

## Editor's note

In the “bubble” era we all leave in we have experienced the bursting of the “.com”, “property market” and the “global economy” bubbles. Indeed, we have experienced the consequences of these events, with the full impact of some of these bubbles still to be felt by our society at large.

Higher Education in general is considered to be a key factor in sustainable development as well as in wealth creation, democracy, peace and justice. A new warning would appear to indicate<sup>1</sup> that the Higher Education sector may well be the next bubble to burst. Certainly, increases in tuition fees and the general cost of living are exacting a greater financial burden on often limited financial resources thus restricting affordability among the more privileged segments of society. In the South African context, such considerations become of paramount importance, especially in view of the South African PhD initiative by the Department of Science and Technology together with the National Research Foundation,<sup>2</sup> which plans for a five-fold increase in the number of doctoral graduates by 2025. This important initiative would certainly place the country in a more favourable position since South Africa's graduation rate is 27 PhDs per million of the population, which is far fewer than that of Brazil's and a ninth that of Australia.<sup>3</sup> There are of course other concerns globally over degree standards<sup>4</sup> as well as professional role diffusion and confusion as a recent on-line survey in the United Kingdom would appear to indicate “... professors regard income generation as their least important role but acknowledge that their own institutions see this task as one of their top priorities. Just 50% of professors rated income generation as either important or very important

to them personally. But, when asked how universities regard this part of their role, the figure became 82%. As one respondent commented, “My university seems obsessed by external income generation rather than the quality of outputs from researchers like me.” Clearly then the road ahead, exciting and promising as it seems to be, needs to be mapped with great care and wisdom, if the “bubble” is not to burst .

### References

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