

## Challenges Faced in Hospitality and Tourism Education: Rural Versus Urban Universities

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**Abstract :** The disparity between universities in rural and urban areas of South Africa is still an ongoing issue. There are a lot of variations in these universities, such as the performance of the students and the lecturers, which is viewed as a worrying discrepancy related to knowledge gaps or educational inequality. According to research, rural students routinely perform worse than urban students in sub-Saharan Africa, and the disparity is wide when compared to the global average. This may be a result of the various challenges that universities in rural and urban areas face. Hence, the aim of this study was to compare the challenges faced by rural and urban universities, especially in hospitality and tourism programs, and recommend possible solutions. This study used a qualitative methodology and included focus groups and in-depth interviews. Eight focus groups of final-year students in hospitality and tourism programs from four institutions and four department heads of those programs participated in in-depth interviews. Additionally, the study was motivated by the teacher collaboration theory, which proposes that colleagues can help one another for the benefit of students and the institution. It was revealed that rural universities face more challenges than urban universities when it comes to hospitality and tourism education. The results of the interviews showed that universities in rural areas have a high staff turnover rate and offer fewer courses due to a lack of resources, such as the infrastructure, staff, equipment, and materials needed to give students hands-on training on the campus and in various hospitality and tourism programs. Urban universities, on the other hand, provide a variety of courses in the hospitality and tourism areas, and while resources are seldom an issue, they must deal with classes that have large enrolments and insufficient funding to support them all. Additionally, students in remote locations noted that having a lack of water and electricity makes it difficult for them to perform practical lessons. It is recommended that universities work together to collaborate or develop partnerships to help one another overcome obstacles and that universities in rural areas visit those in urban areas to observe how things are done there and to determine where they can improve themselves. The significance of the study is that it will truly bring rural and urban educational processes and practices into greater alignment of standards, benefits, and achievements; this will also help retain staff members within the rural area universities. The present study contributes to the literature by increasing the accumulation of knowledge on research topics, challenges, trends and innovation in hospitality and tourism education and setting forth an agenda for future research. The current study adds to the body of literature by expanding the accumulation of knowledge on research topics that contribute to trends and innovations in hospitality and tourism education and by laying out a plan for future research.

**Keywords :** hospitality and tourism education, rural and urban universities, collaboration, teacher and student performance, educational inequality

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