

Nelson Mandela University LT Week 2026 Abstract Submission

Designation: Dr Minenhle Khoza

Affiliated University / Institution: Department of Biotechnology and Food Technology, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

Title: From Compliance to Critical Thinking: Case-Based Learning in Food Regulations Education

Sub-theme: Student Engagement, Agency and Success / From Practice to Scholarship

Format: Paper Presentation

Food Regulations forms a critical component of Food Technology education, yet students often perceive the subject as content-heavy and compliance-driven, characterised by extensive legislation, standards, and regulatory requirements. While regulatory knowledge remains essential for future food professionals, there is an increasing need for graduates who can critically interpret legislation, evaluate complex situations, and make informed decisions within dynamic food systems. This paper presents a reflective account of the use of case-based learning as a pedagogical strategy in a third-year Food Technology module to promote critical thinking, disciplinary reasoning, and professional judgement. The approach integrates authentic South African and international case studies drawn from current regulatory developments, food recalls, allergen declaration failures, misleading health claims, food safety incidents, and labelling non-compliance reported in industry and mainstream media. Through a combination of lecturer-facilitated discussions, small-group activities, debates, presentations, and collaborative problem-solving tasks, students engage with contemporary challenges affecting consumers, regulators, and the food industry. These activities encourage students to interpret legislation within context, evaluate evidence, consider multiple stakeholder perspectives, and propose practical solutions to real-world regulatory challenges. Drawing on principles of humanising and student-centred pedagogy, the paper argues that authentic case-based learning can transform Food Regulations education from a compliance-focused exercise into a meaningful process of inquiry, engagement, and professional identity development. The paper contributes to scholarship on discipline-specific pedagogies by illustrating how real-world regulatory issues can be leveraged to create relevant, participatory, and contextually responsive learning experiences that prepare graduates for the complexities of contemporary food systems.

Keywords: Food Regulations Education; Case-Based Learning; Humanising Pedagogy; Student Engagement; Critical Thinking; Food Technology Education