



Mainstreaming sustainability education from schools to Higher educational institutions in India

Breakout Session- By WIPRO Foundation and UN Environment Education and Youth Alliance

Critical sustainability challenges including climate change, resource extraction and water scarcity are at the center stage of world attention. This has resulted in concerted efforts worldwide to deal with these challenges using medley of crosscutting global treaties and binding commitments. While such conversations form the backdrop for a slew of initiatives and policy decisions by nations and the civil society at large, it is imperative that educational institutions join this narrative by identifying creative intersections of the work in their respective roles. The educational sector plays a critical role both as a fountainhead of new ideas and innovations and as an enabler of social and ecological change. It is now well accepted that sustainability issues cannot be adequately addressed without driving sustainability thinking and action through the learning process. Strengthening holistic thinking at the formative years of an individual's development will go a long way in ensuring that collectively as a society, we integrate sustainability solutions rather than dealing with problems post-facto. It is also imperative that we engage with the Higher education domain in particular as it is, they who will be in the decision making and leadership positions in about 5- 10 years when the stocktaking of the global goals and climate change adaptations by all countries reach a crucial juncture. Of particular importance is also the fact that, one of the key enablers towards pursuing a Green Economic growth is the capacity building of the higher education sector. India is a signatory to the Global Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE). The Partnership supports nations and regions in reframing economic policies and practices around sustainability to foster economic growth, create income and jobs, reduce poverty and inequality, and strengthen the ecological foundations of these economies

It is with this overarching perspective in mind that we urgently need to engage with all the relevant stakeholders in the higher education system in addressing some of these big questions before us. Our endeavor will be to create a platform that will enable different stakeholders in the higher education ecosystem to come together and to co-create new pathways in sustainability education.

The time is right to steward this whole movement forward in a more strategically directed manner to highlight specific case studies, promote larger advocacy and nurture the potentially transformative role that integrating sustainability education can play in multiple disciplines.

This discussion could serve us in building organizational synergies and setting up the foundation for a larger multi-disciplinary network of higher education sustainability educators across India. We strongly believe that these very individuals and their institutions can play the role of nodal centers disseminating critical learnings and knowledge over time. Interactions with academia has shown us that, a collaborative process of building knowledge repositories across disciplines is already underway. The time is come to take forward these discussions to a logical end- the challenge of infusing sustainability ideas, concepts and practices into the curricula of institutions of higher education. It is our belief that co-creating and catalyzing such platforms will lead to something substantive on an ongoing basis.

This is a progressive first step in the right direction. We are aware that we are in the early stages of a journey that promises to be as exciting as it will be challenging. But we are optimistic that leading academic institutions from across disciplines will come forward in pioneering new paths and in co-creating the change we all want.

About WIPRO Foundation and UN Environment Education and Youth Alliance

WIPRO Foundation, committed to promoting Good Citizenship through its initiatives and programmes such as the Wipro earthian sustainability education program. Launched in 2011, this niche program was seen as a natural intersection of our commitment to the key domains of education and ecology and as a key driver of long term and systemic change. For WIPRO, there is a clear need to support and drive sustainability thinking and action through the learning process in schools and colleges across India. Our program vision sees us engage with chosen institutions and stakeholders over a period of time through a journey of institutional learning and explorations in sustainability by playing a facilitative role.

UN Environment's Youth Education Alliance, with a mission to support progress towards the achievement of the Global Goals by collaborating with all partners in education to inspire, inform and engage the next generation of young leaders with objectives to work with partners in both formal and non-formal education space to adopt, integrate education for sustainable development in respective platforms, systems, curricula and campuses