International Journal of Educational Research and Development
www.allinnovationjournal.com
Online ISSN: 2664-7095, Print ISSN: 2664-7087
Received: 28-12-2024, Accepted: 27-01-2025, Published: 11-02-2025
Volume 7, Issue 1, 2025, Page No. 15-18

From classroom to campus: A case study on transforming unused land into sustainable green spaces at Neelam Taram Government College, Yachuli

Dr. Bikash Mepo[1], Dr. Pupy Rigia[2], Joram Pera[1]
[1] Assistant Professor and Guest, Department of English, Government College, Yachuli, Arunachal Pradesh, India
[2] Assistant Professor and Head, Department of English, Government College, Yachuli, Arunachal Pradesh, India

Abstract
Educational institutions often possess unused land that can be transformed into valuable green spaces to address environmental challenges. This paper focuses on an initiative at Neelam Taram Government College, Yachuli (NTGCY), which aimed to rejuvenate unused land into a mixed garden of fruits and flowers. Supported by the principal and the Head of the English Department, the programme integrated practical plantation activities with theoretical environmental education. Adopting a qualitative, participatory action research design, the initiative engaged students and faculty in planning, implementing, and maintaining the garden. Activities included selecting plant varieties, constructing bamboo fences, and screening documentaries on environmentalists Jadav Payeng and Swami Prem Parivartan to inspire conservation efforts.
The programme developed environmental responsibility and encouraged students to adopt sustainable practices, such as recycling tetra milk packets for Peepal Baba's mission. The project outcomes included the successful plantation and protecting of saplings, which enhanced understanding of environment.

Keywords: Environmental education, land restoration, participatory action research, tree plantation, sustainability, student engagement

Introduction

Educational institutions are among the largest landowners, yet much of their land remains unused. In the United States, movements like "Go Green" in school spaces have gained popularity (Sanz-Mas *et al*., 2024). Educational institutions, particularly in urban regions, are exposed to high temperatures, increasing levels of air pollution, and limited green spaces within their compounds. Such exposure can be mitigated, at least partially, through small-scale nature-based solutions, such as creating green spaces within educational institutions. According to Fabio *et al*. (2024), schoolyards as "living" neo-ecosystems build urban resilience to the climate crisis by integrating hybrid configurations of grey, green, and blue infrastructure. Similarly, Santo *et al*. (2016) [6] explored the potential of converting unused spaces into agricultural uses, highlighting sustainable practices such as school gardens, rooftop farming, and edible landscapes. The key takeaway is that unused land spaces within educational institutions can be rejuvenated with plants, serving valuable purposes. Although planting trees alone cannot entirely control global warming, however, the availability of trees plays a significant role in protecting land and rivers and mitigating climate-related challenges

In India, initiatives to address environmental challenges and protect natural resources have gained significant momentum in recent years. One of the project, *Rally for Rivers*, was launched in 2017 by Sadhguru, the founder of the *Isha* Foundation, to combat the dire condition of Indian rivers. Under the program, Sadhguru personally led a month-long journey covered over 9,300 kilometers across 16 states, during which 146 public events were held to advocate for river revitalization (Isha Foundation, 2017).

Initiative like a tree plantation project in Bihar Muzaffarpur district. This three-year project engaged students and teachers from six high schools in rural villages to provide environmental education through awareness campaigns and experiential learning programme. The project resulted in the plantation and maintenance of 850 trees over the three years (Sankalp Taru Foundation, 2020). These programmes highlight the importance of both large-scale and grassroots efforts in addressing environmental challenges and cultivating a culture of environmental responsibility in India.

Environmental education is essential for raising awareness about environmental issues. Swaroop and Verma (2022) emphasize the need to educate humans about environmental protection to increase awareness of these critical issues. Environmental education refers to the process of understanding how nature operates and developing environmental consciousness. It equips students with knowledge, skills, values, and a motivation to act on environmental challenges (Bha., 2017, as cited in Singh *et al*., 2023). This form of education enables individuals to comprehend their interaction with nature and the world, understand environmental problems, and identify solutions while encouraging proactive efforts to protect the environment. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 highlights the importance of sustainable development goals related to environmental benefits and emphasizes the dissemination of traditional knowledge that can effectively address environmental challenges (Kumari, 2021) [4]. Moreover, the NEP 2020 integrates environmental education into the undergraduate curriculum, incorporating both theoretical and practical components to ensure a comprehensive understanding (University Grants Commission [UGC], 2023).

The present study focuses on utilizing unused land within a college campus to cultivate plants. This initiative was supported by the principal and the Head of the English Department, aligning with the undergraduate curriculum's

emphasis on both theoretical knowledge and practical applications of environmental education.

Background

Neelam Taram Government College Yachuli (NTGCY), affiliated with Rajiv Gandhi University, Itanagar, was established in 2007 in the then Lower Subansiri district, now in Keyi Panyor district. The college began its journey on July 19, 2007, operating from a temporary building with just 57 students and 5 teachers. On August 30, 2010, it relocated to its permanent campus. Environmental education is one of the important activity parts of NTGCY and is offered as a compulsory Value-Added Course.

Objectives

- To develop a positive attitude towards the environment among English students of Neelam Taram Government College, Yachuli.
- To utilize unused land within the college campus by planting a mix of fruits and flowers.
- To encourage English students of Neelam Taram Government College, Yachuli to adopt and care for plants till completing their undergraduate course.

Methodology

This section describes the methods adopted in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the programme themed "*Adoption, Plantation, and Restoration of Excavated Unused Land into a Mixed Garden of Fruits and Flowers*."

1. **Research Design**: The study utilized a qualitative and participatory action research design. This design enabled active involvement of students and faculty of English NTGCY, in every phase of the programme, emphasizing experiential learning and environmental awareness.

2. **Study Area and Participants:** A vacant space within the college premises was chosen as the site for plantation and restoration activities. Faculty members and students from the English department of NTGCY participated in the programme

3. **Programme Phases:** The programme was divided into two phases, each detailed below: *Phase 1:* Planning and Preparation: (1) Faculty members convened to design the plantation drive as part of the EVS project. (2) Decisions were made regarding plant varieties (flowering and fruit plants) and the method of awareness creation. (3) Required materials, including plant saplings and fencing supplies (bamboo), were identified. (4) Responsibilities were assigned to students and faculty members. Phase 2: Implementation. Documentaries on notable environmentalists (Jadav Payeng and Swami Prem Parivartan) were shown to students.

4. **Data Collection:** Data was collected using the following tools: Photos documenting key activities such as planting, fencing, and educational sessions were taken. Researchers observed student engagement and participation throughout the programme.

Discussion and Analysis

The programme on *"Adoption, Plantation, and Restoration of Excavated Unused Land into a Mixed Garden of Fruits and Flowers"* was successfully conducted which involved both the practical aspects of planting and the theoretical component of educating students through documentary screenings.

Day 1: Planning and Preparation

On the first day, the faculty members from the English department organized discussions to plan the programme. This included deciding on the types of plants to be used (both flowers and fruits), discussing the materials required for plantation, and assigning responsibilities to students. A short documentary was planned for screening to raise awareness about environmental conservation. The main aim of this day was to prepare both the space and the participants for the activities.

Fig 1: Students selecting their spots for planting

Day 2: Implementation and Plantation

The second day began early in the morning, with students divided into groups to gather materials and prepare for the plantation. Male students were tasked with collecting bamboo for fencing, while female students dug and collected plant samples. By 11:30 AM, the plantation activity officially began, with the presence of the college's principal, vice principal, and various faculty members.

Fig 2: Students collecting and preparing bamboo for the plantation drive

The plants used included various species of flowering plants such as Oleander (Nerium oleander), Cherry Blossom (Prunus serrulata), and Golden Duranta, alongside fruit-bearing trees like Guava and Mango. After the plantation, a bamboo fence was erected to protect the newly planted saplings.

Fig 3: The photo shows the Hon'ble Principal, Vice Principal, Head of the Department (English), and various faculty members of NTGCY participating in the plantation drive

Educational Component: Documentary Screening

After the plantation drive, a short documentary about Jadav Payeng, the "Forest Man of India," and Swami Prem Parivartan (Peepal Baba), was shown to the students. Both figures are well-known for their efforts in afforestation and environmental conservation

Table 1: shows the process of the documentary presentation with the English students of NTGCY.

Jadav Payeng (Forest Man of India)		
An overview	Jadav Payeng, also known as the **"Forest Man of India,"** is an inspiring person from Assam, India. He is famous for planting trees and turning a barren land into a big forest all by himself!	
Video link	https://youtu.be/HkZDSqyE1do?si=U8TUHeJC1pbv1Ohw	
Specific Objectives	To enable students to understand how his efforts have influenced local communities, including changes in livelihood, awareness, and education about environmental conservation.	
Video Presentation and Quescussion	Presentation time:	16:13 minutes
	Discussion:	6 min
	Summing up:	5 mn

Table 2: shows the process of the documentary presentation with the English students of NTGCY.

Swami Prem Parivartan (Peepal Baba)		
An overview:	Peepal Baba, whose real name is Swami Prem Parivartan, is a kind and hardworking person who loves trees and nature. He is famous for planting and saving thousands of trees across India, especially the peepal tree, which is very special in India.	
Video link:	https://youtu.be/HkZDSqyE1do?si=U8TUHeJC1pbv1Ohw	
Specific Objectives:	To enable students to understand Study how Peepal Baba's afforestation efforts have improved local ecosystems, and biodiversity.	
Video Presentation and Quescussion	Presentation time:	16:50 minutes
	Discussion:	6 min
	Summing up:	5 min

Tables 2 and 3 highlight the efforts of Jadav Payeng (the Forest Man of India) and Swami Prem Parivartan (Peepal Baba) for their remarkable contributions to environmental conservation. Both individuals have dedicated their lives to planting trees, with Jadav Payeng transforming barren land into the Molai Forest and Peepal Baba saving and planting thousands of trees, particularly the peepal tree. The short documentary associated with their work provides insights into their efforts and the positive effects these have had on local ecosystems and biodiversity. Their work has significantly raised awareness about the importance of trees and environmental preservation.

The programme was well-received by the students, who were actively involved in both the plantation drive and the documentary presentation. The interactive nature of the event, including the opportunity to plant trees and learn about environmental figures, engaged the students. They displayed positive attitudes toward protecting their plants and pledged to care for them throughout their course.

After the program ended, students were given an additional task to contribute to the Peepal Baba mission on reducing waste through recycling. They were tasked with collecting tetra milk packets, cleaning them thoroughly, and then parceling them to Peepal Baba for further use.

Fig 4: The photo shows students watching the documentary and taking a pledge to protect the planet.

Conclusion

The theme of the programme on "Adoption, Plantation, and Restoration of Excavated Unused Land into a Mixed Garden of Fruits and Flowers" successfully achieved its objectives of promoting environmental awareness and developing a sense of responsibility among NTGCY students of English. Through a well-structured methodology, the initiative engaged both students and faculty of English in hands-on activities such as planting a mix of fruit and flowering plants, as well as in educational discussions facilitated by the screening of documentaries on influential environmentalists like Jadav Payeng and Swami Prem Parivartan.

The integration of both practical and theoretical components allowed students to not only learn about the importance of trees and conservation but also actively participate in making a tangible difference in their college environment. The documentary screenings served to deepen students understanding of environmental stewardship and motivated them to pledge their commitment to protecting the environment. Moreover, the follow-up task of recycling tetra milk packets for Peepal Baba's mission reinforced the programme message of sustainable practices and waste reduction.

In conclusion, this initiative not only contributed to the beautification of the college campus but also nurtured a positive environmental attitude among the students of English. The active participation and the educational value of the programme reflect its success in instilling both knowledge and action in the students, thereby contributing to broader environmental conservation goals.

References

1. Government of India. (2020). National education policy 2020. Ministry of Human Resource Development.
2. Government of India. (2023). Guidelines and curriculum framework for environment education at undergraduate level. University Grants Commission.
3. Kanai MJ, Fabio B, Miras M. Making green heritage schools work: Nature-based solutions and historical preservation when infrastructure fails. Sustainability,2024:16(16):1-15.
4. Kumari S. Environmental education in the context of the new education policy 2020. International Journal of Engineering and Technology,2021:8(3):1929.
5. Munish S, Ashish V. National Education Policy, 2020 and environment education: Challenges and opportunities. Journal of Regulatory Studies,2022:7(3):2-11.
6. Santo R, Palmer M, Kim B. A review of the benefits and limitations of urban agriculture. Johns Hopkins University, 2016.