MENTORING IN POLISH NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Bartosz SEILER[1], Hanna BORTNOWSKA[2*]

[1] University of Zielona Gora, Faculty of Economics and Management; b.seiler@wez.uz.zgora.pl,
ORCID: 0000-0003-0380-746x
[2] University of Zielona Gora, Faculty of Economics and Management; h.bortnowska@wez.uz.zgora.pl,
ORCID: 0000-0002-7327-7524
* Correspondence author

Abstract: Mentoring is used by enterprises as an effective method of developing the competences of their employees. The purpose of the article was to determine the areas of application of mentoring in nonprofit organizations. The authors conducted a systematic review of the issue, which highlighted that there are few publications on this topic. On the basis of this review, a theoretical framework was prepared, which was further verified. Three areas of the application of mentoring in Polish nonprofit organizations were distinguished: staff development, the professionalization of the organization as a whole and the implementation of its stated mission principles or *statutory goals*[1]. Subsequently, 26 nonprofit organizations that use mentoring were selected and an analysis of the words contained on their websites was conducted (supported by IRAMUTEQ program). To triangulate data, a semi-structured interview with one of the surveyed organizations was conducted. An analysis showed that nonprofit entities use mentoring not only as a method of developing employee competences, but also to professionalize the entire organization as well as directly to achieve statutory objectives. In addition, it has been shown that Polish nonprofit organizations use both intra-sectoral and cross-sectoral mentoring. The research results may be the basis for further analyzes of the use of mentoring in nonprofit entities regarding its effectiveness in particular areas, as well as the relationships between various areas.

Keywords: mentoring, nonprofit organizations, professionalization of nonprofit organizations.

1. Introduction

Mentoring[2] in organizations arose as a response to the need to support employees in the pursuit of self-improvement and the achievement of corporate goals (Myjak, 2016). It assumes a partner relationship between the mentor (master) and the mentee (protégé, pupil[3]), in which a

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[1] In Poland, NGOs operate via a set of stated principles known as statutory goals. This term is used throughout this study since it concerns Polish third-sector entities.
[2] Its genesis has been repeatedly described in the literature (see e.g. Antal, 1993; Ehrich and Hansford, 1999; Hall, 2003; Inzer and Crawford, 2005; Mesjasz, 2013), which is why such considerations were omitted in this article.
[3] In the article, these terms are used interchangeably for stylistic reasons.

more competent and experienced person gives advice, information and guidance to a less experienced person, thus caring for his or her professional and personal development (cf. Luecke, 2006; Mesjasz, 2013; Wanberg et al., 2003)[4]. The individual receives support *to manage their own learning in order to maximize their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance, and become the person they want to be* (Parsloe, 1992, as cited in: Simkins et al., 2006, p. 323; cf. Clutterbuck, 2002). In addition, they discover new opportunities, undertake new challenges, identify their limitations and barriers, and embark on activities that will enable them to overcome them, receive emotional support and help in monitoring their progress (cf. Gambande, in: Guryn, 2013).

Different types of mentoring (individual/team, formal/informal, intra-team/inter-team, traditional/e-mentoring, etc., for more, see e.g.: Brewerton, 2002; Mazur, 2008; Stankiewicz and Bortnowska, 2016) can be effectively implemented in business organizations[5], contributing to: improved knowledge transfer, more effective talent management, increased employee retention rates, improved cultural and diversity management (cf. Beltman and Schaeben, 2012; Ehrich and Hansford, 1999; Garvey and Garrett-Harris, 2008). The benefits of mentoring are also enjoyed by employees in such organizations, and they include better: satisfaction, motivation, self-confidence and commitment, a development of professional competences, and opportunities for promotion (cf.: Beltman and Schaeben, 2012; Ehrich and Hansford, 1999; Garvey, Garrett-Harris, 2008).

A preliminary analysis of issues related to mentoring gave rise to the question about the fields of its use in organizations other than enterprises, namely in nonprofit entities (non-governmental, NGO, the third sector, and voluntary)[6]. The assumptions of mentoring seem to be consistent with the culture of the third sector. The concept of training based on a master-student relationship fits well into the axio-normative aspect of the activities of nonprofit entities, along with the principles of democratic management that they adhere to[7].

Since the literature on the subject has a limited number of scientific publications on the use of mentoring in nonprofit entities, our analyzes were undertaken in that area. The object of the article is to determine the fields in which mentoring can be used in Polish nonprofit organizations. Answers to the following questions were sought: Who is the recipient of mentoring offered to nonprofit organizations? To whom do they then provide mentoring services? In which fields can mentoring be used in Polish nonprofit entities?

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[4] Such an understanding of mentoring is adopted in this article.

[5] This has been demonstrated by numerous studies on the effectiveness of mentoring (e.g.: Baran, 2017; Jyoti and Sharma, 2017; Neupane, 2015; Tewari and Sharma, 2014; Underhill, 2006). An example may be the quantitative research carried out by Peace and Ofobruk (2015), according to which mentoring (directed at career support, psychosocial and/or knowledge transfer) had a positive impact on employee performance.

[6] According to the structural-operational definition popular in the literature, nonprofit organizations are entities that are institutionalized, have a private nature, are independent of public administration, self-governing, voluntary, and generate profits to pursue missionary activity (Salamon and Anheier, 1997).

[7] Fudaliński (2013) characterized the culture of nonprofit organizations as: flexible, innovative, people-oriented, collectivist, feminine, with a small distance of power and low level of avoiding uncertainty. They are also inclusive of informal, personal relationships, consensus, the idea of expressing different views and different attitudes, mutual trust, cooperation, and commitment.

The study is divided into seven sections, starting with the introduction. Subsequently, the results of a literature review are presented (based on publications on mentoring in nonprofit organizations included in the EBSCO and Google Scholar databases), followed by the methodology of our research. This paper also presents the results of a review of the websites of a number of Polish third-sector entities, which provide mentoring services. The next section gives an account of the interview conducted with the coordinator of a mentoring program in one of the surveyed nonprofit organizations. The article ends with a presentation of the conclusions derived from the conducted research.

2. Mentoring in nonprofit organizations – results of database review

An analysis of the content of the EBSCO and Google Scholar databases (for the years 1980-2018) showed only a small number of peer-reviewed publications on mentoring in nonprofit organizations (searches for articles containing the following terms in the title: 'mentoring'/'mentor', and 'nonprofit'/'non profit'/'non-profit'/'NGO'/'non-governmental'/ 'nongovernmental'/'voluntary organization'/'third sector') (Table 1)[8].

Table 1.
Number of publications containing terms related to mentoring in nonprofit organizations in their titles

Key terms included in the titles of publications	Number of titles of reviewed publications in the EBSCO database	Number of titles[9] of publications in the Google Scholar database
'mentoring' and 'nonprofit'/'non-profit'/'non profit'	1	8 (including 4 doctoral dissertations, 1 guide and 3 articles)
'mentor' and 'nonprofit'/'non-profit'/'non profit'	1	0
'mentoring' and 'NGO'	3	0
'mentor' and 'NGO'	1	0
'mentoring' and 'non-governmental organization'/'nongovernmental organization'	3	3 (including 1 doctoral dissertation and 2 articles)
'mentor' and 'non-governmental organization'/'non-governmental organization'	1	1
'mentoring' and 'voluntary organization'	0	0
'mentor' and 'voluntary organization'	0	0
'mentoring' and 'third sector'	0	1
'mentor' and 'third sector'	0	2 (including 1 doctoral dissertation and 1 article)

Source: own study based on: EBSCO and Google Scholar (http://www.bu.uz.zgora.pl/index.php/pl/ e–zbiory/eds; https://scholar.google.pl/).

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[8] The results of the systematic review of the literature on mentoring in the third sector prompted a conclusion that this area of knowledge is only beginning to take shape (most of the identified studies have been developed in the last ten years). For this reason, the authors have helpfully synthesized knowledge in the field of business mentoring and the specifics of the functioning of non-governmental organizations.

[9] Reviewed publications cannot be filtered out in the Google Scholar database.

By reviewing the publications indicated in the EBSCO database, the list of relevant articles was reduced to four[10], whereas the review of Google Scholar items expanded that list by another four scientific articles[11] and six doctoral dissertations concerning the subject area under consideration. Among the identified articles, three were theoretical studies (Bronznick and Goldenhar, 2009; Codreanu, 2012; Safi and Burrell, 2007) and the remaining five were empirical works (based on surveys using questionnaires, case studies and heuristic methods: Bogdanova, 2008; Momoh et al., 2015; Nyamori, 2015; Smith et al., 2005; Washington, 2011).

Some authors analyzed issues related to the use of mentoring for the development of employees in nonprofit organizations (Bronznick and Goldenhar, 2009; Codreanu, 2012; Momoh et al., 2015; Safi and Burrell, 2007; Washington, 2011). Nyamori (2015), via empirical research, and found a positive impact of this technique on non-governmental organizations and on the development of their members[12]. Another research perspective was adopted by Smith et al. (2005) who analyzed the functions and characteristics of mentors, including those who work in the third sector. Meanwhile, international mentoring and the diffusion of modern management models across Bulgarian nonprofits were addressed by Bogdanova (2008). In this context, mentoring may be recognized not only narrowly, as a technique for the development of staff competence, but also more broadly – as a source of the professionalization of the entire organization[13]. According to the authors, this is particularly important when analyzing the situation in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, in which there is a certain backwardness of the third sector springing from the socialist structure of their economies before 1989.

The specificity of the organizations in question is that they operate in the public dimension, are not profit-oriented, are driven by certain values, and work towards social change. In such entities, mentoring may be a tool for the direct implementation of the objectives they were founded for in the first place. The literature exploring this topic is more extensive and falls within the area of what is known as social mentoring, a practice whose usefulness has been demonstrated, among other areas, in working with: children and adolescents (Rhodes and Lowe, 2008; Thompson et al., 2016), patients (Rube et al., 2014; Hafford-Letchfield and Chick, 2006), and socially excluded persons (Engelbrecht, 2012; McGeorge and Stone-Carlson, 2010)[14].

Based on the results of the literature review, the fields in which mentoring may be used in nonprofit organizations were distinguished (Figure 1).

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[10] For comparison, the number of peer-reviewed mentoring studies in the EBSCO database was 26,364.

[11] There were 1,080,000 mentoring publications in the Google Scholar database.

[12] Research conducted at SOS Children's Villages.

[13] These fields are interrelated, as increased professionalism among employees translates into the professionalization of the entire organization.

[14] 170 peer-reviewed publications on social mentoring were identified in the EBSCO database, and 630 items – in Google Scholar.

Figure 1. Fields of application of mentoring in nonprofit organizations. Source: own study.

Concerning nonprofit entities, mentoring may be applied in three main fields: the development of staff competences, the professionalization of the organization, and the implementation of its statutory objectives. It may be used to develop the competences of individual employees as represented by various categories, i.e. managers, paid employees and volunteers. Mentoring can also be a tool for professionalizing the entire organization: to raise business standards, as well as to adopt models from the business world. It should be noted that improving the professional knowledge and skills of individual members also contributes to professionalization. Finally, mentoring can be conducive to the direct implementation of statutory goals, e.g. by creating opportunities for the development of beneficiaries of nonprofit entities.

3. Methods

The conducted research process consisted of several stages. Firstly, research problems and goals were identified. Subsequently, publications exploring the outlined research problems were identified based on the EBSCO and Google Scholar databases as well as other online resources [websites reviewed at www.google.com – recommendations from Czakon (2011) and Grzybowski (2014) were accounted for in conducting the systematic literature review]. They concerned the fields of mentoring in third-sector organizations, and in business organizations as providing a comparison. In the articles, information was sought on the potential recipients and targets of mentoring. The studies were filtered by a rejection of those that were repeats or those that did not meet the requirements of a scientific publication. Lastly, the obtained research material was coded and categorized. A report on the conducted literature review was prepared, on the basis of which a theoretical framework was put forward for the fields where mentoring could be used in nonprofit organizations (Figure 1, section 2).

Subsequently, an initial analysis of text contained on the websites of Polish nonprofit organizations that provide mentoring services was conducted. During the research, specific words and phrases contained in websites regarding mentoring programs offered to employees

of nonprofit organizations were searched, and so were their synonyms. The context in which they were used as well as the links between the most common terms were also considered (supported by the IRAMUTEQ program). The collected data was quantified (cf. Babbie, 2008; Silverman, 2011), thus, both qualitative and quantitative approaches were combined in the content analysis.

Furthermore, the identified texts were analyzed by considering the theoretical framework of this study (Figure 1). In the process of selecting organizations for the study, a set of keywords and the Google search engine were used. Also helpful was a general knowledge of Polish nonprofit entities. Ultimately, a total of 26 cases (websites) were selected. Given the non-random selection of the sample, the obtained research material was not representative of the general population, but still enabled a more profound exploration of the problem at hand. A preliminary data analysis was performed during the collection of the data, whereas a proper analysis was performed after gathering the appropriate research material. The obtained data were then coded to provide a list of codes based on the theoretical framework. In the course of the analysis, this list was subject to further specification. Findings from the research were confronted with the available literature and the experience of the authors in the area of mentoring and cooperation with third-sector entities. This allowed for the formulation of relevant conclusions from this part of the research.

In the next stage, for triangulation purposes, a semi-structured interview[15] was conducted (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015) in one of the 26 identified nonprofit organizations[16], whose discussion guide was also developed on the basis of the theoretical framework. The interview took place in April 2019, with the coordinator of the mentoring program serving as the key informant. While the interview was indeed exploratory, it also enabled a verification of the conclusions formulated in the previous stages and helped to pinpoint directions for future quantitative research. The closing of the investigation process was preceded by the formulation of conclusions and an indication of the limitations of the research that was conducted.

4. Results of a preliminary analysis of websites related to mentoring programs offered to representatives of Polish nonprofit organizations
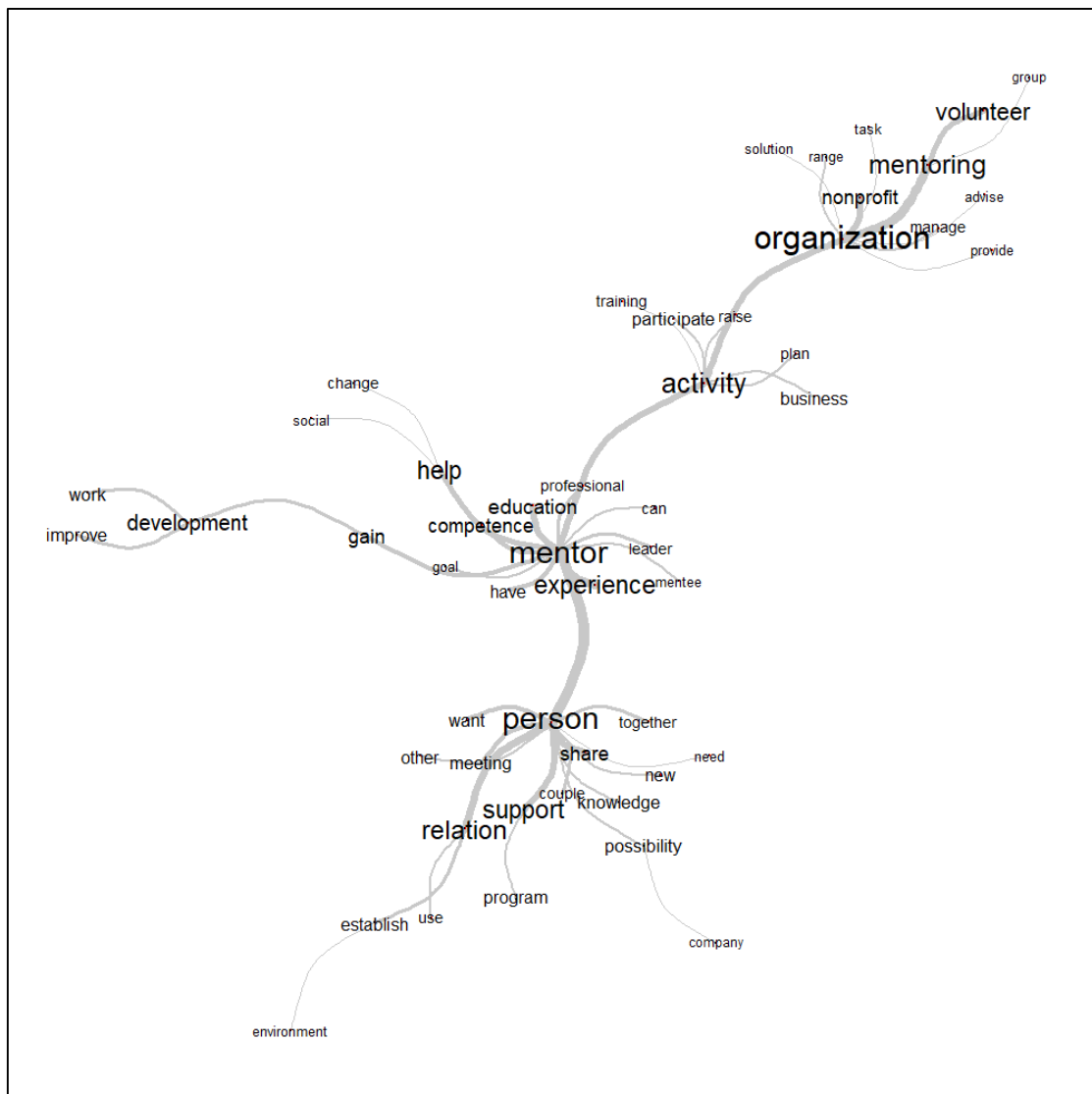
The preliminary analysis of the content of identified websites was supported by the IRAMUTEQ software (see more: Glińska-Neweś and Escher, 2018: 85; Camargo and Justo, 2013), among other tools. Due to the fact that it does not contain a Polish dictionary, it was

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[15] The interview agenda contained nine open-ended questions.
[16] Representatives of six Polish non-profit organizations using mentoring were asked to participate in the interview. Finally, only one person decided to take part in it. The others refused, justifying the lack of time or by creating other barriers.

necessary to translate the text into English. Consequently, the translation was prepared in accordance with the program requirements, and conjunctions, prepositions, most particles, etc. were removed. The words that appeared at least five times in the websites' content were used for the preparation of Figure 2, which shows the number of individual words and the correlations that exist between them and their intensity. During the preliminary analysis of the text, the words were sought that were included in Figure 2 and referred to our theoretical framework. The term 'development' (or similar words) appeared on the examined websites 15 times, 'competence' – ten times. It was supposed that the recipients of mentoring could be, e.g. leaders (this term occurred 12 times) or volunteers (16 times). The word 'professionalization' appeared only once, 'statutory' – twice, while 'goals' – six times. A few main islands of words have been identified. The focus is on the mentor and the activity he or she pursues. A mentor pays attention to people with whom he or she builds relationships and to whom he or she gives support. A mentor's activity is also oriented towards organization and management, including seeking solutions to the problems which mentees have experienced.

Figure 2. Correlations between the most common words found on websites related to mentoring programs for nonprofit representatives. Source: own study.

Due to such an analysis, only a preliminary view of the content of websites related to mentoring programs offered to representatives of nonprofit organizations was obtained. Subsequently, a detailed analysis of the content of the identified websites was carried out.

5. Mentoring in Polish nonprofit organizations – results of a website review analysis

In management terms, nonprofit organizations clearly differ from enterprises and public organizations. Their distinctive features include, but are not limited to: a mission-like and non-financial purpose of activity, an implementation of social services in an emotionally and personally engaged relationship with recipients, voluntary membership, and a reliance on voluntary social work (Stankiewicz, Moczulska, Seiler, 2018; cf. Anheier, 2005). Needless to say, this specific character of nonprofits should be taken into account when implementing mentoring. The analysis of the content of websites showed that such efforts were made in Poland by the Association of Education and Social Research in Wroclaw. As a project coordinator, the Association completed a two-year program entitled *Mentoring as a vocational training method for third-sector organizations*, in which nine non-governmental entities and enterprises from seven different countries of Western, Central and Eastern Europe participated. Due to this undertaking, examples of global good mentoring practices were identified and a training program for representatives of nonprofit organizations was developed, considering the specific nature of such organizations. The solutions proposed were tested among employees and volunteers of non-governmental entities in seven countries participating in the project (http://fundacja–umbrella.org.pl/portfolios/mind–ts/). The results of the analysis of training materials shared on the websites, which were one of the results of this project, did not show any significant differences in the mentoring methodology in the third sector. Their authors focused on the specifics of particular nonprofit organizations, preparing individual (dedicated) mentoring solutions, but at the same time they did not find significant cross-sectoral disparities. This could indicate the relative universality of mentoring as a training technique and the possibilities of its adaptation and dissemination in the nonprofit sector as well.

5.1. Mentoring for the development of staff competence in a nonprofit organization

Nonprofit organizations are a product of grassroots, civic initiative and link their functioning with social work. As a consequence, they have a more diverse staff structure than commercial or public organizations. Four basic categories of third-sector employees may be distinguished. These are: a) managers; b) members (founders or shareholders who serve as a resource to internal volunteers); c) external volunteers (social workers who are not members

of the organization) and; d) paid employees. The analysis established that mentoring may be addressed to each of these categories of employees.

5.2. Mentoring for the development of staff competence in a nonprofit organization

In Poland, acquiring volunteers (social workers) and maintaining their involvement poses a significant challenge to non-governmental organizations (Stankiewicz, Bortnowska, Seiler, 2018; Bortnowska and Seiler, 2018). The problem is the low supply of volunteers compared to other OECD countries, but also the ephemeral and occasional nature of volunteering in Poland. In other words, third-sector organizations in Poland face difficulties not only with recruitment as such, but also with the retention of volunteers afterwards (Stankiewicz et al., 2016). According to research by Adamiak et al. (2016), this problem is reported by more than one in three (37%) Polish nonprofit entities.

Non-governmental organizations should seek opportunities to improve the offer for volunteers, so that these can not only develop the competences needed to carry out their tasks, but also to have the chance to meet their own needs, such as improving knowledge and skills useful in the commercial labor market[17].

As found in the research, mentoring addressed to Polish volunteers focused not only on the development of their competences necessary to perform assigned tasks, but it was also to prepare them for fulfilling the role of a citizen or employee (Table 2). In one of the organizations (TEB Edukacja), participation in the mentoring program was an opportunity for volunteers to update skills necessary to work with socially excluded persons. Additionally, it made it possible for the employees to acknowledge their strengths and identify resources that may be used in fulfilling their duties as a social worker, as well as to pinpoint areas for development. Another organization (Fundacja Centrum Aktywności Twórczej) implemented activities as part of European Voluntary Service. The declared goal of the mentoring program in this case was to develop the competences of intercultural volunteers and to facilitate their adaptation in the country where they had come to perform social work (cf. Abbe et al., 2007).

Table 2.
Examples of Polish nonprofit organizations implementing mentoring addressed to volunteers

Organization name	Mentoring program goal
TEB Edukacja	Teach volunteers how to cope with stress and difficulties in working with socially excluded persons, prevent burnout, animate the local environment, raise funds for those at risk of social exclusion, etc. They obtained information about their resources and areas for development.
Fundacja Centrum Aktywności Twórczej	Make it easier for volunteers to take up social work in countries participating in the program and neighboring partner countries, accelerating the process of socio-professional adaptation.

Source: own study based on: https://efs.teb.pl/aw/wsparcie; http://fundacja–cat.pl/news/w–94/mentorzy–dla–zagranicznych–wolontariuszy–poszukiwani.

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[17] Instrumental motivation among volunteers was confirmed, among others, in research studies by Stankiewicz et al. (2016).

In the literature, it is emphasized that in third-sector organizations, departures of employees are more frequent than in the case of commercial enterprises, which could be explained by the low barriers of exiting such entities. Resignation from cooperation with third-sector organizations is more frequent in situations where other areas of a volunteer's life require greater involvement or when a volunteering employee loses the benefits that led them to cooperate with the organization in the first place (Alatrista and Arrowsmith, 2004; Bradshaw, 2003; Phillips, H., and Phillips, J., 2010). According to Wymer and Starnes (2001), volunteer retention is favored by receipt of support from other members of the organization. A similar argument, as believed by J. Garner and L. Garner (2010), may be used in relation to providing feedback on the performance of voluntary work. Therefore, leaders in the discussed entities should consider the use of mentoring, which not only promotes the development of volunteer skills (needed to effectively carry out assigned tasks), but also strengthens their commitment to the organization's cause (cf. Stankiewicz, Bortnowska, Seiler, 2018).

The research shows that mentoring programs can be addressed not only directly to volunteers, but also to people who manage them. Such an offer was prepared jointly by Fundacja Rokoko and Stowarzyszenie Literackie K.K. Baczyński (http://rokoko.org.pl/ szkolenia--wolontariacie-i-tionoring-dla-kulturalnych-ngo/). The proposal targeted representatives of nonprofit entities engaged in cultural and artistic activities, offering participation in educational undertakings on subjects related to cultural volunteering. Their participants learned not only how to design an offer, but also how to manage a team of volunteers, e.g. in terms of their recruitment and development. This example shows that mentoring can also be addressed to people managing nonprofit organizations, namely, their leaders.

5.3. Mentoring addressed to leaders of nonprofit organizations

A characteristic feature of the discussed organizations is the varied level of the professional competences of the people working in them. Limited funding opportunities for remuneration mean that the Polish third sector mostly employs low-skilled managers and workers (Bogacz-Wojtanowska, 2009, p. 20). In addition, a phenomenon that may be described as *manager's loneliness* is very much at play in the Polish third sector. Since there is no structure of subordination in such organizations, their leaders do not have formal tools for shaping relationships with staff. Because of that, they often end up being overwhelmed by the excess of responsibilities without receiving adequate support from members and volunteers. In Poland, more than half (55%) of the surveyed non-governmental organizations admitted that most of the tasks are carried out by their leaders, i.e. members of the management board (Adamiak et al., 2016). Only in every fourth (26%) is the work divided evenly. This, of course, negatively affects the well-being of managers. In 2015, fatigue and burnout among leaders was observed in every third (36%) such individual (Adamiak et al., 2016). To combat this, mentoring can be suggested that will help leaders to identify goals and recognize the resources needed to

implement them, not only their own, but also those available to third parties (co-workers, donors, etc.). It would also push leaders to seek ways to develop staff engagement so that they are actively supported in the implementation of their organization's mission. Another problem faced by third-sector entities in Poland concerns limited succession possibilities, i.e. difficulties in finding replacements for current leaders. There is also a shortage of ideas on the roles these retired leaders could fulfill after handing over the managerial position, or how to make use of their potential. In fact, there is currently no specific development path for such outgoing leaders. Perhaps they could adjust well to the role of the mentor? Their knowledge and managerial experience could indeed become an important source of inspiration for those who take over their managerial positions.

In the course of the research, mentoring programs addressed to the leaders of nonprofit organizations were identified. They were being implemented through intra-sectoral and cross-sectoral cooperation (Table 3).

Table 3.
Examples of Polish organizations implementing mentoring addressed to managers of nonprofit entities in the framework of intra-sectoral and cross-sectoral cooperation

Organization name	Mentoring program goal
Regionalne Centrum Wolontariatu w Kielcach	Support for NGO leaders in areas such as: creating and managing the organization, building missions and visions, leading, raising funds and managing volunteers.
Feminoteka and IBM	Provide care from female managers at IBM to women starting their management career in the third sector.
Fundacja Szkoła Liderów and Fundacja PwC	Support social leaders by PwC managers in the areas of management, team management and strategy building.

Source: own study based on: http://centrumwolontariatu.eu/oferta–dla–ngo/; http://warszawa.ngo.pl/wiadomosc/661205.html; https://tuwiazowna.pl/sektory–jedna–wizja–coaching–pwc–dla–liderow–spolecznych/.

An example of mentoring implemented through intra-sectoral cooperation was the activities of the association Regional Volunteer Center in Kielce, Poland, which provided mentoring services to managers at third-sector organizations. The mentors shared their experience and worked on competences of the mentees in the field of creating and managing third-sector entities. On the other hand, cross-sectoral cooperation may be exemplified by the activities of IBM and PwC addressed to social leaders, both male and female. In the course of this mentoring, the knowledge of the mentees was developed regarding management techniques typical of the business world.

Mentoring programs may be dedicated to specific categories of employees, but they are sometimes also addressed to a nonprofit organization as a whole. In that case, the use of mentoring does not only serve the development of the competences of specific staff members, but is a form of development of an entire third-sector entity. This approach is of a strategic nature and constitutes a type of intervention at meso-structural level.

5.4. Mentoring aimed at the professionalization of a nonprofit organization

The role of nonprofit organizations is being redefined today. Among other things, their importance in the institutional system of social services is rising, prompting increased pressure from key stakeholders (government agencies, private donors) so that the entities in question adopt effective performance standards, and on the other hand increased competition between nonprofits themselves. Institutional change may lead third-sector organizations to adopt two main strategies of action (Sanzo-Perez et al., 2017): professionalization, or partnership with the business sector.

Going beyond reactive action and moving away from the current administration to pro-development management is becoming a precondition for the survival of third-sector organizations in the changing environment. As a result, the professionalization of nonprofits is being increasingly discussed in the literature. Some researchers identify this term with professionalism, while others with the adoption of business orientation and the adaptation of managerial practices (Cumming, 2008; cf.: Dobrai and Farkas, 2016; Hwang and Powell, 2009; Pope et al., 2018; Stankiewicz and Seiler, 2013). According to Kafel (2014, pp. 103-104), these approaches may be partially reconciled, as professionalization is linked with the postulate of building a professional nonprofit organization. It can be focused on a person and refer to the pattern of professional roles, or be organization-oriented and characterize the resources, processes and capabilities of the entity as a whole. With this assumption, organizational professionalism stems directly from the professionalism of employees.

Participation in mentoring is not only an opportunity for the personal development of employees of the third sector, but also a form of the intra-organizational diffusion of patterns of a modern approach to social management. The literature notes that training contributes to the dissemination of professionalization among nonprofit entities (Hwang and Powell, 2009; Carvalho et al., 2016). This is a manifestation of normative isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), associated with the sharing of certain beliefs by professionals from various organizations.

Training, including mentoring, is an opportunity to spread specific cultural patterns in the third sector, seen as manifestations of professionalism (e.g. standards of rationality or pragmatism) (cf. Stankiewicz and Seiler, 2013). In the analysis of the websites, examples of Polish mentoring programs were identified, in which mentoring was a tool for building a professional nonprofit organization. In such cases, the explicitly formulated offerings emphasized the technique's effectiveness in this area. The implemented activities were to be an element of a strategic, intentional approach to the professionalization of the entities in question. The mentoring was carried out by raising professionalism among employees, but at the same time it was geared towards increasing the durability and independence of the organization as a whole. Such programs were implemented, among other organizations, by the Krakowskie Forum Organizacji Społecznych KraFOS, the Europejskie Stowarzyszenie Edukacji i Rozwoju

'Pionier', Fundacja Pokolenia, and Fundacja Biuro Inicjatyw Społecznych. Additionally, participation in a mentoring program was offered by Fundacja Impossible (Table 4), which would rationalize the functioning of a nonprofit entity by increasing the professionalism of its staff.

Programs addressed to representatives of third-sector entities expressing interest in economizing activities of their organization and seeking alternative ways of financing the implementation of statutory objectives were also identified. Examples include: the Mentors4GdańskNGOs program offered by the Mentors' Forum "AHA EFECT", or the "Economization of NGOs" project put forward by the Centrum Wspierania Organizacji Pozarządowych Sektor 3[18].

Table 4.
Examples of Polish nonprofit organizations oriented to the professionalization of third-sector entities

Organization name	Mentoring program goal
Krakowskie Forum Organizacji Społecznych KraFOS	Support representatives of the third sector who want to become independent (i.e. professionalize) their organizations. Mentors focused on formal, legal, financial, organizational and strategic issues related to cross-sectoral cooperation and volunteering, etc.
Europejskie Stowarzyszenie Edukacji i Rozwoju 'Pionier'	Legal mentoring concerning the organization of obligatory statutory meetings, carrying out board changes, setting up business within NGOs, raising external funds, etc.
Fundacja Pokolenia	Empower and increase the effectiveness and outreach of informal groups and non-governmental organizations. Offer support in working out solutions based on available potential and resources.
Fundacja Biuro Inicjatyw Społecznych	Educational, consultative and socially mobilizing assistance. Mentoring directed at supporting organizations in achieving their goals.
Fundacja Impossible	Assistance in achieving objectives according to the scheme: 1. Analysis of health (situation in which the organization finds itself), 2. Prescription (defining the areas in which the intervention will bring the most benefits), 3. First-aid kit (establishing relationships with professionals providing solutions and offering advice), 4. A follow-up visit (observation of the first effects of changes, support).
Forum Mentorów "AHA EFFECT"	Support for nonprofit leaders who are interested in economizing their organization by participating in a training and consulting program offered by business mentors.
Centrum Wspierania Organizacji Pozarządowych Sektor 3	Assistance provided by a business mentor to a representative of a nonprofit organization in the development of a plan to acquire new sources of financing for the organization.

Source: own study based on: https://co.krakow.pl/strona_glowna/208400, artykul,mentoring.html; http://www.ngo.olsztyn.eu/index.php/ogloszenia–organizacji/331–bezpatny–mentoring–dla–organizacji–pozarzdowych?font=big; http://fundacjapokolenia.pl/aktywnosc–obywatelska/; http://bis–krakow.pl; http://impossible.org.pl/projekty/mentoring/; http://forum–mentorow.pl/programy/.

A professional nonprofit organization should, by definition, try to effectively achieve the objectives it has outlined for itself. The use of mentoring to improve the efficiency of an organization can indirectly contribute to a more effective solving of social problems. However, it is also possible to use mentoring with a view to directly achieving objectives in the social dimension.

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[18] Activities focused on raising the professionalism of nonprofit organizations are particularly important in countries where the third sector is relatively weaker, e.g. in Central and Eastern Europe (cf. Gliński 2006).

5.5. Mentoring to achieve social goals

Nonprofit organizations start as a result of a grassroots, civic initiative to help resolve social problems in a situation where the state and the market are failing to do so. Such organizations work in the fields of education, social care, health care, culture, sport etc., adopting a self-help orientation aimed at supporting their own members or service orientation directed at activities in the interest of external clients. It could be argued that mentoring can be a tool helpful in achieving social goals in various fields, regardless of the orientation adopted by a nonprofit organization. Such cases were also identified in Poland (Table 5).

Table 5.
Examples of Polish nonprofit organizations that use mentoring to achieve social goals

Organization name	Mentoring program goal
Polsko-Amerykańska Fundacja Wolności, Towarzystwo Inicjatyw Twórczych "ę", Stowarzyszenie Przestrzeń Inicjatyw Społeczno-Kulturalnych PISK, Fundacja Joanny Radziwiłł Opiekuńcze Skrzydła	Forging intergenerational bonds. People 55+ shared their life experience with children, who in return made them familiar with technological novelties and drew attention to what the younger generation finds important.
Erasmus Student Network Polska	Supporting the acclimatization of people coming to Poland as part of student exchange.
Fundacja na rzecz Collegium Polonicum	Assistance for unemployed people aged 25 or less, who are planning to enter the labor market and are planning a path of career development.
Stowarzyszenie Innowacji Społecznych "Mary i Max", Fundacja ALPHA and Krajowe Towarzystwo Autyzmu, branch in Łódź	Friendship volunteering oriented towards supporting people with autism and Asperger's syndrome. Due to mentoring, these people gained self-confidence in interpersonal relationships and more actively participated in social and cultural life, etc.
Stowarzyszenie Centrum Promocji Ekorozwoju	Education of people who will implement the principles of sustainable development in their environment. A series of training sessions were offered (on sustainable development, project management and interpersonal skills) and mentoring as part of the Inkubator Ekopomysłów initative.
Stowarzyszenie Sursum Corda and Centrum Wspierania Rodzin "Rodzinna Warszawa"	Assistance offered to children from incomplete families, deprived of contact with the family, on the part of "big brothers and big sisters" who disseminate positive examples among them by spending time together.
Centrum Wsparcia Imigrantów i Imigrantek	Help for refugees in adapting in Poland (sharing knowledge, ideas, contacts, learning how to move around the city, showing important places, learning a language, etc.)

Source: own study based on: http://seniorzywakcji.pl/utw–dla–spolecznosci/; https://www.esn.pl/pl/ czym–jest–erasmus–student–network–polska; https://centrumwspieraniarodzin. pl/aktualnosci/180– starszy–brat–starsza–siostra; http://www.sc.org.pl/projekty/starszybratstarsza siostra/misjaprogramu/; http://lubuskimentoring.pl/; https://wolontariatkolezenski.pl/o–projekcie/mentoring/; http://cpe.info.pl; https://centrumwspieraniarodzin.pl/aktualnosci/180–starszy–brat–starsza–siostra; https://www.facebook.com/events/813829075397907/; https://www.gdansk.pl/ wiadomosci/uchodzcy– wolontariusz–pomoze–blizniemu,a,43324.

Nonprofit organizations are also active in the area of business support and stimulation of economic development. Their objectives can be of a social nature, carried out by helping particular groups of citizens in setting up and running their own business, for example. In the course of the research, examples of mentoring in this area were identified (Table 6).

Table 6.
Examples of Polish nonprofit organizations using mentoring in the diffusion of knowledge from the third sector to the business sector

Organization name	Mentoring program goal
Fundacji Przedsiębiorczości Kobiet	Business mentoring addressed to enterprising women entering the business world. Mentors, active businesswomen, shared knowledge and experience, helped in the development of business concepts.
Fundacja Liderek Biznesu	Support for representatives of non-governmental organizations by business leaders in the implementation of their professional goals, a conscious shaping of their careers, developing critical self-awareness and improving leadership skills.
Fundacja Mentors4Starters	Help people who want to launch and develop their own businesses, shape their careers in corporate structures, as well as those who act voluntarily and implement social projects.
Odpowiedzialni.pl	Promoting entrepreneurship and innovation; creating and developing SMEs, improving cooperation with administration and other organizations in order to create a common ground for development activities; popularizing knowledge in the field of insurance among the public, propagating knowledge about new technologies, etc.
Fundacja Inkubator Technologiczny	Support for entrepreneurs in the field of: setting up a company and creating valuable products and services, preparing a marketing strategy, developing a business model and assessing the investment potential of a startup and raising funds for social activities.

Source: own study based on: http://www.entertheroom.pl/life/22–wywiady/7004–wywiad–fundacja–przedsiebiorczosci–kobiet; https://www.fundacjaliderekbiznesu.pl; http://mentors4starters.pl/o–programie/; http://www.odpowiedzialni.pl/; http://ybp.org.pl.

These types of activities were carried out as part of cross-sectoral exchange. A number of the third-sector organizations in this study organized mentoring programs addressed to company representatives and enabled the development of practical business skills.

6. Mentoring in Polish nonprofit organizations – exemplification based on interview results

Having analyzed the content of the websites, it was found that mentoring is used in Polish nonprofit entities not only to achieve their statutory objectives, but also to develop the staff and professionalization of the entire organization. Further exploration of the issue was provided by an interview carried out in one of the 26 surveyed Polish organizations, with a representative of the foundation from the Pomeranian region. The organization operates in three main fields: social assistance, civic activity and social economy. It runs, among other things, an entrepreneurship incubator for a nonprofit organization whose aim is to empower informal groups, third-sector entities, and improve the efficiency of their operations and expand the

scope of their activities. The mentor, with whom they collaborate on their development, takes care of the incubated group/organization. Additionally, in the incubation process, the organization uses the services of mandatory legal and formal advice.

Retracing the interview, two editions of the mentoring program were organized in the organization. The first one lasted six months, and the second - twelve months. A total of sixteen nonprofit organizations participated in these programs, which were looked after by ten mentors.

According to the key informants, mentoring in nonprofit organizations can be applied to all categories of employees: managers, members, volunteers and paid employees. They suggested that mentoring proves particularly useful in the process of the development of managerial skills, as it is there where it creates the greatest opportunity for the professionalization of a third-sector organization. One respondent reported that, in their work with nonprofit leaders, it was essential to systematize their knowledge in the fields of formal and legal aspects, planning and settlement of projects, gaining financial resources, image shaping, marketing, cooperation with volunteers, etc. At the same time, many stressed that, in the case of leaders of nonprofit organizations, it is particularly important to provide them with *mental support* and to boost their *self-confidence*, since they often have no managerial skills and are therefore apprehensive and diffident. Overcoming psychological barriers with the mentor's help was helpful, including in initiating economic activity, and thus in obtaining economic stability and independence by organizations.

The key informant also pointed to barriers to the use of mentoring in nonprofit organizations. They emphasized that in the face of *multi-tasking and multiple roles in the organization*, their employees simply did not have enough time to participate in mentoring. This translated into *lesser involvement in the mentoring process*. In addition, issues also arose due to frequent changes in the organization's objectives, depending on the sources of financing for current operations. As a consequence, as the interviewer stated, mentoring in nonprofit entities is *difficult to plan and interrupted by current problems*.

7. Conclusions

The conclusions from this research show that the use of mentoring in the third sector can serve to transfer knowledge from the environment to a nonprofit organization, and vice versa. This transfer can be internal or cross-sectoral. In the first case, it occurs within the third sector, while in the second case it takes place between sectors. Mentoring, as a tool for transferring knowledge to nonprofit organizations, can also favor the development of the competence among staff, managers, employees and volunteers, as well as help improve the efficiency and professionalization of the entire organization. Knowledge can also be transferred by nonprofit

organizations themselves. Mentoring can be helpful in achieving statutory objectives, both in the social (within the sector) and the business context (cross-sectoral) (Table 7).

Table 7.
Directions of knowledge transfer and fields of using intra-sectoral and cross-sectoral mentoring in nonprofit organizations

Direction of knowledge transfer using mentoring	Fields in which mentoring was used	Intra-sectoral	Cross-sectoral
Transfer of knowledge to nonprofit organization	Development of competences of nonprofit organizations employees	Employees of the third sector are mentors to employees of nonprofit organizations, and the relationship is based on experiences from the functioning of the third sector.	Employees of enterprises are mentors to employees of nonprofit organizations, and the relationship is based on experiences from the business sector.
	Professionalization of nonprofit organizations	Mentors from the third sector disseminate their knowledge and experience in nonprofit organizations in order to professionalize them.	Business mentors disseminate knowledge and experience in nonprofit organizations in order to professionalize them.
Transfer of knowledge from nonprofit organization	Implementation of statutory objectives (nonprofit organizations)	Mentors from the third sector implement statutory social objectives, e.g. by working with the unemployed, the disabled, youth, etc.	Mentors from the third sector implement statutory business objectives, e.g. by supporting people running their own business.

Source: own study.

Mentoring applied to employees of nonprofit organizations can serve various functions. When addressed to young volunteers, it can be a means for those people to implement plans related to their professional life. Participation in mentoring can be an opportunity to learn about oneself and get to know oneself better, but it is also used to develop skills useful in the labor market. Mentoring addressed to the managerial staff may serve the development of the entire organization to a greater extent. In this context, it becomes an organization's tool for professionalization. Mentoring used in this area is characterized by an intentional approach to improving the sustainability of nonprofit organizations. Its application is of a strategic nature. Professionalization takes place by raising professionalism among staff, but what it truly intends is to raise the standards of the entire organization, and consequently, to contribute to its durability and stability. This application of mentoring is of vital importance for Polish nonprofit organizations, due to their relative weakness and young market age. However, implementation of mentoring also encounters certain barriers related to the specific nature of the activities of third-sector entities. The main such obstacles include problems arising from limited financial (e.g. problems with allocating funds for administrative costs, including training costs), organizational (e.g. difficulties related to the coordination of accessibility of social workers and mentors), psychological (e.g. managers' concerns related to self-perceived lack of managerial skills) capacity. In this article, it is argued that the implementation of mentoring in nonprofit entities should also take into account their relatively low level of formalization and bureaucracy.

The presented study is exploratory and does not allow for drawing far-reaching generalizations of the obtained findings. There are few publications on this issue, thus the obtained results may be the basis for further in-depth analyzes of the use of mentoring in nonprofit entities regarding its effectiveness in particular areas, as well as the relationships between various areas.

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