

Towards an understanding of mergers in higher education

Since 2002 South Africa's higher education landscape has undergone a number of changes. As a result of a process of mergers introduced by the government, many of the country's tertiary institutions underwent substantial change. The transformation of the tertiary education sector appears to be an ongoing project. That is how it should be. Innovation and change go hand in hand in a sector of education that has the responsibility of training the scientists and technologists of tomorrow.

In this edition of *TD*, we publish a position paper by Dr Frans Kamsteeg, a specialist in organization studies of the VU University Amsterdam, on the merger process at North-West University. The process started in 2002 when the national government took bold steps to start with the complex integration of the country's historically white and black institutions of higher learning. For most institutions it has been an encounter in change management that called for exceptional managerial skill. Although the processes have been completed on paper there still appears to be a lot of unfinished internal business.

Dr Kamsteeg intends to solicit research support from a number of academics at NWU, as well colleagues at other universities in the country. They will work in collaboration with a number of postgraduate students of the Netherlands in a project aimed at understanding what has precisely happened since the university started moving in the direction of a transformed institution.

The project will be funded largely from overseas.

It is evident that NWU's management is eager to take note of what the researchers have to say. The project appears to be bold and innovative. For the university it could be of immense value in terms of planning a cohesive sense of togetherness in a changed higher educational environment. Moreover, it could also benefit higher education in South Africa. Most of the country's tertiary institutions normally share information in an effort at promoting a more efficient higher education system in the country.

The project should be of considerable interest for many institutions.