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Design Mentoring Approach in Companies in Poland

Małgorzata Baran[1]

ABSTRACT

In the contemporary world of business, mentoring has become common practice. Its objectives include the personal and professional development of employees, training new employees, nurturing talents, planning for successions and developing leaders. A literature review has enabled the author to conclude that a structured, systematic, coordinated and evaluated mentoring program helps businesses achieve the expected results, i.e., the construction of lasting mentoring relationships leading to the realization of intended goals and benefits. The question therefore arises, how do companies build effective mentoring programs? The aim of the article is to determine the conditions for building effective mentoring programs. The research was conducted on a non-probable sample of 30 companies operating in Poland that have implemented mentoring programs within the last 3-5 years. Triangulation of research methods was applied. PAPI and IDI methods were used to survey representatives of chosen companies who manage mentoring programs.

The effective mentoring program is achieved by defining the roles of participants in the mentoring process precisely and by defining their competencies, responsibilities and objectives. Furthermore, it is important to establish transparent rules for participation in the mentoring program, i.e., participation criteria for mentors, selection criteria for mentees and placement criteria for bringing participants together into suitable pairs or groups. It is crucial to provide mentoring participants with support in the form of advice, consultation before and between mentoring sessions, and monitoring their expectations of and satisfaction from participating in the program.

KEY WORDS: formal mentoring, mentorship, effectiveness, mentoring programs

JEL Classification: M5

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1. Introduction

In the contemporary world of business, companies increasingly focus on ways to manage the organization's most valuable asset, namely, employees with unique knowledge and many years of experience. Thus, mentoring has become common practice. Mentoring objectives include the personal and professional development of employees, training new employees, nurturing talents, planning for successions and developing leaders (Clutterbuck, 2002; Gravells, 2008; Hansford & Ehrich, 2006; Meginson & Stokes, 2004). These objectives clearly contribute to the development of the whole organization by enabling the employees to realize their potential by motivating them to action, by increasing their productivity and by raising their chances of success (Allen, 2007; Friday & Friday, 2002; Higgins, 2000; Irving, Moore, & Hamilton, 2003; Willson & Elman, 1990). Mentoring can be effective at every stage of an

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employee's career (Chao, 1997; Dreher & Ash, 1990; Fagenson, 1989; Fajana & Gbajumo-Sheriff, 2011); however, the biggest challenge that the company faces in its mentoring program is the achievement of objectives not only of individual employees or groups of employees but also of the entire organization (Hansford, Ehrich, & Tennent, 2004; Irving et al., 2003; Klasen & Clutterbuck 2002; Parsloe, 2000).

A literature review has enabled the author to conclude that a structured and properly coordinated mentoring program allows businesses to achieve expected results, i.e., the construction of lasting mentoring relationships that lead to the realization of intended goals and benefits (Bedwell et al., 2011; Eby & Lockwood, 2005; Friday & Friday, 2002; Garvey & Alred, 2011; Ragins & Cotton, 1999). The question, therefore, arises of how companies build successful mentoring programs. This question became the subject of research conducted by the author in the fourth quarter of 2015 and the beginning of 2016 with funding from research project no. PN/1/2015/CC. The aim of this research was to assess the degree of organizational preparation for operating mentoring programs in companies in Poland. In particular, the selection process and the selection of mentoring participants were examined. Research was conducted on a special, selected sample of 30 companies operating in Poland that had successfully implemented mentoring programs at least 3-5 years (in some cases over the past decade or more) prior to the survey. The aim of the article is to present the author's own research findings on the building of effective mentoring programs in enterprises in Poland and on the tools used to assess the degree of organization preparation for implementing effective mentoring programs.

2. The essence of mentoring

There are numerous definitions of mentoring in the scholarly literature. Mentoring, as it is widely understood in business, is a way to help individuals and organizations achieve business objectives based on the potential of the participant to make use of the knowledge and experience of the mentor (Coaching Center, 2016). Mentoring is a way of developing the personal potential of employees by working with an experienced person who boasts a great deal of professional business knowledge. As a result, mentoring includes the mentor's direct assistance in the mentee's development, professional advice and the informal exchange of information (Listwan, 2005).

In numerous research studies, both mentors and mentees suggest that mentoring not only constitutes the dissemination of knowledge, the mastering of skills, and the personal and professional development of the employee but also the accrual of both a high level of satisfaction from just participating in the mentoring process and the benefits from building relationships (Baran, 2014; Clutterbuck, 2002; Henriques & Curado, 2009; Kram, 1985; Parsloe, 2000).

Apart from benefiting the mentor and mentee, mentoring can also be beneficial to the whole organization, as shown by Wilson and Elman (1990) and Megginson et al. (2008). To clarify the concept of the "mentoring process," it is worth noting the definition by Garvey, Stokes and Megginson, who defined it as a process launched intentionally within the organizational environment (Garvey et al., 2009). Mentoring is characterized by a mode of implementation comprising a formalized process that deliberately enables the mentor's experience to support the mentee in line with the aims of the organization. The concomitance of development objectives of the mentee and organization is known as "organised mentoring" (Garvey & Alred, 2011).

The informal method of the mentoring process in an organization can be identified as a process that has not been formalized, existing without documented rules, organizational regulations and appropriate structures within the organization. It develops spontaneously and occurs as a result of the mentor-mentee relationship, which involves a willingness of both parties to cooperate, invest time and exhibit mutual trust (Baran, 2016). It is often seen as a process to achieve specific demands, very often to produce career-related support (Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 1992). Usually, it is based on unwritten rules of the traditional master-student relationship. On the other hand, formal mentoring is a formalized process, located in the organizational structure, based on contracts, procedures, and regulations (Baran, 2016). This type of mentoring is formed through an organized and planned matching of mentor and mentee by the organization (Ragin & Cotton, 1999). The mentoring sessions are based on a schedule of meetings and evaluations that impact the mentee's work. The whole process is structured and the rela-

tion between mentor and mentee is coordinated using standard norms, action plans and particular objectives (Bahniuk & Hill, 1998; Bednell et al., 2012; Hansford & Ehrich, 2006, Noe, 1988).

Regardless of the kind of mentoring used and regardless of the size and specialization of the organization, the basic mentoring scheme remains unchanged (Allen, 2007; Holiday, 2006; Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2002; Kram, 1985; Megginson & Clutterbuck, 1995; Parsloe, 1992); its objectives are related to the organizational culture, organizational structure and strategy. In the literature review of the best practices of mentoring schemes conducted by the author, there are some key steps of effective mentoring schemes in all types of organization (Allen, Finkelstein & Poteet, 2011; Cranwell-Ward, Bossons, & Gover, 2004; Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2002; Megginson et al., 2008; Merrick, 2009; Ramaswami & Dreher, 2007; Schein, 2010; Sontag, Vappie, & Wanberg, 2007), these are as follows:

- estimating the expected benefits for the organization, the mentors and the mentees,
- determining the timeframe in which the benefits should become apparent,
- engagement and support of senior and middle management and the HR department in the mentoring process,
- coordination and supervision,
- monitoring of the process and the procedures used, evaluating, informational and promotional activities,
- recruitment and selection of mentors, mentees, pairing mentors and mentees,
- estimating the mentoring process plan – duration, number of sessions, training, advice, evaluation,
- and evaluating the mentoring process in the organization.

3. Characteristics of mentoring programs

Many authors contend that appropriately planned, organized and managed mentoring programs can effectively help employees meet their own goals and the goals and strategies of the organization (Clutterbuck, 2002; Friday & Friday, 2002; Hansford & Ehrich, 2006; Kram, 1983; Ragins & Cotton, 1999).

Mentoring relationships produced in the framework of formal and coordinated mentoring programs differ fundamentally from relationships produced in the context of informal mentoring (Allen, Eby, & Lentz, 2006). This difference exists regardless of what type of mentoring the organization uses, from community-based relationships to e-mentoring relationships, including peer mentoring, group mentoring, mutual mentoring, reverse mentoring, team mentoring and virtual mentoring (Baran, 2016; Garvey & Alred, 2011; Higgins, 2000; Klasen & Clutterbuck, 2002; Ragins & Kram, 2007; Stokes & Merrick, 2013). The key difference between the two systems is the way in which relationships are built, while informal mentoring relationships are produced in conditions of mutual understanding and need from both sides, mentoring pairs in formal programs are formed as a result of specific HR processes (Ragins, 2002). Formal and informal mentoring relationships also differ in the structure of the relationship (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Informal relationships are not bound by schedules, predetermined durations and imposed rules. In contrast, formalized mentoring is characterized by a more structured mentoring process, comprising the selection of mentors and mentees, placing them in pairs, interim feedback and evaluation. Implementation of mentoring sessions takes place with the use of standards, constant action plans and time frames (Baugh & Fagenson-Eland, 2007; Eby, 1997; Higgins & Kram, 2001; Ragins & Cotton, 1999).

In the literature, on the subject, some authors suggest that informal mentoring can be more valuable than a formal system on average (Chao et al., 1992). Nevertheless, the study by Ragins (2002) showed that formal mentoring programs have the potential to produce as many benefits as informal ones. Furthermore, formal mentoring is an important tool for the organization in the process of employee development, increasing both the productivity and efficiency of the employees (Ragins, 2002). If a mentoring program is formal, it allows employers to manage the program and its participants effectively (Wilson & Elman, 1990). By devoting time to the careful preparation of rules, procedures, criteria, schedules and participating employees, employers are able to ensure the effectiveness of the program, i.e., they are able to ensure its timely implementation and the achievement of its designated objectives (Friday & Friday, 2002; Irving et al., 2003).

4. Methodology

This study was conducted at the turn of 2015 and 2016 within the research project (PN/1/2015/CC). Mentoring research in selected Polish companies was based on the triangulation of research methods, which was supposed to increase the credibility of the obtained materials and their interpretation (Hensel & Glinka, 2001). Three research methods were used in the study:

- A quantitative study based on PAPI (direct questionnaire, paper-and-pencil interview)
- A qualitative study based on the IDI (individual, in-depth interview)
- Analysis of existing data (documents from companies).

The study was conducted on a non-probable (purposeful as described by Babbie, 2003; Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2001) sample of 30 companies operating in Poland that use mentoring. The term "companies in Poland" used in this work refers to companies that are both registered in the Polish National Court Register and who conduct their business activities in Poland. The first criterion of a company's participation in the study was using a mentoring process for a minimum of 3-5 years and organizing mentoring programs. The second criterion taken into account was the size of the organization that used mentoring (in order to diversify the sample with small, medium and large companies). The purpose of such selection criteria was to obtain a variety of organizations with extensive experience in the implementation of mentoring and the use of mentoring programs.

The task of producing a representative sample of companies that use mentoring programs proved to be difficult to achieve, mainly due to the lack of registers available, i.e., databases containing such entities. Therefore, the selection of companies took place through cooperation with mentor associations and organizations associating mentoring organizations in Poland. The main research method used in the study was the direct questionnaire interview PAPI. The choice of such a research technique was dictated by the complexity of the research problem, which influenced the very large questionnaire survey (consisting of 37 questions and response cards for the responders). PAPI was used to survey representatives of companies managing mentoring processes, who were coordinators of mentoring programs (often in HR departments). The PAPI method allowed the author to obtain aggregate data by using standardized questions (Babbie, 2003).

In the qualitative study, the method of data collection was based on individual in-depth interviews (IDI), which were also carried out with the coordinators of mentoring processes. In-depth interviews were carried out using a scenario that included questions and a list of issues to be discussed. The qualitative method permitted an in-depth analysis of the mentoring issues in the surveyed companies and an answering of questions that could not be asked under standardized conditions using the questionnaire survey.

A group of 30 companies took part in the research, which includes 4 (13%) small companies (with 10-49 employees), 6 (20%) medium companies (with 50-249 employees), and 20 (67%) large companies (with at least 250 employees). For the respondents' industrial sector, the sample consists of 15 (50%) service companies, 7 (23%) manufacturing companies, and 8 (28%) trading companies. All the companies operate with Polish capital.

The aim of the study was to determine how companies were building effective mentoring programs. Based on a literature review, elements of the process initiating mentoring in the organization—directly concerning program participants and their preparation to participate in the process—were identified. One of the elements that characterized the system was the formal program coordinators' selection of candidates as mentors and potential mentees to participate in the program and the way in which they were put into pairs or mentoring groups. Further, selected elements of the mentoring process in the organization concerned the competence of the program participants, their roles in the process, expectations of and benefits from participation in the process and the roles of superiors.

At the same time, based on the evaluated practices of the surveyed companies, an attempt was made to create a tool for measuring the level of preparation of organizations to build effective mentoring programs.

5. Participant selection process in business mentoring programs in companies in Poland—presentation of research results

The vast majority of companies surveyed (86.6%) indicated that a system had been created where mentors

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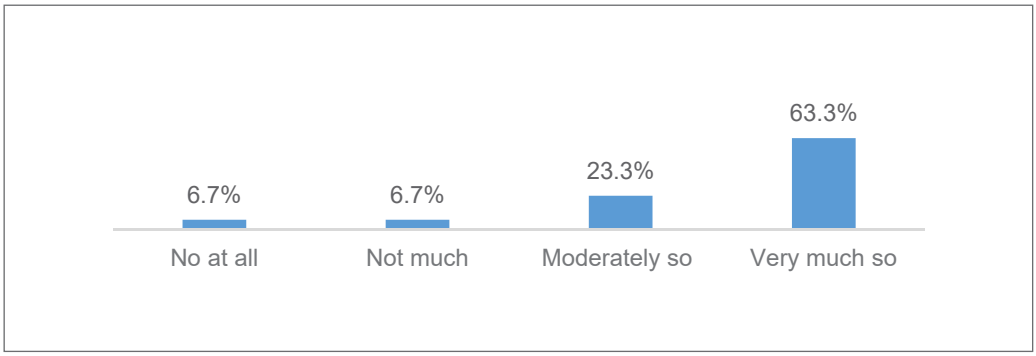

Figure 1. Degree of agreement with the statement "Before the mentoring process started, a system was created whereby mentors and mentees were selected and placed into pairs" N = 30

and mentees were selected and placed into pairs or groups. Only 13% of companies stated that no selection system at the stage of implementing mentoring programs had been established in the company—cf. Figure 1.

An analysis of the methods used for selecting mentors to participate in the implementation of mentoring programs in the surveyed companies showed that the main criteria comprised following:

- substantive knowledge of the sector (96.7%),
- the amount of experience in the organization (90%),
- knowledge about management and managerial skills (90%),
- ability and willingness to share knowledge (90%),
- availability (86.7%),
- opinion of the mentor's milieu on their knowledge and experience (80%),
- position/standing in the company (70%),
- whether or not the mentor volunteered (63.3%).

It is worth noting that none of the surveyed organizations considered gender or age of the candidate as a criterion for selecting mentors.

In contrast, the analysis of the methods used for selecting mentees to participate in mentoring programs showed that more than half of the companies turned to nominations by superiors (53.3%), while simultaneously taking into account survey findings on employee training and developmental needs. One in three companies taking part in this study indicated that the selection of mentees took place differently than indicated above, i.e., in those companies a crucial factor was the candidates' earlier roles as mentees in talent programs (30%). In addition, the opinion of the HR department played a significant role in the respondents' opinion of the analyzed process (15%).

In more than half of the surveyed companies, an individual or a coordinating team for mentoring in the company was responsible for the selection of participants in the mentoring process and their suitable placement into pairs or groups. The results of the study indicate that it is most common for the process manager to collect applications from people who — meeting set criteria — are willing to mentor and to match them to mentees in response to the identified developmental needs of the mentees (56.7%). The second most used method, albeit decidedly less common, is the recommendation of mentoring pairs by a specialist or the HR manager (36.7%). It is worth noting that none of the organizations employed a selection system in which mentoring pairs were chosen at a draw (see Figure 2).

Another important aspect of this study was to see if companies were mindful of avoiding codependency between mentor and mentee during the selection of mentoring pairs or groups (Figure 3). For most companies surveyed (86%), the lack of codependency between mentor and mentee constitutes one of the main principles of the mentoring process.

As seen in Table 1, the problem of codependency affects small businesses most acutely.

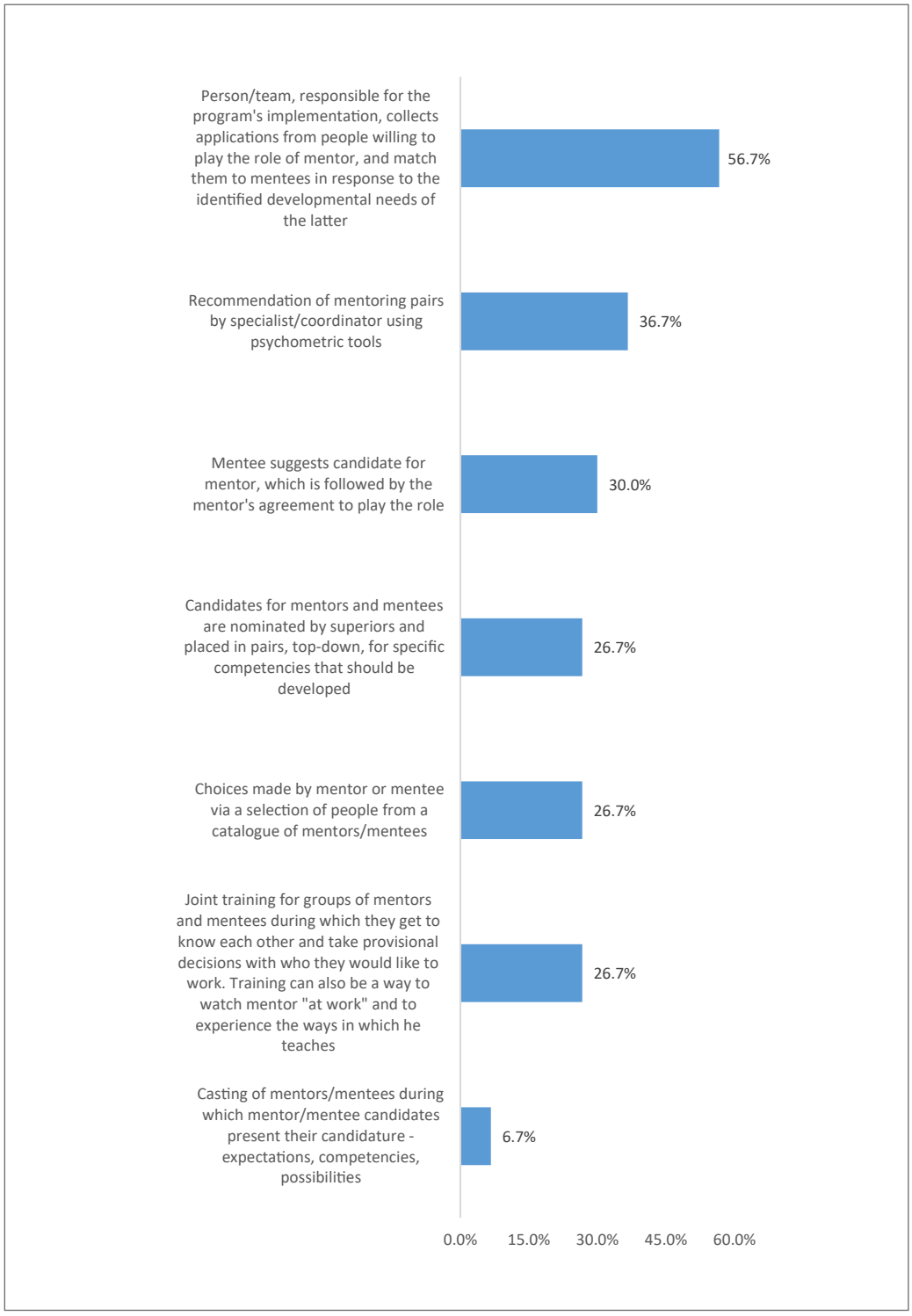

Figure 2. Ways of selecting participants for business mentoring relationships [3]

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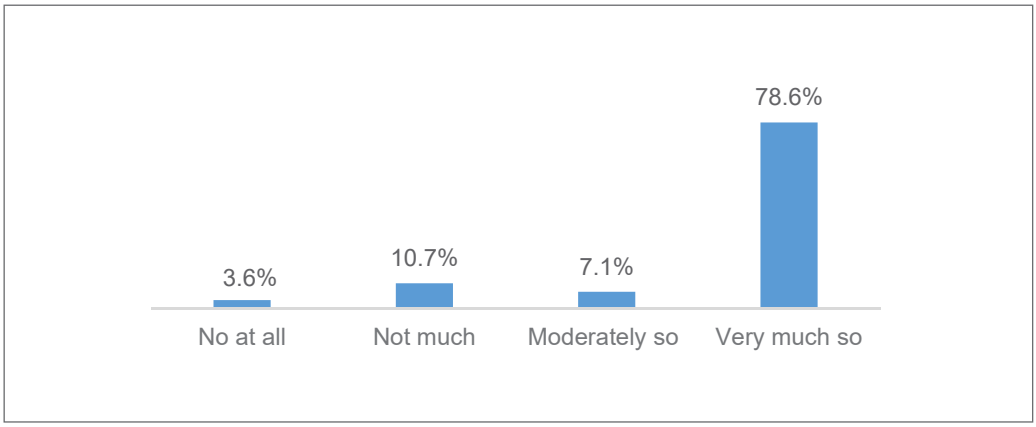

Figure 3. On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 4 (very much so), degree of agreement with the statement "When matching mentors with mentees, care is taken to avoid any codependency between the two" N = 30

Table 1. Average degree of agreement with the statement "When matching mentors with mentees, care is taken to avoid any codependency between the two" according to the size of the companies.

Small companies	Medium companies	Large companies
2.0	3.95	4.0

At this point it is worth noting that the evaluation question concerning which businesses take care to avoid codependency between the mentor and mentee is positively correlated with the size of the organization — the result of Spearman's correlation turned out to be very high, at 0.751 with a significance level of < 0.01. This means that the bigger the company, the more care taken to avoid codependency between the mentor and mentee in the mentoring process.

6. Company preparation for building effective mentoring program—results of research on companies

In the context of examining companies that have experience implementing mentoring programs over many years, program coordinators were asked a set of questions concerning the degree of preparation of the company's employees to participate in mentoring processes. A suitable set of questions—developed on the basis of a literature review—has enabled not only an exposition of how a mentoring process was prepared in the surveyed organizations but also the creation of tools measuring the degree of organizational preparation for building effective mentoring programs (which will be discussed in more detail later in the article).

To assess how the surveyed companies a) prepared employees to participate in the mentoring process and b) were able to build effective mentoring program, a set of questions was posed to them to determine how much they agreed with the following statements:

1. Before launching the mentoring program in the company, a system was created to select and appropriately pair mentors and mentees.
2. Before launching the mentoring program, the core competencies of a potential mentor were defined.
3. Before launching the mentoring program, the core competencies of a potential mentee were defined.

4. Before launching the mentoring program, the developmental/competence needs of the mentor/mentee participants in the program were identified.
5. The roles of mentor and mentee were clearly defined and understood from the very start of implementation of mentoring in the company.
6. When matching mentors with mentees, care is taken to avoid any codependency between the two.
7. Before launching the mentoring program, the expectations of future mentors were assessed.
8. Before launching the mentoring program, the expectations of future mentees were assessed.
9. Before launching the mentoring program, specific benefits resulting from participation in the program were outlined to future mentors.
10. Before launching the mentoring program, specific benefits resulting from participation in the program were outlined to future mentees. Table 2 shows the percentage distributions for all answers to the above 10 questions.

It is worth noting that for all the analyzed questions, the percentage of positive statements ("Very much so" and "Moderately so") was dominant, which means that most of the preparatory elements of the analyzed process were carried out by the surveyed companies. Calculations were made to verify if the size of the company significantly influenced the answers to the above mentoring preparation questions. Each answer (on a scale of 1 to 4) was compared by calculating the Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric significance test (this test was chosen because more than two groups were being compared).

The answers to four statements turned out to be significantly different depending on the size of the company. They include the following:

1. Before launching the mentoring program in the company, a system was created to select and appropriately pair mentors and mentees.
2. Before launching the mentoring program, specific benefits resulting from participation in the program were outlined to future mentors.
3. Before launching the mentoring program, the expectations of future mentees were assessed.
4. The roles of mentor and mentee were clearly defined and understood from the very start of implementation of mentoring in the company.

In each of these statements, answers from small companies differed significantly from those of medium and large companies. Small companies rarely define the specific benefits of mentoring before implementation of the mentoring process. They also fail to attach sufficient importance to the definition of the roles of mentor and mentee, hence limiting the participants' understanding of their roles in the process from the outset. In contrast, according to the response from medium and large companies, it was more common to offer training, advisory and consultative support, especially for mentors, as well as for mentees. In addition, participants in mentoring programs usually sign a mentoring contract defining the objectives of mentoring, as well as the roles, tasks and responsibilities of participants. Similar differences between small, medium and large companies were observed in the evaluation of the expectations of people who participate in the program as mentees. In this particular case, there is a linear correlation: the larger the company, the more frequently the expectations of mentors are evaluated.

Using the list of variables based on the questions listed earlier, a scale was developed to show the extent of the organization's preparation to build successful mentoring programs. The scale was created to ensure good preparation of the company employees to perform their assigned roles in the mentoring process. Suitable preparation enables the development of effective mentoring, i.e., relationships that lead to the achievement of mentoring objectives while contributing to high levels of satisfaction of the mentoring participants by just participating in the program. The scale includes questions about the process of preparation by the organization to run mentoring programs. All the selected questions shared a common way of measuring the degree of agreement: respondents had to answer each question on a scale of 1 to 4 (where 1 means "Not at all" and 4 means "Very much so"). By summing up the answers of the questions included in the scale and dividing the sum by the number of questions, a measure was obtained which, like a single question, produced a value between 1 and 4.

The proposed scale of organizational preparation for building effective mentoring programs yielded the following values:

- "1" means that the company is completely unprepared to build successful mentoring programs,
- "2" means that the degree of organizational preparation to build effective mentoring programs is low,

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Table 2. Comparison of answers to questions on the organization's preparation to build effective mentoring programs

Statement	Degree of agreement with the statement			
	Very much so	Moderately so	Not much	Not at all
1. Before launching the mentoring program in the company, a system was created to select and appropriately pair mentors and mentees.	63.3%	23.3%	6.7%	6.7%
2. Before launching the mentoring program, the core competencies of a potential mentor were defined.	70%	13.3%	16.7%	0%
3. Before launching the mentoring program, the core competencies of a potential mentee were defined.	43.3%	30%	20%	6.7%
4. Before launching the mentoring program, the developmental/ competence needs of the mentor/ mentee participants in the program were identified.	63.3%	26.7%	3.3%	6.7%
5. The roles of mentor and mentee were clearly defined and understood from the very start of implementation of mentoring in the company.	60%	23.3%	16.7%	0%
6. When matching mentors with mentees, care is taken to avoid any codependency between the two.	78.6%	7.1%	10.7%	3.6%
7. Before launching the mentoring program, the expectations of future mentors were assessed.	53.3%	16.7%	16.7%	13.3%
8. Before launching the mentoring program, the expectations of future mentees were assessed.	50%	26.7%	13.3%	10%
9. Before launching the mentoring program, specific benefits resulting from participation in the program were outlined to future mentors.	56.7%	26.7%	16.7%	0%
10. Before launching the mentoring program, specific benefits resulting from participation in the program were outlined to future mentees.	50%	33.3%	10%	6.7%

Table 3. Comparison of answers to questions on the organization's preparation to build effective mentoring programs according to company size.

Variables	Small company – average response	Medium company – average response	Large company – average response	The Kruskal-Wallis significance test for independent samples (p-value)
1. Before launching the mentoring program in the company, a system was created to select and appropriately pair mentors and mentees.	2.5	3.0	3.8	0.007
2. Before launching the mentoring program, the core competencies of a potential mentor were defined.	3.33	3.5	3.6	0.624
3. Before launching the mentoring program, the core competencies of a potential mentee were defined.	2.8	2.5	3.3	0.335
4. Before launching the mentoring program, the developmental/competence needs of the mentor/mentee participants in the program were identified.	2.8	3	3.76	0.079
5. The roles of mentor and mentee were clearly defined and understood from the very start of implementation of mentoring in the company.	2.67	3.75	3.6	0.030
6. When matching mentors with mentees, care is taken to avoid any codependency between the two.	2	3.95	4	0,0001
7. Before launching the mentoring program, the expectations of future mentors were assessed.	2.17	3	3.5	0.18
8. Before launching the mentoring program, the expectations of future mentees were assessed.	2	3	3.5	0.014
9. Before launching the mentoring program, specific benefits resulting from participation in the program were outlined to future mentors.	2.5	3.75	3.6	0.005
10. Before launching the mentoring program, specific benefits resulting from participation in the program were outlined to future mentees.	3.17	3.5	3.6	0.663

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Table 4. Consistency of scale regarding the organization's preparation to build effective mentoring program.

Questions included in the scale *preparation of participants* for mentoring	Cronbach's coefficient alpha after exclusion from the scale	Cronbach's coefficient alpha for the *entire* scale
1. Before launching the mentoring program in the company, a system was created to select and appropriately pair mentors and mentees.	0.878	0.887
2. Before launching the mentoring program, the core competencies of a potential mentor were defined.	0.887	
3. Before launching the mentoring program, the core competencies of a potential mentee were defined.	0.890	
4. Before launching the mentoring program, the developmental/ competence needs of the mentor/mentee participants in the program were identified.	0.883	
5. The roles of mentor and mentee were clearly defined and understood from the very start of implementation of mentoring in the company.	0.867	
6. When matching mentors with mentees, care is taken to avoid any codependency between the two.	0.878	
7. Before launching the mentoring program, the expectations of future mentors were assessed.	0.863	
8. Before launching the mentoring program, the expectations of future mentees were assessed.	0.868	
9. Before launching the mentoring program, specific benefits resulting from participation in the program were outlined to future mentors.	0.871	
10. Before launching the mentoring program, specific benefits resulting from participation in the program were outlined to future mentees.	0.875	

- "3" means that the degree of organizational preparation to build effective mentoring programs is high,
- "4" means that the company is completely prepared to build successful mentoring programs.

The creation of the scale allowed the author to develop a tool that companies could use for their own purposes and needs to evaluate the process of organizational preparation to implement mentoring in the company. The resulting knowledge can encourage the company to initiate improvement actions or corrective measures, if necessary, and will produce better/more effective mentoring processes in the organization.

To assess the reliability of the newly created scale, Cronbach's coefficient alpha was calculated[1] for the whole scale, and for each of the items included in its composition after its exclusion in order to see if the reliability of the scale would be higher or lower after exclusion of individual questions.

Table 4 shows the results of the calculated coefficients. Cronbach's coefficient alpha for the entire scale turned out to be very high, at 0.887[2]. One of the ele-

Table 5. Average of scale regarding the organization's preparation to build effective mentoring programs according to company size.

Scale	Small company – average	Medium company – average	Large company – average	The Kruskal-Wallis significance test for independent samples (p-value)
The scale of preparation of participants in mentoring	2.83	3.56	3.58	0.029

ments (no. 3) after exclusion from the scale would have only raised the scales consistency slightly, but the decision was made not to exclude this position, given the high level of consistency of the whole scale.

To verify whether there were differences in the scale due to the size of the company implementing mentoring processes, a comparison of averages was made. The result confirmed that the average of the scale showing the degree of preparation of participants in mentoring increases with company size (cf. Table 5).

Both the size of the company and the scale of the preparation of mentoring participants were high and significantly statistically correlated to one another—the Spearman's correlation coefficient between these two variables was 0.435 ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, it can be concluded that the larger the company (among those surveyed), the better prepared it is to build lasting and effective mentoring programs based on matching mentoring participants, understanding their individual roles, and knowing the principles of mentoring. This leads to the implementation of the designated objectives and the acquisition of benefits expected by the participants and the organization in the mentoring process.

7. Conclusions

The essence of effectively implementing a formal mentoring program is, in the opinion of the author, the decision-making process by the employer (e.g., the mentoring coordinator) that aims to build lasting relationships between mentor and mentee. This allows participants of the mentoring process to fulfill their needs, meet their expectations, and achieve predefined benefits, all of which directly contribute to the effectiveness of the whole mentoring process in the organization. This effectiveness is achieved by defining the roles of participants in the mentoring process precisely and by defining their competencies, tasks, responsibilities and mentoring objectives. Furthermore, it is important to establish transparent rules for participation in the mentoring program, i.e., participation criteria for mentors, selection criteria for mentees and placement criteria for bringing participants together into suitable pairs or groups. At the same time, it is very helpful to provide mentoring participants with support in the form of advice, consultation before and between mentoring sessions, and monitoring their expectations of and satisfaction from participating in the program. Implementation of all these elements increases the effectiveness of mentoring programs. This research indicates that the larger the company, the more attention it pays to include all of the aforementioned elements in the mentoring process, thereby being better prepared to build mentoring programs. Consequently, the company can successfully implement its mentoring program.

The results of the study – despite the proven statistically significant correlations – have not been generalized, since only a group of 30 companies was examined. Furthermore, the results described in this article incorporate only selected elements of the business mentoring process, resulting in an analysis that may appear to the reader somewhat terse and incomplete. So far, only a few mentoring studies have been conducted in Poland, focusing on identifying mentoring needs and expected benefits. The mentoring process has not been examined in terms of its effectiveness, as presented in this article. The study has obvious limitations, mainly due to a small and non-probable sample.

Therefore, it is recommended that further research makes use of a larger sample in order to generalize the conclusions. Despite perceptible limitations, the study is important for HR practitioners and managers because it enhances managerial knowledge of mentoring effectiveness and allows companies to better prepare themselves for mentoring processes through the proposed tool to assess organizational readiness for mentoring. At the same time, the article does not exhaust the research problem, it merely contributes to further research into the determinants of mentoring process in enterprises.

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Endnotes

1 *Cronbach's coefficient alpha measures the internal consistency of all elements in a given scale and thus determines whether the latter are studying the same phenomenon.*

2 *It is generally assumed that if the value of Cronbach's coefficient alpha is over 0.7, it signifies a high consistency of the scale.*

3 *Answers do not add up to 100% because respondents could choose more than one answer.*

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