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ADAPTING MODERN METHODS OF LECTURING IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES: A CRITIQUE

Balogun, M.A

Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Otto-Ijanikin, Lagos, Nigeria
balogunmozn@yahoo.co.uk

Tejumola, Abduhaadi, A.

Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Otto- Ijanikin, Lagos, Nigeria
tejumolahaadi@gmail.com

Kareem Yisa, B

Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Otto-Ijanikin, Lagos, Nigeria
hajjoshioyemi4sure@gmail.com

Balogun, Ilyas, O.

Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Otto-Ijanikin, Lagos, Nigeria
ilyasbalogun130@gmail.com

Abstract

Different disciplines have explored the concept of lecturing from different perspectives. However, adapting some modern methods of lecturing in Nigerian universities have not been systematically studied. Therefore, this paper examines critically the modern methods of lecturing in our modern days tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

In agreement with other researches, this paper notes that there are many challenges facing the methods of teaching in Nigerian Universities today. Triangulation method was used to gather information for this paper, and both primary and secondary sources were used to obtain information for this article. The findings of this paper show that the traditional lecture method will not lead to much educational achievements unless it is combined with interactive engagements with the students and prompt feedback from the tutors

The paper recommends that if Government could live up to her expectation by provision of basic amenities and state-of-the-arts teaching facilities to the tertiary institutions, the phenomenon could be reduced. A concerted effort is therefore needed among all stake holders in the education sector for the task of promoting effective teaching in our tertiary institutions.

Keywords

Teaching, Lecturing, Professionalism and Modern

1. Introduction

This paper analyses the concept of lecturing. It examines different definitions of lecturing. The paper looks at characteristics and the different modern methods of teaching. The work asserts that if Nigerian universities could adopt it, it will make learning and teaching more interesting and effective. The paper also explains the rationale behind lecture method of teaching in our tertiary institutions and how it can be improved upon. It also discusses the challenges facing lecture method in Nigerian universities with a view to identifying some of the challenges it encounters. Solutions were equally proffered to some of these problems.

1.1 Research Problem

Poor academic performances and poor attendance are noted among students attending classroom today in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The challenges facing lecture method in teaching higher institutions need to be identified and solutions suggested to it.

1.2 Statement of the problem

1. What are the factors responsible for poor academic performances among the students in Nigerian higher institutions?
2. How can lecture method be improved upon?
3. What are the ways to make the lecturers to be more enthusiastic to their job?

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the challenges facing lecture method in teaching in tertiary institution?
2. Does the government provide solution to the challenges?
3. How can the problems be solved?

1.4 Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between lecture method and other methods of teaching in tertiary institutions

2. There is no significant difference between students taught with lecture method and other methods of teaching.
3. Lecture method is the best method of teaching.

1.5 Research Objectives

1. To examine the challenges facing lecture method of teaching
2. To analyse the causes of these challenges.
3. To suggest solutions to the identified problems

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study is restricted to adapting some modern methods of lecturing in some tertiary institutions in the South West of Nigeria.

1.7 Research Gap

Having gone through many works and my experience in teaching, there has not been any specific work on challenges facing lecturing method in Nigerian tertiary institutions and its solutions.

1.8 Research Methodology

The major source of collecting information for this study was mainly from secondary and primary source. Documents and other publications were studied. Qualitative research method was also used to understand people and their behaviour. It is suitable for this work because it includes observation. Observation entails a systematic data collection approach. (Robert, 2000)

1.9 Analysis

In this work, qualitative analysis and explanation was given for the reasons responsible for the persistent challenges facing lecture method. Solutions to these problems were also discussed from relevant work and observations.

2. Definitions of Lecturing

Exley and Dennick (2006) while tracing the history of lecturing opine that the term lecturers or readers are derived from the Latin *lecture* meaning 'to read aloud'. They maintain that this tradition goes back to many hundreds of years to the monasteries of Europe before the use of printed books, where scholars would travel hundreds of miles to gain access to specific texts.

Lecturing is 'an anachronistic form of teaching in which the teacher takes all the responsibility for deciding what the students are to learn, for preparing the content and for 'delivering' it-too frequently. 'Lecturing is also an innovative word for teaching people too

old to be treated as kids'. It can also be viewed as an opportunity to air one's own knowledge of the subject in front of (usually) attentive audience'. Lecturing can also be viewed as engaging with many people simultaneously to convey information, enthusiasm, knowledge and to generate interest and participation among the audience (Race, 2002). It is an interactive learning session, involving a human guide passing on knowledge and stimulating thinking and learning in others' (Svinicki, & McKeachie, 2011).

Lecturing is a traditional form of teaching with the primary objective of imparting knowledge to learners about a topic. Effective lecturing recognizes the limitations of this medium and augments the knowledge -supply function with learning texts (e.g. lecture notes and handouts). It focuses, instead, on those aspects of teaching that can only be delivered face-to-face: inspiring and motivating-making a subject 'come alive' and using performance skills to engage with the subject matter and explain it.

Having a critical look at some of these definitions Brown and Race (2002) suggest that lecturing has both negative and positive aspects. The positive aspect of lecturing is where certain conditions can be satisfied.



Figure 1: *Lecture at the Australian Defence Forces Academy*

3. Purposes/Goals of Lecturing

Marries, quoted in Gibbs (1998) argues that:

The essential function of lectures is to place knowledge in a meaningful context. By his synthesis of different points of view, or textbook treatments; by his emphasis on essentials, and the extrapolation of basic principles; by the clarity with which he relates the parts of his exposition, a lecturer can enable the student to perceive the subject coherently. But, perhaps even more usefully, he can provide a more personal context, showing why the subject interests and excites him, how he has used it in his own experience, how it relates to problems whose important his audience already

understands. From this, the student can more easily imagine how he himself could use it, and he develops his own context for mastering a problem.

Bliggs (2000) offers the principal reasons for giving lectures which include:

- Aid memory during the lecture;
- Aid revision;
- See the developing structure of a topic;
- Relate and reorganize during further study;
- Select what is important;
- Know what must be learnt; and
- Maintain attention

We lecture to achieve the following aims:

- i. To enthuse our students: This accounts for having a large-group lectures, this is done to enhance students' desire to learn. Through lecturing, students can be excited to read more, practise more, try out what they have learnt, test themselves out on what they have understood, talk to each other and continue to learn. Knowledge is power, through this; one will be able to know how students are responding to the lecturer material. Exley and Dennick (2006) view this as the best reason for delivering lectures.
- ii. It gives students the information they need: Lectures serve as useful occasions to give students useful information. Although one may not be able to give all the information required on a subject within the timescale of the normal one-hour lecture period, but by giving hand-out materials, these activities must be combined; speaking and giving them materials to read within the lecture. For this reason, you will probably want to balance an element of information delivery with other activities designed to make them think as suggested by Bligh, (2000) and Race (2002). Bligh (1998) claims that lectures are as effective as other methods of transmitting information. Exley and Dennick (2006) claim that lecturing presents recent research and information to the students
- iii. To cover the syllabus: It aims to cover what is necessary for students to know. Lecturers are sometimes bothered and concerned that they are not going to get through the entire syllabus, especially as time goes by because of varied unexpected circumstances. Time should be provided for reflection and digestion.
- iv. It is a cost-effective means of curriculum delivery: Compared this to small-group teaching, lecturing is cheap, one lecturer can teach hundreds or even thousands of

students at a time. Gibbs et al (1992) contended that students performance tends to diminish as class sizes increase and that strenuous efforts need to be made to ensure that more does not mean worse. Large audience needs more planning and forethought to keep active learning effective.

- v. As a means of accounting for class contact time-to quantify it: We are in an age of accountability and external scrutiny, the teaching role can be quantified in terms of bums-on-seats x hours-sitting-there. This is what people seem to think, people talk much about teaching quality, but not enough about learning quality.
- vi. To keep track of the students: This is basically attendance, but attendance means more than one thing-there's 'being there' and 'being attentive' for a start. It is easy to measure being there, but much harder to measure how attentive students are, falling attendance gives useful messages about lecturers and the students.
- vii. Some people enjoy giving lectures: Many lecturers find giving lectures the most rewarding aspect of their role. At its best, a lecture provides you the chance to share your experience and expertise. It helps you to get excited about the things you are really interested in. It makes you to work your way through a reasoned argument of a complex set of contradictions in a logical and coherent manner It puts a novel spin on a well-known set of issues and to energize and galvanize the students to go out and take the topic further. Lectures should be given with a high degree of contagious enthusiasm, confidence, passion and conviction, these are important for students in their audiences.
- viii. Lectures help the students to change their feelings and attitudes. Bligh (1998) asserts that changing attitude should not normally be the major objective of a lecture. He claims further that lectures are not effective in generating enthusiasm in a subject and therefore students' motivation should not normally be the major objective of using the method to teach. It also helps the students learn how to turn information into knowledge and to help students learn, and adapt into Higher education's assessment culture (Biggs, 2003).

4. How to Ensure Successful Lecturing

The problems associating with lecturing which include nerves, nightmares, drying up and stage fright. According to Brown and Race (2002) the problems can be solved by building one's confidence in terms of preparation, so the work you do prior to the lecture is likely to make one feel more comfortable.

- Making sure you know exactly what you are going to say right at the beginning so that you are not lost for words when you start. Write them down and do not to look at them

other than in extremist situation. Gibbs et al (1992) suggest starting from orientation, briefing, flagging, setting ground rules and answering students' questions.

- Take a couple of deep breaths before you start to speak without overdoing it.
- Make sure you have a drink of water on hand so that if your throat feels dry; you have something on hand to help.
- Make sure you can read your own notes and don't be too vain to wear glasses if you really need them.
- Watch other people whose lecturing style you admire and try to analyse what it is that they do well so that you can emulate it, so long as it fits in with your own personal style.
- Get someone to watch you teach and ask them in the preliminary stages only to comment on what you do well.
- Dressed the occasion, since you are in the limelight with all eyes focused on you means that your wear is of more significance than, it is in the seminar room or the practical class. It is sometimes expected that lecturers should dress relatively formally, for example in a suit, in other places it inspires ridicule. Explore what is normal practice where you work and looks for what fits you most.
- Be heard. Be audible, if voice amplifier is provided, ensure that you check and test it first. You should not shout or strain your voice. Think about the pitch of your voice and notice how it changes, when you talk in public.
- Getting through the syllabus, this is the task of the students, do not overexert yourself about this. You do not have to get through the syllabus. It is the students who need to get through it. Lecturers have got through it, and it is turn of the students now. Lectures should serve as 'spotlights', identifying the really critical issues, the most difficult ones for the students to understand well, treating them in depth in lecture. We should tell students what they should do on their own steam, which sources to select from, and how relevant and related they are in their end of session or semester exams.
- Adding 'finish' to your lectures; When it is about 10 minutes to the hour we should be least beginning to wind up the lecture' we should be heading to natural stopping place, summing up, going back to the particular purposes of the lecture, or some such appropriate closure phase of the event.
- Making our words work: by the tone of our voice, body language gestures, speed of delivery, facial expression, repetition and audible and visual evidence of our own passion and enthusiasm for the topic of the lecture.

- Dictating is not known for being efficient as far as learning payoff is concerned. It was sensible thing when books were rare and expensive, and before photocopying was invented, it seems students do not have concentration when it comes to dictation, they don't think about the meaning of the words.
- Explaining things to the students
- Asking questions; it has been said that the? Is the most important character on the key board? A question mark implies that some thinking needs to be done. There are several common bases for questions, including: who? Why? When? Where? Etc. It is said that 'everything important is simply the answer to an important question', questions should be asked alternately to enhance high learning pay off.
- Give the students a break, in the form of an actual rest for a few moments, an invitation to read their own colleagues' notes, to have a stretch, to tackle a problem, to silently reflect or to plan future work associated with a topic.
- Get some instant feedback on how they are doing, perhaps by a show of hands, instant questionnaire, post-it exercise or by electronic means
- Undertake mini-assessment task such as a quiz, a set of multi-task questions on screen, or a short-written test on the hand-out.
- Change the nature of the stimulus, in this regard, if the students have been looking at slides in the dark, put the main lights on and talk without reference to images for a while, or if the main technique up to that point has been talking through a PowerPoint presentation, give them a single image or video clip to look for a moment.
- Change the activity: This could be achieved by, if the students have been writing for 30 minutes or more, you could ask them just to sit and listen to you or audio clip for few minutes without writing anything down. If they have been the explanation given by the lecturers for a while, they could be asked to apply the concept to a problem, provides variety of options.

The main characteristics of a good lecturer are that they:



- A good lecturer presents the audience with opportunities for meaningful engagement with the subject material and with their lecturer.

Figure 2: *During lectures, students are supposed to:*

- Keep their attention engaged: Brown and Race (2002) have argued that students' attention spans in lectures can be varied. Bloom's (1953) studies of students' thinking during lectures and discussion indicated that more of students' thoughts were relevant to the content during lectures than during discussions, but that there was less active thinking in lectures than in discussions.
- Writing, this is divided into two; note taking and note making, the former entails copying down everything a student hears from the lecturer. Although note taking keeps students busy and quiet, because it is just copying something down without thinking about it much at all, It delivers little learning achievement, but note making is not just copying things down, but processing what is being shown and said, and turning it into their own notes. Lectures should share with students the differences between note taking and note making; and the latter division should be embraced by the students (Mutsuura et al, 2015).
- Asking questions: Brown and Race (2002) claim that this activity paves way for high learning achievement, because the person who asks the question is likely to learn something, despite its seemingly disadvantages, such as: Questions come slowly and randomly. Some students see it as prompt to pack up their books and papers prior to leaving. It is sometimes boring; students could still be encouraged to annotate questions while they are making notes. They should also be encouraged to answer questions as a way of making them learn more.

- Explaining things to each other (interactive engagement): By this student are encouraged to explain things to one another. The person explaining it gets a stronger understanding simply through the process of putting it into words and communicating it to someone else. This process has high learning benefit, because the benefits accrue when those who are doing the explanation deepen their own understanding by putting the idea across to those who didn't understand it (Petty, 2014).
- Hand-outs for learning, not just for information: This could be used for interactive learning materials, they should be full of things for students to do, during and after lectures, they become a much more valuable resource for students than just yet more information.

5. Others Modern Methods That Can Be Adopted To Teach In Nigerian Universities

- Seminars and tutorials: is often led by an academic tutor or guest speaker and can involve a presentation, but the format is normally much more informal and promotes open discussion around specific topics or theories. Debates and discussions around a specific topic or a piece of work, presentations will be prepared for the session. Tutorials also provide the students with the chance to ask questions and receive feedback about their work.
- Independent study; Taking responsibility for one's learning and managing time effectively; this involves peer mentoring and peer assisted study schemes. Learning support through; peer support structures led by students for students. Peer mentors are higher-year students on the same degree programme as the students, who will help the students find their feet when they arrive in the university and adjust to student life. Peer mentors will often organise activities and workshops to support students with a specific issue. They will also set up social events to help everyone get to know each other a little better.

PASS (Peer Assisted Study Sessions): The sessions are led by volunteer students (PASS leaders) studying the same subject, who act as facilitators. Sessions will often be based around a specific area of study. You will have the opportunity to consolidate and build on your existing knowledge through discussion with other students in an informal and supportive environment. You can compare notes, analyse, criticise, ask questions and talk through ideas. It encourages active learning in a friendly, informal and fun environment.

- **Academic advisers:** Every undergraduate student is assigned an academic adviser who is there to give advice about any academic issues throughout the duration of their course. Academic adviser will be able to help student with the transition from school or college to university – and help him to get to grips with studying and learning more independently. They will also be able to help the students develop their skills in academic writing or research, or any other skills that are specific to their degree programme. Student academic adviser is in addition to their personal adviser, who will be able to assist students with personal and pastoral issues unrelated to their study. Students can request a change of academic adviser at any time.
- **Field trips;** Fieldwork or field trips can be a compulsory element of some courses, such as laboratory and practical work. Fieldwork can help students to put their theoretical knowledge into practice, that will allow them to explore specific areas or learn techniques.
- **Problem-based/enquiry-based learning system;** PBL or EBL groups are presented with a real-life problem or scenario and students will need to work as a team to investigate potential solutions while identifying what skills or knowledge they need to effectively manage the situation.
- **Projects;** They will normally choose, within the confines of their project, how much time to spend on it. The number of words, in some cases, they may be asked to give a formal presentation on the results of their project. This is a good method of teaching. (Petty, 2014). Many Nigerian universities do not adopt this
- **E-learning;** This means students should be exposed to study online using material created by their lecturers, download papers and take online tests, or access relevant audio and video material.
- **Learning through research;** These opportunities give students the chance to be involved in work that has real impact beyond their degree, as well as equipping them with the analytical skills that will help them take the next step- whether that is into their new career or as continuing students.

6. Feedback

Lecturers should obtain feedback on their lecturing from students and peers. The students' feedback could be got from the following sources:

- Questionnaires: This could be in form of paper-based or electronic, asking the students to reply to a series of questions, most of which frequently can be answered by ticking a box or selecting a rating from excellent to poor, or corresponding number scale (Likert scale).
 - Informal chats: Dennick and Exley (2006) are of the opinion that this could take place at the end of the lecture, at social events, in the coffee bar, in the lecturer's office or in the student union café. They tend to be ad hoc, often unplanned, and discussions take their own course rather than focusing on specific issues.
 - Structured or semi-structured individual or group interviews: This could be meeting students in small groups to ask a range of pre-prepared questions. You ask them about aspects of your lecturing which can be a valuable way of finding out how you are doing or using a nominal group technique, where students themselves are asked to volunteer areas that they feel are particularly worthy of mention.
 - Post-its, post cards or notes: Students could be invited to give feedback by means of written, often anonymous brief comments that can be passed to the front of the lecture hall or deposited in a comments box placed at the exit of the lecture room. It can also be deposited in the departmental office or outside the lecturer's door. E.g. what do you like us to start/ stop/continue doing?
 - Show of hands methods: This is probably the most frequently used means of gaining an element of student interaction/participation in a lecture, ask a question about an aspect of your teaching and asking the students to put their hands up.
 - Individual electronic feedback/response systems in lecture rooms: Some institutions have installed into lecture theatres individual electronic response systems in lectures. Student can be asked to respond via an individual keypad to questions from the lecturer, who can immediately show on screen an analysis of responses from the whole cohort.
- From Peers:
- Peer observation schemes: Most people feel some level of anxiety about having a colleague sitting in the classroom watching what happens, especially when this observer is there as part of a quality assurance, review or inspectoral role. But this role is different from what we have just described, having your colleague to observe you is a methodology that is likely to provide a supportive environment for constructive criticism. This is usually done in the UK, they will be in the position to offer a well-informed critique of your lectures.

- Mentoring: This is done by more experienced colleague to give them benefit of advice based on experience and wisdom gained over the years.
- Course/unit/module review meetings: Many programmes hold annual or more frequent reviews at which feedback from students is presented and discussed. Sometimes, student representatives are asked to come to such meetings to provide what is hoped is a representative view of students' comments they have elicited from their peers in informal and semi-formal contexts. This sometimes could be a robust or dishonest if the student reps concerned fear that voicing negative response might impact on their own scores and grades.
- Evaluating your own lecturing: Variety of instrument could be used for this to evaluate yourself with feedback from students and peers. For instance, Assess Your Own Teaching Quality (Brown and Race, 1995), write some statements such as: I do this often, I do this from time to time, I can't do this yet, I don't intend to do this, Action plans and comments, etc., with the title (How do I Know how I'm doing?) ticking the boxes that apply to their own position in relation to the activities listed.

7. Common Lecturing Problems and Their Likely Solutions

Exley and Dennick (2006) list some of the challenges facing lecturing approach as follow:

- Too much material: It is commonest form of fault. Attempting to over teach with poor management of time, overwhelming students with information, the lecturers inhibit the learning of key concepts. Lecturers should therefore be circumspect by reducing the amount of material they want to present, remember the slogan 'Less is more', practise and time your presentation beforehand (Schmidt, et al, 2015)
- No outcomes: This is another common fault. Lecturers telling students what they wish to cover and not realising it. Outcomes are statements concerning what students should be able to do at the end of the lecture. This can be solved by being precise in what you want the students to achieve after the lecture.
- No attempt at contextualization: This is when lecturers do not connect the new topic with the previous one, or not explaining the importance of the topic, when starting a lecture always make connection with the prior knowledge and explain its importance and usefulness.
- Irrelevance: this is deviation from the prescribed curriculum, which technically irrelevant, lecturers should be well coordinated centrally and peripherally and know what the curriculum prescribes.

- Poor audio-visual aids: some lecturers scribble indecipherably on whiteboards, rubbing out what has not been written by the students; lecturers should write well and neat, no excuse for poor handwriting.
- Incompetent use of audio visual: inability to operate lights, overhead projector, the computer etc., lecturers should arrive early for a lecture using audio visual aids and ensure all equipment is working and have the knack on how to use it.
- Poor explanations: this when the lecturer starts to 'um' and 'err' and jumps over sections too rapidly or without explanation, no logical or coherent explanation. Lecturers should practice explanation until they have a rational sequence that makes sense. Lecturers should not take their own understanding for granted and trying to make up an explanation on the spot in a lecture, this can go wrong. Understanding something does not mean you can explain it to someone who has never heard about it.
- Too fast: Lecturing too fast can be a result of too much content or nervousness, a lecturer needs a good structure, well organized content and opportunities to practise and receive feedback from colleagues.
- Boring/monotonous/unstimulating: Lecturers speak in a boring monotone, he uses the same technique throughout the lecture with no variation, material is presented in a very unstimulating way. Lecturers should practise modulating the voice, go to a voice training course, where good presentation techniques are demonstrated. Try to develop some enthusiasm for your subject (Henk, et al 2015).

Other challenges include:

- Inadequate security for universities Cyber Café,
- Inadequate e-learning experts or manpower to train both the staff and the students,
- Internet facilities adopted in most universities are not functioning very well,
- Hardware used for e-learning classes are costly and some universities cannot afford it,
- Inadequate supply of electricity to e-learning centres for effective teaching and learning, Inadequate funding of the universities to buy e-learning technologies,
- Inadequate laptops or computers for both the students and staffs.
- Inadequate digital library and access to multimedia facilities,
- Inadequate funds and poor salary,
- Outdated books and reading materials in the library
- Some lecturers are not competent,
- Prejudice or sentiment in employing lecturers at the expense of merit,

- Proliferation of academic programme and universities at the expense of merit.



Figure 3: *Congested lecture hall*

8. Recommendations

- The Nigerian university education system needs a reformation for it to meet the societal needs. Academic reform cannot work unless relations among university authorities, faculty, students, and government are redefined based on mutual respect and collaboration.
- Lecture method should be with modern innovations which include self-study by the student, peer-instruction, interactive engagements and immediate feedback from the tutors (Henk et al, 2015)
- The university administration should show interest in ascertaining the functionality of newly established methods of learning and research to see how well they are going in view of the university's ICT goals and the general ICT policies of Nigeria.
- The library staff should also do more training sessions to upgrade students' skills in using the multi-media facilities.
- Library staff as well need to upgrade their skills as the digital library install newer technologies.
- Lecturers should direct their students to the digital library for specific assignments, and use it to evaluate the relevance of the e-library and subsequently arm the university administration with information on ways to equip and generally position the digital library to serve the students better
- There should be more in-training services for the lecturers.

- Lecturers should be trained in appropriate skills in e-learning. Power supply should be adequate or improved upon to enhance the use of e-learning in our universities.
- Government should provide e-learning technologies to Nigeria universities to equip their e-learning centres. Government should release money to the universities for adequate funding of e-learning centres.
- Universities should employ capable computer experts to train Nigerian universities lecturers on how to use e-learning technologies to deliver their lectures. Lecturers should be given computers to enable them prepared their e-learning lectures and notes. Private sectors, non-governmental and voluntary organizations should assist to equip universities e-learning centres.
- Lecturers should be employed on merit and world class lecturers must be allowed to teach in our universities and the modern methods of lecturing should be used to enable students to learn proficiently. Adequate salary should be paid to them promptly and research grants should be released adequately. Lecturers should be sponsored by the government to attend conferences, seminars both within and outside Nigeria.

9. Conclusion

This paper has made attempt to investigate the contemporary phenomenon of lecturing and its challenges facing Nigerian universities today. There is the need for Nigerian universities to move towards more business-like forms of management and governance. The roles of e-learning in teaching and learning process cannot be overestimated, especially in Nigeria where emphasis in being placed on technological development. E-learning and adapting modern methods of lecturing are a powerful tool that can be used to enhance and encourage effective teaching and learning process in universities. Through e-learning classes, students will be able to work independently and acquire more knowledge in their disciplines. Both the government and stakeholders should join hand together to ensure adequate provision of e-learning resources to our universities to facilitate technological advancement and to aid teaching and learning process. Other challenges should also be solved frontally for our universities to compete with global universities in the 21st century.

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