

## From the Editor's Desk

An enormous and complicated administrative structure has been put into operation in an attempt to evaluate and assess university educational offerings. Institutional audits are to be performed at regular intervals to determine whether the various educational programmes on offer are achieving specific goals, some of which have little to do with actual quality of education. Indeed these internal and external audits are carried out in such a fashion that they seem to have much more to do with creating what appears to be an impressive *show* rather than with actually determining anything of lasting value or indeed much that would contribute towards really improving tertiary education. University academics are being made to spend a great deal of their time at mostly senseless and unproductive meetings and workshops; apparently to learn how to moderate examinations and assess students for example, despite their many years of doing just these activities. Indeed the whole system seems designed mainly to create opportunities for consultants, outsiders and external organizations to earn large amounts of money with very little regard for whether the money is well spent or not. One even needs to ask questions as to whether there are financial inducements or other perverse incentives operating to facilitate some aspects of this whole process. Meanwhile research output and the true quality of that output appears to be rapidly diminishing while scandals concerning plagiarism and falsification of experimental and other data are increasing despite the essentially useless mechanisms that are being overtly organized to monitor or control tertiary education. Concentration on the educational content of the courses that academics present and self-improvement of the knowledge and skills of these same academics appears to be much less of an important aspect, so long as they waste sufficient time at workshops of some sort that mostly has very little to do with excellence of education or enhancement of research activities. Every five minutes or so, official or other documents need to be redone as new directives are issued from different agencies that are all apparently unable to finally make up their minds what they actually want or need and thus continually reorder new information in different formats. Unnecessary meetings and new committees are established at a rate that far exceeds the mating habits of nymphomaniac rabbits on high doses of Viagra. The only saving grace is that more and more of these meetings gradually fail to achieve their minimums required for quorums - not that this usually tends to prevent such meetings from actually taking place anyway. All of these aspects of *so-called* quality control of tertiary education have the important and major effects of creating a negative atmosphere that lowers morale and lessens the likelihood that South African Universities will become more capable of producing original and creative work of an adequate or satisfactory international standard. What is truly astounding is that very little protest seems to emanate from the academics of South African Universities or from educationalists in primary and secondary schools. Perhaps this is really at the root of what is truly wrong with tertiary education (and, to a large extent primary and secondary education) in this country. Mostly, academics, and indeed teachers in schools, seem to be afraid to challenge the systems in place whether or not they seem to be appropriate or sensible. And, indeed should they do so their concerns are largely ignored while yet more committees are formed and new documents are prepared to fill more empty rooms and to remain generally unread. There should be a better way to growing education and solving the many problems of this country! High quality education and original research can only grow and prosper in a free, open and supportive environment where academics are able to explore and concentrate on these aspects alone. It is not produced through committees, directives and mindless and meaningless documentation of various sorts. So, perhaps some of these aspects should be re-evaluated and easier and more effective systems should be put into operation as soon as possible.