Dr. Charles Kivunja: Social media connecting students

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00:00:06,300 --> 00:00:06,600
Hi, everyone.

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00:00:06,700 --> 00:00:24,000
My name is Charles Kivunja and I am a senior lecturer in the School of Education where I teach mainly second-year Bachelor of Education students, a subject called teaching and assessing for active learning.

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What I am going to do this morning is to share with you my experiences in what I have done in the online teaching environment to make my students' experiences better.

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In particular to bridge their gap between the learning experiences of internal students and external students.

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As you know, the gap exists because the internal students in addition to the lectures get face-to-face interaction with me as their lecturer and with each other within a workshop or a tutorial arrangement, but the external students do not have that opportunity.

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And as a matter of fact, many of them express frustration about the loneliness that they experience as they engage in learning within the online environment.

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And so, since 2012, I started working on a design of my online lecture and workshop material which would give the external students an experience as close as possible similar to that of the internal students.

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And I did that by creating a social media technology, naturally not creating but utilizing social media technology called Google Discussion Circles.

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And what this does is to set up a virtual classroom to which I give access to all the internal students as well as all the external students.

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And then both cohorts, that's the internal and the external can meet within this virtual classroom and they discuss the topic for the week.

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I give them the topic for the week and so the internal students get to share their experiences with the external students.

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And so, there is a cross-fertilization of ideas and enrichment of the learning experiences.

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And in particular the external students feel that this design has enabled them to collaborate, to cooperate, and to communicate better with each other.

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They engage in critical thinking. They engage in problem solving. They engage in communication, in collaboration, and innovation, and they put additional resources from the internet into the learning community and they share this.

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So, the feedback has been very encouraging and I think it is one way to help bridge the gap between the learning experiences of internal students and external students and it will make it more enjoyable and more useful to them.

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00:03:52,900 --> 00:04:12,400
So, I hope this type of experience might help you to think of how to improve the learning environment -- the online learning environment for all of your students irrespective of whether they are on or off campus, whether you have face-to-face contact with them or not.

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All the best.