

Online Education as a Strategy for Mitigating Climate Change: A Cross-Sectional Survey of ODeL Centers within Kenyan Universities

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Abstract

Climate change has emerged as one of the most pressing challenges of our time, necessitating urgent and comprehensive action. Education plays a vital role in fostering awareness, understanding, and action on climate change. With the advent of online education, there is an opportunity to harness its potential in addressing climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. This study sought to provide insights into the role of online education in mitigating negative effects of climate change. The study is anchored on Systems Thinking theory which involves understanding the intricate relationships between various factors like energy consumption and policy frameworks, and how they contribute to promoting sustainable educational practices, reducing carbon emissions, and enhancing climate change resilience. The key research question was: To what extent has online education contributed as strategy for mitigating climate change? A census survey of seventy-three (73) Universities in Kenya was undertaken with the in-charge ODeL Centers as the respondents. An online questionnaire with both structured and open ended questions was administered to gather data on ODeL Directors' perceptions on online education as critical strategy for mitigating negative effects of climate change. Fifty-nine (59) respondents (80%) completed the survey tool. Qualitative data was analyzed by the use of NVivo version 12 while quantitative data was descriptively analyzed through the use of frequencies, percentages, measures of central tendency and measures of dispersion. The main study finding is that a majority (82%) of ODeL directors perceive ODeL as a critical driver for fostering a climate-friendly educational practices and that online education has significantly contributed in promoting climate-friendly practices, enhancing environmental awareness and increasing climate change resilience. The study recommends that learning institutions need to integrate remote education as a means of mitigating climate change.

Keywords: Online Education, Strategies, Climate Change, Mitigation, Adaptation

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