

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the contributions of the Asia-Pacific region to leading practice in sustainability in higher education (HE), as prelude and orientation to this special issue collection from different countries and regions.

Design/methodology/approach – This is a critical review that includes international and regional policy contexts in sustainability and “education for sustainable development” (ESD), whilst exploring the trajectories of key initiatives across the region and considering the broader context of sustainability innovation within the HE sector.

Findings – The Asia-Pacific region offers many creative initiatives and shows considerable progress in ESD and in understanding the learning dimensions of sustainability. At the same time, it mirrors global trends in that further work is needed to promote systemic change in educational arenas, particularly in terms of strategic integration within HE institutions. The Asia-Pacific contributions to this collection demonstrate the need to harness national policy, to develop local and regional initiatives and to work effectively towards more profound change in HE curricula and through collaboration with external communities and stakeholders.

Originality/value – This is a distinctive collection of new initiatives from the Asia-Pacific, which compensates for the comparative lack of dissemination in this area. There is considerable sustainability innovation emerging in this region which shows leading-edge responses from within the HE sector on a number of key challenges and issues.