



IntelliMindEd, 2(6); 2026, 198-213

DOI: [10.69687/ime.nseeepsd.2026.1.16](https://doi.org/10.69687/ime.nseeepsd.2026.1.16)

National Seminar on Effect of Ecopreneurship on Environment Protection & Sustainable Development

Ecopreneurship – In Need of E-Learning Courses

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Abstract

Introduction: In this fast-paced world, as technology has spread its wings, its deteriorating effects on mother Earth have made us re-think about conservation of resources, which further led to the concept of sustainability. With the intervention of government and initiatives to promote green businesses, the concept of ecopreneurship has come to limelight. Ecopreneurship, a child to a seemingly dissimilar pair of parents — the entrepreneurship and sustainability disciplines — is an emerging concept and a way of doing business in more environmentally friendly ways. This paper analyses the effectiveness of e-learning platforms and the ecopreneurship courses available to future leaders.

Methodology: The paper is prepared by collecting primary data through the survey method to understand the impact of ecopreneurship on students. The sampling technique used is convenience sampling, and the survey was conducted on graduates and post-graduates. Data were collected in both qualitative and quantitative forms, with qualitative data converted using Likert's scale, a rating scale used to measure opinions, attitudes or behaviors by asking respondents to choose from a series of answer options. The questionnaire included 14 questions, of which two were considered for analysis while the

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remaining 12 serve as supporting statements. The strength of association between the two binary variables — knowing about a course and willingness to join — was measured using Yule's Colligation Coefficient, alongside a gap analysis of ecopreneurship courses on Indian e-learning platforms.

Results & Discussion: India's e-learning market size reached US\$ 7.3 billion in 2024 and is expected to reach US\$ 20.8 billion by 2033, a CAGR of 12% during 2025-2033, while the e-Skill India portal records over 12.75 lakh students enrolled for 19.8 lakh courses. The gap analysis found only a few courses that specifically train an individual to become an ecopreneur: the Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability graduate certificate, Ecoversity's Permaculture Design Certification, and general entrepreneurship offerings on Coursera. Platforms such as SWAYAM offer MOOCs in environmental science but no focused ecopreneurship courses, and most sustainability content is scattered under general headings. From the contingency table ($a = 25$, $b = 2$, $c = 70$, $d = 21$), Yule's $Q = 0.579$, indicating a moderate positive association between knowing about the course and willingness to join it, so the null hypothesis is accepted. Further, 58% of respondents have enrolled in an online course, 34.7% have heard of the PM Surya Ghar Yojana, 24% have not heard of any green energy concepts mentioned, 43.6% cite growing concern for society as the major driving factor, and 29.7% are highly keen to enrol if such courses are offered within their academics.

Conclusion: Ecopreneurship has the potential to transform India's environmental and economic future. However, the lack of targeted e-learning opportunities limits its reach. Addressing this gap with accessible, region-specific, and practical digital education will empower a new generation of sustainable entrepreneurs. As depicted using Yule's colligation coefficient, creating more awareness about ecopreneurship motivates individuals to equip themselves with the trending needs of the society, which is possible through government intervention. For India to lead in green innovation, investment in ecopreneurial education must be prioritized.

Keywords: Ecopreneurship; E-Learning; Online Courses; Sustainability Education; Green Business; Yule's Q; Convenience Sampling; Likert Scale; Student Awareness; India.

1. Introduction — Ecopreneurship

With the rapidly changing climatic conditions and technical advancements happening world-wide, everyone's focus is gradually shifting towards the problems arising due to the deterioration of nature. A new concept of business that helps to satisfy the human's greed to earn money and to reduce the exploitation of nature simultaneously is termed as eco-preneurship. Ecopreneurship refers to a management philosophy whereby the business efforts of the entrepreneurs are not just only motivated by profit, but also by a concern for the environment. It is also called environmental entrepreneurship and eco-capitalism. It is a new market-based approach showing opportunities for improving environmental quality and capitalizing upon them in the private firm for profit. Green entrepreneurship, sustainable entrepreneurship, biosphere entrepreneurship, and eco-entrepreneurship are all the synonyms.

Table 1: Few definitions of ecopreneurship

S. No.	Author	Definition
1	Allen and Malin (2008), Paramashivaiah et al. (2013)	"Green entrepreneurs are embracing environmental values as a core component of their identity and seeing them as a competitive advantage of their company in the market place."
2	Bosman (2013), Schaltegger (2002)	"Entrepreneurship through an environmental lens."
3	Bosman (2013), Isaak (2016)	"An organisation that is a 'system transforming, socially committed... break-through venture.'"
4	Bennett et al. (1991), Bosman (2013)	"An ecopreneur is an entrepreneur who wishes to earn a living through finding solutions to environmental problems."
5	Bosman (2013), Schuyler (1998)	"Entrepreneurs who drive their business not only by profit but also by a concern for the environment are known as ecopreneurs. This practice may also be known as environmental entrepreneurship or eco-capitalism."

Entrepreneurs are encouraged to pursue sustainable development while maintaining environmental balance. Entrepreneurs cannot ignore environmental issues while expanding and diversifying their business activities. Environmental destruction is still a big problem and a global issue in the age of globalization. More and more entrepreneurs will expand their operations, further damaging the environment.

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Ecopreneurship has three major components: society and social, economy, and ecology/environment.

Few examples of environment friendly brands are:

- a) EcoRight: Founded in 2017 in Ahmedabad, EcoRight has 18 product lines and 140 SKUs available in around 11 ecommerce websites. The startup says it makes products that are ethically, socially, legally, and environmentally audited as per the pillar standards of SEDEX 4. Its products, which include tote bags, work bags, backpacks, etc., are reusable, made with natural products, and are developed with innovative fabrics to make products better for the environment.
- b) Pallavi Agarwal and Prachi Agarwal founded Chalk and Chuckles which shapes children's learning, skills, and experiences based on the games they play. The Chalk and Chuckles team helps families to unplug and connect with one and another while building character values and key learning skills.
- c) Love Organically is a Mumbai-based beauty manufacturing brand which claims to produce 100 percent natural and chemical-free products. It was founded by Deepshika Deshmukh and the brand claims that every product includes nutrients from flower extracts, essentials oils, and aromatic botanicals.
- d) Krya Sustainable Goodies: It was founded in 2010 by Srinivas Krishnaswamy and Preethi Sukumaran to create environmentally-friendly products. Began by manufacturing organic laundry detergent, the startup has expanded its product line to include hair, skin, and other home care solutions. Based on the principles of Ayurveda, the startup says its products are natural, vegan, and organic in nature.
- e) MINC, also known as Mini Couture, creates contemporary eco-friendly garments which are sustainable and present a contemporary Indian fusion style. Founded by

Mini Varkey Shibu and Kochery C Shibu in 2007, the startup designs garments while
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only using natural fabrics, azo-free environment-friendly dyes, and closure made from natural materials like wood, coconut, etc. It also promotes khadi, and the team believes in promoting green living through eco-fashion.

There are many more brands of this sort and few ideas that could help in building sustainable business empires are:

1. Electric Harvesting Tiles — Tiles that are equipped with technology to generate electricity from the people's footsteps. This idea claims that we can generate 10 seconds of light from one foot. We don't want any large transformer for generating power and it requires no natural resources.
2. Recycling old jeans to tailor jean bangs helps to reduce textile waste and create unique accessories that are both eco-friendly and stylish.
3. Edible wafer tea cups that help to replace disposable plastic teacups.

1.1 Importance of Ecopreneurship in the Indian Context

1. **Environmental Need:** India ranks among the most polluted countries globally.
2. **Youth Unemployment:** Entrepreneurship offers a solution to job scarcity.
3. **Rural Upliftment:** Sustainable business models can benefit rural communities reliant on agriculture and natural resources.

1.2 E-Learning

E-learning — also called electronic learning or web-based training — is anywhere, anytime instruction delivered over the internet or a corporate intranet to students and other learners via a browser. Contrary to traditional learning methods, e-learning lets students, employees in training and casual learners participate in an organized learning experience regardless of their physical location.

The journey of eLearning, or electronic learning, is a testament to the rapid technological advancements of the past few decades. From its humble beginnings to

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today's sophisticated digital learning solutions, eLearning has transformed the educational landscape, making learning more accessible, flexible, and efficient.

1.3 History of eLearning

The concept of eLearning can be traced back to the early twentieth century, with the advent of teaching machines and programmed instruction. However, it wasn't until the 1960s that the foundations of modern eLearning were laid — pioneers like B. F. Skinner developed teaching machines for self-paced learning, an early precursor to today's digital learning solutions.

The introduction of personal computers in the 1980s marked a significant milestone. This era saw the development of computer-based training (CBT) programs, essentially digitized textbooks. These programs offered a more interactive and engaging way to learn compared to traditional methods, setting the stage for the future of eLearning.

The true revolution in eLearning began in the 1990s with the rise of the internet. The world wide web opened up new possibilities for distance education and online learning. The first online courses emerged, allowing students to access course materials and submit assignments via email.

The late 1990s and early 2000s witnessed the proliferation of broadband internet, which significantly enhanced the quality and accessibility of online learning. This era saw the rise of virtual classrooms, where students could interact with instructors and peers in real time.

The 2010s marked the advent of mobile learning (mLearning), driven by the widespread adoption of smartphones and tablets. Mobile apps and responsive web design allowed learners to access educational content anytime, anywhere, further increasing the flexibility and convenience of eLearning. Advanced algorithms and data analytics enabled digital learning solutions to tailor educational content to individual learners'

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needs and preferences. This approach improved learning outcomes and enhanced learner engagement and motivation.

India's e-learning market is growing rapidly, with platforms like Coursera, edX, Udemy, and Indian-specific portals like SWAYAM and NPTEL seeing high enrollments.

India's e-learning market size reached US\$ 7.3 Billion in 2024. Looking forward, IMARC Group expects the market to reach US\$ 20.8 Billion by 2033, exhibiting a growth rate (CAGR) of 12% during 2025-2033.



Figure 1: eSkill India — NSDC’s eLearning aggregator portal, key highlights

The image above shows the statistics about the government initiative “e-Skill India” which shows that around 12.75+ lakh students enrolled for 19.8+ lakh courses to access quality education online.

Despite rising interest, aspiring ecopreneurs face educational challenges, especially in remote or underserved regions. Traditional business curricula often overlook sustainability, and few e-learning platforms offer comprehensive training in ecopreneurship. This paper investigates the current educational landscape and underscores the need for more inclusive, accessible, and practical e-learning courses in this field.

2. Literature Review

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Literature review is one of the basic components of research process. The review on literature pertaining to the research topic adds valuable insights to the existing pool of knowledge and helps to know what has happened over a period of time. It will give panoramic view of the area of research and provide better understanding. Reviewing the literature also helps to find out the research gap where the research is not yet conducted and carried out. Hence, the main thrust of this chapter is to focus the available literature on ecopreneurship and its related e-learning platforms.

A paper titled “An Environmental Sustainability-Based Ecopreneurship Learning Process” co-authored by Herlina, Disman, Sapriya and Nana Supriatna attempted to study the students' role in an ecopreneurship-based social science learning in order to maintain environmental sustainability. This study revealed that the ecopreneurship learning conducted in university environment was not significantly effective since not all of students experienced the real context through field study. They only focused on classroom learning and did not have interest to initiate and develop an environmental-based enterprise.

Research paper titled “Strengthening Students' Characters and Ecopreneurship through Science, Environment, Technology, and Society Course” by Martini, L. Rosdiana, H. Subekti, B. Setiawan focused on studying the effectiveness of the course — Science, Environment, Technology, and Society (SETS) — on students' characters and ecopreneurship. This course supports the students to develop ecopreneurship to create products from organic and inorganic waste treatments. The research concluded that the course could strengthen students as ecopreneurs and aid in improving students' learning in each of the six stages of the course.

Paper titled “Identification of ecopreneurs' business competencies for training program development” written by Sanna-Mari Renfors, published in the Journal of Education for **IntelliMindEd | ISSN: 2998-8527, USA | National Seminar on Effect of Ecopreneurship on Environment Protection & Sustainable Development, Department of Commerce & Management Studies, AKNU, Rajamahendravaram, AP, India**

Business, Volume 95, 2020 - Issue 1, emphasises the necessity of specific business competencies for ecopreneurs to succeed: in particular, an ability to make green values a part of their business operations, product offerings, and business relationships.

All the above papers studied the effect of ecopreneurship courses on students but no paper distinctively measured the availability and sufficiency of e-learning courses for aspiring ecopreneurs in India. Hence our paper focuses on the topic on which there is minimal data available and no previous work is readily available online.

3. Formulation of Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis: H_{0a} : There are no sufficient number of courses available on ecopreneurship in Indian e-learning platforms.

Alternative Hypothesis: H_{1a} : There are sufficient number of courses available on ecopreneurship in Indian e-learning platforms.

Null Hypothesis: H_{0b} : Average number of students have awareness about ecopreneurship.

Alternative Hypothesis: H_{1b} : Average number of students doesn't have awareness about eco-preneurship.

4. Research Methodology

This research paper is prepared by collecting primary data through survey method to understand the impact of ecopreneurship on students. The sampling technique used is convenience sampling. The survey was conducted on graduates and post-graduates. The data is collected in both qualitative and quantitative forms and the qualitative data is also converted into qualitative form using the Likert's scale. Likert's scale is a rating scale used to measure opinions, attitudes, or behaviors by asking respondents to choose from a series of answer options. The data thus obtained is analyzed using Chi-square

test to achieve the desired objective and the results are shown in the Analysis and Results section.

5. Research Objectives

The research paper aims to achieve the following objectives:

- i) To study the sufficiency of the number of eco-preneurship courses available in Indian e-learning platforms.
- ii) To understand the level of understanding and awareness on the topic Ecopreneurship among a class of students i.e. the budding generation of entrepreneurs.

6. Analysis and Results

Null Hypothesis a: H_{0a} : There are no sufficient number of courses available on ecopreneurship in Indian e-learning platforms.

Alternative Hypothesis a: H_{1a} : There are sufficient number of courses available on ecopreneurship in Indian e-learning platforms.

6.1 Gap Analysis: Ecopreneurship Courses on Indian E-Learning Platforms

Considering the global scenario, despite the rise in number of ecopreneurs and the growing demand for environment friendly products, there are only a few courses available specifically to train an individual to become an ecopreneur. They are:

1. Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability: Offers a graduate certificate in Ecopreneurship. The program includes courses on sustainability ventures, climate perspectives, and innovation for climate and sustainability.
2. Ecovercity: Provides a 6-month online Permaculture Design Certification. This course focuses on regenerative systems, sustainable living, and ecological careers. It includes live classes, recorded lectures, and a globally recognized certification.
3. Coursera: Features various entrepreneurship courses, including those with a focus on sustainability and innovation. You can explore options like "Creating Change

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through Social Entrepreneurship” by Yale University or “Entrepreneurship Strategy” by HEC Paris.

Though there are numerous portals, number of courses and many skill development programs available online in various sectors like energy, sanitation, waste recycling etc. there are no such courses that integrate business principles to skill and technology to let the young entrepreneurs confidently take up ecopreneurship.

Platforms like SWAYAM offer MOOCs in environmental science, but there are no focused courses on ecopreneurship. BYJU'S and similar platforms primarily focus on K-12 and competitive exams, leaving a gap in sustainability-oriented entrepreneurship education.

Most content related to sustainability is scattered under general headings like “green business,” “environmental studies,” or “sustainable development,” lacking practical entrepreneurial focus.

E.g.: Green Jobs by IID, Social Entrepreneurship* course by IID etc. *Social Entrepreneurship — It includes taxability required documents but doesn't include essential fintech knowledge required for a business etc.

If there is proper sectoral division that these courses belong to ecopreneurship, it becomes easier for everyone to access them.

Hence, to test the hypothesis we couldn't find specific data about the courses to develop a certified ecopreneur in India. Here's a brief on Stanford's “Strategies for Sustainability” online course. It is designed for business professionals across various sectors who aim to integrate sustainable practices into their organizations. The course does not publicly disclose specific information about its participants. However, some individuals, like Eva Morales, have shared their completion of the program on platforms such as LinkedIn.

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Sri Saiteja Annareddy, Founder @ Cero Hero, an app that helps you achieve net-zero goals: track emissions, reduce your carbon footprint, and be a sustainable hero to fight climate change has completed this online course and is successfully running his impactful startup. We can also show-case valuable testimonials of the participants of Stanford's Ecopreneurship program which highlight the importance of practical approach towards the ecopreneurship practices.

Few example, Kindle Williams a participant of the Summer Internship programme on Ecopreneurship from Stanford highlighted how she got benefitted from the course in her own words like "In our work this summer, we've discovered something we weren't expecting: Some of the treatment plants' biggest challenges are around training. They have invested in equipment, but don't have a workforce that can operate it effectively. This insight will greatly influence our product design to provide a truly holistic solution for wastewater treatment."

"We're trying not to let a very precious resource — which emits a lot of carbon dioxide in its production — go to waste. We recover the ammonia to be used as fertilizer, and at the same time, we're removing the pollutant from the wastewater streams.", their work was on Electro Scan.

Bharti Singhla, Co-founder @ Chakr Innovation, MBA/MS Environment and Resources '24 from Stanford's Graduate School of Business, participant in the inaugural Summer Ecopreneurial Immersion and Internship Program, Chemical Engineer from IIT Delhi was involved into development of Emission Control Device that reduces Particulate Matter, Carbon monoxide & Hydrocarbons emissions by over 70%.

Few of the above examples portray Indians who have resorted to a foreign institute for an ecopreneurship course. Thus, we can quote that there is every need to make the eco-

preneurship courses readily available online. Our idea in emphasizing the need for
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ecopreneurship courses is not to downgrade the value of available courses on sustainability and various green concepts but to highlight that not just theoretical knowledge but practical and analytical approach towards the business practices and policies is essential. Thus, keeping this in mind, integrated courses are to be designed and made available to the upcoming generations.

6.2 Hypothesis b

Null Hypothesis b: H_0^b : Students who are aware of ecopreneurship courses are willing to join the course.

Alternative Hypothesis b: H_1^b : Students, even though they are aware of ecopreneurship courses are not willing to join the course.

To test the above hypothesis, we have considered the primary data obtained as answers to a questionnaire that included 14 questions of which 2 questions were considered for analysis purpose and the findings from the remaining 12 questions' answers can serve as supporting statements. The questions considered were:

- i. Have you enrolled in any ecopreneurship courses till now?
- ii. Do you like to enroll into any ecopreneurship course?

Objective of the study: To determine the association between individuals knowing about a course and their willingness to join using Yule's Colligation Coefficient (Yule's Q).

Data Summary: The following contingency table summarizes the data obtained as results of the above two questions:

Table 2: Contingency table of course awareness and willingness to join

Knows about course	Willing to join	Not willing to join
Yes	25	2
No	70	21
Total	95	23

Methodology: To measure the strength of association between two binary variables, Yule's Q coefficient is applied. Yule's Q is defined as: $Q = (ad - bc) / (ad + bc)$

Where: a = frequency of (Knows & Willing) = 25; b = frequency of (Knows & Not Willing) = 2; c = frequency of (Doesn't Know & Willing) = 70; d = frequency of (Doesn't Know & Not Willing) = 21.

Calculation: Using the provided values: a = 25, b = 2, c = 70, d = 21. Substitute into the formula:

$$Q = (ad - bc) / (ad + bc) = (525 - 140) / (525 + 140) = (385) / (665) = 0.579$$

Interpretation: The calculated Yule's Q value is approximately 0.579. Yule's Q ranges from -1 to +1.

- A value near +1 indicates a strong positive association.
- A value near 0 indicates no association.
- A value near -1 indicates a strong negative association.

Therefore, a Q value of 0.579 suggests a moderate positive association between knowing about the course and willingness to join it. This suggests that individuals who are aware of the course are somewhat more likely to express willingness to participate than those who are not aware. Thus, we can accept null hypothesis.

6.3 Other Findings

1. 58% of the respondents of the survey have enrolled into an online course.
2. 34.7% of the respondents have heard of The PM Surya Ghar Yojana - Offers free rooftop solar installations to eligible Indian households, and about 16% have heard of Green-energy summit but about 24% have stated that they haven't heard of any green energy concepts mentioned.
3. Also, the results imply that Growing concern for society is the major driving factor towards ecopreneurship as 43.6% respondents have accepted the same.

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4. About 46% very strongly recommend a change in the business motives currently adopted.
5. Around 30% very strongly think that there is need for more awareness regarding ecopreneurship courses.
6. About 29% think that there is need for more research to be done on ecopreneurship.
7. Almost 30% think that there is need for more awareness regarding ecopreneurship courses.
8. 29.7% are highly keen towards enrolling into the ecopreneurship courses if they are offered as part of your academics.

7. Recommendations

- **Develop Modular E-Learning Curricula:** Platforms should offer tiered courses — beginner to advanced — covering eco-business models, climate finance, carbon accounting, etc.
- **Incorporate Experiential Learning:** Use simulations, real-world case studies, and mentorship programs to enhance learning outcomes.
- **Collaborate with Climate Experts and Entrepreneurs:** Cross-sector partnerships can ensure content is up-to-date and practical.
- **Focus on Accessibility:** Courses should be affordable, available in multiple languages, and mobile-friendly to be accessed by rural population.
- **Encourage Certification:** Recognized credentials can help ecopreneurs secure funding or partnerships.
- **Aggregating the related courses:** Gathering all the courses related to green businesses and sustainability and promoting them under the name of Ecopreneurship would make it more user-friendly and help create more awareness about the topic.

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8. Conclusion

Ecopreneurship has the potential to transform India's environmental and economic future. However, the lack of targeted e-learning opportunities limits its reach. Addressing this gap with accessible, region-specific, and practical digital education will empower a new generation of sustainable entrepreneurs. Also, as depicted using the Yule's colligation coefficient, creating more awareness about ecopreneurship motivates the individuals to equip themselves with the trending needs of the society which is possible through government's intervention. For India to lead in green innovation, investment in ecopreneurial education must be prioritized.

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