

Undergraduate Food Product Innovation at University of Zululand: Shaping the Future

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ABSTRACT

Society, in a continual process of transformation, requires of universities that they adjust, adapting the education they offer to comply with the demands of society particularly on poverty, unemployment and food insecurity and the workplace demands. In response to common criticism that graduates lack employability skills necessary to address the complex issues in today's circumstances, a capstone course was developed. This paper discusses the practical training that was delivered to students in a university classroom to determine acceptability of food products using Indigenous Knowledge (IK). Indigenous crops used are often discovered through community research. The Food Product Development course offered, integrates the food science sub-disciplines, marketing while it is offered concurrently with research methods. A food industry approach to food product development is used. Course outcomes focus on the multiple aspects of food product innovation, marketing and on career skills development. Students work in teams to plan for developing and evaluating the products for acceptability on campus youth. Projects are usually based on the nutritional problems in developing communities in South Africa. The approach used is a developmental, collaborative approach combining lectures, brainstorm sessions, competitor profile, progress oral briefings to the simulated management team, developing the product prototype, assessing the product's acceptability. A written individual report counts towards summative assessment. Assessment of student learning revealed an enhanced understanding of aspects of product innovation process, and motivation. Challenges included dealing with team members who were not carrying out their responsibilities, ensuring that the team stayed on task and schedule. Limited semester period does not allow for writing skills refinement on the part of the student. In the final analysis, merits outweigh the risks and there is still room for further refinement. Administrative support is necessary for dramatic changes of converting the module to a year course.

Keywords: Product Development, Sensory Evaluation, IK, Collaborative Approach

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