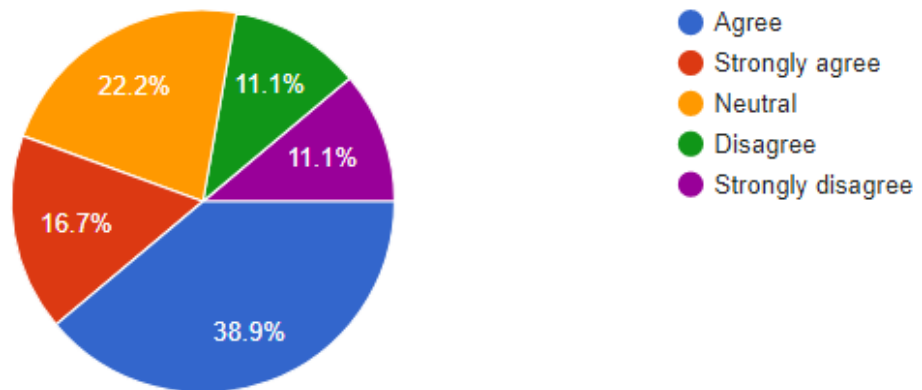
### **Staff results**

Staff at Kepler have confirmed that males and females struggle different at a rate of 55%. This shows a difference and looking at the interviews they have said that females were the ones struggling more mainly because of the house chores that parents expect the females to do as an addition to their academics.



## Males and females struggled at different levels

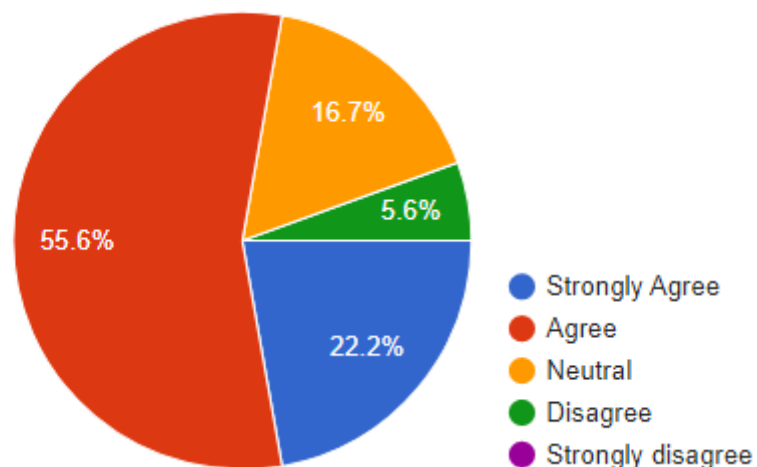
18 responses



The staff data confirms that they struggled with mental wellness during COVID-19. Seventy-seven percent show that COVID-19 did impact them and this shows a struggle which might have affected their productivity at work and their concentration towards support the students.

## COVID 19 impacted my mental states

18 responses



### **Discussion with staff**

During an interview with Kanyeshyamba, the manager of student affairs at Kepler Kigali (2022) said that there is a huge number of females who requested coming back to the campus early on because managing house chores and the academics wasn't something easy for them.

Additionally, Kepler Registrar Dusengumuremyi (2022) said that adaptability was a hard thing for both staffs and students considering the fact there were a lot of uncertainties. He also said that the pandemic has challenged the organization to push further in terms of using technology which is something that was a struggle in the beginning but which kept on improving as days went on.

Besides, learning from the graph created, I have realized that some students might not be willing to use the support system in-person for multiple reasons and that is why I had to think of how it can be accessible to those that are near and those that are far. The other thing is that some students might be struggling because their families aren't willing to support them through and that might be a challenge which pushes Kepler to create an accessible program to those that needs to come in-person instead of staying online.

## **Program Description**

The protocol is going to be used to support struggling students to catch up and make sure that they are ready to move on the same level as other student. The protocol will come as a space for students to be able to have a place that they can use to work together. At Kepler most of other study groups are office hours and the course facilitator is the one to identify the agenda for the students and they are also about either the modules or the foundation program that students have to go through. At Kepler Kigali students are expected to earn 4 competencies a month and those

who fail to meet that monthly goal, will be encouraged to join the program for support and the grow as well.

This space will be for a discussion about their College for America Projects since they all do it independently and don't often have the room to discuss it in teams. This will be a study group that will give students the space to use where they can access the instructors and have some other colleagues around to collaborate with. It will be happening once a week for two hours and students will be able to access a space at campus where they can be able to focus and work. With the students who are not around campus, they will be allowed to attend the session online and both spaces will have monitored by academic advisors.

The pilot of the project will last for 12 months where there will be multiple evaluations to see the impact and improvement the program will be making based on the feedback we will be receiving from the students and the staffs. After 6 months, the program will be refined based on the feedback, it will be shared with other programs that have the same model as Kepler so that it can be impactful wherever it can be applicable in the teaching and learning environment. Additionally, this program will be free to Kepler students and it will be an additional support system specifically for struggling students.

The protocol will come as a space for students to be able to have space that they can use to work together. This will be a study group that will give students the space to use where they can access the instructors and have some other colleagues around to collaborate with. It will be happening once a week for two hours and students will be able to access a space at campus where they can be able to focus and work. Students who are not around campus; they will be allowed to attend the session online and both spaces be monitored by academic advisors.

Basing on the feedback from the data collection, the program will be addressing the struggles that the students have faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. It will be helpful to those who lost track because of multiple reasons. Then the recommendations will be helpful to improve the education system, the infrastructure, and help in getting prepared for any pandemic that might come.

At Kepler, students who are working on College for America Projects, they are required to earn 4 credits a month and for them to earn that; they need to have completed around 10-15 sub-projects in total. With the program in place, there is hope that the students' performance will be increased on a level of 20% in the first 12 months of trying with the program.

The reflections from the program will allow us to develop long lasting change that will allow us to be ready just in case there is a different pandemic. The fact that the program will work both in-person and online will allow flexibility for different situations that can occur in the future. In developing the resources to be used in the study hall, we will need to develop them for both in-person and online. The sessions will be recorded and available online for the students in case they need to watch and review it at a later time.

As part of the next step, there are some recommendations to the government on how students from rural areas can be helped through the provision of a conducive place that can provide both internet and laptops for students in rural areas who can't access the internet in their home (See in the recommendation part). That would help the community to grow and help them to be ready to face any other pandemic that can affect more things especially in education sector.

During an interview with Dusengumuremyi, the Kepler registrar (2022) he explained explained that multiple students reached out communicating that they are having trouble attending the classes because they couldn't get electricity in their rural areas. This was a

challenge because it wasn't something that can be fixed easily and quickly which is why as part of the recommendation, infrastructure needs to be improved for the education sector to be prepared in any case of emergencies which can limit the students' movement. The infrastructure building will help in increasing the resilience of the community.

## Goal and Objectives

The goal is to help students who are struggling academically to stay motivated and achieve their academic goals. These are the objectives that are set to use while evaluating the success of the program. Basing on these objective, we will be able to see if the program has met the target or not.

- Increase students' motivation and engagement in by 20% in a year Student has lacked engagement because of working online and this program will provide them an opportunity that they will be able to use to access the support that they need for them to learn better. The other thing is that it will give them the access to work together and be able to learn from each other and stay engaged as students together.
- 20% increase of students who graduates in 3 years' time. Students will be able to work as team whenever necessary and they will be given a space so that they can learn and practice together. The other thing is that the protocol will be given in evening hours so that those that are at work can get an opportunity to learn and be on the same pace with other students around.
- Reduce 10% of student struggling with achieving academic goals. Student set goals weekly and monthly which they are supposed to achieve. When they fail they are offered

some more support by using improvement plans which are also have some goals that students are supposed to be achieving at a certain time. With the program, there is an expectation of the number of struggling students reducing.

## Activities and Partners

Stakeholders	Activities	Frequency
Students	Participating in the Study Hall, and Offering feedback	This is will happen weekly depending on the students' progress.
Academic Advisors	Facilitating the Study Hall, Evaluating students' Progress, Compiling the data and analyzing them	The team will be alternating and 1 academic advisor will be Attending the session Weekly.
Course Facilitators	Attending the Study Hall, Evaluating the progress	They will be attending depending on the need/gaps of students and they will be attending Bi-monthly

Alumnae	Offering motivational testimonies	They will be attending once in 2 months.
Parents/Guardians	Encouraging students to attend, Availing time for the students to Attend especially those who work from home.	The encouragement is needed daily for the students to stay motivated.
GEM HUB	Facilitating training, Evaluating the students' progress.	The training will be happening once a month depending on the need.

## Evaluation

The evaluation for this project will be happening on a monthly basis. This is because even the students' progress at Kepler are evaluated on a monthly basis. Again, I believe that a month is enough for a student to show a change whenever there is one. Intend to do multiple evaluations to make sure that the data can help in making decisions and changing the program to better suits the student's need and the institutions' growth. Basing on the students' progress and the feedback then we can be able to improve on the program. Additionally, there will be another

evaluation which will be quarterly, and this will combine the data of the first months so that we can be able to compare the data from last year and other past months.

## Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

Outcomes, Assumption	Indicators	Data Collection/Sources	Frequency	Person (s) Responsible
Outcome 1: Increase students motivation to by 20% with 6 months of operation.	Number of students who register for modules to learn will increase.	Survey	Quarterly	Academic Advisors
Outcome 2: 20% increase of students who graduates in 3 years' time.	Number of graduates will increase.	Students tracking tool like Power BI and other Weekly tracking tools	Quarterly	Advisors
Outcome 3: Reduce 10% of student struggling with	Number of struggling students will reduce.	Students track tool	Monthly	Advisors



achieving academic goals.				
Outcome 3: 10% of students engagement.	Level of engaged students will increase.	Survey	Monthly	Advisors
Outcome 4: Overall program success	Project usefulness score	Student scores the program through a survey.	Quarterly	Director of academic advising.

## Implementation

### A. Capacity

To successfully implement the program, we will need the help of the director of the academic advising who will help us in tracking the program success. With the help of the academic advisors, the program will be having an advisor once a week to monitor the students both in person and online so that they can get the support that they might be looking for. The data of students' progress will be recorded regular so that the team can have a baseline while evaluating the students.

### B. Money

The project will cost \$1,550 for a year to plan, implement and evaluate. This amount will be detailed in the budget table. The program will be happening at the Kepler campus and online

for students and staffs. This will reduce the cost because the space is for Kepler. In times of training, the students and the staffs will need some refreshments and those that will be doing well, will be getting rewards to motivate them and others.

Kepler will be funding the program from the budget of student support. The technology team at Kepler will be helping in developing tools to use in evaluation. The other thing is that the director of academic support will help in requesting the outside professional trainers to come and train employees on change management and students too.

### **C. Sustainability**

For us to get the long term results with impact. The project is going to be promoting:

- Students increase in the ability to learn independently.
- Increase of student success over time
- Reduction of students who spends longer in program
- Increase in mastery of the content
- More successful testimony from the program attendees
- Increase in the staff motivation

**In terms of finance:** Kepler will be able to run the program on their own which will reduce the cost that is spent on the outside stakeholders who participate in the program operation.

### **Extension**

- The program will expand to different Global Education Movement that has the same education program as the one for Kepler.
- Kepler will continue running the program in both campuses both Kepler Kigali and Kepler Kiziba to support the students who might be struggling academically.

### **D. Timeline**

The timeline is going to represent the beginning of the program to see how it will keep on improving and growing along the way. The evaluation will be every month but the general evaluation will be done after six months. This will allow us to learn from the feedback and grow from there.

For 12 Months												
Activities Year 1 (2022-2023)	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Seeking feedback on the program	x				x			x			x	
Applying the feedback		x	x			x	x		x	x		x
Developing the communication strategy to the external stakeholders			x			x			x		x	

Communicating the protocol to the academics staff.		x			x						x	
Developing the weekly celebration Newsletter			x			x			x		x	
Team meeting for evaluation				x				x				x
M&E			x			x			x	x		x

After the evaluation process this program will be recommended to other program that are working like Kepler especially those that are under the Global Education Movement which are using blended learning. The success of the program will allow Kepler to continue using the method in different cohorts which will make it continuous. To any other university will a similar model can benefit from using it with the hope that it will increase the productivity of the students and the wellbeing of the staff as well.

The feedback gathered at the end of 6 months will help in improving the program so that it can be used long-term in the organization. There will be constant evaluation of the program

from both the management of Kepler and the students' feedback in regards to how the program can be improved for the better use.

## Budget

Description	QTY	Amount
Change management training for staff	1	\$500
Rewards	10	\$100
Materials to use in trainings.	10	\$50
Hiring professional trainers on Change management	2	\$300
Students training	2	\$500
Miscellaneous		\$100
<b>Total Budget</b>		<b>\$1,550</b>

After presenting this program to the academic advising team, the director of academic advising will be the one to approve the budget so that the program can be conducted for six months to assess the impact before having it as a regular tool to use with struggling student since it can still be helpful even after the Covid. This is because it can allow the students to have the community of students to collaborate with and the access to the advisors'/course facilitators to support them whenever necessary.

# Recommendations to other Higher Learning Institutions

These recommendations are from the staffs and the students of Kepler Program with the hope that the government of Rwanda together with the education institution will create the system that is ready for sudden changes like pandemics and other disasters. Some of the recommendations are:

- It is strongly recommended to the government to establish Cyber Café in rural areas to allow students to use them because there are rural areas where electricity can be only in cities. This will offer the access to laptops and internet to allow students to have what to use during their online studies in case there is an another pandemic that can arise. Always be prepared for any challenges and educational institutions should equip their staff with all the necessary skills that could help them to cope with the challenges or other eventualities like climate events, armed conflict and other emergencies.
- There is a need to build relationship between higher learning institution through forums and social events so that they can be able to collaborate in sharing best practices and supporting each other in time of need. When the Covid-19 hit, each university tried to do its own things and even those that were able to continue online were operating on their own without even supporting those that were struggling which is something that needs to change.
- Focusing on ICT integration in education so that all concerned personnel are able to cope with working on any task regardless the change. There should also be a provision of enough learning resources and material to easily access the learning and instructional delivery.

- It would be better if schools introduce the blended learning methods a head of time so that in case of any situation, students keep their academics running without any burdens.
- Institutions should provide the professional development for teachers/educators on how to keep updating the course contents where applicable to adapt them to the new situation.

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