Network fills PhD supervisor gap

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The problem in your article, ‘PhD supervisors – a rare African commodity, in the 25 June issue of Research Africa is being addressed by a Regional Initiative in Science and Education (RISE) established in 2008 with funding from the Carnegie Corporation in the US.

The African Materials Science and Engineering Network (Amsen) aims to develop research capacity in materials science and engineering among its five members. These ‘nodes’ are the University of Botswana, the University of Nairobi, the University of Namibia, the Federal University of Technology Akure, Nigeria, and the Witwatersrand University in South Africa.

Amsen PhD students are offered at least two supervisors—one from the home institution and one or more from other nodes in the network. Supervisory teams are carefully selected, with one senior academic and the others junior members. In this way supervisory capacity is being built along with the training of academics.

After the successful review of the progress and achievements by the RISE networks during the first phase up to 2011, their funding was renewed for a second phase up to 2013. The success
of the networks has attracted other international funders to the negotiation table to scale up the networks up to ten times during the third phase beyond 2013 and to strengthen their sustainability.

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