

ABSTRACT

Hungry students exist as an almost invisible population at universities. Yet globally, as in South Africa, student hunger is a growing phenomenon that threatens academic success. Should universities be providing food aid to students, or is food aid the remit of social service organisations alone? At the heart of the role of a research university is the creation and dissemination of knowledge. Traditionally, universities have not necessarily been concerned with the conditions under which students are expected to pursue academic activities. The reality though is that universities find themselves dealing with the problem of student hunger on campuses. Research in student hunger is limited to the prevalence and distribution of the phenomenon at universities. No research has delved into stakeholder views and attitudes about the role of the university in providing food aid to students. Understanding these attitudes requires research. This study is premised on a qualitative research approach, involving internal student and staff stakeholders of the University of the Witwatersrand. Online questionnaires, individual interviews and a focus group were used to collect data from volunteer participants. The research has illuminated differing views on the University's role in providing food aid to students, but more significantly, has helped us understand what the barriers are to developing a consensus approach to student hunger. The main conclusions drawn from the study are that student hunger *should* be addressed if access to encompassing education is valued and academic success is the goal. Information from this research may contribute to the development of policy on how best to respond to the issue of student hunger.

Keywords: Hunger, food insecurity, university, students, stakeholder, academic success, right to food, obligation.