

SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION COLLOQUIUM: FOOD INSECURITY

*HOSTED BY THE UNIVERISTY OF THE FREE STATE
(UFS)*

Date: 14th August 2015

Venue: Albert Wessels Auditorium, University if the Free State



Reported by the Vaal University of Technology
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1. PROGRAMME THE DAY

08:00 -10:00		
Item No.	Time	Activity Item
1.	08:00	Registration and other Refreshment.
2.	08:00	Welcoming: Prof Jonathan Jansen, Vice Chancellor and Rector, UFS
3.	08:35	Food Insecurity: A threat to education
4.	08:50	Mosa Leteane, SRC President
5.	09:00	Research Presentations: Introduction by Dr. Loise van den Berg, Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, UFS. <i>Skeleton in the University closet: Food insecurity among the student population at the UFS.</i>
6.	09:05	Dr. Louise van der Berg, Department OF Nutrition
7.	09:20	Dr. Nick Munro, Discipline of Psychology, School of Applied Human Sciences, UKZN. <i>Hunger for knowledge: Food security among student at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal.</i>

09:30 – 11:00		
Item No.	Time	Activity Item
1.	09:35	Mbalenhle Gwacela: African Centre for Food Security, UKNZ, <i>Achieving food security for university students through stakeholder holder joint participation: A food bank Model</i>
2.	09:50	Coffee/Tea
3.	10:10	Dr. Yasmine Dominquez-Whitehead, School of Education, Wits <i>Investigating perceptions of food security complexities in South African Higher Learning Institution</i>
4.	10:25	Stella Sabi
5.	10:40	Dr. Suna Kassier, Discipline of Dietetics and Human Nutrition, School of Agriculture Science and Agribusiness, UKZN <i>The plight of food insecurity among university students on financial aid</i>

11:00 – 1500		
Item No.	Time	Activity Item
1.	10:55	Break
2.	11:00	Dr. Lucia Maleko, Department of Education and Dietetics. <i>The nutritional/food environment and nutritional practices of students on the 'no students hungry programme' at the UFS</i>
He	11:25	Panel discussion: How do we change the food insecurity situation at Universities? What need to change? Panel: 1. Ruda Landman 2. Pro Jonathan Jansen 3. Prof Edelweiss Wentzel- Viljoen (HPCSA)
4.	12:30	Lunch

5.	13:30	Art and Social Justice performance
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14:00 – 16:30		
Item No.	Time	Activity Item
1.	14:00	Discussion Panel: The formation of a community practice (Cornelia Faasen, Acting Dean of Student Affairs, UFS)
2.	15:00	Coffee/Tea
3.	15:15	We can Act
4.		Introduction: Lisa Coetzee, Action
5.	15:20	Community Food Gardens, Steph-Marie Jordaan, UFS and Thabo Olivier, Qala Tala
6.	15:10	Dr. Ronica Ramsout, UFS <i>A plant based diet as a solution to alleviate food insecurity</i>
7.	16:00	Executive Summary
8.	16:00	Mrs Grace Jansen, Patron NSH
9.	16:10	Photographs
10.	16:20	Networking and group photos
11.	16:30	Adjournment

2. REPRESENTATION FROM THE VAAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Four representatives from the Vaal University of Technology (VUT) represented coming mainly on the following departments:

1. Social Transformation
2. Research and Higher Degrees
3. The Student Representative Council Deputy President
4. The SRC Gender Officer
5. Career Academic Development

3. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDENT FOOD SECURITY AND INSECURITY ISSUES

The South African Higher Education Colloquium is declared at the first is first kind hosted in the South Africa Higher Education Colloquium of Food Security. The Colloquium was held in Bloemfontein at the University of the Free State (UFS) on the 15th of August 2015. It was a one day Colloquium.

This report reflects on fundamental issues pertinent to the Food Insecurity as a prevalent sector in our current socio political economy in relation to how it is experienced by students in institutions of higher learning. In accordance to the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, an interest on Food Insecurity politics was sparked by a dissertation conducted by one of their an Honours student. The questionnaire the

developed by the student used in his/her study was then adopted in further pursuance of forms of interrogations around food security and insecurity.

4. SETTING THE SCENE: THE CONTEXT AND MILESTONES

The following provides an overview reflection on the milestones of Professor. Jansen and his team in student insecurity initiatives in context of the University of the Free State (UFS)

2012

The programme was officially launched under what the University of the Free State called “The No Student Hungry Bursary Programme. The programme was officially launched with Professor Jonathan as the Champion of the programme, Mrs. Grace Jansen as the patron and by the former Dean of Student Affairs, and his wife, Dr Crain Bester.

2011

The no student poverty Hungry Bursary Programme (NHS) was born from an initiative by Professor Jansen to financially assist food insecure students at the UFS

2013

After a survey by the UFS Department of Dietetics and Nutrition, the programme grew in size and objective. The success of the programme became known across the country.

2014

Four volunteers embarked on 33 day hike from Bloemfontein to Cape Town to Cape Town to raise awareness on the student hunger. The team completed more than 1 000 km on foot.

2015

With the success of the NSH, a need was identified to have a colloquium on food insecurity on university campuses in the country. The UFS hosted the first colloquium on the national social justice.

5. SYNOPSIS OF COLLOQUIM PROCEEDINGS

There were seven presentations that revolved around food insecurity. The presentations will be attached as annexures in this report, and topics presented are as follows:

- UFS Food environment and nutritional practices,
- UFS Skeleton in the University closet,
- UKZN Achieving food security,
- UKZN Food security and academic performance,
- UKZN Hunger for knowledge,
- UKZN Perceptions of food insecurity complexities and
- UW Food acquisition struggles.

1. INTRODUCTION

The University of the Free State's "No Student To Hunger Bursary Programme" invited all institutions of Higher Learning Colloquium on Food Insecurity. It was envisaged the best practices and an exploration of available research on student food during annual Arts and Social Justice Events. The major concern thus far is that food insecurity on campuses is growing thus contributing to racial and urban divides. As institutions of Higher Education in South Africa, HEI are endowed with the responsibility to develop comprehensive plans to eradicate food insecurity. The University of the Free State make a humble appeal to be part of the solution inclusive of all other institutions of Higher Learning.

Present in this Colloquium were champion institutions on Food Security Such UKZN, UFS, UNNM, Tshwane University. Other HEI included amongst *interalia*, VUT, North West University, Potchefstroom University, University Of Western Cape etc.

The Department of Dietetics and Nutrition at the UKN puts emphasis on the right to Food Insecurity among

2. OPENING REMARKS

BY PROFESSOR JANSEN – from the University of the Free State

PROFESSOR JANSEN

His commitment to Student Insecurity was motivated through a student he encountered upon the realisation of how her health was withering away, thus impacting on her academic performance that ultimately lead to her drop out. This was partly because e of her sister whom she was financially dependent upon and lost her job as a cashier.

Professor Jansen highlighted ways in which people talk about nutrition, e.g. Picky eaters for survival eating, which is rather a new concept. Historically, people ate for survival. Professor Jansen made a symbolic illumination through communion shared by Jesus Christ through the provision of unleavened bread the days hunger through bread. A meal in those historical times served as a conduit of bringing and unifying families with undertones of compassion, humility and embracing an act of love. This is a similar trend in times of today.

Professor Jansen's inference on the Jesus Christ story was an emphasis of the revival of politics of love and compassion which are strongly embedded in the culture of activism which he argued that it is in decline in the current political conjecture in Institutions of higher Learning.

Within Institutions of Higher Learning, Professor Jansen came to the realisation that a lot of students and cannot even afford to be "picky eaters". He is driven by the passion and touched by the circumstance students affected by Food Insecurity (FI). As Professor Jansen describes one of his key involvement at a small scale in giving attention to challenges around Food Insecurity (FI), she adopted a student from Zimbabwe who in modest terms was withering away in terms of weight and an unhealthy physical outlook. Subsequent to the help provided to the student, positive results were yielded. She started putting weight and later introduced her new boyfriend to him. Such an intervention yielded positive results towards the student psychologically. She then in turn, became one of the best committed and compassionate student assistant at the University as a result of knowing how it feels to have struggled. He then tried assisting her against the backdrop of the xenophobic tendencies that were highly prevalent in those times. In contextualising his effort, he reminisced what he referred to as Hard Xenophobia and Soft Xenophobia. He asserted that Soft Xenophobia manifests itself by way on an example of denying students access study permits to international students.

The message that Professor Jansen was trying to portray was an illumination of what constitutes a fundamental difference, an impact a contribution to Food Security/Food Insecurity to students and the extent to which progressive interventions can contribute to the student academic performance. With this background in mind, there can be a positive harnessing, unleashing of the potential and the talent that has been inhibited by worries on how to get the means towards the next meal. So to Professor Jansen, in a nutshell, by providing food, one accomplishes several things, not only and institutional value but also a social value. As he phrased it, he reiterated how food is not just only a matter of the provision of a balanced diet, but also a communion symbolic to the churches' tradition of sharing bread together. Furthermore he reiterated how food also carries a political value and function, beyond the unification of the family. To him, food also carried spiritual undertones and functions, not only limited to the Christian or any form phenomena. It serves as a way of connection human spirits.

He made reference to how the public service association and private institutions deserves to be commendable. *"I suppose on this point, one would need to seek further clarity that will hopefully feature in the presentation to be sent to all stakeholders present in the Colloquium"*.

For Professor Jansen, the University of the Free State (UFS) has set the standard high for academics influential for academics through the inculcation of human behaviour that promotes the love and concern for students despite the background they come from. This serves as part and parcel of human prophecy towards investing in humanity. What binds people together through such initiatives is the simple concept of bringing people together through food.

With such an assertion, Professor Jansen placed an emphasis on encouraging conversation and opening up dialogues at national levels within universities geared towards a consideration of nutrition with all its meaning and variations elevated high on their policy and strategic agenda. The emphasis should not just be on the focus for food for academic food, which is by implication not just the educational mandate of o Institution of Higher Learning.

3. DOCTOR LEWIS VAN DER BERG – NSH: NUTRITION AND DIATETRICS SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION

This serves as a presentation on Food Insecurity (FI) on University Campus. The presentation dwelled on the scientific part of the programme to report on the official research on nutrition in South African Universities. The presentation provided a platform from what to depart from towards designing sustainable solutions geared towards addressing Food Insecurity challenges.

Dr. van Der Berg indicated that here will be more seven presentation that will attempt to unpack and tackle problems regarding the subject matter and they all come from different disciplines including *inter alia*, psychology food and security etc.

In these presentations, it was envisaged that gaps on research around Food Insecurity (FI) will be placed on the surface thereby a drive towards the development of sustainable solutions on Food Insecurity. The presentation were anticipated to each take 15 minutes long and will be availed on the UFS website. The day was divided into three sessions with breaks as well as a panel discussion.

4. SUMMARY OF THE PANEL DISCUSSION

Issues emanating from the panel discussion:

- The main idea was to design model for all stakeholders to participate on Food Insecurity by looking at its prevalence in institutions of higher learning
- In short, hunger was defined as the existence of the availability or having sufficient food. Food insecurity has ramifications of hunger, poor quality diet as well as issues such as worrying on where to get the next meal. Food Security in this continuum. In the context of an attempt to theorise an to put issues of food insecurity into context, an analysis has been informed by Maslow's hierarchy of needs which defines food, water, warmth, rest, hunger as the most fundamental basic needs.
- However, prevailing from the discussion in the colloquium, it has proved eminent that Food Security or Food Insecurity has been the least study discipline. There is a prevailing assumption that if a student is registered at the Institute of Higher Learning, there is a relative assumed student immunity to issues and challenges regarding Food Insecurity (FI) and Food Security (FS). The key attribute to this is a lack of sufficient research in the discipline as already indicated.

Four key major research initiatives have been conducted at:

- Hawai University, in which 1 in 5 student were found to be experiencing food insecurity,
- In the New York University in which 45, 1 % of student have been found at risk of Food Insecurity,
- In Griffith Australian University, in which 6,5 were found as vulnerable to Food Insecurity and 25, 3 as severely vulnerable,
- The Rural University of Oregon, in which 59% portion of the University population were receiving assistance in terms of food.

BECAUSE OF THE OFTEN UNSPOKEN ABOUT UNDER RESEARCH AROUND FOOD SECURITY AND FOOD INSECURITY, NOTIONS SUCH AS “SKELETON IN THE UNIVERSITY CLOSET HAS BEEN EMPLOYED”.

In as much as Food Security/Insecurity has emerged as a global phenomenon, one of the questions raised was around students in developing countries.

- SAHANES reflected 20.2% on Food Insecurity
- In line with this, 54% of South African Household were depicted as not food insecure
- 28,3% were at risk of hunger
- 26.0% experienced hunger

In the context of South Africa, the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Wits University, the University of Johannesburg as well as the University of the Free State (UFS) have so far been in the forefront in championing the Food Security and Food Insecurity Programme, hence the South African Colloquium of this kind in the South African Institutions of Higher Learning as indicated in the Colloquium.

In her study, Dr. Lewis illustrated the prevalence and biographical attributes characterising those students likely affected and impacted by Food Insecurity. Her methodological approach comprised descriptive observational study, the assessment of the population under study, a website based questionnaire, a food insecurity scale. This also touched on question background bio demographic information and social coping skills on Food Insecurity (FI). The study was conducted through the student portal which was open for three weeks till information saturation was reached.

As a way of ensuring maximum participation by respondents, an incentive or price equally appealing to students was issued. That could be used to buy groceries, electronics and the likes.

In her study, required research protocol were followed. There was an acknowledgement of limitations to the study and an employment of scientific validation strategies. The research modelled along the common research methodology employed in Australia which encompasses the Single Item Approach in combination with the Multi Item Measure which further reinforces the validity of results. The utilisation of a combination of both approaches and tools provided an illustration that there are similar trends regarding the outcomes on the impact on Food Insecurity. The validity emanating from the utilisation of these tools was guaranteed by measures such as in-depth literature review and interviews

5. DOCTOR MUNRO FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF KWA-ZULU NATAL

Doctor Munro's presentation was titled "Hunger knowledge; Food Security amongst students at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal: 2010 – 2015 within the period of 2010 -2015 at the Pietermaritzburg Campus.

In her presentation, she made an inference to the effects of globalisation and massification on Food Insecurity/Hunger amongst students. As a mitigation strategy, various institutional departments joined hands in an attempt to rather minimise the problem. Within the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, the extent of the prevalence of the Food Insecurity problem posed a serious challenge on the retention of students within the university. According to Doctor Munro, there needs to be a consideration of engaging the agricultural sector and community at large.

In providing an elaboration of the national trends and prevalence of Food Insecurity, the national indicators as she pointed per Household in terms of the Food Insecurity ranged from 21% to 24%. At an individual level, the statistics are a bit higher ranging from 25% to 26%.

As a glimpse to part of her presentation, she made reference to the fact that Food Insecurity impacts not only on academic achievement and performance at universities, but also on the cognitive ability of children. In adults, it leads to reduced concentration, stability, passivity and decreased social interaction.

6. PRESENTATION BY MISS MBALENHLE GWACELA – AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF FOOD SECURITY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU NATAL: ACHIEVING FOOD SECURITY FOR UNIVERSITIES THROUGH STAKEHOLDER JOINT PARTICIPANTS (SUMMARY)

On the basis of her findings from her Masters degree in the field of Food Security in Institutions of Higher Learning in South Africa, there is a causal relation between Food Insecurity and student academic performance. Consequently, 50% - 60% student drop rate was thus one of her key findings. She departs from the point of view that Food Insecurity is not a new phenomenon, the limitation is that it is not openly discussed especially at an institutional leadership level.

The key question raised in her presentation was how the universities alongside other relevant stakeholders can engage towards finding a common workable intervention on Food Insecurity

As an intervention in her study, she proposes the institutionalisation of a food bank within institutions of higher learning. Secondly, she proposes stakeholder engagement and collective decision making.

7. A PLANT BASED DIET AS A SOLUTION TO ALLEVIATE FOOD INSECURITY

This presentation acknowledged that Food Insecurity is a global problem and is therefore the moral duty of those in possession of resources to alleviate Food Insecurity with strong emphasis on sustainability.

The presenter acknowledged that the future is bleak especially in light of the future projected water scarcity in South Africa. The implications are linked to food production, exacerbated by climate change.

8. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

1. It was pointed out that in the context of UFS, Food Insecurity is double compared to developing countries.
2. The Institutions of Higher Learning prone to Food Insecurity statistically is 31.99 in the Free State, 34.4 in Kwa-Zulu Natal and almost 30% in North West.
3. There is a realisation that not eating adequately in terms of quantity and nutritionally impacts on academic student performance.
4. The first generation as opposed to those with parental or a solid support system are more vulnerable to Food Insecurity.
5. There was a realisation that 1 in 5 students support other students in need through financial aid schemes.

6. One of the critical challenges that surfaced is that the majority of female student on financial aid scheme have children who are under their support. The percentage estimated as drawn from one of the studies is 22.8%.
7. Those that are single in terms of marital status are at high risk of food insecurity.
8. It was realised that students who prepare their own food are prone to the vulnerability of Food Insecurity
9. In terms of the employment status of other participating students, it surfaced that a larger proportional percentage if employed, work 19 hours a week with an average salary of R3 343.00 per month. The salary is augmented by the 70% participants declaring that they rely on borrowing money.
10. As emergency measures, 9% relied on selling their belongings.
11. 2% admitted to stealing other student's food.
12. 53% of the studies student population have admitted to relying on asking for food.
13. In some instances, other institutions there is an availability of food parcels. But there minimal response to the programme. This I mainly attributed to the stigmatisation associated with being seen as needy.
14. Students have reported to go hungry nearer to the examination periods, thus impacting on their concentration and performance. For instance, as indicated in one of the presentations, performance would drop from 17% to 11% towards the end of the semester as a result of a depletion of resources. The concern would then be a perpetual worry on how to access the next meal.

9. OVERARCHING CHALLENGES

- It was indicated that there is a limited or lack of research and publication in the field of study and interest.
- NSFAS has often been indicated as inadequate to cover the need of the student entire basic needs. NAFSA as many pointed out is that it has to cover for tuition, text books and accommodation. In an attempt to augment this, student engage in poor dietary quality food and a lack of dietary diversity in their meals. Furthermore, this leads to erratic food intake.
- There is an assumption that food insecure people are normally underweight. On the contrary, food insecurity can lead to overweight and obesity due to a diet in high energy but lack in nutrients.

10. PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The NAFSAS strategy is to be reviewed since the money allocated to students is deemed insufficient. For instance, it is claimed that it only covers tuition, text books and accommodation. But the gap of where to find the next meal for students impacted by Food Insecurity remains unbridged. Interestingly, the student's basic needs was located within the context of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. It then becomes problematic if the necessary basic needs are not met. Students' academic concentration and performance are impacted by a focus of ensuring that the basic needs are met.

2. It was also indicated that there is a needs to engage and mobilise resources from private institutions.
3. The reinstatement of food halls for food catering emerged as one of the prevalent recommendations.
4. Weaved into this as a consideration of ensuring the provision of nutritious food in cafeterias, which is convenient, affordable and accessible.
5. As the impact of Food Insecurity, the most critical recommendation was an institutionalisation of the educational component towards the realisation of the full scope of what interventions for Food Insecurity seeks to achieve.
6. Student are ought to be educated and trained on financial management skills, basic food nutrition and nutritional food preparation.
7. There needs to be awareness raising campaigns on Food Insecurity in institutions of higher learning
8. One of the presentations indicated that the notion of food banks needs to be introduced within institutions of higher learning.
9. Employment opportunities needs to be created for student's augmentation of any financial aid they could be receiving as well as the promotion of self-reliance.
10. There needs to be training provided life skills and awareness raising on the psychology of financial management and nutritional dietary management.
11. Possibilities of soup kitchens in institutions of higher learning.

11. HIGHLIGHTS

- ✓ Retention and achievement is deemed meaningless without looking.
- ✓ Whilst some studies as presented negated the severity of the impact of Food Insecurity by implying that it is an over-exaggeration, but the predominant view is that it is a reality.
- ✓ In terms of validity, researchers committed to adopting a dual method of Single Itemised approach and Multiple Itemised approach.
- ✓ A commitment was undertaken that it is critical to duplicate the study on Food Insecurity in all Institutions of Higher Learning.
- ✓ This stems from the fact that there is an integrated feeding scheme in primary and secondary schools. But that excludes institutions of higher learning.
- ✓ There needs to be an institutionalisation of polices around Food Security I institutions of higher learning.
- ✓ In addition, throughout the colloquium's proceedings, it was indicated that there is a need to develop a national policy that will trickle down to institutions of higher learning and thus customised to their realities.
- ✓ Another perspective placed an emphasis on to drawing global companies on board and to find ways of holing them responsible and accountable. It was mentioned that global companies keep on producing food that does not comply with nutritional food regulations and normally cheap with low nutrient intake. The beverage industry for an example was indicated as the fastest growing industry. With the University of Witwatersrand for an example, soft beverages were taken out of the shelves of the cafeterias. The students resisted such that a point of compromise was reached through the erection of vending machines.

12. SUMMARY OF CLOSING REMARKS FROM PROFESSOR JANSEN

In one of the concerns raised by the student by the student bodies, a concern was raised on how to engage the academics within institutions on how to make academic more responsive and accountable to the plight on the plight of Food Insecurity as it affects the student population in various institutions higher learning. His dynamic response as that it has to come from and initiated by the students themselves.

There need to revolutionised and revive activism alongside the academic mandate within institutions of higher learning in advancing the course for challenging of Food Insecurity in South African Institutions of Higher Learning. He proposed that every leader in universities should take up a course in Political Science. This is in accordance to Professor Jansen, is motivated by the fact that one cannot understand the dilemmas and dynamics without an understanding of the evolution of the political economy. In addition, what needs to be pondered on is the creation of a compassionate society and unlocking the potential dormant within the civil society.

He further argued that South Africa's approach to governance is embedded with political symbolism. A huge amount on spending is reduced in spending on the higher learning sector, but one continues to witness the establishment of two to three universities whilst the pie remains the same. This poses a challenge to the university leadership. According to him, tuition within UFS is low and NAFSAS is therefore not exploited, since he has also found innovative ways of sourcing funding from elsewhere.

The idea is not only to mobilise for an increase in the NAFSAS funding, but there needs to be a consideration of sourcing money from other volunteers and stakeholders. In painting a scenario, he asserted that students as the bulk supporters of chains like Pick and Pay and the likes, there is a need find innovative ways of holding them accountable. As an example, he mentioned that if students should stop buying from such chains, they would definitely come on board in response towards the alleviation of the Food Insecurity challenge. The overarching challenge then becomes how do we begin unlocking the private sector. In one of the remarks made to Professor Jansen input, especially in relation to unlocking the private sector was that a lot of emphasis is placed on Food Insecurity as opposed to what the speaker referred to Food Sovereignty. This is mentioned in the context that South Africa has a lot of food that is often wasted. Against this backdrop, this necessitates the lobbying of the private sector on food pricing

He reiterated his desire to see students establishing food gardening initiatives as a contribution towards the minimisation of the potential or possible dependency syndrome within campuses. In actual fact, in one of the presentations by one of the students, food gardening in UFS residences has proven to be a success with the utilisation of minimal resources.