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World Environment Day 2023: How environmentally conscious students are revolutionising sustainability

With a heightened awareness and a deep commitment to preserving the planet, these students are spearheading innovative solutions through sustainable products and start-ups.

Shruti Bansal New Delhi, UPDATED: Jun 5, 2023 16:53 IST





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World Environment Day 2023: How environmentally conscious students are revolutionising sustainability

By Shruti Bansal : In recent years, a remarkable shift has taken place among students worldwide. With an increased awareness of environmental issues, young minds are stepping up to tackle the challenges of sustainability. Today, students are not only passionate about preserving the planet, but they are also becoming active participants in creating a greener future. Let us see how students are embracing environmental consciousness and spearheading the development of sustainable products and startups.

To delve into this, India Today has a discussion with a handful of industry experts to understand how the emergence of environmentally conscious students and their dedication to sustainable practices is a testament to the power of young

AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

"The core component of teaching pedagogy is to give input on the sustainable and ethical implications of every concept taught in the class. During the Lifecycle of a student, inputs on Finance, Economics, Marketing, Branding, Digital Marketing, Research, Data Analytics, Manufacturing process, Operations & Supply Chain, and Entrepreneurship are given," says Gaggan Bhatia, Department Lead of Fashion Business, Pearl Academy.

"Extensive conversation on sustainability, which is not limited to environmental sustainability but covers social, human, and economic parameters as well, is made. The students are encouraged to incorporate these inputs in their class and final projects," he adds.



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"Our student-led task forces are dedicated to driving positive change and creating awareness about Sustainable Development Goals. Through projects like 'Rethinking Plastic, Climate Action project, paper usage monitoring, thrifted fashion clothing, recycling e-waste, growing your own microgreens and compost, our students actively engage in research, activities, and awareness campaigns, says Rima Singh, Head of School, DPS International, Gurgaon.

KEY DRIVERS OF CHANGE

"Students use their passion, creativity, and determination to raise awareness and inspire others to adopt sustainable practices. Through education, innovation, entrepreneurship, collaboration, and digital advocacy, they make meaningful contributions to combating environmental challenges and inspire new generations to prioritize sustainability," says Gaggan Bhatia.

"Our aim is to promote recycling, composting, and responsible disposal practices, thereby minimizing waste generation and creating a zero-waste environment. Through this endeavor, we instill in our students the values of environmental stewardship and waste reduction, shaping them into responsible global citizens," says Ajay Singh, Principal, The Scindia School.

STUDENTS ORGANISATIONS AND CLUBS

"Students form networks and collaborations with like-minded individuals and organizations. They join environmental clubs, participate in student initiatives, and engage with NGOs and other sustainability-minded groups. These networks provide a platform to share ideas, resources, and experiences, amplify the impact of their efforts, and encourage others to join them, says Mr Bhatia.

"We believe that sustainable practices are the key to a better future. Through a wide range of initiatives, we are happy to be nurturing a culture of environmental responsibility and instilling a deep sense of stewardship within our campus community," says Siddharth Chaturvedi, Executive Vice President, AISECT Group.

STUDENTS AS AGENTS OF CHANGE: SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS AND STARTUPS

UGreen Technology focuses on reducing Carbon Footprints by directly capturing the carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and flue gas and converting the captured CO2 to value-added industrial products like Syngas, carbonated salt, and Compressed CO2.Ugreen is being supported by the incubator centre of UPES-Runway Incubator.

"During the second year of my BTech program, I visited an oil field and refinery. Witnessing the high carbon emissions at the plant, I couldn't help but question why no action was being taken to address this issue. When I expressed my concerns to my mentor, he encouraged me to propose a viable solution, explaining that reducing production or refining activities was not feasible. The experience inspired me to delve into extensive research," says Gaurav Dwivedi, Co-Founder, UGreen.

"After researching and brainstorming for two years, we achieved a breakthrough and came up with this technology. My profound love and commitment to nature became the driving force behind the establishment of UGreen Technology, he adds.

Vyakti is a start-up that began in 2020 with an undergraduate student in Delhi. The idea behind this start-up was to improve the condition of the animal leather industry. The start-up prioritise materials that have a minimal environmental impact and support the health of our planet. For instance, we utilize vegan leather derived from cactus, a renewable resource that is 80 to 90 percent biodegradable.

"We offer a range of handcrafted, plant-based leather bags and accessories like wallets, duffle bags, sling bags, shoulder bags, mobile bags, etc., made from sustainable materials. Our products are functional, timeless, and cruelty-free, and kind to the planet. We believe that sustainability should not come at the cost of style and quality, and our products are a testament to this belief," says Sarthak Khandelwal, Founder, Vyakti India.

STRATEGIES USED BY STUDENTS TO ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY

Students apply different strategies based on their classroom learning to ensure their products' sustainability and environmental friendliness throughout their life cycles. Common strategies they use are:

LIFE CYCLE ASSESSMENT

Students conduct a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) to assess the environmental impact of a product from production to disposal. Life cycle assessments help identify areas for improvement and enable informed decisions regarding design, materials, production processes, and end-of-life management. By considering the entire life cycle, students plan to minimise the environmental impact of their products.

MATERIAL SELECTION

They pay attention to the materials used in products. Students are also extensively researching, identifying, and sourcing environmentally friendly materials such as recycled or upcycled materials, organic and non-toxic substances, and responsibly sourced materials. By choosing sustainable materials, they reduce the environmental impact and potential harm caused by products.

DESIGNING FOR SUSTAINABILITY

From the outset, students are encouraged to focus on incorporating sustainable design principles. Factors such as material selection, energy efficiency, waste reduction, and recyclability are considered in the design process. By adopting concepts such as cradle-to-cradle design, they can create products with minimal environmental impact and easily disassembled and recycled at the end of their life cycle.

CO-OPERATION AND CERTIFICATION

Students work with a third party or certification body to validate a product's sustainability claims. They strive to obtain certifications such as organic, fair trade, energy saving, and recycling labels. These certifications give consumers confidence and assurance that products meet specific environmental standards.

CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND INNOVATION

The increasing environmental consciousness among students is a powerful force driving positive change in society. By embracing sustainable practices and actively participating in the development of eco-friendly products and startups, students are shaping a future that prioritises the well-being of our planet.

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