

E-learning and sustainability of higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa: a review and synthesis

Purpose

This study aims to examine the state of literature on the role of e-learning in the sustainability of higher education institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa, with the goal of identifying explored thematic areas, finding out the deficiencies in extant literature and recommending areas of future research work.

Design/methodology/approach

The research used a systematic literature review, examining articles published between 2012 and 2022. In total, 52 publications were identified and subjected to analysis.

Findings

The findings reveal that few studies have explored the relationship between e-learning and the sustainability of higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa, with larger economies in the region dominating research output. In addition, traditional technology adoption and social learning theories dominate the theoretical frameworks in this area. Moreover, the authors observed limited adaptation of these theories to local contexts, leading to outcomes with limited contextual details or lack of the same. Despite its potential, e-learning has yet to be fully embraced as a strategic tool for the sustainability of higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Originality/value

Although various systematic literature reviews exist in the field of sustainability in higher education, there seem to be no reviews specifically focused on e-learning within the context of Sub-Saharan Africa. This review sheds some light on potential future research paths regarding the theory, content and context of e-learning for the sustainability of higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa, and by extension, in developing countries worldwide.