

Zero Waste Campuses

Building a Sustainable Future Through Education

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EDUCATIONAL institutions, besides being learning spaces, are centres of transformation. They influence society not only through knowledge, but also through values, practices and actions. Through mentoring, role-modelling, and positive reinforcement, institutions can inspire youth to exert influence in their power base, which will then vibrate to other sections of society, creating a ripple effect. However, today's fast-paced, consumption-driven culture, fuelled by branding, competition, and convenience, has led to a surge in disposable lifestyles. The rise of 'one-go' habits has significantly increased waste generation, not just at the point of consumption but also during production and packaging. A large portion of this waste is plastic-based and non-biodegradable, which poses long-term environmental threats.

Likewise, fast fashion and frequent replacement of electronic devices, often driven by social media trends and the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) mindset of youth, is compounding the environmental challenges. The planned obsolescence, technological or stylistic, by the companies to boost consumer demand, is leading to shorter product cycles and encouraging youth to go for constant product upgrades, thereby accelerating environmental degradation.

In India, in the last five years, there has been a surge in e-waste generation by 73%, corroborating the above-stated trend. Similarly, every year, 8.5% of global textile waste is accumulated in India, and only 59% of this is recycled, 19% downcycled, 5% incinerated, and 17% enters landfills. The increasing volumes of e-waste and discarded textiles are a stark reflection of the scale of the problem, underscoring the