E-Learning Requirements for Education in the Fashion Industry

Dr. Vandana Jaglan

Programme Coordinator (Textile Design), Satyam Fashion Institute, Noida

Abstract

Classrooms are boring. Today students feel school is not challenging or interactive enough. It has been said that there are two reasons why we learn; some learning is essentially forced on us while the other is what we sit back and enjoy. E-Learning has brought back the joy in learning through its innovative and interactive content and delivery. This paper is an attempt to look into the need for use of e-learning solution specially for the fashion and design industry. Apparel sector, a subsidiary of textiles industry provides employment to large population in India. Fashion marketing and merchandising applies to merchandising of fashion apparels and accessories. The apparel sector in India has been seeing a considerable growth.This is an ever-evolving industry and offers potential areas of engagement through e-learning platforms and solutions.

Key words: E-learning, Classroom teaching, Fashion industry, Fashion marketing, Fashion merchandising

Introduction

Over the past years, the textile and apparel industry has been building up on its capacities at various levels, expanding its product base, incorporating innovative technology, and engineering newer avenues of business. The sector is one of the largest industrial sectors of the country and is a major propellant for the economy's growth. The export industry has been showing a growth higher than domestic industry over the past years. But, the export industry in India requires a major chunk of workforce with good knowledge in fashion marketing and merchandising.

EMPLOYMENT IN TEXTILE AND APPAREL INDUSTRY

The Indian textiles industry is arguably the largest organized industry in the country in terms of employment and number of operational units, provides employment to nearly 9 Crore workers, because of large number of subsidiary industries dependant on this sector.

This employment generation of 17 million workforce which will require the fashion education institutes to fulfil the demand of the industry and equip the students with the latest industry skills and training.

Review of Literature

There have been inherent issues and challenges dominating the fashion and apparel industry, and one major amongst them is shortage of trained and educated workforce. National Institute of Fashion Technology was the first fashion college in India to be established in 1986 to fulfil the requirement of trained workforce for fashion industry. Since then we have seen many other fashion colleges and institutions growing up (Table 1). A few of them are Army Institute of Fashion and Design (AIFD); JD Institute of Fashion Technology

(JDIFT); Indian institute of Fashion Technology (IIFT); Pearl Academy of Fashion (PAF); WLC College India; Academy of Fashion Studies; ALT Training College; Apeejay Institute of Design; B D Somani Institute of Art; INIFD, NID, NIIFT, Satyam Fashion Institute etc (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1: Major Fashion Colleges in India

College	Year of Inception	Location	Major Courses
Army institute of fashion and design	2004	Bengaluru	Fashion Design; Apparel merchandising and Logistics management
JD institute of Fashion Technology	1988	Mumbai, Bengaluru, Gurgaon and 10 other major locations	Fashion and apparel design; fashion photography; Merchandising, Fashion Business Management
Indian Institute of Fashion Technology	2001	Delhi	Fashion design; Garment Manufacturing Technology; Apparel Merchandising
Pearl Academy of Fashion	1993	Delhi	Fashion Merchandising; Garment Manufacturing; Fashion Retail; Fashion Marketing; Fashion Design
National Institute of Fashion Technology	1986	Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, Kolkata and 9 other locations	Fashion Design; Fashion Management; Fashion Apparel Production
Satyam Fashion Institute	2007	Noida	Fashion Design, Textile Design, Fashion Communication,

			Lifestyle Accessories and Mass Media courses
School of Fashion Technology	1998	Pune	Fashion Design, Textile Design, Fashion Communication, Jewellery Design, Interior Design
WLC College India	1996	Delhi, Mumbai and several other locations	B. Design courses

Source: College Websites

Apart from these Indian colleges there are a vast majority of international fashion colleges those provide education in the field of fashion. All of these colleges accept international student in-campus and many of them have 100% online delivery option available. Not only for the online students but all these colleges provide a unique mix of online and offline delivery of course to enhance the learning procedure of the student. As shown in table all of the colleges follow a blended approach of course delivery to students, i.e. Classroom teaching mixed with online teaching approaches. The colleges bold in the table 1.2 are the colleges which apart from blended approach provide 100% online certification courses.

Table 1.2: List of International Fashion Colleges

College/ University	Online Courses	Location	Blended Teaching Approach
Academy of Arts University	Yes	San Francisco	Yes
Art Institute of Pittsburgh	Yes	Pittsburgh	Yes
Berkeley College	Yes	New York	Yes
Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising	Yes	Los Angeles	Yes
International academy of design	Yes	Chicago	Yes

and training			
LaSalle College	Yes	Philadelphia	Yes
London College of Fashion	Yes	London	Yes
Marymount University School of Arts and Sciences	No	Virginia	Yes
Michigan State University–DHED	No	Michigan	Yes
Milan Fashion Campus	Yes	Milan	Yes
Parson School for Design	Yes	New York	Yes
POLIMODA	No	Dallas	Yes
Pratt Institute	No	Brooklyn	Yes
Royal college of Art	No	London	Yes
Savannah College of Art and Design	No	Savannah	Yes
Washington University School of Art	No	Washington, D.C.	Yes
West Valley College - Fashion Design and Apparel Tech	No	California	Yes
Westwood college	Yes	USA (various locations	Yes
Fashion Institute of Technology	Yes	USA	Yes

Source: College Websites

As clear from the data most of the international colleges follow the latest way of teaching through e-learning for two benefits; firstly to equip the students in a better way than traditional methods by bringing in more practicality in the course structure and secondly providing a chance to the working professional to get better and updated knowledge at their working places only.

DEFINITION OF E-LEARNING

E-learning is commonly referred to the intentional use of networked information and communications technology in teaching and learning. A number of other terms are also used to describe this mode of teaching and learning. They include 'online learning', 'virtual learning', 'distributed learning', 'network and web-based learning'. Fundamentally, they all refer to educational processes that utilize information and communications technology to mediate asynchronous as well as synchronous learning and teaching activities (www.e-learning.nic.in).

E-learning is the process to create, develop, deliver, manage and assess dynamic and simulative learning content in the most user friendly way using latest technologies.

Under its umbrella, it covers following points:

- The convergence of the Internet and learning, or Internet-enabled learning.
- The use of technology to create, foster, deliver, and facilitate learning, anytime and anywhere.
- The delivery of individualized, comprehensive, dynamic learning content in real time, aiding the development of communities of knowledge, linking learners and practitioners with experts.
- A phenomenon delivering accountability, accessibility, and opportunity to allow people and organizations to keep up with the rapid changes that define the Internet world.
- A force that gives people and organizations the competitive edge to allow them to keep ahead of the rapidly changing global economy

E-Learning has already established its credentials and its popularity can be gauged from the fact that delivery is not restricted to just plain text but has crossed boundaries to video creating virtual class rooms via video conferencing. The introduction of a variety of technologies has made it possible to convert it from impersonal to highly interactive medium of pedagogy (the art and science of teaching).

E-learning offers following benefits to learners:

a) Real Time Learning

E-Learning offers real-time learning and application of critical knowledge. E-Learning is immediate and provides up to date information, this information can be saved and reviewed again and again.

b) Learner based training (LBT)

E-Learning changes the focus of training from traditional instructor-based to learner-based training. It can be customized according to the learners pace and needs.

c) Individual training

An effective e-Learning system is based upon the learners learning style, job requirements, career goals, current knowledge, and personal preferences. E-learning creates individualized learning experiences.

d) E- learning Empowerment

E-Learners are responsible for their own learning. This empowers them to manage and implement their own learning and growth plans. This is crucial for individual growth. Empowerment creates confidence and direction, resulting in powerful learning and growth possibility.

e) Simulation

E-Learning introduces a truly innovative way of simulating each learning experience with content and ideas provided by some of the leading professionals in the world.

f) Collaboration

This is accomplished through either joint problem-solving or discussion among study groups through forums, discussion groups and chat rooms. Collaboration is the way to effective learning.

g) Anytime and anywhere flexibility

E-learning is truly flexible; it can be done anytime and in any location. The reality of training in a virtual information classroom, across continents, is now possible, anytime, anywhere- 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

h) Cost effective.

Costs can be applied to each learner and results can be measured against them. There are also no expensive work seminar arrangements with travelling and other related costs.

i) Quantifiable ROI

E-Learning can be effectively measured in terms of knowledge gain and retention. College can easily establish systems that can track progress, report and results. This is where ROI will be recognized by both the college and student instantly.

E-LEARNING FRAMEWORK AND CURRENT COURSE STRUCTURE TO E-LEARNING

When moving to e learning, it is important to judge how to adapt classroom material to successful e learning experiences. Assets such as: slides, lectures, handouts, exercises, and motivational stories must be converted. Converting resources online can be challenging. Some conversion may involve simply switching to a file format; others may call for you to reconstruct the asset in a completely new form.

Tools to Convert Assets

To decide which tools to use when, judging the training objectives, including degree of performance and how to evaluate achievement are done. A delivery technique that will allow evaluating the achievement of the objectives is always selected.

a) Video

The easiest way to convert lectures is to videotape the trainer, digitize and compress the film, and post the clip onto a streaming-media server. This method is suited to very simple learning needs.

b) Audio

Audio has some advantages over full video. High-quality audio files are smaller and need less bandwidth than even poor-quality video. It is good to try out with various settings to produce a file that the trainee can download and play easily. Inserting the sound into a multimedia program, like Macromedia Flash, will take care of the compression and require enormous amount of money.

c) Slides

Slide presentations have been the support of most training classes. Before altering classroom slide presentations for use in an online lesson, it is important to assess the complexity of slides, such as animation, transition, sounds, and other special effects. While using PowerPoint slides, the simplest solution is to use

the Save as HTML command. This selection creates a linked series of Web pages analogous to the slides and lets developers target certain browsers.

d) Handouts

Courses normally use handouts, textbooks, and assign library readings. All reading can be converted to electronic form. Adobe Acrobat PDF permits users to distribute copies of any document that can be printed. Creating PDF documents necessitate Acrobat publishing software, and trainee must have the free Acrobat Reader program. Acrobat documents can be simple imitations of their paper equivalent, or hypertext links, thumbnail images of pages, sounds, and other multimedia can be added.

e) Interaction

This includes Tests in the form of true or false; multiple choice, Macromedia Authorware and CourseBuilder for Macromedia Dreamweaver offer regular test templates, including true-or-false, multiple choice, drag-and-drop, and text entry.

f) Practice exercises

Many courses include laboratory sessions or other practical activities. Online versions need to exercise the decision-making processes rather than imitate the classroom activity. This kind of activity needs no technology other than plain HTML and a Web browser.

g) Simulated tasks

Sometimes it's too complex or expensive to have trainee interact with the actual system. Essentially, a fundamental simulator is a linked series of image maps of the various dialog boxes. Correctly performing a step, such as clicking on a tab or button, displays the next panel or dialog box in the procedure. Simulation uses Dynamic HTML and JavaScript programming. Tools as Macromedia Director, Authorware, and Flash help developers to build excellent interaction by automatic scripting.

h) Discussion forums

The majority of Internet server packages include a component to sustain discussion groups, and similar software is often included in browsers or email readers.

Methodology

New software programs have made life much easier for developers and facilitators of e learning. Interactive exercises, testing, collaboration, and content development are significantly simplified. What used to take days/weeks can now be done more quickly - with modest or no coding/programming skills required.

The research design used for the study is as under:

(A) Technique: Survey, Observation

(B) Sampling: The technique used for sampling of students was judgemental and the students of 2nd, 3rd and 4th year of B.Des. (Fashion Design) and B.Des. (Fashion & Lifestyle Accessories) were chosen as they have enough exposure to the different kinds of the subjects in the curriculum. Also, 12 faculty members were also given the questions from these streams to understand the requirements from the facilitators.

Results and Discussion

The results of the survey are discussed as below:
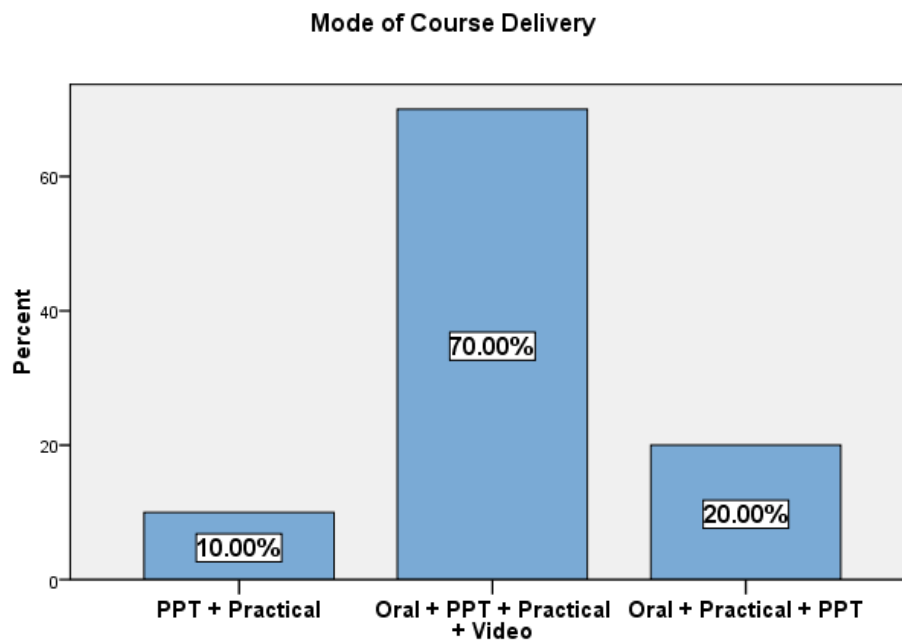
    a)   Mode of Course Delivery

The mode of delivery denotes the method used by the faculty to deliver the course content in the classroom to the students.

Figure 1.1 represents the response of 60 students and figure 1.2 represents the response of faculties. The respondents were open to choose more than one option. As seen in table 5.1, 39.3% students said that faculties use many options for course delivery like oral/ power point presentation, practical demonstration and videos. The responses obtained in the questionnaire show that animation or online delivery is zero in current scenario. 21.4% said that the most popular mode were Oral, Power point presentation and practical demonstration. This is also supported by the fact that the subjects in the course curriculum of NIFT are a blend of theory subjects and process-based subjects therefore, as per the requirement of the subject, the mode may be different.
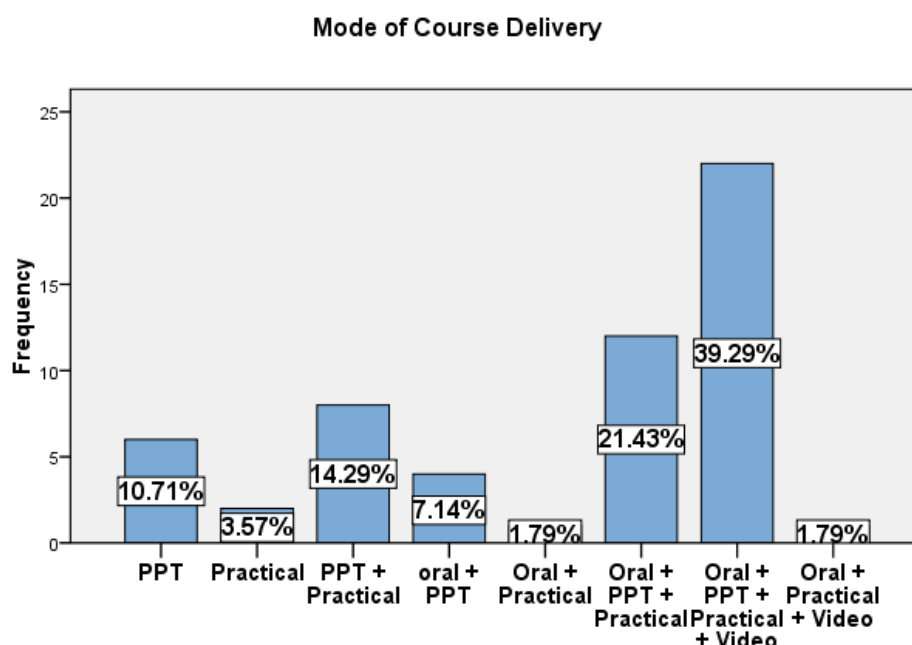
Fig.1.1: Student's response for the mode of course delivery

**Figure 1.2: Faculty's response to the mode of course delivery**

Figure 1.2 shows the response given by the faculties for the same question. As seen in the graph, 70% faculties said that oral, power point presentation, video as well as practical demonstration are used together for delivery of the course.

b) Problem in following up lecture/ presentation/ demonstration

When students and faculties were asked about any kind of problem faced by them during lecture/ presentation or practical demonstration, 86.67% students and 100% of the faculties provided affirmative response as shown in fig. 1.3(a) and 1.4(a).
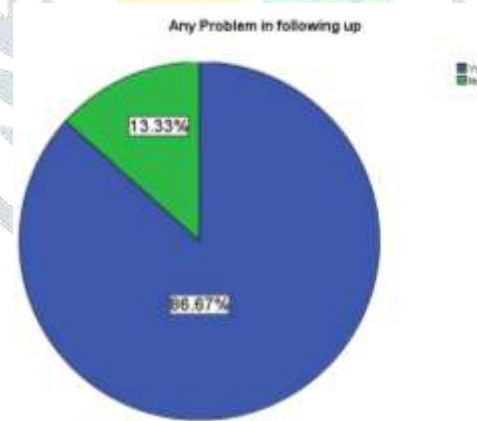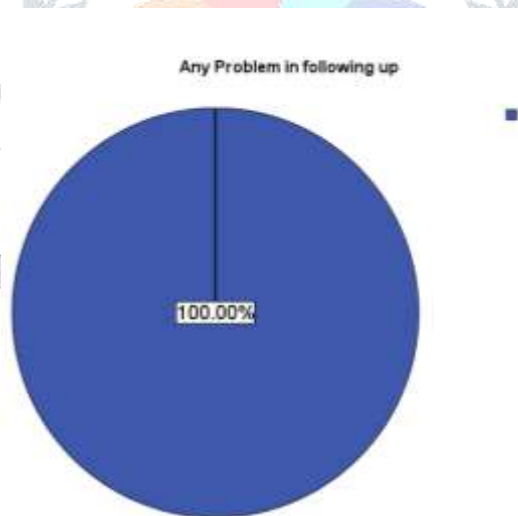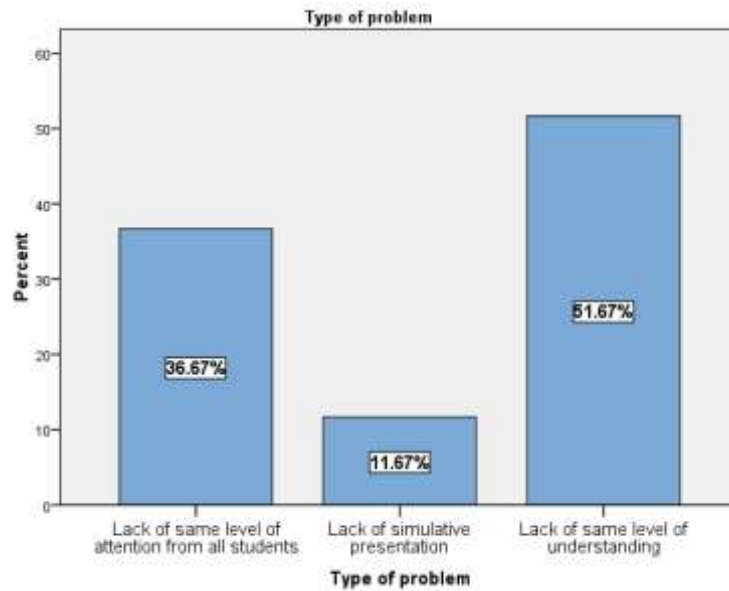

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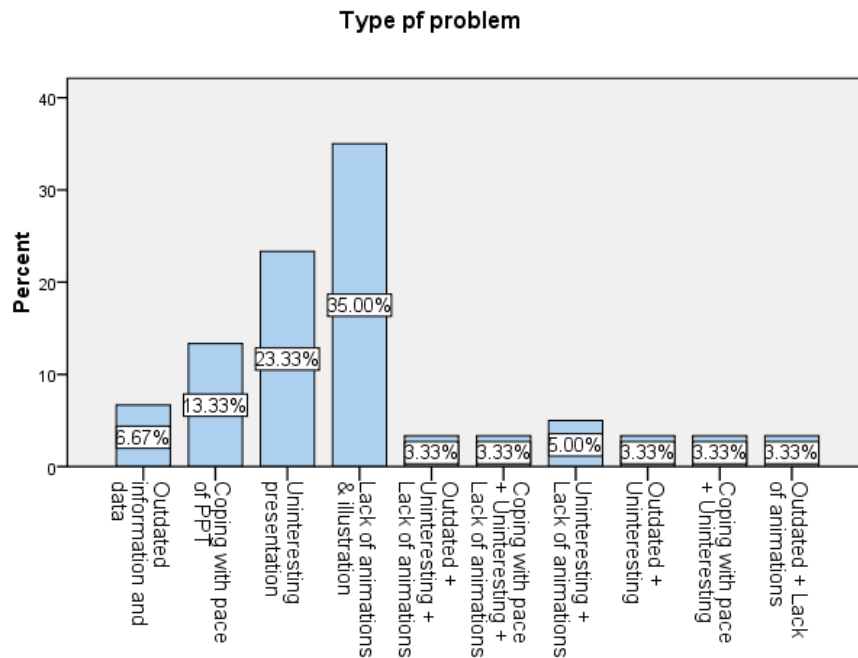
(b)

Figure 1.3: Students' response to following up

The most common type of problem as said by students (35%) was lack of animations and simulation followed by uninteresting presentation (23.3%) as seen in fig. 1.3 (b). The most common problem seen by faculties was lack of same level of understanding (51.6%) as seen in figure 1.4 (b) followed by lack of same level of attention (36.6%).
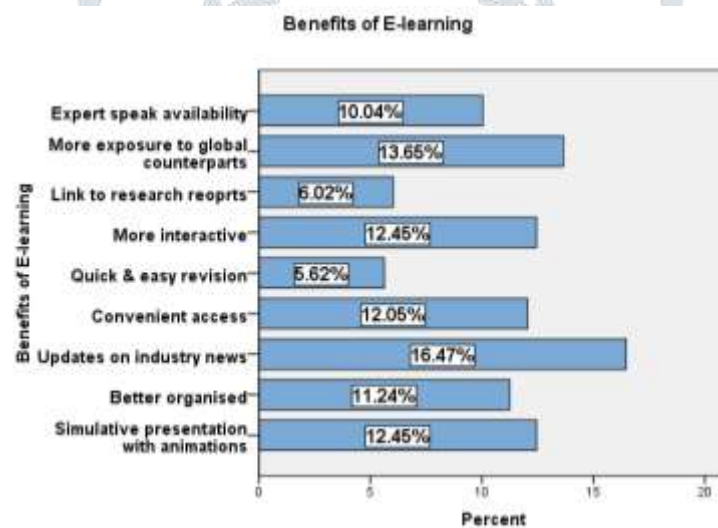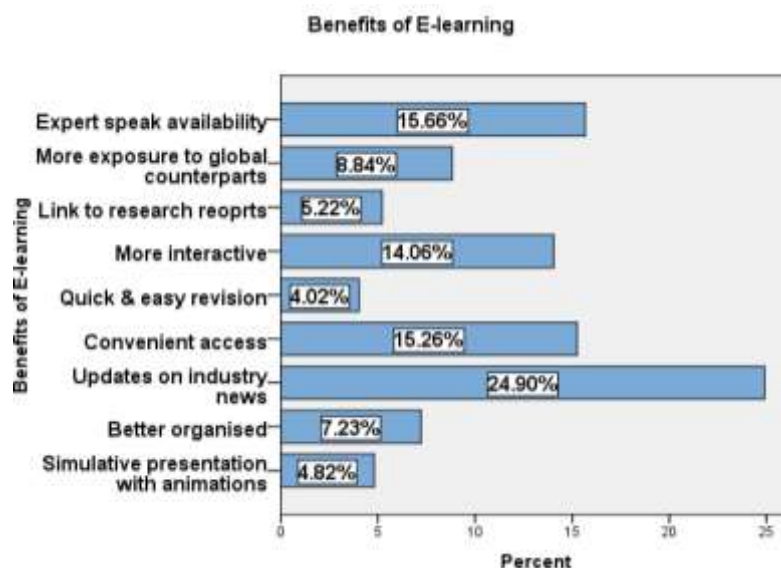

(a)

(b)

Figure 1.4: Faculty's response to problem of following up by the students

c) Benefits of E-learning

The respondents were asked about the benefits that are derived from e-learning. Most commonly opted choice amongst students and faculty was updates on industry news (fig. 1.4)

(a) Students' response

Benefits of E-learning

(a) Faculty's response

Figure 1.4: Response to benefits of e-learning

Other popular benefits chosen by the respondents were exposure to global counterparts, more interactive and convenient access. Also, other choices were also opted by them. In general, it is seen that the respondents feel that e-learning has several benefits.

- The most popular mode of course delivery includes oral, power point presentation, practical demonstration and use of video slides. This is also supported by the fact that the subjects in the design course curriculum is a blend of theory subjects and process-based subjects therefore, as per the requirement of the subject, the mode may be different.

- As found in the study, the most common type of problem as said by students was lack of animations and simulation followed by uninteresting presentation. The most common problem seen by faculties was lack of same level of understanding and attention during the classes. Thus, e-learning features like uploading lectures/ slides on intranet may help solve the problem of slow learning. And use of animations and simulations, online lectures may arouse interest of the students into the lectures.

- When students were asked about how they cope with the problems faced in class, the most popular choice was online search followed by self study in library. While faculties said they give presentations to the students and ask them to see more examples on internet. This finding further supports the concept of e-learning for coping up problems of slow learning seen in classroom lectures.

Conclusion

Globally, E-Learning has already established its credentials and its popularity can be gauged from the fact that delivery is not restricted to just plain text but has crossed boundaries to video creating virtual class rooms via video conferencing. It is evident in this paper that in Indian context, there is a great scope of implementation of e-learning solutions for fulfilling the demands of the fashion industry. Most of the students and faculties feel that the traditional classroom settings may include online/ interactive features to make it more interesting and attentive.

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