Conducting Research and Mentoring Students in Africa

This is a Research Report from the

CODESRIA African Diaspora Project

CODESRIA Working Paper Series

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Conducting Research and Mentoring Students in Africa

CODESRIA College of Mentors Handbook

Edited by

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Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
DAKAR

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The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) is an independent organisation whose principal objectives are to facilitate research, promote research-based publishing and create multiple forums geared towards the exchange of views and information among African researchers. All these are aimed at reducing the fragmentation of research in the continent through the creation of thematic research networks that cut across linguistic and regional boundaries.

CODESRIA publishes *Africa Development*, the longest standing Africa based social science journal; *Afrika Zamani*, a journal of history; the *African Sociological Review*; the *African Journal of International Affairs*; *Africa Review of Books* and the *Journal of Higher Education in Africa*. The Council also co-publishes the *Africa Media Review*; *Identity, Culture and Politics: An Afro-Asian Dialogue*; *The African Anthropologist, Journal of African Tranformation, Method(e) s: African Review of Social Sciences Methodology,* and the *Afro-Arab Selections for Social Sciences*. The results of its research and other activities are also disseminated through its Working Paper Series, Green Book Series, Monograph Series, Book Series, Policy Briefs and the CODESRIA Bulletin. Select CODESRIA publications are also accessible online at www.codesria.org.

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Dedication

A Song of Gratitude

Olabode Victor Akinyemi

The morn' will dawn again!
Tho' wallowing in the smoky night
Like an orphan by the simmering brush
Throttling alone the canvas dark
Africa will sing again
By her warlords the "yo" song of victory!
Yes, the morn' will dawn again!
Cause we are not altogether bereaved
Of hope in the flesh of Heroes past!
Nkrumah, Awolowo, Mandela, and their hosts
Live on in you, the avatars of hope
To give birth to us, the new dawn of hope!
The morn' will dawn again!
And Africa, my Africa
Like the great leopard of Timbuktu
Will mount the tree of destiny
Beyond the claws and fangs of old predators
Who would no longer have her food heinously snatched!
O morning of hope! O morning of hope!
Dawn quickly at our behest!
Africa awaits thy tots
To bear her up this slippery Everest
To rest her feet on the Mont of grandeur
Where her flowers will bloom again!
Thank you madam and sirs! You are the great Avatars of Hope! Africa will surely smile again!

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Ishmael I. Munene is professor in the Department of Educational Leadership at Northern Arizona University teaching courses in Comparative Education, Higher Education, and Educational Research. As an experienced scholar in higher education, Munene has written widely on African higher education, higher education governance, education for the marginalized and educational technology. He has edited two volumes on Africa and authored two books in addition to publishing numerous journal articles, book reviews and newspaper commentaries on education and governance. He has also guest-edited a journal on African education. Munene is on the editorial advisory board of Africa Education Review and serves as an article reviewer for several journals. He has held visiting academic fellowships at Kassel University in Germany, Osmania University in India and the Catholic University of East Africa in Kenya along with the Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship. In 2008, he was honored by the African Studies and Research Forum with the Excellence in Research Award.

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Preface

This book is an outgrowth of the inaugural session of the Council for the Development of Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA) College of Mentors Institute convened at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, Kenya from 10 to 20 April, 2017. The authors of the book comprise the resource persons and 49 very competitively selected doctoral candidates from across Africa that participated in the Institute. The impetus for the book was the desire to develop a tool that is suitable for conducting research and mentoring students in Africa that other doctoral candidates, other writers, and mentors can use in their pursuits.

The College of Mentors is a part of the activities of CODESRIA's African Diaspora Support to African Universities program. The College is composed of senior academics from the Diaspora and within Africa in higher education, the humanities and social sciences. This component entails linking selected PhD candidates and their supervisors to mentors for purposes of benefiting the candidates in their PhD progress. The mentors are expected to offer advice regarding relevant literature, read and comment on draft chapters of theses in preparation, liaise with the official advisors of the doctoral candidates based at African universities and share their views about the work of the students; and where possible, invite and host the students and the official advisors as visiting scholars. The mentors may also be requested to run various activities under this program such as institutes, research methodology workshops and research networks. A joint workshop of the selected students, their supervisors and mentors are held at the beginning to agree on working modalities. The College seeks to both complement and strengthen the support in capacity building in African universities in which CODESRIA is engaged through the Small Grants Programme for Thesis Writing, the institutes, and the methodology workshops.

CODESRIA's African Diaspora Support to African Universities seeks to mobilize African academics in the Diaspora to contribute to the strengthening of African universities, the nurturing of new generations of scholars in Africa in a

culture of excellence, and the revitalization of the social sciences, higher education studies, and the humanities. The specific objectives of the initiative include the strengthening of PhD programs and the curricula in the social sciences and the humanities (SSH); contribute to the filling of gaps and dealing with shortages in teaching; mentoring of young social science scholars in Africa, more generally; as well as in strengthening relations between African academics in the Diaspora and the institutions where they are based and African universities.

The initiative derives from CODESRIA's mandate as the leading Pan-African social science council of the continent and its responsibility to help address the problem of the shortage of qualified academic staff in many African universities both for teaching and for PhD supervision. This problem has worsened with the creation of hundreds of new public and private universities. The consequences of these shortages include the lack of capacity in most of the social science and humanities departments and schools in African universities to organize quality postgraduate programs and conduct research. In some instances, capacity for postgraduate supervision does not exist, and doctoral and masters students take longer to complete their programs due to a lack or shortage of qualified supervisors and mentors.

On the other hand, the existence of a large African academic Diaspora has been documented in numerous studies. Many of these scholars are willing to lend a hand in the revitalization of universities in their home countries or elsewhere in Africa. Other highly qualified academics are circulating outside the universities, within Africa itself, and it would be important to have an initiative that taps into the knowledge and skills they have. Therefore, one effective way to address the shortage of qualified senior academic staff and PhD supervision capacity in African universities is to mobilize the academic Diaspora to support universities in Africa.