Institutional Mentorship in West Africa: Comparing Government-Regulated and University-Led Models

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Abstract	Article Info
This paper compares two institutional mentorships in the West African context: one is an institutional affiliation required by the National Accreditation Board (NAB) between a mentor public university and mentee private university in Ghana; the second one is a university-led mentorship between a mentor private university in Ghana and a mentee private university in Niger. The research questions are the following: How do the two models of institutional mentorship contrast? What is the role of the mentor and mentee in ensuring the effectiveness of institutional mentorship? To investigate these questions, qualitative data was collected through document analysis and interviews of key informants, who were involved in the mentoring relationship across the three institutions. Goleman's (2000) leadership styles theory was applied as the theoretical framework in analyzing the case studies. The NAB institutional affiliation was coercive and created a disempowering and constraining effect upon the mentee, whereas the university-led mentorship displayed an authoritative leadership style and empowered the mentee through the inspirational example of the mentor. The understanding of responsibilities of the mentor and mentee in ensuring effective mentoring was regulations-driven under the NAB affiliation model and values-driven under the university-	

led model. The study showed the importance of the sense of agency of both the mentor and mentee in contributing to the mentoring relationship and what both forms of institutional mentorship could learn from each other. The findings of this study are important and relevant in informing the NAB to improve its institutional affiliation program and for new universities that are seeking models for building mentoring relationships with other institutions to expand their potential and impact.

Introduction

From the 1990s, Africa experienced a surge in the number of private universities in response to a rise in demand for higher education and the introduction of policies that welcomed private sector higher education growth (Varghese, 2004). Despite their contribution to expanding access to higher education in Africa, concerns about the poor quality of private universities persist (Tamrat, 2017). In Ghana, the government established the National Accreditation Board (NAB) to ensure the quality of higher education in the country; the NAB created a system of institutional affiliation for new private universities to be mentored by more experienced and chartered public universities (Utuka, 2011). Under the NAB arrangement, the mentor institution oversees the quality of the mentee institution's admissions, academic delivery, exams, personnel, administration, and facilities and issues diplomas for the mentee institution until it obtains independent charter (Utuka, 2011). Alongside this system, other forms of mentorships have been

established between universities that are not supervised by the government. At one private university in Ghana, both forms of institutional mentorship were experienced: one was its NAB-required institutional affiliation with a Ghanaian public university; the other was the Ghanaian private university's mentorship of a new private university in Niger, which was set up through a mutual agreement between both parties.

While there have been many studies conducted on mentoring relationships at the individual level in higher education (Colvin & Ashman, 2010; Darwin & Palmer, 2009), few analyze institutional mentorships. The studies that analyze institutional mentorships in Ghana (Ansah & Swanzy, 2019; Tsevi, 2015; Utuka, 2011; Yakubu, 2015) scrutinize NAB's affiliation system and center on the role of the mentor or the NAB rather than that of the mentee. There is virtually no literature on other forms of institutional mentorships in Ghana and West Africa and on the role of the mentee institution in the mentoring relationship. This study seeks to fill this gap in the literature through a qualitative study that analyzes two different forms of institutional mentorship: a government-regulated institutional affiliation between two Ghanaian universities and a university-led mentorship between a Ghanaian and Nigerien university. This study will address the following research questions:

1. How do the two models of institutional mentorship at the case study contrast?

2. What are the roles of the mentor and mentee in ensuring the effectiveness of institutional mentorship?

Since institutional affiliation is a requirement of all new universities in Ghana, this research will inform the work of Ghanaian policymakers and the NAB. Learning from the university-led

institutional mentorship model can help improve NAB institutional affiliations, and lessons from government-regulated affiliations can be applied to enhance university-led mentorships. Beyond Ghana, this research will provide valuable information to universities in Africa as they explore institutional mentorship as a potential means of improving education quality at their institution and creating greater impact on other institutions in the continent.

This study is organized in the following way. I first provide a literature review on private universities in Ghana, NAB institutional affiliation, and individual mentorship. I also introduce the theoretical framework of Goleman's (2000) leadership styles. Second, I introduce the multiple case study methodology and qualitative methods employed to collect data for this study. Third, I share key findings that explore this study's research questions by applying Goleman's (2000) framework to the two institutional mentorship case studies. Fourth, I provide an analysis of the findings and identify the key factor of agency that influenced the case study mentoring relationships. Finally, I outline the contributions of this study to the literature and conclude with recommendations for higher education stakeholders and future avenues of research.

Literature Review

Institutional affiliation began long before Ghana's independence from Britain. The establishment of higher education in Ghana, like other African countries, was strongly influenced by its European colonizers (Sawyerr, 2004). The first public universities in Ghana were managed and mentored by the University of London. This meant that London determined the appointment of personnel, curriculum, and exams of Ghanaian affiliates to ensure that they

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maintained international standards (Sawyerr, 2004). Consequently, the first Ghanaian institutions closely mirrored their mentor institution in Britain. After Ghana gained independence, the University College of Gold Coast, which was established in 1948 under the University of London, was released from foreign control and renamed as University of Ghana (Botwe-Asamoah, 2005, p. 190). Later, Kumasi College of Technology also gained university status and was renamed as Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (Ansah & Swanzy, 2019). The University College of Cape Coast was subsequently established in 1962 and initially affiliated with the University of Ghana until 1971 when it was given university status (Ansah & Swanzy, 2019).

For decades, the higher education sector in Ghana was dominated by these three public universities, but recent years have witnessed an explosion in the number of private universities. While there were no private universities and three public universities in 1993, these figures increased to 20 public universities and 81 private universities in 2019 (NAB, 2019). The NAB was established in 1993 as the national quality assurance and accreditation agency in higher education (NAB, 2007). The NAB requires that new higher education institutions be mentored for at least ten years before being able to apply for independent charter, which would enable them to award their own degrees (NAB, 2010). The mentee applies to be in an affiliation with a qualifying chartered institution of their choice. The mentor institution is mandated to have departments that offer the degree programs of the mentee institution and a coordinator, of at least the level of senior lecturer, to liaise with the mentee institution (Government of Ghana, 2010). This institutional affiliation system involves three parties: the mentor, the mentee, and the NAB. While the mentor institution submits an annual report on the mentored

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institution's activities to the NAB, the NAB also conducts its own annual affiliation barometer to evaluate the status of the mentee institution as part of the accreditation process; however, some universities believe this system is redundant (Ansah & Swanzy, 2019).

The literature analyzing the NAB's institutional affiliation system reveals some of the grievances of mentee universities. Although the NAB helps regulate higher education by investigating and exposing substandard institutions, some private universities view the NAB's approach as a form of control rather than quality assurance, and they express the need for greater flexibility in order to maintain institutional autonomy (Utuka, 2011). For instance, the NAB employs a single questionnaire for the evaluation of all kinds of higher education institutions, which prevents the adaptation of its evaluation standards to diverse approaches (Utuka, 2011). Furthermore, the mentees' already strained budgets are burdened by payments of accreditation fees to the NAB and annual institutional and program affiliation fees to their mentors (Ansah & Swanzy, 2019). Ansah and Swanzy (2019) suggest that compulsory institutional affiliation can stifle innovation at mentee universities and doom mentee institutions to simply become more similar to their mentors on the path to gain legitimacy. The attention of mentor universities also tends to be divided. Some mentor universities supervise dozens of mentee universities at once and lack the capacity and the commitment to support the unique needs of each mentee institution (Owusu-Mensah, 2015).

The general mentoring literature examines the dynamics of individual mentoring from various angles, including the functions of mentoring and the traits of effective mentors and mentees. Kram

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(1988) explains that mentoring in workplaces fulfills both career and psychosocial functions; therefore, the mentor not only helps the mentee develop professionally through sharing their expertise but also provides emotional support and encouragement to boost the mentee's self-confidence and personal growth. Effective mentors exhibit caring, integrity, and prudence while displaying strong relational, emotional, and cognitive skills and respect for the mentee's independence (Johnson, 2003). However, not all mentoring relationships are positive. Detrimental mentors can be disabling and manipulative and undermine the mentee to protect their own status (Morton-Cooper & Palmer, 2000). On the other side of the relationship, effective mentees take personal initiative in setting the agenda for and arranging meetings with their mentor, and they are willing to challenge their mentor and be challenged while maintaining respect, good humor, and open-mindedness (Clutterbuck, 2004). The literature also points to the importance of the mentees choosing their mentors; one study found that new teachers were more likely to seek help from those with whom they developed a personal connection rather than the mentors matched to them through a program (Tellez, 2016).

To sum up, the literature on NAB institutional affiliations concentrates on policy-related challenges and rarely draws connections to the research on mentorship between individuals, and the scholarship on individual mentorship has not extended to investigate situations where multiple people from different institutions are engaged in a mentoring relationship. This study seeks to draw a link between individual and institutional mentorship by building on the literature in both fields and contributing to the gap in the literature on university-led mentorships. I take an

interdisciplinary approach to bridge this gap by employing a theoretical framework from the field of leadership studies.

Theoretical Framework

Goleman's (2000) leadership styles will be applied to analyze the two forms of institutional mentorship in this study. While mentors are not always in managerial roles in relation to mentees, mentors are leaders in the sense that they guide others, who in this case are the mentees, to achieve a common goal. Goleman's framework is useful in comparing the quality of interactions taking place in both institutional mentorships. Goleman describes six different leadership styles that work best in different contexts and argues that the most effective leaders use a mix of styles to suit each situation. Some leadership styles are not effective in creating a conducive work climate. Coercive leadership, in which a leader takes forceful, top-down decisions, can lower the morale of employees by making them feel that their perspectives are not valued in the workplace, and pacesetting leadership, in which a leader sets high standards and expects their team to swiftly produce results, negatively impacts the workplace climate because employees can become overwhelmed. Authoritative leaders who inspire their followers, affiliative leaders who empathize with their followers, democratic leaders who encourage active participation, and coaching leaders who help their followers grow all contribute to creating a positive climate by emotionally connecting with those they lead. This theory is limited in bringing out the role of the mentee because it zeroes in on how the mentor's leadership style affects others. Nevertheless, the framework provides a starting point for evaluating the quality of different mentorship models. In applying Goleman's

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leadership styles to compare the institutional mentorships in this study, this study hypothesizes that the mentors displaying these leadership styles create the same kind of empowering or disempowering effects on their mentees. Determining the quality of interactions through this approach creates a suitable framework for comparing the two institutions and understanding the role of mentor and mentee in the mentoring relationship.

Methods

Qualitative multiple case study methodology was employed for the study. The first case studied is the institutional affiliation between a Ghanaian public university (University C) and a Ghanaian private university (University A). This case was selected because the private university recently obtained independent charter after 15 years of being in an institutional affiliation and had the opportunity to experience both being mentored and operating without mentorship. The second case is a university-led mentorship between a mentor Ghanaian private university (University A) and a mentee Nigerien private university (University B). In this case, the Ghanaian private university, which was a mentee in the NAB institutional affiliation, served as a mentor for a new university in Niger. This second case provides a window into understanding an alternate approach to institutional mentorship that is yet to be explored in the literature. Unlike the first case of NAB institutional affiliation, the second case of institutional mentorship is relatively new and, at the time of the study, had been in place for one year. While this alternative form of university mentorship may not be common within the African context, investigating this case provides valuable information to

universities that are seeking to expand their potential and impact through mentoring or being mentored by other universities.

These two dissimilar cases of institutional mentorship were selected for comparison and to draw conclusions about the characteristics of an effective mentorship. Since University A was part of both of the case studies, there may be some inherent bias in respondents' views. On the other hand, this perspective is important because the university had the unique opportunity to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of both approaches. Because University A experienced NAB institutional affiliation prior to its mentorship of University B, respondents from University A were able to reimagine a more ideal institutional relationship when they had the opportunity to lead it themselves. Information about the three universities involved in the case studies are listed below in Table 1.

Table 1.

Traits of case study institutions in 2019

	Private/Public	Founding year	Country	Number of students	Number of degree programs
University A	Private	2002	Ghana	1,173	6
University B	Private	2017	Niger	524	6
University C	Public	1962	Ghana	74,720	210+

The main data collection methods employed were semi-structured interviews and document analysis. First, the administrations of the three institutions involved in the cases were approached to obtain suggestions of key informants. The target population was comprised of members of the administration, staff,

and faculty who were most involved in the mentorship arrangement. This was a relatively small group. While mentoring does impact the entire university, studying the influence of mentoring on the entire university population was outside of the scope because the study focuses on the quality of mentoring relationships rather than assessing the outcomes of mentoring on the campus community. Each interviewee was provided with an informed consent form, and I met with interviewees both in person and over the phone to conduct interviews. 13 interviews were conducted in total, and each interview was transcribed and coded by hand in order to identify common themes in relation to the research questions. The data from the interviews were triangulated with document analysis of NAB documents on institutional affiliation and the memorandum of understanding for the university-initiated case study.

Findings

Before contrasting the two models of institutional mentorship, I provide a brief description of both kinds in terms of their initiation process, the content of engagement, and goals.

First case study: Government-regulated institutional affiliation

As required by the NAB, University A selected University C to be its mentor, and this institutional affiliation continued until the mentee obtained charter, which was the ultimate goal of the affiliation in addition to quality assurance. Institutional affiliation typically consisted of three components: First, every semester, the mentee sent final exam questions to their mentor for pre-moderation, and after the exams were administered, the mentee sent graded exams to the mentor to moderate their marks. Second, the mentor verified that all of the mentee's degree candidates met graduation

requirements, including reviewing and approving students' final projects. Third, the mentor institution awarded its certificates to the mentee's students. Every five years, during the accreditation review, the mentor sent a representative to visit the mentee institution and monitor its progress. The mentee was required to be under the mentor after 10 years. However, it took 15 years for University A to obtain independent charter because it had to work on meeting various costly requirements in terms of equipment and facilities.

The process of obtaining an independent charter (NAB, 2020) is described in this section. First, the applicant university fills out a charter accreditation form that serves as a form of self-evaluation and submits the application with a fee. The NAB reviews the application to see if the institution has fulfilled the required criteria. Criteria include at least half of faculty as full time and with terminal degrees, rising student enrollment over ten years, financial capability, effective institutional governance structure, good student to staff ratio, good environment, good quality assurance system, and high staff retention rate. The board can reject the application and advise the institution to correct any areas that need further work. If the board decides to proceed, experts are commissioned to look at the institution's governance, financial sustainability, and physical facilities. The mentor institution also prepares and submits a report on the readiness of the mentored institution to award its own degrees. After compiling and reviewing these reports, the NAB visits the applicant to have a discussion with the leadership to confirm all claims made in application. When all conditions are met, the NAB makes a recommendation to the Ministry of Education for the institution to be granted a presidential charter.

Second case study: University-led mentorship

A new university in Niger (University B) was inspired by a more experienced institution in Ghana (University A) and requested for help to learn from the older institution. The founder and president of University B connected with the founder and president of University A and discovered that University A was a perfect role model for his university. University B also began to participate consistently in an annual conference for African universities hosted by University A. It is important to note that Niger does not have an institutional affiliation system, so University B was not required to have a mentor but sought out the mentorship on its own accord. Prior to the official beginning of the mentorship, a relationship had already begun to form between the two parties through these interactions, but it was formalized through the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU), which outlined the purpose, scope, and areas of cooperation of the mentorship. The general areas of cooperation included curriculum design and review; faculty, staff, and student exchange; parallel teaching and sharing of curriculum; administrative and managerial work process design and review; and strategy and policy design and review.

According to the MOU, the mentorship consists of various programs, which each have their own targets and timelines, and while there is no set duration for the mentorship, the relationship can be terminated at any time by either party. The MOU also stipulates that financial arrangements will be made on a program by program basis between the two universities. For instance, University A could agree to fly its representatives to visit University B, while University B caters for the visitors' accommodation, food, and transportation. The mentoring relationship is of mutual interest to both universities

because it allows the two institutions to strengthen their academic and scholarly links while providing opportunities for cultural exchange and collaborative research. For the mentor, this mentorship is one way that it can scale its mission to foster the next generation of leaders in Africa. While University A can only graduate a limited number of students every year, supporting another university to raise the same caliber of graduates enables the mentor to impact more lives and regions in Africa. The mentee's goal is to learn from the experience and model of the mentor in order to develop its own capacity to provide the highest quality university education in Niger.

At the time of this study's interviews in 2019 and 2020, a few administrators, faculty, and staff members from University A had visited University B to advise on areas of need, including curriculum development and mental health counseling. Several faculty members, administrators, and students from University B also visited University A for the annual higher education conference hosted by University A.

Comparative analysis of the two cases

Coercive mentoring

When Goleman's leadership styles are applied in this analysis, the NAB-required institutional affiliation primarily aligned with the description of coercive leadership. Because the mentor already had an idea of the traits of a quality institution based on its own experience and the standards given by the NAB, the mentor steered the mentee in that direction. There is an element of coercion involved because the affiliation was a compulsory arrangement that the mentee was obligated to follow in order to obtain accreditation from the government. All interviews from the mentee side shared a common

concern that this relationship was rigidly imposed, which prevented the mentee institution from being able to freely innovate. When asked about the achievements of the mentorship, most respondents from both the mentor and mentee sides said that obtaining charter was the main success. This seems to suggest that the other aspects of improving the quality of the education provided at the school was not the central purpose of the mentoring. The end result rather than the process was emphasized.

As expected, this coercive relationship had a disempowering effect upon the mentee because there was little to no mentee choice: University A was expected to fit into a system of standards that already existed rather than having the space to experiment in its own way. As Goleman explains, coercive leadership prevents flexibility and makes top-down decisions that destroy new ideas. From the mentee's perspective, the mentor institution was a police-like authority figure. Interestingly, the respondent from University C did not recognize major points of conflict: "[Disagreement] doesn't come in. Because you only discuss with the [mentee] school what they want to do, and you guide them. We are not supposed to impose." This response differed significantly with the respondents from the mentee. Informants from the mentee institution spoke about how they had to advocate for their stance in cases where they did not agree with the mentor institution. This may have been due to institutional differences. Beyond differences in terms of private versus public and student population size, the institutional norms and values of University A and C also differed significantly. University C had been mentored according to mainly British-influenced standards, which can be traced back to the time that London mentored Ghanaian public universities, whereas University A wanted to create more of an American-style liberal arts experience.

For instance, the mentor institution had allocated 60 percent of students' grades for any given course to the final, whereas the mentee wanted a much lower percentage allocated to the final with a greater emphasis on process assignments. The two institutions compromised at 40 percent for the weight of the final, but the respondents maintained that, in this form of mentorship, they did not have the freedom to decide the best percentage for themselves. In another example, the mentor institution did not understand why some of the mentee's lecturers wanted to evaluate their students with a final paper instead of a final exam. Therefore, all of these aspects where there were pedagogical and philosophical divergences needed to be negotiated with the mentor. As one faculty member from University A described, the mentor "fear[ed] what they don't know." The mentor institution did not feel comfortable with significantly veering away from its own practices; at the same time, the mentor was simply doing its job by playing the quality assurance role expected by the NAB and was also required to follow those set standards.

From both the mentor and mentee side, the mentoring relationship appeared to be externally imposed instead of internally motivated. When asked about what the mentorship meant to the mentor institution, the respondent said the mentorship was "a mandatory thing that every newly private institution needs to follow… their graduates received [our] certificate. So, if a school is taking your certificate, it is incumbent on you to monitor their process." This comment suggests that the mentor institution's motivation to engage in the mentorship and to ensure its success was to comply with government expectations and to ensure that its reputation was upheld. It did not necessarily come from a place of wanting to see another institution grow. An administrator from the

mentee university noted that "if the mentorship was not required, we wouldn't have gone for it."

If given the choice, the mentee institution would have opted out of a mentorship since it did not see the benefit of affiliation for their development as a new university. Another faculty member shared that this affiliation system at least helped the mentee institution adapt to Ghanaian standards, but others shared that most of it was "annoying" and "a bother." Because of the nature of this externally imposed process, the mentee lacked agency in the relationship and felt the mentorship was more of a chore than a privilege. Interviewees from University A felt that the mentorship was detrimental in that it held the new university back from achieving its vision.

Authoritative mentoring

The university-led mentorship most closely matched the authoritative leadership style. The mentor inspired the mentee through its own example and vision, which the mentee also strove to achieve. The point of difference here is that the mentor did not have to persuade the mentee to buy into the vision because the mentee already had the same vision even prior to engaging with the mentor. As explained earlier, this is where Goleman's theory's limitations lie. The mentees' agency is not taken into consideration in the leadership style framework. Both University A and B shared the aspiration of providing a new kind of innovative student-centered education that would enable their graduates to become transformative leaders in their countries. Both were also influenced by American models of higher education since the founders of both universities received their tertiary education in the US and were supported by American universities to develop their curricula and structures. This values

alignment was the reason why University B selected University A as its mentor in the first place. University B wanted to become what University A was but in its own way. Both institutions were united in purpose in terms of the kind of higher education they wanted to see develop in Africa. The authoritative leadership style resulted in empowering the mentee by allowing it space to innovate and take well-informed risks towards achieving the shared goal. The standards of success were clear and agreeable to the mentee because the mentor was already achieving them.

Mentoring between University A and B was based on a mutual understanding and a self-motivated desire between both institutions as equal partners in the relationship. The mentor played the role of a guide rather than an enforcer, and the mentee could decide to accept or reject any of the mentor's suggestions. Both universities recognized that they were situated in different cultures even if they were both located in West Africa and that what worked at one university may not be suitable for another. Unlike coercive mentoring, there was no need for extended negotiations over decisions taken by the mentee that differed from the mentor's recommendations because the mentor respected the independence of the mentee. One administrator from University A shared: "What we are doing with the universities we are mentoring is more like a friendship. We are there to give them advice. We are not insisting that they do anything. There is no supervision as that of [University C]." A faculty member from University A maintained that "the institution must remain themselves in terms of their purpose and version, so that we also maintain our purpose and vision, but we work hand in hand to help each other." A respondent from University B echoed this thinking: "The two parties must know that the mentorship is an inspiration. Every university should hold on to

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their purpose no matter the school that is mentoring them." The mentor's purpose was not to dilute the brand of the mentee. This idea of the institution remaining true to itself was repeated across interviews from University A and B. Accordingly, this mentorship was about helping the mentee become the best version of itself rather than a copy of the mentor institution.

In this highly empowering mentorship, the mentee communicated to the mentor about its areas of weakness that required support, and the mentor addressed the mentees' needs and provided advice and examples from its own experience. University B saw the mentorship as highly beneficial because "we can learn faster and focus on what is more important. Mentorship also helps avoid mistakes because your mentor would have may be experienced a challenge and will prevent you from encountering the same challenge." The mentee institution is able to learn from the challenges of the mentor and the systems that the mentor designed in addressing its challenges.

Unlike NAB institutional affiliation, which primarily consisted of back and forth communications on various required items that were requested by the mentor, the university-led mentorship worked organically and included training by the mentor institution to help the mentee institution develop the capacity to improve on its delivery. Advice on administrative aspects such as organizational design and financial planning was provided to help the mentee develop effective institutional policies and procedures. Overall, the mentoring relationship was underpinned by the mentor's care for and belief in the mentee: one respondent from University B explained that the mentor institution "genuinely wants to see you become great."

Role of mentor and mentee

The mentor and mentee both play a role in ensuring the effectiveness of a mentoring relationship, and this is the aspect that Goleman's (2000) leadership styles fail to capture. In the NAB affiliation, the roles of both the mentor and mentee to ensure quality at that mentee institution are well-documented procedures that are part of the NAB's affiliation system, and they are not flexible in case either the mentor or mentee do not agree with the protocol. The roles are enforced through accountability of the mentee institution to the mentor institution and the NAB's supervision of both institutions. The rigidity of this policy tended to make institutional affiliation inherently coercive whether the mentor institution intends to make it so or not. The responsibilities of mentor and mentee were regulations-driven in the first case.

In the second case, the roles were not spelled out in detail and could also change over time as both institutions learned and realized that their initial ideas could be improved. As one University B administrator described, the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship depended on "the mindset" and "the culture" of both parties. In explaining the role of the mentor, university A administrator claimed that

> *mentoring does not necessarily force the individual to be like their mentor. They just encourage them to their best. In all relationships, there should be value in both sides. I personally did not see the value in [University C]. It will be better if the mentors guide the mentees to create their own systems instead of depending on their mentors' systems.*

University A was primarily motivated by its desire to help another African institution flourish and to contribute to improving higher education on the continent. One staff member from University

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A said that "We can't have multiple [University A's] across Africa – the impact is greater if multiple people are doing it." Mentoring was one concrete way for University A to share its creative approaches and spread its impact beyond its own campus. This contrasted with the NAB institutional affiliation, which focused on the mentor's obligations to meet government requirements and to ensure that the mentee institution met the same academic standards as itself.

In the university-led mentorship, the mentee could not be passive and wait for the mentor to tell it what to do. The mentee needed to determine the direction of the mentoring interactions and areas of focus. Lack of understanding about its shortcomings and needs was one of the challenges shared by University B. Initially, the university did not know what it was seeking from the mentorship and where it needed the most help. An interviewed staff member from University A also noted that University B did not seem prepared in understanding what it wanted to achieve through the mentorship. This made it difficult for the mentor to know how to support the mentee. The university-led mentorship required the mentee to play the leading role in some ways because it was not designed to provide clear-cut answers or commands.

One administrator from University B explains:

The mentee should have a clear vision and objective of where they want to go. On the side of the mentors, they should clearly listen to the needs of the mentees, so that they can help the mentees based on what they need, because the mentor can also learn from the mentees… [The mentee should] explain [their] weakness well to [their] mentors so that they can help [the mentees] accordingly.

One University B administrator noted that "[this] mentorship will help you to think but will not give you answers. You must find

out the answers yourself." The mentor has already walked the path and can share its experience, but it serves as more of a guide than an authority figure. Next, after determining what it needed and receiving guidance from the mentor, the mentee needed to take actions to implement suggestions that it saw as fit. One of the weaknesses mentioned by the respondents from University A is that the mentee institution seemed overwhelmed by many other challenges, such as high staff turnover, and that it was not able to follow through on some of the recommendations it agreed to implement. In other words, the mentee needed to take full ownership of the process in order to make the mentoring relationship effective. Nevertheless, the actions of the mentor and mentee were values-driven: even if the roles were not always outlined or enforced, both the mentor and mentee naturally made efforts to ensure the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship based on their shared values.

Analysis

The analysis of the above findings demonstrates the importance of developing models to understand mentorship that incorporate the agency (or lack of agency) of both the mentor and mentee. This was an aspect the Goleman (2000) framework was not able to capture because the framework assumed that the leader, or mentor, had full agency, and the followers, or mentees, were reactive rather than proactive in the relationship. The findings reveal that the sense of agency is critical in developing a mentoring relationship of value to both sides. This resonates with the literature on individual mentorship emphasizing the importance of mentee choice (Tellez, 2016) and the mentee's personal initiative and ownership of the

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mentoring process (Clutterbuck, 2004). The mentee needed to determine what it sought from the mentoring rather than being passive in the relationship (Clutterbuck, 2004). This also echoes concerns raised by the research on institutional affiliations about the stifling nature of NAB institutional affiliations (Ansah & Swanzy, 2019; Utuka, 2011).

Both the mentor and mentee's sense of agency can be reduced in rigid bureaucratic systems. One common strategy of organizations that deal with many different individuals or institutions is to streamline the process with structured steps to make it easier for the supervising organization to keep track of the certification of many diverse entities. Even though the creation of these kinds of guidelines are helpful and clarify what each individual needs to do to move forward in their application for accreditation, an over-reliance on such processes makes the system inflexible and constraining. The findings from University A respondents demonstrated that they felt the NAB-required institutional mentorship limited their institution's freedom to develop their own alternative approaches to education. Rather than being something that supported their development as a new university, the mentoring process was a hoop that they had to jump through in order to obtain greater autonomy from the government. Some respondents claimed that the institutional affiliation was actually a burdensome hindrance and that the government should change its policy of requiring new universities to undergo affiliation. This is the disadvantage of using a blanket policy that fails to sufficiently individualize the programs for the benefit of each institution. Institutional affiliation, as currently devised by NAB, could be more effective and helpful if it was based on a differentiated approach that took into consideration the unique strengths and needs

of each institution and created space for the mentee institution to fully actualize its own vision.

The NAB can learn from the example of the university-led mentorship to understand how agency is incorporated in many aspects of the mentoring process from the matching to the planning of every aspect of the mentoring program. Mentorships that promote a sense of agency are based on the mentor's trust and support for the mentee institution. At the same time, the university-led mentorship can learn from the NAB in terms of creating stronger processes of accountability in order to keep the mentee on track. As explained earlier, University B was slow to implement concrete suggestions made by the mentor because it was overwhelmed by other tasks it needed to do, and one can also conjecture that the mentee may not have felt a strong obligation to follow through with action items in a timely manner because it would not be penalized for failing to do so. Agency is helpful but can also slow down progress without adequate structure. Therefore, both models of mentorship can learn lessons from the other in improving upon its weaknesses.

The limitation of this study was that it relied upon interviews and did not include observations of interactions between mentor and mentee institutions, especially because one of the mentoring relationships had concluded before this research took place. However, with a small sample size, the study was able to find fairly consistent answers across institutions to help demonstrate the reliability of the data.

Conclusion

This study provided a comparative analysis of government-regulated and university-led institutional mentorships in the West African context. The main findings are that the NAB-required institutional mentorship was coercive and unable to flexibly meet the needs of the mentee institution, while the universities-initiated mentorship reflected the authoritative leadership style and was based on a mutual understanding as partners towards a shared goal with the mentor serving as an inspirational example. Furthermore, the mentor and mentee roles were regulations-driven under the NAB institutional affiliation, and they were values-driven under the universities-led mentorship. The analysis showed that the sense of agency of both the mentor and mentee institutions is critical in creating an effective mentoring relationship and must be incorporated into mentorship models.

This study makes unique contributions to understanding mentorship that have been previously unaddressed. First, it has provided a comparative analysis and two different forms of institutional mentorships, which could then be applied in other contexts to evaluate institutional mentorships. Second, rather than only outlining the challenges of institutional mentorships, this study has shed light on the role of mentors and mentees in improving the effectiveness of such a relationship. Third, the study has shown that there are strong conceptual links to explore between individual and institutional mentorship. Future avenues of potential research include research comparing the characteristics of successful (resulting in charter) and unsuccessful (not resulting in a charter) NAB institutional affiliations and research on institutional mentorships in other contexts. Theoretical frameworks should be developed to

understand the connections and distinctions between institutional mentorships and individual mentorships in order to structure further analysis of this less-studied field.

Despite the challenges often described by the literature, institutional mentorship can be highly effective and helpful if done well. It can be a way for new universities to learn from the experiences of older universities in order to better navigate its own path of development. Therefore, I recommend that new private universities explore potential means to improvement by learning and seeking mentorship from other institutions. In a time when South-South collaboration is greatly needed, institutional mentorships among African universities carry enormous potential to propel the development of higher education in Africa and must be studied in greater depth. These efforts will contribute to improving the quality of education for students and, in turn, the development of more capable individuals for the future of Africa.

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