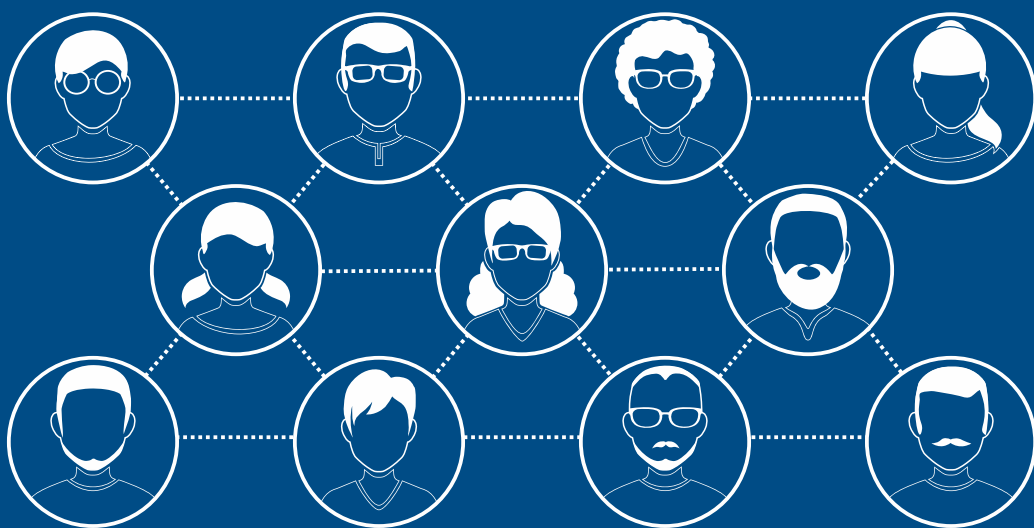# COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS FOR MENTORS AND MENTEES IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP: THEORY AND PRACTICE

COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS FOR MENTORS AND MENTEES IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP:
THEORY AND PRACTICE

Monograph

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Content

INTRODUCTION

This monograph is a part of the project entitled "**Development and Introduction of a Communication Competencies Model for Enhancing and Maintaining a Business Mentor Network"** (DICCMEM, 2019-1-LV01-KA203-060414). The aim of the project was to examine barriers to communication competencies between mentors and mentees and propose solutions how to enhance and maintain a business mentor network by means of communication technologies. The project is interdisciplinary because, according to the OECD classification, it directly relates to such fields of science as economics, entrepreneurship, communication as well as information technology. The project involves the following research studies: a technical and economic feasibility study and an industry research study.

Project activities:
- technical and economic feasibility study on the communication competencies model for the business mentor network;
- theoretical literature studies, an examination and a comparison of mentor work specifics in Latvia and abroad;
- interviews with the participants of the business mentor network (mentors and mentees); interviews, a questionnaire with experts;
- mobility, experience exchange with foreign countries;
- development of a smart communication competencies model for the business mentor network;
- development of an effective communication and collaboration methodology for the business mentor network;
- a pilot group of mentors and mentees for assessing the effective communication methodology;
- creating a mentoring handbook;
- publishing original scientific articles in journals or conference proceedings included in Web of Science or SCOPUS (or other) databases;
- development of a joint monograph;
- development of a network between partners.

The target group of this project represents several fields, them being research and academic environment: scientists, students, academic personnel in social sciences, as well employees engaged in research; an entrepreneur environment: entrepreneurs

from all countries who wish to participate in business mentor network activities as mentors and mentees; enterprise stakeholders: employees, customers, business partners; entrepreneurs as users of the communication methodology for the business mentor network; society: the society as a whole, as entrepreneurship in a region affects every resident through creating new jobs, improving the economic situation in the region, which increases the purchasing power of residents, amounts of taxes paid to the local and national governments.

The expected impact on the participant organizations is: involving more than 20 staff persons in the project; employing research staff; improving competence in the communication field; enhancing international relationships; further collaboration in research. The project applied a competence-based approach and the assessment of its quality, impact and relevance. This can contribute to a higher quality of education and training as well as supporting permeability between different education and training pathways. The expected results of the project are effective solutions to developing the business mentor network in all countries: a performed study on the communication competencies model; a designed smart communication competencies model coupled with adequate methodology; a developed mentoring handbook; original scientific articles published in journals or conference proceedings.

The project leader is **Rezekne Academy of Technologies (Latvia)**. Project partners are **Bialystok University of Technology (Poland), Utena University of Applied Sciences (Lithuania), Burgas Free University (Bulgaria), Ecoistituto del Friuli Venezia Giulia** and **Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre Ltd (Latvia).**

Bialystok University of Technology is a public institution of higher education subordinate to the Polish Minister of Science and Higher Education. It is the largest university of its kind in the north-eastern region of Poland and a modern, dynamically developing institution with 65-year-long experience in educating scientists and technologists.

Utenos Kolegija/University of Applied Sciences is a modern, student-oriented, state higher education institution offering higher college studies directed towards practical activity, applied research and professional activities. Its researchers participated in the projects and have experience in communicating with enterprises and organisations of students' practical training. Also the teachers teach subjects related to business communication and carry out scientific research, they organise non-formal courses for enterprises and carry out international projects.

Burgas Free University /BFU/ is a modern educational institution established with an act of the Great National Assembly on 18 September 1991. It is one of the first non-state universities in Bulgaria, established in the biggest industrial and cultural centre in the south-eastern region of the country.

Ecoistituto del friuli Venezia Giulia is a non-profit research institutution established in 1989. Ecoistituto's activity focuses on sustainable development and education, following a multidisciplinary approach aimed at promoting effective and sustainable results (people livability). Ecoistituto collaborates with schools and governmental

institutions, organizing research, projects courses, seminars, and workshops on sustainable development, cooperative business, environmental education as well as special needs education.

Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre Ltd (hereinafter LLKC) is the largest advisory service provider in Latvia. The strategic goal of the LLKC is to contribute to rural (incl. forestry) and fisheries growth by promoting the start-up of businesses and economic efficiency. The LLKC's main objectives are: 1) to be a cooperation bridge among entrepreneurs and organisations representing various rural sectors, administrative, educational and research institutions and residents; 2) to contribute to the transfer of innovative agricultural, forestry and fishery technologies and best practices in order to increase the efficiency of processes, productivity and the quality of products and to promote environment-friendly management of natural resources. One of the priorities of the LLKC is the promotion of entrepreneurship in rural areas which involves advisory support starting up and developing a business.

The monograph will be useful for mentors in focusing on specific communication processes as well as researchers interested in the communication of mentors and mentees.

The chapters of the monograph are organized into two parts. **Part 1** gives an overview on different aspects of mentoring, for example, communication skills, specifics of mentoring in business and mentoring in electronic environment. **Part 2** examines the results on communication competencies in mentoring in five countries – Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Poland and Italy.

PART 1
THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

CHAPTER 1
Theoretical perspective
on mentoring and communication

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Upon launching the project, the project's working group defined the role, functions and significance of a mentor and a mentee in the project context. In order for the definitions to be in line with the goal of the project, the researchers applied the approach used in the development of the Latvian and Lithuanian Business Mentor Network and defined the concepts of mentor and mentee as follows:

Mentor – an experienced entrepreneur or manager who has accumulated knowledge in entrepreneurship, who, without consideration and willingly, devotes his/her time, experience and suggestions to help the new entrepreneur orient in business environment and develop his or her business, helping to achieve his or her goals. The mentor listens, asks questions, challenges the mentee's goals, studies, gives advice, shares his/her experience and contacts. A mentor's role is not to advise but rather give a different way of thinking.

Mentee – an entrepreneur or a person who plans to be an entrepreneur, who, with the support of the mentor, wants to start or develop his or her company, who:
- has defined development issues and challenges requiring business mentor support in advance;
- is active and interested in the mentoring programme;
- is motivated to learn from business mentor experience, knowledge, as well as mistakes and good practices;
- is ready not only to learn but also to take concrete actions for the establishment or development of the company.

Mentor experience in business or company management or in the concerned sector:
- if the mentee wants to start a business – mentor experience – at least 2 years;
- if the mentee wants to develop a business – mentor experience – at least 5 years.

Such a person in business could be a mentor as well. In today's world, a mentor is described as a person with some defined qualities, an expert who oversees and trains a younger person (Memon et al., 2015).

Mentoring relationships (mentorships) are dynamic, reciprocal, personal relationships in which a more experienced person (mentor) acts as a guide, role model, teacher, and sponsor of a less experienced person (protégé). Mentors provide protégés with knowledge, advice, counsel, support, and opportunity in the protégé's pursuit of full membership in a particular profession.

In recent years, mentoring as a kind of knowledge transfer has become increasingly popular and widespread in the world. This means that a person (mentor) having experience in a relevant field transfers the experience to a person (mentee) having no such experience or having little experience.

The origins of mentoring are found in Japan, England, Sweden and the USA, yet mentoring soon became popular in other European countries as well. The way mentoring is used slightly differs in each country. In North America, mentoring is mainly used for career growth, and the mentor is responsible for building up skills and talents in the mentee and the mentee's career growth, while in European mentoring the mentor helps the mentee to enhance the skills and achieve success him/herself (LIAA, 2009).

In Europe, mentoring takes various forms, it has adapted to various purposes and needs and has found diverse uses.

Effective business mentoring is based on the mentor's knowledge of and experience in business and communication skills as well as the encouragement of the mentee in a friendly and positive way (LIAA, 2012). Mentoring is an effective knowledge transfer process that came to Latvia owing to the assistance provided by the European Commission; it is implemented by experienced mentors working with their mentees (Konstantinova & Rivža, 2007). Researcher Stern, however, points out that the history of mentoring as a knowledge transfer process is long. In Latvia, this approach has been employed since the 14th century – masters from various fields taught their apprentices who later became masters themselves, transferring their skills to others (Šterns, 1997).

Scientist R. Sullivan stresses a strong relationship between the mentor and the mentee that creates a safe environment for the growth and development of the mentee (Sullivan, 2000). This opinion is supported by researchers who emphasise that the mentor has to be sensitive to the emotional and intellectual world of the mentee. Sensitivity is the basis for trust in relations between mentoring participants and better conditions for learning. This perspective of mentoring is typical of mostly psychology and education researchers (Konstantinova, 2008). Researcher E.A. Ensher defines mentoring as "...prudent formation of pairs of persons with different experience and skills with the aim of contributing to the growth of, and building up specific skills in less experienced persons..." (Ensher et al., 2002).

Mentoring refers to a one-to-one relationship between a less experienced (i.e. protégé) and a more experienced person (i.e. mentor), and is prototypically intended to advance the personal and professional growth of the less experienced individual (Mullen, 1994).

According to researchers (Clutterbuck et al., 2005), the mentor becomes a trusted person and, giving assistance, achieves considerable change in the mentee's knowledge, work and thinking. Mentoring is the most intense and powerful one-to-one developmental relationship, entailing the most influence, identification, and emotional involvement (Wanberg et al., 2003).

Mentoring relationships could be strictly formal or flexible, being allowed to move in any direction by agreement between the mentor and the mentee, yet the relationships have to always contribute to achieving the mentee's goals. Such relationships could be regarded as an important knowledge transfer process in the context of both the entrepreneurial and the conventional learning environment (Konstantinova, 2008).

Mentoring could be characterised as bilateral "communicative relations" that consist of verbal and nonverbal behaviour and whose goal is to offer or request assistance. Performing this dialogue communication, mentors develop and give relevant messages that are referred to as a specific communicative behaviour or one party's action aimed at benefitting someone or helping others (Burleson et al., 2002). This implies that mentors have to regularly adapt their communication in order to understand the needs of the other party; therefore, both parties need an understanding of their communication style and a wish to objectively assess the behaviour of the assisted person (Radu Lefebvre & Redien-Collot, 2013). Arora and Rangnekar (2016) conclude that numerous studies in the past provided strong evidence about the linkage of the protégé's personality (individual differences) with the receipt of mentoring. For example, the protégé's personality traits have a decisive role in influencing the protégé's initiation for mentoring relationships, and the individuals with high emotional stability, a higher internal locus of control and higher self-monitoring initiation patterns receive high levels of mentoring.

Communication is a key to successful entrepreneurship. Communication skills are important not only for individuals in the communication industry but also for educators, young people and entrepreneurs who need to present not only themselves but also their ideas.

The process of communication between the mentor and the mentee is called interpersonal communication. Interpersonal communication involves an interaction between two or more people, usually with a direct connection and with some sort of assumed relationship. A sufficient understanding of the communication process by the mentor is essential for proper collaboration between the mentor and the mentee.

Regardless of whether communication is internal or external, horizontal or vertical, all forms of communication in the entrepreneurial environment help to increase efficiency and improve organizational performance. The key purpose of communication is to ensure that a message is comprehended in a way it was initially intended in order to reach the audience. That is why communication could be both verbal and visual – it is a continuous process, during which interaction occurs among the communicator, the channel, the message and the communicates. An essential element in communication is the communicative effect or response, which indicates whether

the message has reached the audience and whether the communication objective is going to be achieved.

Anyone communicates with various teachers, influencers and promoters, which indicates that the presence of such a person is important. The role of communication in starting up and developing a business is emphasized in the theoretical literature as well. Those with extensive professional and business contacts are likely to have more information about opportunities, more likely to acquire information at an earlier point, have a larger pool of potential reference providers and 'career brokers', and more likely to be known to those who control or affect jobs (Feeney & Bozeman, 2008).

Effective mentoring can contribute to increased self-efficacy and effectiveness and improved and expanded skills and competencies, which can support individual advancement in e.g. educational and career domains (Montgomery B.L., 2017). When engaged in a dyadic mentoring relationship, mentors elaborate and convey supportive messages depicted as "specific lines of communicative behaviour enacted by one party with the intent of benefiting or helping another" (Memon et al., 2015).

This means that communication and the knowledge of principles of effective communication are essential characteristics of mentoring. Mentoring in this top-down framework then emerges as interactions, largely based on a one-way flow of information, between a mentor and an individual being mentored (i.e., a mentee). The focus of mentoring can include a range of goals, for instance skills or competency development, psychosocial or socioemotional support, and career development (Montgomery, 2017).

The theoretical literature emphasizes the knowledge of the mentor's communication skills and principles to establish effective communication between the mentor and the mentee.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has declared communication as one of the significant 21st century skills (Ester van Laar et al., 2020). In mentoring, this is the most important tool for achieving results because the mentor alone does not guarantee career growth, yet the quality of the growth depends on the relationship between the mentor and the mentee (LIAA, 2009).

The authors' theoretical literature review indicates that mentoring refers to relationships and communication that involve sharing experience and support provided by an individual who shares his/her knowledge, experience and wisdom to another individual – a mentee – who is ready and who has a wish to benefit from the exchange and to improve his/her professionalism. Since mentoring requires the mentor going deep into in the mentee's problems and discussing subject matters, the mentor does not teach but encourages the mentee him/herself to make a decision.

In parallel with communication skills, the mentor's experience and ability to pass on his/her knowledge are highlighted. A research study conducted to identify which mentor is rated the highest in inter-organizational mentoring concluded that the most effective mentors for this type of mentoring are those who have professional experience and the necessary skills to transmit this experience to the mentee. Likewise,

the most effective mentors are those who have leadership qualities and an authentic desire to get involved in the mentoring process, and those who know how to put themselves in the place of the mentees, understand their needs and problems. Less important is the capacity for influence and power, as well as previous experience in mentoring. Likewise, age and gender are of little importance. As a consequence, the selection of mentors for inter-organizational mentoring programmes should be much more focused on professional experience, relationship skills and motivation than the name, position and image (Gisbert-Trejo et al., 2019a).

For the communication process to be effective, however, the involvement of the mentee is required. In addition to the characteristics of the mentor, the influence of the mentee in mentoring is also emphasized.

Characteristics of a mentee:

[...] *the mentee has emotional intelligence; the mentee has organizational commitment; the mentee has good performance; the mentee shows high potential for development; the mentee shows a locus of control (perception of control of his/her professional life); the mentee has self-esteem; and the mentee shows extroversion* (Gisbert-Trejo et al., 2019b).

This means that the mentee must be development-oriented and have a desire to acquire knowledge, i.e. only then a proper communication process could occur. A research study that examined mentoring in business concluded that the effect of entrepreneurship mentoring is determined by the coupling interactions of the mentor's factors, the mentee's factors and their interaction relationship (Ting et al., 2017). Therefore, the key to improving the effect of entrepreneurial mentoring is to promote comprehensive conditions for the entrepreneurial mentor, which includes the mentor's quality, mentoring ability and mentoring intention. It is necessary to promote the mentor's mentoring intention (incl. active care, personal demonstration, responsibility) (Ting et al., 2017).

Nowadays, competitiveness and the ability to respond quickly to change are becoming the most important factors for the development of business in the regions.

Researcher R. Zvirgzdiņa, who examined business development in rural areas of Latvia, believes that fostering economic activities in rural areas requires a comprehensive approach which would involve retraining the rural population and creating opportunities for acquiring basic knowledge of business, general economic knowledge and advice (Zvirgzdiņa, 2006). Other researchers who examined the entrepreneurial environment in the regions (LU, 2010; LIAA, 2009; Altum, 2017) referred to the need to apply experience transfer techniques. Such an opportunity is provided by mentoring whereby experienced mentors transfer their knowledge to mentees. Mentoring is based on the knowledge and experience of a mentor that allows a mentee to consider his/her disposable options and resources and encourages the mentee to use them to solve a particular problem or achieve a goal (Konstantinova & Rivža, 2007).

As indicated by European practices, entrepreneurial experience transfer or mentoring in business is one of the most effective ways that contributes to a number

of new businesses and economic growth (Rivža, 2006). In many countries, mentoring is recognised as a progressive business growth instrument. Transferring successful experience among enterprises, actively sharing knowledge, experience and contacts as well as forming a business cooperation culture are its unique values. Mentoring is mainly used to contribute to the development of new and less-experienced enterprises (LIAA, 2012). However, it has to be admitted that "mentoring is not a key to success or a solution to all problems – only an opportunity to learn the opinion of experienced entrepreneurs and get advice" (Asere, 2011).

Mentoring in entrepreneurship represents a systematically shaped relationship based on long-term and voluntary support between a successful entrepreneur sharing his/her knowledge, experience and views and another entrepreneur who is ready and willing to learn it and improve his/her professionalism (Konstantinova, 2007).

Mentoring is generally a one-to-one interrelation that normally occurs between a senior, a more experienced person (the mentor), and a junior, a less skilled one (the mentee), to help the mentee to effectively and rapidly adapt to the business environment through advice and guidance so that the mentees acquire organizational socialization, career advancement and professional and personal growth (Gisbert-Trejo et al., 2019a). Mentoring is a relationship between a person with advanced experience and knowledge and a more junior person who seeks assistance, guidance and support for their career, personal and professional development (Fowler & O'Gorman, 2005).

Mentoring activities are implemented by the mentor and the mentee. The mentor is an entrepreneur or manager experienced in business who has accumulated knowledge, or an industry specialist who devotes his/her time, experience and advice free of charge and in good faith to help a young entrepreneur navigate the business environment and develop his/her activities. The mentee is a new or future entrepreneur who, with the support of the mentor, wants to start or develop his/her own business, having previously defined the support needed within the framework of cooperation (LIAA, 2009; LIAA, 2012). Mentoring is a long-term relationship between the mentor and the mentee that meets the need for development, helps to unlock the mentee's full potential and brings benefits to all the involved parties. The mentor individually works with an enterprise to assess its business performance and problems or opportunities for developing its potential, give advice and recommendations on business expansion and particular action (Norvēģijas finanšu…, 2014).

Scientists have researched various factors affecting the quality of mentoring. Various research studies have been done on what makes cooperation in mentoring successful.

In her research, R. Ortiz-Walters found that in order for cooperation to succeed in mentoring, such prerequisites as mutual trust and satisfaction with the relationship on the part of the mentor were needed along with a similar way of perception, interpersonal comfort and real motivation (Ortiz-Walters et al., 2010). The research studies have proved that the mentor's education largely affects the mentor's own understanding of his/her role in mentoring (Lejonberg et al., 2015). The researchers

(Leck & Orser, 2013) believe that trust is an essential component of effective mentoring relationships, and mentoring programmes have to include activities helping to build up and promote trust between the mentor and the mentee. The researchers (Gisbert-Trejo et al., 2019a) identified 29 mentor characteristics (age, gender, work experience, motivation to be a mentor etc.).

The literature review of mentoring has revealed that gender effects on mentoring programmes are extensively analysed and researched. Globally, most mentors are men, as it is them who take leading job positions at many companies. It has been found that mentors play a great role in men's career growth and even a greater role in women's career growth (Burke et al., 1994). As found in research studies, both male and female mentees confirmed that they were more satisfied with the mentors who provided psychological support for their career growth. It was found that relationships between the mentor and the mentee could range from excellent to very unsatisfactory (LIAA, 2009). This allows to conclude that mentors themselves do not guarantee growth, yet the quality of growth depends on the relations between the mentor and the mentee or, more precisely, the consistency between the mentee's needs and the mentor's ability to support these needs (LIAA, 2009). The researchers (Fowler et al., 2007) revealed a few significant relationships between gender and mentoring functions. As far as mentees were concerned, female mentors provided personal and emotional guidance to a greater extent than male mentors; female mentors provided career development facilitation to a greater extent than male mentors and female mentees were provided with career development facilitation to a greater extent than male mentees; also female mentees were provided with role modelling to a greater extent than male mentees. As far as mentors were concerned, there were no significant differences in the functions provided to female and male mentees. Looking at satisfaction with mentoring through the prism of gender, the researchers (Ortiz-Walters et al., 2010) believe that masculine protégés, who strongly identify with their career roles, report being more satisfied with mentors who provide support in career development. Conversely, feminine protégés, who measure career success using socio-emotional-based criteria, report being more satisfied with mentors who provide psychosocial support. The researchers (Leck & Orser, 2013) state that "women are still under-represented in positions of power. Mentoring has been widely adopted as a mechanism to help women climb the corporate ladder. The lack of female mentors frequently means that female protégés have to be mentored by men. If women are to break the "glass ceiling", it is imperative that male mentors trust their female protégés to the same extent as their male protégés and provide them with the same career advancing opportunities".

The practice showed (O'Bannon, 2018) that there was no statistically significant difference in clients' satisfaction according to whether an entrepreneur worked with a mentor of the same gender. In case of small enterprises, mentees, first of all, wanted a mentor who listened to them, and who accurately assessed their particular business situation. They wanted a mentor who was helpful and who provided relevant advice in a respectful manner.

Researching the prototypes of an ideal mentor, the researchers (Bailey et al., 2016) pointed out that, when asked about their ideal mentor, the respondents emphasized the guidance given by the mentor, interpersonal "warmth" and his/her ethical integrity. The prototypes of an ideal mentor varied, depending on ethnicity and gender as well as on how the question was asked.

The authors conclude that mentoring is a knowledge transfer process implemented by experienced mentors and mentees. Mentoring in entrepreneurship is based on the mentor's knowledge and experience, which allows the mentee to assess the opportunities and resources being at his/her disposal and use them to solve a particular problem or achieve a goal.

Globally, entrepreneurship plays a significant role in creating employment. When entrepreneurs succeed, economies thrive. They therefore need a support system that nurtures their potential and an environment suitable for sustainable entrepreneurship to take place. One of the key components that entrepreneurs could benefit from is mentoring. However, the understanding of mentorship, its benefits and impact is still not widespread across most developing nations (Wachira, 2018). A strong relationship between the mentor and the mentee creates a safe environment for the growth and development of the mentee (Sullivan, 2000).

Mentoring does not just help young professionals gain the experience and wisdom they need in the workforce; it can also increase the likelihood of small business success. Working with a mentor at least five times greatly increases an entrepreneur's likelihood of business success. It has to be noted that the top three issues entrepreneurs asked their mentors for help with were: human resources issues (61%); growth/business expansion (59%) and start-up assistance (53%) (O'Bannon, 2018).

The authors agree with the above-mentioned assertions and believe that mentoring is one of the most effective ways that contributes to a number of new entrepreneurs and economic growth. Overall, entrepreneurship expands and develops if experienced entrepreneurs give guidance to beginners in entrepreneurship. Mentoring positively affects the national economy, as new enterprises are founded, unemployment declines and the competitiveness of enterprises increases.

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CHAPTER 2
Specifics of business mentoring

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Introduction

In its basics, business mentoring is a process of positively influencing a contact between a **mentor**, usually an experienced and respected professional, who offers their knowledge, wisdom, and advice to a less-experienced **mentee** or **protégé** with a purpose to enhance their professional performance and development. From the psychological point of view, the mentor acts as a role model, supporting the mentee's activities. Both functions – business and psychological, provide explicit and implicit lessons related to professional development for an individual entrepreneur or a company's employee. Usually the term mentee implicates a broad range of individuals who are in the role of a "learner" or a trainee in mentoring relationships.

Research has consistently found mentored individuals to be more satisfied and committed to their professions than non-mentored individuals (Wanberg et al., 2003). Furthermore, mentees often get better professional development, career fostering, and better progress than non-mentored professionals. The mentoring process is twofold and mentors can also benefit from the mentoring process by improving their personal skills, deriving increased satisfaction from training the next generation of leaders, learning new technologies and applications, developing their self-knowledge and self-awareness, or becoming aware of new methodologies or trends in their area. In addition, they both share their professional network with each other and increase awareness about business processes in different departments and organisations that would not otherwise be known to them.

According to Forbes contributor Ken Perlman, "good mentors can help new professionals learn skills that go beyond the classroom, such as management principles and leadership practices. They provide a different perspective, relate different leadership experiences and ask a different set of questions".

Business mentoring usually goes through different stages. During the initial stage, mentors select potential mentees deliberately or accidentally. They usually look for motivated, positive and talented people who lack some experience. In the next

phase, both parties should get to know each other, establish realizable relations and determine their roles. This stage includes application and selection processes and, finally, matching the mentor and the mentee(s). The next stage includes the mentoring process itself as well as defining a set of objectives and an action plan, followed by regular meetings between the parties, using various types of communication until the final outcomes are met. This stage could last from a couple of days to years, if the mentor and the mentee establish a long-lasting partnership, providing the mentee with access to consistent guidance and resources. The final phase is mentorship conclusion, while the entire process and its results should be analysed and redefined, if necessary.

Managerial know-how transfer through mentors in fact differs from the above conception. Mentors can be described as concentrations of managerial knowledge. They are characterised through intense interactions with their environment and they can be viewed as technology transfer channels in business interaction systems. On the other hand, it cannot be accepted that economies in transition (in this paper the CEE countries will be analysed only) have to be approached in the same way as developing countries.

Mentorship is important since it provides mentors' personal experience that could not be read in books. It appears to be a valuable asset as many mentors do not describe all their thoughts and opinions in a book, if they have written any at all. In addition, mentorship is tailor-made to mentees needs, which is impossible to read in a book.

Many studies and surveys prove that mentoring is important for success in business. Results from the executive coaching survey conducted in 2018 by Stanford Center for Leadership and Research (Executive coaching survey, 2018) reveal that over 80% of different-level CEOs received some form of mentorship. In similar research by Sage, 93 percent of start-ups claim that mentorship is helpful in achieving success (Fletcher & Mullen, 2012). It is easy to believe that mentorship provided by an experienced professional has a powerful positive effect on entrepreneurs or intrapreneurs. In addition, empirical work has found that informal, long-term mentorship may be more effective in career advancement than formal, short-term mentoring (Eesley & Wang, 2014).

Mentoring implies a personal contact between mentors and mentees using various synchronous or asynchronous channels: face-to-face, phone, written notes/reports, e-mail, audio/video conferences. This personal communication improves the trainee's self-confidence and is highly adjusted to his/her personal needs. Surveys and reports state that self-confidence is more crucial to professional development than talent and competence (Blokker et al., 2019).

Mentorship could assume both a formal and informal method and it could potentially help mentees in their development (Blau et al., 2010). Educational mentoring is well-known and widespread in colleges and universities despite the proliferation and specialisation of mentorship courses and programmes. Entrepreneurship education which includes mentorship can have a strong, positive impact on entrepreneurial behaviour (Xin et al., 2020). Entrepreneur and investor mentors can both

advise mentees on financing or fundraising opportunities and pitfalls at the beginning of their start-ups. Mentors who are or have been investors provide the most direct link, however, entrepreneurs and even employees often have investors in their personal networks whom they can make introductions to if needed (Wang, 2013). Intrapreneurial or career mentorship involves employees who have the potential to start new or to improve existing activities and it may include an element of guidance on how to easily get promoted and move up within the current organization (Wyatt et al., 2019). On the contrary, entrepreneurial mentorship aims at helping the trainee to set up their own business, so their personal development is emphasized to a greater degree (Xin et al., 2020).

Effective mentoring could play a very important role not only in young entrepreneurs' role and career fostering, but could also be critical for organisations' overall development and progress. However, mentorship effectiveness is not always straightforward and may involve some challenges. For instance, the benefits of mentoring may vary according to the degree to which a mentee has a well-defined professional identity (Weinberg, 2019). Regardless of the mentoring type, successful mentoring appeared to be based heavily on the mentor's willingness and ability to interact frequently with the mentee (Brashear-Alejandro et al., 2019).

Business Mentoring Functions

Kram's mentor role theory (1985) describes two major categories of mentor functions. The first category includes functions that are related to the career development of the protégé (Ragins & Cotton, 1999):
- sponsorship: protection against promotion and mistakes;
- coaching or teaching;
- protecting;
- challenging assignments;
- exposure and visibility.

Functions related to entrepreneurial career (St-Jean, 2011):
- integration;
- information support;
- targeting;
- confrontation.

The second category of functions focuses on psychological support – the development of a sense of competence and professional identity, self-efficacy, professional and personal development, and covers such psychosocial functions as:
- developing a sense of professional self (acceptance and confirmation);
- guidance;

- recognition;
- problem solving, mentor as a touchstone for the protégé (advising or mentoring);
- respect and support (friendship).

  Entrepreneurial Psychological functions (St-Jean, 2011):
- Reflector;
- Motivator;
- Trustee;
- Encouraging.

The third category is role modelling – the mentor is a role model and enables the protégé to identify with him/her, including commitment, comparison, trust, respect and demonstration of high standards. The mentor demonstrates patterns of skills, behaviours and attitudes that the protégé must integrate in order to be successful. In order to begin the process of identifying and copying certain behaviours or skills, it is important for the mentor to gain respect of the protégé and become a significant figure for him/her (Chen, 2013; St-Jean, 2011).

The fulfilment of psychosocial functions depends on the development of interpersonal relationships and the emotional connection between the mentor and the protégé. The mentor may not perform all of the roles and functions described, but only some of them (Ragins & Cotton, 1999).

Mentors who have well-developed social skills develop their relationships with others more successfully in the workplace, they are better listeners and more supportive (Wu et al., 2012).

Specifics of Entrepreneurial mentoring

Communication in a dyadic relationship between a mentor and an entrepreneur is oriented towards two main goals. The first objective is to create a business project that meets market expectations and practices, i.e. adapting (conforming) the new project to the rules and regulations of the market in order to be realistic and feasible. The second objective is that the new business project will add value to customers through new or modified products and services that do not yet exist on the market, i.e. differentiation from existing products and services through new challenges is needed. The choice of communication strategies is aimed at realizing these two main goals: conformity and differentiation to the market. The first objective requires knowledge and implementation of existing rules when creating a business plan, and the second requires innovation and creativity in transforming old or creating new products and services (Lefebvre & Redien-Collot, 2013).

St-Jean and Audet summarise the expected results of the mentor-protégé relationship with emerging entrepreneurs as follows: generally speaking, the relationship

is expected to improve learning outcomes, influence expectations related to starting a new business, develop specific knowledge and skills (e.g. accounting), provide solutions to approaching local or international clients in a suitable manner, develop the ability to identify opportunities, boost greater self-confidence and high entrepreneurial self-efficacy, develop leadership skills and, finally, lead to greater satisfaction with their work as entrepreneurs (St-Jean & Audet, 2013).

The style of mentor intervention in dyadic mentor-protégé relationships is actually an interactive approach that can be facilitative (nondirective), collaborative and instructive (directive) (St-Jean & Audet, 2013).

It is recommended to apply a new approach in the mentor-protégé relationships, starting from the Socratic method (the method of asking questions for the sake of giving birth to ideas), called the maieutic approach (Gravells, 2006).

Two basic communication styles are used by mentors in organizations to achieve their desired goals: **interpersonal communication** and **communicative openness**. The style called "interpersonal communication" is described as personal communication between two persons who have developed a relationship and are considered more than acquaintances. This communication style serves to achieve different goals of the group or individuals in the organization, such as: personal growth and development of their own potentials, fulfilment of certain responsibilities, learning certain techniques and the overall development of the mentee by providing the necessary information by the mentor – information on his thoughts, feelings, knowledge and experience to help to achieve his personal goals. The second communication style, the "openness style", is related to the quality of communication or the effectiveness of interpersonal communication, i.e. the extent to which each participant is inclined to communicate openly with the others, to reveal themselves within adaptive limits, to respond spontaneously to external stimuli. Communicative openness means a free movement of information in both directions from the mentor to the protégé(s) and back, i.e. exchange of information to the highest degree. The mentor provides information in the direction of the needs of his or her protégés and opens a field for free discussion on current topics (Ismail et al., 2014).

Stages of entrepreneurial mentoring

Mentor-protégé relationships go through four well-differentiated phases. The **first phase** is the *Introduction stage*. From the point of view of the Social Exchange Theory at this stage, potential mentors and protégés, before engaging, weigh the benefits of future relationships and the cost they have to pay to maintain them (Ragins & Kram, 2007). The relationship between the mentor and the protégé begins to develop by discussing common goals, values and desires. It is a process of getting to know each other and gradually developing trust between them. During the introductory phase, intense fantasies emerge in the protégé about the mentor's ability to provide

guidance for development and support. The transferred, unrealistic attitude towards the mentor facilitates the processes of positive identification with him or her (Memon et al., 2015; APA, 2006; Kram, 1983).

Phase Two: the *Cultivation stage* lasts between 2 and 5 years and is the first phase in which the mentor begins to train and develop his or her protégé. At the beginning of this phase, the two parties agree on professional and psychosocial goals that will be achieved and the time it will take. This allows progress to be tracked and goals to be renegotiated over time. During this phase, two functions of the mentor develop and reach their high point, namely those related to career development (teaching the protégé how to work effectively; setting tasks that contain some challenges; counselling, tutoring, increasing recognition and attracting attention) and psychosocial functions (friendship – respect and support; professional identity development). The mentor is responsible for the effectiveness of intensive communication during this phase (Memon et al., 2015; APA, 2006; Kram, 1983). Similar personality traits have a positive influence during this stage of developing the mentor-protégé relationship (Ragins & Kram, 2007).

Phase Three: *Closure/Separation Stage*. The reasons for ending the relationship between the mentor and the protégé may be different: the achievement of the set goals; the completion of training, the development of one's own professional identity, the development of autonomy and independence in the realization of one's ideas. This is a phase in which separation should occur in a healthy and non-traumatic way (without the feeling of loss, abandonment, or betrayal), with the agreement of both parties in the relationship regarding the beginning of the end (Memon et al., 2015; APA, 2006; Kram, 1983).

Phase Four: *Redefinition Stage*. During this phase, the relationship between the mentor and the protégé changes. They may be renegotiated to continue, but after a significant change – as a collegial relationship or friendship. The career of the protégé will no longer be the focus of the relationship. During this phase, it is important that the balance is positive and that the desired goals are met. It is possible for both parties to start developing new mentoring relationships (Memon et al., 2015; APA, 2006; Kram, 1983).

Mentoring approaches

Needs-driven mentoring approach

Mezias and Skandura propose a new approach to the development of the mentor-protégé relationship which they call the "needs-driven approach to mentoring." They are developing a new approach in the framework of international mentoring which should facilitate the adaptation to the work environment of managers who come

from another country, from different national and organizational cultures. According to this approach, the relationship between the mentor and the protégé is formed and driven in its development by the specific needs of the protégé. The authors of the approach justify the shift of focus from traditional to needs-based mentor-protégé relationships with diversity, large numbers and ever-changing needs in an international assignment. The authors describe the specific needs of the mentees during each of the three stages of the international assignment to a managerial position, namely: before, during and after the appointment (return to the sending country). Adapting to the job position in the new country also has three dimensions: adapting to the culture of the host country, to the work role and group socialization. As a result of combining the three dimensions of adaptation to the work environment with the three stages that the appointment goes through, there are 9 specific needs related to challenges in the development and socialization of migrant leaders, such as: Advice on accepting assignment, Host-country adjustment, Work role adjustment, Host-country office culture, Home-country readjustment, Home-country office culture. Meeting these needs requires different types of mentoring and building relationships with several mentors simultaneously. The mentor-protégé relationship within this approach can be of fourfold typology (informal hierarchical, formal hierarchical, informal peer, and formal peer), each type being suitable for application in meeting specific developmental and socialization needs. The traditional approach comes down to the fact that the mentor is fully authorized to recognize the needs of the protégé and the moment to satisfy them, as he or she has the necessary knowledge and experience. The new approach emphasizes a search for the most suitable mentors for different needs arising during the three different stages of the international appointment (Mezias & Scandura, 2005).

Within this approach, researchers focus on researching and identifying opportunities to meet the protégés' learning needs in learning organizations in the mentoring process. They emphasize the role of situational factors in the emergence of strong pressure on protégés to continue to learn and develop – new needs arise for the development of interpersonal skills, behavioural change and identity change. This requires exploring the possibilities for adapting the approach to learning organizations (Ragins & Kram 2007). The influence of multiple relationships with mentors on the effectiveness of the protégé within international mentoring and the needs-based approach has been the subject of comprehensive research. The effectiveness of mentoring was assessed through 8 variables – organizational identification, sharing knowledge of the organization, the immigrant's knowledge of the organization, job satisfaction, group work, work-related stress, productivity and ability to grow up (expatriate effectiveness as measured by the organization), identification, organizational knowledge-sharing, expatriate organizational knowledge, job satisfaction, teamwork, job-related tension, performance and promotability. The influence of the protégé's participation simultaneously in two types of interactions – with the mentor in the sending country and with the mentor in the receiving

country – on his efficiency at the workplace was traced. The obtained results confirm that the host-country mentor had a significant positive effect on the organizational knowledge, organizational knowledge-sharing, job performance, promotability, and perceptions of teamwork of the mentee. It has been observed that the home-country mentor simultaneously had a significant positive effect (on organizational knowledge, job performance, and promotability) and a negative effect (on organization identification and job satisfaction) on the mentee. The work-related tension of the mentees was not significantly affected by either of the two types of relationship with the mentors (Carraher et al., 2008).

The three stages of the international assignment (pre-departure, on-site and repatriation) represent a training cycle – international transfer of knowledge and information through the process of mentoring by multiple mentors (home-country mentors, relocation mentor and host-country mentors). The information exchange cycle starts before the arrival in the host country; it is most intense during the appointment and continues after the return home. The learning cycle finishes (pre-departure, on-site and repatriation learning). The protégé is seen as "the" star "around which information is assembled" through a network of mentors (Crocitto, Sullivan, Carraher, p. 5, 2005). During the first stage of the cycle (pre-departure stage) the mentors satisfy the need for informing the protégé about the demands of doing business in the host country, job demands and culture change. In the second stage, the protégé must receive information related to changes in his country as well as information to help him adapt to the new organizational and country culture. During this stage, training continues in local business norms, in specific skills and abilities to perform work tasks. During the repatriation stage, protégés need the support of mentors to cope with the culture shock of their return, to adapt to organizational and national culture, to be able to provide their colleagues with valuable experience and contacts (Crocitto, Sullivan, Carraher, 2005).

Mentee-driven approach to mentoring

It is an approach to mentoring that empowers the protégé to influence his or her relationship with the mentor, to guide and inform him or her about his or her needs and ways to meet them. This presupposes an active role of the protégé in the mentoring process and in building the relationship with the mentor. Mentoring is in the position of an active participant who influences (managing up) the mentor (directs the development of relationships in a certain direction, accepts them as his own, shares his needs with the mentor and ways to meet them, plans meetings with the mentor and sets their agenda, asks questions and requests feedback (Zerzan et al., 2009).

Mentoring issues in business support processes

As it was explained above, the studies in technological transfer have been relatively more developed. In many cases those concerning management know-how transfer are based or helped by the findings about the technological transfer. The assessment of managerial know-how (MKH) transfer in a systemic environment could be based on reflections over the elements of a model of technology.

In the proposed by Tom Keil component model of Ramanathan (Keil, 1995, p. 7) the components are defined as follows:
- Technoware referring to the tangible and palpable part of technology;
- Humanware capturing the skills of single individuals in the organisation;
- Orgaware describing the organisational arrangements to use humanware and technoware;
- Infoware capturing the articulated knowledge by human beings concerning technoware, humanware, and orgaware.

It is easy to say, and it will not be a mistake that MKH concerns all the 4 components. But in terms of the place of the management mentors here, the answer is not that simple. Different types of mentors match more or less properly the transfer of MKH to every of these 4 elements. As the independent expert (the right one for resolving an issue or the one who "catches the fish") on the one end – appropriate for specialised knowledge in Technoware and Orgaware, and the interventionist (who transfers skills or "teaches to catch the fish") on the other end – oriented as Infoware provider (the types of mentors are in line with the classification by Alan Weiss (1994, p. 15)).

Defining in general terms, in the title and in the text often could be mentioned for mentors only. In all the cases, if not mentioned by the other, they should be accepted as management consultancies (MC) according to the definition in this paper (the Institute for Mentoring Management in Germany) (Hiron MC), in which the management consultant is an independent and qualified person, providing his professional services through: identifying and examining problems, elaborating recommendations, discussing and co-ordinating with the client the best way of acting and providing the client with the required assistance for implementing these recommendations. At the same time, when speaking of management mentors as facilitators of MKH, a general image is more adequate. The consultant is not only the person with a registered office and a profit-oriented business. This term includes also university professors with such a practice, business-support institutions, experts at different levels and representatives of different investment funds and banks if all of them refer to the accepted definition.

In defining MKH transfer, the above-mentioned four components of Ramanathan's model of technology will also be assumed (and its components cited below). In this way adapting the definition of Autio's managerial know-how transfer used by Tom Keil

(Keil, 1995, p. 9) will be defined as an active interaction pattern between two or more entities in which the sum of managerial knowledge increases through the development, relocation, and transformation of one or more components of the model. MKH transfer has to be distinguished from MKH diffusion which describes the process of spreading MKH in an economy. Diffusion is essentially a passive process and can be understood as a macro-perspective on the MKH flow. The diffusion of MKH in an economy implies several transfers of MKH between different entities.

Primary actors in this process are not only mentoring bodies but also companies, universities and research centres that deal directly with MKH by relocating, transforming or developing it, but for the needs of this paper MC will be regarded only. Secondary actors are the organizations that facilitate the transfer process through information, financial, or infrastructure services.

To be more correct, it should be clear that only the direction of the MKH flow from the industrialised countries to the CEE transition countries will be examined, though in this way, there could be misunderstanding regarding that the primary actors are only West consultancies. But MKH transfer modes also include joint development projects with local business and scientific partners, joint ventures between consultancies and similar types of collaborative alliances.

The new knowledge that has to be combined in the countries with unique transition (CEE) usually concerns the following directions (Gibb, 1995):

- readiness to work in unclear turbulent environment;
- necessary knowledge and skills for successful transition from manager to entrepreneur;
- knowledge and skills for successful transition from entrepreneur to manager;
- acquiring knowledge and skills to motivate the personnel in specific transition conditions.

In this direction, based on the case of Bulgaria, there are assumptions made by Milen Baltov when speaking about the synergistic effect of combining efforts in education (in this case training is included in the term), research and consultancy (Baltov, 1996). Unfortunately, mentoring companies often have to conduct research on their own, sometimes in spheres beyond their activity, and researchers on their behalf, especially in CEE countries, still are not used to contacting mentors in order to correct or add their research. What is more developed in these countries is the connection between education and mentoring. On the one hand, when entrepreneurs and managers need basic knowledge, they often meet mentors as trainers in certain spheres of their education; on the other, when mentors are trainees, they refresh their knowledge. In speaking of small business educational programmes, the directions where Baltov sees a place of MCs concerning MKH transfer could be generalized as: making education more practical, having effective transfer of entrepreneurial (managerial in the case) know-how that has already been adapted to local conditions, and implementing joint projects where education and mentoring sustain

an important part of the project. These assumptions are also viable when applied for complex projects funded by various sources (including foreign).

Conclusion

The factors of the environment that influence the performance of mentors are separated into two levels. The designed model cannot determine them but it can analyse their influence. External causes, given their positive effect, stimulate the development of the small business sector, improve the environmental climate and some macroindexes as well as strengthen confidence in maintaining business contacts.

Still, internal causes concern the participants in the process and are connected – for client organizations – with a possible introduction of a new product/service, business growth, increasing turnover, for mentors – with improving their own expertise and greater flexibility. Experimentally, in the future following the process in the gaps in mentors' performance, the causal linkage with the designed model becomes possible. It is also possible to perform a case analysis of certain examples – mentors and their clients, as well as using expert's estimations, interviews and analysis of innovations in the theory.

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CHAPTER 3
Communication skills for mentors and mentees

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Introduction

Both the business community and the academia agree that good communication skills are essential in business and especially in the process of its development (D. Conrad, R. Newberry, 2011). However, research shows that, in practical terms, they are the ones most in need of start-ups. Therefore, business consulting activity, which plays the role of business promotion, is relevant and contributes to the development of other competencies of a start-up entrepreneur. More and more people turn to consultants, hoping for advice and help in developing their business and personal professional career.

According to D. Perkumienė and A. Perkumas (2010), quality consulting must be distinguished not only in terms of content but also critical are the factors of communication between clients and consultants – the consultant must be able to understand the client, delve into his/her feelings and character. Good communication skills of the client and the consultant, pleasant communication between them have a positive impact on the deepening of clients' knowledge and decision-making. J.H. Lahiff, J.M. Peppose (1997) emphasize that according to communication science, communication between communicators is crucial. It is the creation and exchange of meanings when knowledge (certain information) being transferred as the meaning of a particular object, the construction of signs meets the expectations of the recipient, his/her social experience, culture. The mutual efforts of both agents of the communication process determine which ordinary meaning will be created. In general, communication, according to J. Fiske (1990), V. Misevičius, R. Urbonienė (2006) and others, it is not only an exchange of experience, verbal and non-verbal signals, information, and mutual understanding. With the help of communication, words, opinions, motivation of behaviour and actions expressed by another person are understood, as well as the perceived mood, meanings expressed in a figurative sense as well as comprehended ethical and cultural nuances.

In the context of business consulting, when discussing communication and mutual understanding of communicators, the issue of communication efficiency is inevitable.

The information sent with the use of effective communication is coded in such a way that it is understood by the recipient as intended by the sender of the information. One of the most common problems encountered both in day-to-day communication and in the process of business consulting arises when the communicating parties do not understand each other. Such a situation arises when the information being sent is misrepresented, the sender of the information is unable to express him/herself properly, and in this situation the recipient of the information is unable to understand it properly. It is because of these factors that problems of non-communication or ambiguity arise. Therefore, **in both general communication and business communication, the skills of communicators are crucial**.

Communication skills. General approach

The exchange of information takes place through verbal and non-verbal communication (Hill et at., 2007). Researchers recognize that both types of communication are equally important and cover a whole range of skills that communication participants need to have. In turn, according to the form of transmission, **verbal communication can be spoken and written** (Nauckūnaitė, 2003). According to A. Kaul (2015), *verbal and non-verbal information must be adequate to each other* because if the verbal information provided is "denied" by the body or eye movements, it can impair successful communication. Adequate nonverbal communication can help to read the mood and emotions of the other communication participant during the conversation: sometimes the things a person shows, although not spoken orally, are just as important as what was said. According to A. Mehrabian (2017) nonverbal communication can, in a sense, be treated as "communication with feelings" as it transmits more than 80 per cent of all information.

J. Adair (2003a) distinguishes the following communication skills: **active listening, purposeful reading, writing, one-on-one interview skills, speaking and presentation skills, meeting management skills, communication skills necessary in a specific organization or communication relationship.** Active listening and interview/counselling skills are also emphasized by M. McKay, M. Davis and P. Fanning (2009), B. Townsend Hall (2007) and others. B. Townsend Hall (2007), J. Fiske (1990), and A. Gregory (2010) argue that communication is not possible without feedback. In business communication, feedback skills play an essential role. A. Hill, J. Watson, D. Riversand, M. Joyce (2007) emphasize that in communication **reflection skills** of both sides of communication are equally important. Self-interaction (Reflexion) enables the human being to develop the self, to define and interpret their world and to organize actions based on such interpretations.

In summary, the skills discussed above are verbal oral and written communication skills, as their primary form is words. According to A. Kaul (2015), **oral**

communication includes *interview/consultation, speaking, presentation, feedback, meeting management and active listening skills.* **Written communication** involves *reading* and *writing* (e.g. business correspondence, etc.). Reflection can be both oral and written.

Skills of verbal spoken communication

J. Adair (2003a), M. McKay, M. Davis, P. Fanning (2009) and other researchers single out **interview skills** as one of the vital communication skills. However, according to A.N. Turner (1982), **an interview as a method of verbal communication has many features in common with the method of counselling**, which is used much more frequently in the communication of business consultants and mentees. In analysing the above methods, we must emphasize the **skills of rational and reasoned arguing and questioning.** According to J. Adair (2003a), the ability to argue is probably the most crucial management and leadership skill and can be applied both in interviews/counselling as well as other situations. According to the researcher, the ability to argue can be an instrumental means of communication to "throw out" ideas, to find solutions to problems.

Disputing is a process during which solutions, their alternatives and arguments "for" and "against" are discussed and sought. A. Kaul (2015) states that in arguing it is essential to maintain an impersonal tone of the conversation, to avoid deviations, to challenge assumptions. Disputes often select certain cases and try to prove their correctness. According to the scientist, this is one of the biggest mistakes of any dispute, because it is usually based on arguments that are favourable and convenient for the person in argument. Meanwhile, other unfavourable or opposing arguments are simply ignored.

Arguments using statistics can also dictate erroneous assumptions, as it is often unclear whether aggregate data can be appropriately extracted from large data flows. According to Adair (2003a), for example, if 3,986 people in Boston now choose brand products for breakfast rather than corn buns, can it be concluded that all Americans do so? In this respect, statistics can be biased. Therefore, in order to make the best possible use of statistics as a source of data, it is necessary to be able to distinguish fact from opinion when presented together clearly.

The ability to ask appropriate questions is a critical skill during interviews and consulting. Questions are listening tools. A consultation or interview consists of asking "correct" questions of different types (closed, open-ended, research, etc.) at the right time. Questions, according to M. McKay, M. Davis, P. Fanning (2009), help to understand the situation better, maintain dialogue, allow to check if what is being said is understood correctly, reveal oneself (e.g. a counsellor) and help to reveal the other communicating part. Most communication researchers acknowledge that there are some limitations to using different types of questions, for instance, the closed

ones require a simple "yes" or "no" answer and significantly limit communication. In contrast, open-ended questions require a comprehensive answer and are more conducive to communication. Research questions are profound, but can "knock the interviewer out". Business consulting professionals need to be aware of the latter limitations and be able to apply them responsibly.

When speaking about **listening skills**, V. Baršauskienė (2002) states that listening is one of the most important and complex skills that need to be acquired in order to learn to communicate effectively. *Listening* is an *attentive, sincere commitment to the communication process*. An essential part of this skill is the **skill of attentiveness**, which strengthens communication, improves understanding. It can be demonstrated by voice (e.g. questioning) and body language.

Listening to and understanding, as B. Townsend Hall (2007) observes, is essential for effective communication. M. McKay, M. Davis, P. Fanning (2009) argue that not listening is "dangerous" because much of the essential information is lost. Therefore, to understand why people do certain things, one needs to learn to "read their minds", to understand what they feel, how they say one word or another. Researchers emphasize that a person who has mastered the skill of good listening can distance him/herself from prejudices, beliefs, personal anxiety, interests. A good listener is usually valued well, listened to by those who interact with him/her.

The work of M. McKay, M. Davis, P. Fanning (2009) mentioned above emphasizes that listening must be effective. The authors argue that such listening must be active, empathetic, open, understanding the other party. According to J. Adair (2003b), good listening is when the listener closely observes the interlocutor as he/she speaks, is interested in him/her and tries to find a mutual interest, believes that everyone has something valuable that can teach the other, does not judge the interlocutor's personality, but focuses on what he/she knows, is curious about people, ideas, encourages the speaker (with nods or eye contact), takes notes, knows his/her attitudes, prejudices and can control them, is patient with non-communicative, poor communicators, has a tolerant attitude towards other people's views. The scholar, as mentioned earlier, also emphasizes that good listening must be active and be characterized by a willingness to listen, a clear hearing of the message, clarification of the meaning that the interlocutor wants to convey, and not just his/her interpretation, the presentation of an appropriate answer. J. Adair (2003b) emphasizes that, when listening actively, the listener must be prepared to ask questions, weigh evidence, observe own assumptions, listen "between the lines" (i.e. hear what is not said), observe such nonverbal elements as facial expression, tone, posture, physical gestures etc.

When discussing **speaking and presentation skills**, J. Adair (2003b) emphasizes skills of effective information transmission, i.e. the ability to convey the necessary information in a clear, consistent manner, based on examples. The researcher states that the transparent transmission of a message is essential in communication and it means expressing oneself clearly in a way that aids understanding

and overcomes any physical inhibitions (speaking or writing clearly or using the right medium).

E. Rimkutė (2007) states that communication researchers, explaining why some speakers are persuasive and others are not, concluded that listeners accept the speaker's ideas for two reasons: either they are persuaded by the speaker's arguments or emotionally affected by thought expression and the speech itself. J. Adair (2003a) emphasizes that effective speaking must be clear, simple, vivid, natural, enthusiastic, focused on the interlocutor, the information that needs to be provided.

Presentations are ideas, concepts, insights that are talked about or shared with a group or audience (Kaul, 2005). Presentation skills are required when certain information needs to be presented orally or in writing. A. Kaul (2005) states that an effective presentation must have clear goals, must be planned and prepared in advance, it must use visual aids, conclusions; the presentation must assess whether it involves the audience/interlocutor, responds to the goals. During the oral presentation, the language of the speaker's body plays an important role.

One of the essential principles of effective communication, according to B. Townsend Hall (2007), is to get the right **feedback** because merely transmitting information is the wrong position for communication – communication is a two-way process. As J. Fiske (1990) argues, **feedback** is the transmission of a recipient's response to the sender of that information, allowing them to adapt to the needs and responses of the interlocutor. During face-to-face communication, feedback is particularly important because the desired information can be transmitted by voice and received by the eye, i.e. by observing the reaction of another person. Thanks to such feedback, according to the said researcher, the recipient of the information feels involved in the communication. When we realize that the communicator takes our reactions into account, we are more likely to agree. Furthermore, when we cannot express our response, frustration accumulates and it can become so great that the content of the message is almost completely lost. According to J. Fiske, feedback increases the effectiveness of the message.

V. Baršauskienė (2002) states that maintaining feedback – paraphrasing, asking "Have I understood you correctly?" is a vital communication skill. It is especially significant that the same words said by the interlocutor are not automatically repeated in the speech, but paraphrased to show that what the interlocutor said was understood. According to A. Gregory (2010), one way to maintain long-term relationships with customers is to maintain open communication, i.e. ask for their feedback, a contribution to how things are going and how they feel about the service being provided.

Feedback is essential during communication because it helps the sender to make any necessary adjustments so that the message is correctly received. Positive feedback indicates the receiver has received and understood the message. Negative feedback indicates that the receiver either has not received the message or has not understood its content.

Written communication skills

Written communication is the most formal type of communication that is not as interactive as spoken communication. However, it is very closely related to verbal communication and is an integral part of business consulting. According to Z. Nauckūnaitė (2003), the boundaries between oral and written communication are difficult to define because any message (information) can be either written or conveyed in a living word: spoken language can be recorded in graphical (written) form, and written text can be read, i.e. conveyed in an audio form.

A. Kaul (2015) notes that written forms of communication are diverse – reports, illustrations, memos, letters, emails, websites, social media and more. V. Baršauskienė (2002) also distinguishes such forms as reports, various articles, messages, reviews. According to the scientist, as mentioned earlier, the comprehensibility and effectiveness of a written text are determined by properly chosen words, the length of the sentence and its place in the text, the volume of the text.

J. Adair (2003a) argues that the structure, layout, content, style, and tone of a written text are important in written communication. Writing should be understood in the same way as talking to a person, the only difference its being on paper or in cyberspace. In written communication, according to the researcher mentioned above, six principles of good conversational communication are applied: clarity, planning, simplicity, brightness, naturalness, brevity. For example, when writing a business letter, it is worth preparing an initial draft to make sure the message is clear, is written in the right style and tone, using the most appropriate words and phrases, with no grammatical errors, the text layout is appealing.

J. Adair (2003a) emphasizes that when writing a report that needs to make an impact, several important issues need to be considered, such as: the report should have an introduction, objectives, a title, clear presentation logic, content based on sources, facts, examples, conclusions, and recommendations. Illustrations, diagrams, photographs and other visual information must be included in the text of the report.

According to B. Townsend Hall (2007), reports must use accurate, objective data, clearly identify and address the problem so that the detail does not "obscure" the critical issue. It is also important whether the report is not offensive, whether a non-technical person can understand it, or whether the decision to be taken is indicated.

Purposeful reading skills, according to J. Adair (2003b), are listening in action. A good reader should examine what material has to be read, evaluate how and to what extent it relates to a particular job, role, aspirations, decide how to deal with specific information read.

As M. Daneman (1991) observes, different people have different reading skills that depend on their cognitive structures and processes. Reading skills, on the other hand, are one of the most complex skills, the use of which in a technological environment acquires new nuances. H. Kucukoglu (2013) states that the reader inevitably

encounters two "realities" – the one that is visible in the text and the one that is hidden "between the lines". Therefore, good reading skills are characterized by in-depth, critical analysis of the text, having a reading goal, searching for connections, visualization, drawing conclusions and generalizations, asking questions etc.

It can be stated that the appropriate content, style, tone of written communication helps to ensure that the message is conveyed and understood. Therefore, it must be simple, straightforward, natural, concise, polite.

Attitudes of communicators as a factor determining communication skills

A. Aleksandravičius, S. Valauskienė (2014) state **that communication culture skills, personal qualities and the professionalism of a consultant** also play an essential role in business consulting. Therefore, it can be said that the skills of communicators are part of a broader concept – "competence" – which, together with skills, includes the knowledge and attitudes of the communicator.

According to J. Fiske (1990), the **prejudices of the communicators, the willingness to communicate influence** the communication because people of different cultures, experiences and education perceive reality differently. Therefore, perception is not just a psychological process. It is also a cultural thing. Our perception and understanding of reality are as specific to our culture as our language is. It is in this sense that we speak of reality as a social construct that inevitably shapes our attitudes. Individuals of different educational and cultural contexts or levels perceive, interpret and communicate the same phenomena or problems differently.

The above thoughts of J. Fiske (1990) are supported by J. Almonaitienė (2002). The researcher says that many studies confirm that the more similarities there are between the communicating people – origin, education, political, religious, ethnic interests, tastes, personality traits, etc., the more attractive they are to each other, the more successful their communication is. It is difficult to determine how many similar attitudes or values should be adhered to by communicators, but an essential factor is thought to be the relationship and importance of similar attitudes. It is not suitable for a person to support another person in many areas other than the one that is one of the most important in his or her life.

J. Almonaitienė (2002) emphasizes that the success of communication depends in no small extent on personal attitudes, values, attitudes towards others. When we perceive other people, we subconsciously select only a part of the available information. Which part it is, i.e. which information we perceive and which we do not, depends on our interests, attitudes, motives, etc. We usually see what we want to see – what confirms the preconceived notions.

Research results (Hill et al., 2007) show that communication is more effective and the likelihood of mutual understanding is higher when there is a high degree

of sharing, i.e. when the areas of communication of the communicators overlap, when culture, language, values and experiences are shared. Besides, participants sharing their experience can easily "step into the others' shoes" – i.e. empathize and thus increase the effectiveness of interactions between equal individuals who tend to give and receive.

The analysis performed in the first part allows to state that good non-verbal and verbal communication skills of communicators (active listening, asking questions, constructive arguing, speaking and presenting, feedback, etc.) and written communication skills determine good interpersonal understanding, communication, help to achieve the set goals more effectively.

Characteristics of communication skills of mentors and mentees: expression of skills and benefits for mentoring

Open communication is one of the most critical aspects in developing the interpersonal and professional trust of mentors and mentees. Supportiveness, personal engagement, well-chosen words, confidence, integrity, and credibility are integral aspects to consider when a mentor communicates with a mentee. Communication can be a challenge at any point in the mentor-mentee relationship. How mentors communicate with mentees is fundamental to the mentoring relationship (Cho et al., 2011; Phillips-Jones, 2003). Effective communication allows for better understanding of a person or situation, helps to reduce differences, build trust and respect and create an environment where creative ideas, problem-solving, support and concern thrive. Effective communication occurs through verbal channels, such as meetings, phone calls and web-based conferencing. Other types of communication include digital or handwritten methods, such as email, letters and social media technology, e.g. wikis, blogs, forums and instant messaging. Both in mentor-mentee verbal and written communication, specific interpersonal and personal communication skills are essential. Interpersonal communication skills include verbal communication, non-verbal communication, and written communication. Personal communication skills are the skills to present oneself, including personal appearance and personal presentation (Haddon, 1999). The most critical communication skills in mentoring are:
- verbal communication (counselling/interview) skills: active listening, emotional perception, stress management, ability to ask questions and formulate sentences, get feedback;
- non-verbal communication: tone and pitch of voice, body language, gestures;
- written communication skills: clarity, consciousness, completeness, concreteness, courteousness, correctness, consideration.

Verbal communication skills to ensure effective communication between mentors and mentees

Verbal communication is a component of most mentoring activities, which include one-on-one sessions, meetings between a team of mentors and a team of mentees, email or phone conferences, or training sessions between mentors and mentees. When mentoring, effective communication involves more than just providing information or giving advice. It requires asking questions, listening carefully, trying to understand a mentee's concerns or needs, demonstrating a caring attitude, remaining open-minded, and helping to solve problems. There are many communication skills that mentors can utilize to effectively communicate with mentees, including the following (I-TECH Clinical Mentoring Toolkit, etc.):

Active listening is an essential mentoring skill. Listening is the mentor's most potent tool for developing relationships. Being listened to makes someone feel valued, influential and respected. Active listening involves forgoing all other activities for the time being and giving full attention to the act of listening to ensure that a mentor/mentee understands the speaker's intent as well as feelings behind the speaker's words. Active listening is not nagging, cajoling, reminding, threatening, criticizing, questioning, advising, evaluating, probing, judging or ridiculing. Active listening requires the listener to hear the words and identify the feelings associated with the words. Mentors should be able to understand mentees from their point of view.

Various mentoring handbooks/guidebooks (High School Teen Mentoring Handbook; I-TECH Clinical Mentoring Toolkit, etc.) emphasize that the mentor must master the following active listening techniques during counselling/interviews: paraphrasing, probing, reflecting, clarifying, summarizing, informing, reinforcing, and self-disclosing. These techniques are relevant also for mentees. Table 3.1 provides the necessary active listening techniques to enable the mentor and mentees to be active and effective listeners.

Emotional perception and stress/conflict management. The ability of emotional perception for both the mentor and the mentee can be defined as emotional self-perception (ability to analyse and perceive one's feelings, emotions, intuition) and emotional perception of others (ability to analyse and perceive others' feelings, emotions). The mentor must show that the feelings of the mentee are understandable. In this case, the ability to be in another person's shoes is shown, and the situation is assessed from his/her point of view. By delving into feelings, tension is reduced, and communication is improved. In order to prevent interpersonal relationships from turning into a conflict, the mentor should behave naturally, be able to share feelings appropriately, ensure that words correspond to body language, not try to take the position of the defender, be him/herself and not demonstrate being superior to the mentee. The mentor must express respect for the mentee. Successful mentors and mentees are emotionally self-aware and they self-regulate, understand how their mood affects the nature of their influence on their colleagues, and they have empathy, compassion

and a genuine interest in promoting others. Kram (1985) identified two significant functions for mentors: a "career-related function", which includes providing feedback and challenging assignments, as well as facilitating and developing new skills, and a "psychosocial" function, which includes providing support, role modelling and encouragement. The "psychosocial" function is critical in mentors and mentees' communication as well because social support refers to beneficial interpersonal relationships that aid in preventing or reducing stress. House (1981) identified four types of social support: emotional support (e.g. esteem, trust, concern), appraisal support (e.g. affirmation, feedback), informational support (e.g. advice, suggestions, directives and information) and instrumental support (e.g. money, labour and time). Effective mentoring depends on mutual exchange between the mentor and the mentee that is built on trust and openness and is sustained for as long as the mentoring relationship is needed. Emotional engagement of both the mentor and the mentee is necessary for a successful relationship, and the mentoring relationship "is inherently reciprocal and interdependent" (Opengart & Bierema, 2015). Without trust, the mentee will not be able to be frank, open and receive guidance. Mentors need to be able to appraise their mentees and understand their emotions accurately. Table 3.2 illustrates mentoring relationships based on emotional perception and stress/conflict management skills.

TABLE 3.1. Active Listening Techniques to be Employed by Mentors and Mentees during Business Consulting and Their Benefits (according to Racioppi, 2019)

Active listening techniques needed by a mentor	Active listening techniques needed by a mentee
• focusing on the interlocutor; • showing that one is listening; • checking that one understands the speaker correctly; • paraphrasing the thoughts expressed by the interlocutor; • reflection of the speaker's feelings; • the ability not to interrupt, not to change the subject of the conversation, to allow the interlocutor to complete; • regulating and restricting one's speech; • the ability not to advise the unsolicited.	• showing that one is listening; • the ability to ask questions in order to understand better and clarify certain things; • the ability to be open to new information; • regulating and restricting one's speech; • checking that one understands the speaker correctly.
Benefits of active listening skills to a mentor	**Benefits of the active listening ability to a mentee**
• allows the mentor to understand the information provided by the mentee before submitting his/her own; • allows to find out the essence of the mentee's problem, to gather as many facts about the object of counselling as possible	• allows the mentee to feel that the mentor understands what he or she is saying; • the mentee feels respected; • allows the mentee to feel that his/her feelings about the topic being counselled are understood.

TABLE 3.2. Emotional Perception and Stress/Conflict Management Skills and their Benefits (according to Opengart & Bierema, 2015)

Benefits of emotional awareness and stress/conflict management skills for a mentor	Benefits of emotional awareness and stress/conflict management skills for a mentee
Mentors are more able to: • use self-awareness, • connect with a mentee, • handle the intensity of the relationship, • accurately assess feelings of a mentee, • encourage a mentee's reflection on actions, • utilize personal emotions and draw on them to be an effective mentor, • challenge a mentee to deal with negative emotions, • help a mentee with character development, • express empathy for a mentee, • exhibit good role modelling, • urge a mentee to reflect on learning, manage emotions.	Mentees are more able to: • use self-awareness and understand emotions of themselves and others, • be open and honest, • listen and reflect, • respect the advice of a mentor and ask for help, • manage emotions and stress. Mentees know that a mentor understands how they feel and that their feelings are respected and valued.

Skills to ask questions and formulate sentences. Questioning is fundamental to successful communication and is the key to gaining more information and without it, interpersonal communications can fail. Being able to formulate and ask the right questions is a crucial skill for an effective mentor. An appropriately phrased question can unlock new ideas, challenge limiting assumptions and bring about new insights. Proper questions in mentoring are simple and generally require open-ended responses (i.e. not closed questions requiring yes/no responses). However, to get the most out of a mentorship, mentees need to be clear, focused and may even need to encourage a mentor in their role. The easiest way to accomplish this is by asking the right questions. In the communication process between a mentor and a mentee, it is essential to be able to formulate appropriate questions not only for each other but also to formulate questions for themselves. Table 3.3 presents the benefits of this ability for effective mentor-mentee communication separately.

Skills to give and receive feedback. Feedback is one of the most important aspects of any mentoring relationship, but it is also one of the trickiest to get right. According to Hattie and Timperley (2005), feedback provides a systematic approach to developing better relationships, learning and improving performance and staying on track and achieving goals. Feedback is most effective when it follows active listening. Feedback is a useful way that mentors can demonstrate they have been listening and check they have understood what the mentee is saying by either summarising (which is where the mentor repeats a shortened version of what has been said using the mentee's own words) or paraphrasing (which is where the mentor uses his/her own words to convey the sense of what the mentee has said). Feedback must be balanced and constructive. Feedback is particularly useful when it is based on evidence and linked to the mentee's

strengths. Beginning with evidence makes the feedback more believable and linking the evidence to strengths builds the mentee's confidence.

TABLE 3.3. Benefits of the Skill to Ask the Right Questions in Communication of Mentors and Mentees (according to Racioppi, 2019)

Benefits of the skill to ask the right questions for a mentor	Benefits of the skill to ask the right questions for a mentee
• enables the mentee to expand the idea he/she has already expressed; • properly asked questions allow to control the content of the conversation; • mentors gain new insights into successful interactions not just with their mentees, but also with their team members, colleagues and senior leadership; • being able to ask the right questions at the right time and in the right way will help a mentor talk about what is going on and help in guiding a conversation in the required direction.	• asking appropriate open-ended questions leaves some control of the conversation to mentees, allows mentees to direct the conversation in the direction he or she wants to pay more attention to; • mentees stay focused on goals, gain insights into achieving and fine-tuning those goals, learn what skills and behaviour patterns need adjusting and discover pathways for interacting with key decision-makers; • open questions help to respond without having to be defensive, help in generating ideas as well as in building the relationship.

TABLE 3.4. Benefits of Giving and Receiving Feedback in Mentors and Mentees' Communication (according to Anderson et al., 2012)

Benefits of giving and receiving feedback for a mentor	Benefits of giving and receiving feedback for a mentee
• receiving feedback allows us to know what is working for mentees, and where they need more support; • feedback from mentees demonstrates their belief that discussions make an essential contribution to later success; • giving feedback to the mentor on what is working or not working in the mentoring relationship.	• helping mentees discover their talents and potential strengths; • improving self-awareness; • enhancing self-esteem; • raising morale; • encouraging people to want to learn; • offering reassurance; • motivation; • improving individual performance; • can help mentees identify evidence of improvement through changing practice

Non-verbal communication skills to ensure effective communication between mentor and mentee

Mentors communicate with mentees when they are speaking and when they are not speaking. Much of human communication is non-verbal, examples of positive or open body language include eye contact (depending on the culture), open or relaxed posture,

nodding or other affirmation, pleasant facial expressions. Non-verbal messages play an influential role in the communication process. Body language plays a vital role in active listening. The mentor's body language should show interest and a willingness to listen. Non-verbal communication has more impact than words alone, so a facial expression, eye contact, non-verbal prompts (e.g. head nodding) and body posture (leaning slightly towards the mentee, showing interest) will contribute towards building upon the professional relationship and improving discussions.

TABLE 3.5. Benefits of Non-verbal Communication Skills in Mentors and Mentees' Communication (according to Pfund et al., 2013)

Benefits of non-verbal communication skills for a mentor	Benefits of non-verbal communication skills for a mentee
• helps to create a better image of oneself; • understanding the nonverbal cues of the mentee will help the mentor communicate with him/her more effectively; • helps to discover mentees' true feelings towards their mentor and about what the mentor is saying.	• helps to create a better image of oneself; • the mentee uses positive body language and non-verbal signals to demonstrate openness and undivided attention.

Written communication skills that ensure effective communication between the mentor and the mentee

Written communication involves any type of message that makes use of the written word. The list of written mentors and mentees' communication is quite long. It includes emails, letters, reports, presentation slides, case studies and other documents. Written communication through email, instant messaging, and other electronic means is strongly discouraged when mentees and mentors are trying to resolve a problem. Written communication can easily be misunderstood and lead to an escalation of the issue. Moreover, dashing off an email in anger or frustration does not allow individuals the time they need to cool down and think through the situation. An essential principle in communication theory is the 7Cs of communication, which was developed by Scott Cutlip and Allen Centre (1952) in the book *Effective Public Relations: clarity, consciousness, completeness, concreteness, courteousness, correctness, consideration.*

Advantages of written communication:
- ensures accuracy and reliability. Verbal communication may be altered or interpreted differently, but the information shall be clearly and unambiguously stated in the written communication;
- responsibilities can be easily assigned;

- it creates the image of a mentor or a mentee;
- the information may be reviewed, adjusted or rewritten before it is transmitted.

Disadvantages of written communication:
- communication is time-consuming;
- a possible late receipt or the message sent does not reach the recipient;
- difficult to express emotions.

Barriers to Effective Communication

Communication barriers negatively affect the efficient flow of information, cooperation between the mentor and the mentee, work efficiency and interpersonal relationships. Communication between mentees and mentors must be based on honesty and professionalism in order to maintain an excellent inner climate. With good relationships, communication with mentees is more sincere. Verbal barriers to communication that should be avoided include the following (Pfund et al., 2013):
- *moralizing* – making judgments about a mentee's behaviour, including calling it right or wrong, or telling him/her what they should or should not do;
- *arguing* – disagreeing with instead of encouraging the mentee;
- *preaching* – telling the mentee what to do in a self-righteous way;
- *storytelling* – relating long-winded personal narratives that are not relevant or helpful to the mentee;
- *blocking communication* – speaking without listening to the mentee's responses, using an aggressive voice, showing impatience, showing annoyance when interrupted, or having an authoritative manner. These behaviours often lead to the mentee feeling down, humiliated, scared, and insecure. As a result, the mentee may remain passive and refrain from asking questions, or distrust the mentor and disregard his or her recommendations;
- *talking too much* – talking so much that the mentee does not have time to express him/herself. As a mentor, it is important not to dominate the interaction.

Examples of nonverbal barriers to communication include shuffling papers, not looking directly at the mentee when he or she is speaking, and allowing interruptions or distractions. These barriers may have consequences for both the mentor and the mentee. They may lead to poor sharing of information, fewer questions being asked by the mentee, difficulty in understanding problems, uncomfortable situations and a lack of motivation on the part of the mentee.

Conclusions

Business consulting activity plays the role of business promotion and contributes to the development of other competencies of a start-up entrepreneur. Quality counselling is one in which relevant content is presented and discussed, and counselling participants make an effective use of verbal and nonverbal communication skills.

In order to develop effective business communication, the mentor and the mentee must have and demonstrate such verbal spoken communication skills: active listening, presenting/asking questions, clear speech (formulation of cohesive sentences), feedback, reflection (emotional perception), constructive disputing, conflict, stress management skills.

In written communication between the mentor and the mentee, it is crucial to follow these principles: clarity, consciousness, completeness, concreteness, courteousness, correctness, consideration. Purposeful reading and reflection skills based on in-depth critical analysis of the text, reading "between the lines", asking questions, forming insights are important in written communication.

Non-verbal communication is very important in business communication as it helps to develop professional relationships and discussions. Therefore, both the mentor and the mentee must have and apply, as appropriate, non-verbal communication skills such as friendly facial expression, eye contact, calm, persuasive tone of a voice and timbre, and an open, encouraging posture to the speaker.

Cultural differences, prejudices and communication barriers of verbal and non-verbal attitudes of communicating business mentors and mentees negatively affect the efficient flow of information, cooperation between the mentor and the mentee, work efficiency and interpersonal relationships. Therefore, it is important that communicators (especially the mentor) have knowledge of possible barriers, are able to identify and manage them.

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CHAPTER 4
Communication models in mentoring – literature review

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Definition of communication

Communication is typically defined as a process of sending and receiving. Such a communication process can be found in many disciplines, ranging from psychology and sociology to management science and even engineering, technology, and artificial intelligence. Consequently, great interest has been shown in finding an idealized communication model (Al-Fedaghi et al., 2009).

Communication can be seen as a mechanism of mutual relations which establishes contacts, as well as a set of all means and methods for transferring information in order to influence the behaviour of people (Naumovski et al., 2017). It can be defined as the transfer of information and its meaning from one individual or group to another individual or group. A key element in this definition is the meaning. Communication has the transfer of meaning as a main objective (Naumovski et al., 2017).

Communication in context of the activities of one organization (products, services, clients, co-workers and so on) is called business communication (BC). BC is a process of generating, transmitting, receiving, and interpreting messages in interpersonal, group, public and mass communication contexts through written and nonverbal formats. This type of communication is aimed towards organizing activities that will lead the members of the company to making a profit. Effective business communication is the key to planning, leading, organizing and controlling resources of organizations to achieve their objectives, and may be formal or informal in nature (Hynes, 2005; Gramatnikovski et al., 2015).

Organizational communication (also in business organization) is done inside and outside the organization. Internal communication targets internal members of the organization, including superiors, collaborators and subordinates (Reka & Borza, 2012). With the use of internal communication the staff exchanges information, establishes relationships, forms a system of values, creates an organizational culture,

harmonizes activities, collaborates for the achievement of goals and develops formal and informal networks (Berger, 2009 cited in: Reka & Borza, 2012). Internal communication includes: communication of strategies, plans, corporate visions, guiding principles, corporate culture, shared values, exchange of ideas, employee motivation etc. (Reka & Borza, 2012). External communication aims at building connections with customers, stakeholders, institutions, (government) agencies, administrative offices or other organizations. This kind of communication includes: marketing, branding, advertising, customer relations, selling, media relations, public relations, business dialogues etc. (Reka & Borza, 2012).

The performance of an organization depends upon the successful communication inside the organization at various levels and outside the organization with business partners, government agencies and customers (Luthra & Dahiya, 2015). Only when organizations are fully aware of the principles of effective communication, will they be able to accomplish their goals and enhance their performance (Reka & Borza 2012).

Business communication is a process of transferring information and understanding between different parts and people of a business organization. It contains various modes and media involved in communication interchanges (Scheming & Mason, 2013).

Communicative skills help humans to reach out to one another or to confront events that challenge their flexibility, integrity, expressiveness and critical thinking skills (Mutuku & Mathooko 2014). Communication is also the most important skill for success in business. Studies show that people in organizations generally spend over 75 percent of their time in interpersonal communication (Carroll, 2009: ix, cited in: Scheming & Mason, 2013).

Types of communication

We can divide different types of communication in an organization, including (Mutuku & Mathooko, 2014):
- interpersonal communication – interaction with another person,
- intrapersonal communication – interaction with oneself, or to reason with or evaluate oneself,
- group communication – the process of interacting with a limited number of others, work to share information, develop ideas, make decisions, solve problems, offer support, or have fun,
- mass communication – communicating to a large number of people using media (television, newspaper, internet, radio),
- online or machine assisted communication deals with communicating through the use of online software that is programmed to interact with browsers or users.

The most common context of a business and professional relationship is interpersonal communication, which is defined as an interaction in which one person sends a message to another using a specific communication channel (Weiten et al., 2008). Interpersonal communication skills are obviously the foundation of success in business (Scheming & Mason, 2013).

Success in business depends on a person's ability to communicate effectively, wherein effective communication combines verbal and nonverbal forms (Scheming & Mason 2013). Verbal communication includes oral and written communication between people and involves the use of words in speaking, writing, reading and listening (Troester & Mester, 2007; Scheming & Mason, 2013). Any form of communication that does not specifically use words is considered nonverbal (Kudesia & Elfenbein, 2013, p. 806). To make this subject more tangible and accessible, Kudesia and Elfenbein (2013, p. 807) list primary components of nonverbal communication from relevant literature (Table 4.1).

TABLE 4.1. **7 Key Components of Nonverbal Communication (Kudesia & Elfenbein, p.807)**

Appearance
Movement
Facial Behaviour
Vocal Behaviour
Space
Touch
Time

Non-verbal communication (using other mediums such as body signals) includes many of human body signs. Nonverbal "language" offers a lot of important means, such as: human posture, dress, accessories, gestures, eye contact, facial expressions, smile, voice intonation, laughter, eye contact, eye signs, distance between the communicators, touch, clap, dance, and physiological responses – sweating palms or forehead, paleness, acute facial and neck redness and others (Peleckis et al., 2015).

Albert Mehrabian, a pioneer of body language researches, found that 7% of the information is conveyed by words, 38% by voice features, and about 55% of the information is conveyed by non-verbal language (Mehrabian, 2009).

In a great variety of situations, communicators can more easily achieve their purpose by improving the accuracy and efficiency of their nonverbal communicationa. Nonverbal communication has a big significance for six reasons. First, nonverbal factors are the major determinants of meaning in the interpersonal context. Second, feelings and emotions are more accurately revealed by nonverbal than verbal means. Third, a nonverbal part of communication conveys meanings and intentions that are relatively free of deception and distortion. Fourth, nonverbal cues play a metacommunicative function that is indispensable in attaining high-quality communication. Fifth,

nonverbal cues represent a much more efficient means of communicating than verbal cues. Sixth, nonverbal cues represent the most suitable vehicle for suggestion (Leathers & Eaves, 2016, p. 5-9). Nonverbal messages can support or interfere with verbal messages which are delivered by people (Scheming & Mason, 2013).

Channels of communication

A communication channel is the technical (or formal) side of the communication process that allows us to transfer information from the sender to the receiver and vice versa. A communication channel includes all the means for the creation and acceptance of a message, i.e. signs, language (including body language), codes, technical devices etc. (Sanina et al., 2017). Generally, we can distinguish written, oral, visual and electronic channels of communication. It is worth stressing that visual communication skills garner little attention within the business communication research, yet they may hold increasing importance among business communication instructors (Coffelt et al., 2016).

Another name of a communication channel is a communication method. It means systematic procedure that includes verbal, nonverbal, paraverbal and written communication. Communication methods include various approaches from attitude, tones, words, methods of communication (verbal, written, or technology) and specific techniques that will improve the likelihood of effective communication between the source and the receiver (Kotter, 1996).

A channel is a means of communication that an organization can either select to use or can decide not to use. A particular channel could be a preferred option in certain situations or totally ignored in other circumstances. Channels can be used separately or combined with each other (Sanina et al., 2017).

Today, organizations rarely use a single communication channel for the transmission of their messages. Studies show that combinations of two or more channels are rather frequent, and that these combinations can occur either sequentially or simultaneously (Sanina et al., 2017). Ruppel and Burke (2014) state that there are a lot of situations with complementarity that use different communication channels, like telephone, text messaging and e-mail, face-to-face communication and Facebook.

The principal characteristics for understanding various communication channels are as follows (Sanina et al., 2017):

- reliability – a measure of certainty that the channel will function, meaning the likelihood that the communicative content (i.e. feedback or information) will be delivered,
- speed – how fast it is possible to obtain a result from communication, meaning either that information is delivered or a response is received,

- effectiveness – choosing the right channel or a combination of channels to solve a particular problem and to increase organizational development.

The communication process is successful when the receiver understands the message as intended by the sender. This process sounds simple but it is not always achieved in business because of various reasons, for example: incorrect encoding and decoding of the message, interfering messages and an incorrect choice of the communication channel (Scheming & Mason, 2013).

Communication problems and barriers

Communications barriers are defined as obstacles and factors which disturb the communication process and, therefore, make communication incomplete and ineffective (Scheming & Mason, 2013).

Barriers to communication can be: external to participants, intrapersonal and interpersonal (Pearce et al., 1984, cited in: Moore, 2013, p. ,12-14). External barriers include, among others: organizational structure (hierarchical versus horizontal) and available technology. Intrapersonal ones make up such issues as: personality, level of knowledge and emotional state. Interpersonal obstacles include perceived credibility of the sender by the receiver. Other communication barriers can be associated with: channel choice (matching the medium to message goals) and lack of feedback (the sender depends on feedback to judge the success of communication) (Moore, 2013, p. 14).

Communication obstacle or barriers are any factors that affect the success of the communication process per se. Barriers of essential significance are the following (Hamilton, 2008; Krizan et al., 2008; Naumovski et al., 2017):
- the selection of words that are too heavy, too technical or too easy for the recipient,
- grammar, sentence structure, punctuation and spelling,
- physical form of the message,
- personal appearance of the sender,
- environmental factors,
- ability of the recipient,
- ineffective listening skills,
- other communication barriers: lack of interest, lack of knowledge, different cultural perceptions, linguistic difficulties, biases and partiality etc.

Communication barriers lead to miscommunication and cause problems in the course of this process, such as: causing defensive reactions, cutting off further communication, diminishing chances to identify options and resulting confusion or misunderstanding (Pancrazio & Pancrazio, 1981, cited in Scheming & Mason, 2013).

Selected models of communication

A communication model is an idealized systematic representation of the communication process. Such models serve as standardization tools, and they provide the means to (Al-Fedaghi et al., 2009):

- question and interpret actual communication systems that are diverse in their nature and purpose,
- furnish order and structure to multifaceted communication events, and
- lead to insights into hypothetical ideas and relationships involved in communication.

Communication models can be divided into one-way and multi-shift. One-way models are mostly traditional. In the traditional communication process, the sender relays a message through the channel to the receiver. Multidirectional communication models are those where one unit becomes the creator and the sender of messages (Ungerman & Myslivcová, 2014).

The channels, or means by which the sender transmits a message to the receiver, vary depending on the communication purpose, the intended receiver, and the type of message. Traditional communication channels include print, TV, broadcast, outdoor or personal (Kotler & Lee, 2008). New forms of communication consist of mobile, buzz, viral, guerrilla and engagement marketing.

The first model of communication was introduced by Shannon and Weaver in the middle of the last century. It was particularly designed to develop effective communication between the sender and the receiver. This is, however, a model of signal processing.

The Shannon (1948) and Weaver model did not include content that was transferred. The authors found factors which affect the communication process called "Noise", but the model also deals with various concepts like information source, transmitter, channel, receiver, information destination, encode and decode – Figure 4.1.

In this model the sender is the originator of the message or the information source selects the desired message. The Encoder is the transmitter which converts the message into signals (Shannon, 1948).
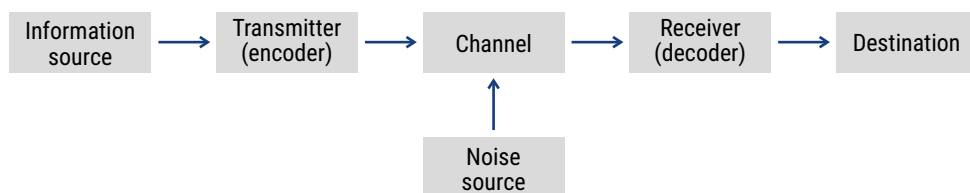
FIGURE 4.1. **Shannon and Weaver's Model of Communication (Shannon, 1948)**

In Shannon and Weaver's model, the communication system is understood as a system of the type indicated schematically in Figure 4.1, which consists of essentially five parts:

- The information source which produces a message or a sequence of messages to be communicated to the receiving terminal.
- The transmitter which operates on the message in some way to produce a signal suitable for transmission over the channel.
- The channel is merely the medium used to transmit the signal from the transmitter to the receiver.
- The receiver ordinarily performs the inverse operation of that done by the transmitter, reconstructing the message from the signal.
- The destination is the person (or thing) for whom the message is intended.

Shannon and Weaver's model of communication and its variations are the most common models adopted in many fields. It is called the linear model because of its assumption being that communication is a one -way process, so it suits the emerging technologies at that time such as radio and telegraph. On the other hand, nowadays this model is considered as *a model of flow of information through a medium* as it does not match the new technologies in the field because in the real and modern media, communication is neither unidirectional nor direct multidirectional and mostly indirect. This model is also known as an *objective model* assuming the meaning of the message is understood in the same way by the sender and the receiver (Leeuwis & van den Ban, 2004). If such a model were applied to human communication, "effectively, the model proposes a speaker consisting only of a mind (the source) and a mouth (the transmitter), and a listener consisting only of ears (the receiver) and a mind (the destination). It therefore totally fails to reflect many intermediate cognitive processing stages" (Al-Fedaghi et al., 2009).

Shannon and Weaver's model has influenced all communication models. The authors also introduced a mechanism that accounts for differences between the transmitted and received signals. This has evolved into the current feedback concept.

A new attitude to the communication model was introduced by Schramm as in his Circular Model the author embodied an idea that communication is a circular process by nature. Schramm conceived decoding and encoding as activities maintained simultaneously by the sender and the receiver. He also made provisions for a two-way interchange of messages (Schramm, 1961) – Figure 4.2.

In this model, the encoder is someone who originates and sends the message. The decoder is the one who receives the message and the interpreter could be any person trying to understand and analyse, perceive or interpret. From the starting point of communication to the end, interpretation goes on. This model breaks the traditional sender and receiver models. Each person acts as both the sender and the receiver and hence uses interpretation. Encoding, decoding and interpretation is going

on simultaneously. Semantic noise is a concept introduced here when the sender and the receiver apply different meanings to the same message. It happens mostly because words and phrases are not understandable, so certain words and phrases will lead to deviating from the actual meaning of communication.
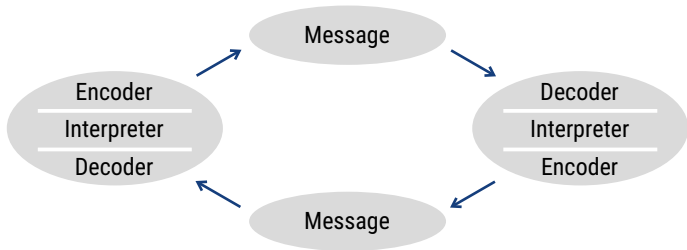
FIGURE 4.2. Schramm's Model of Communication (Schramm, 1961)

The next model of communication deepening model components is Berlo's model of communication. It takes into account different aspects of the message (content, elements, treatment, structure, code) and equalizes both the sender and the receiver. Berlo's model of communication operates on the SMCR pattern (Berlo, 1960). In the SMCR pattern S means Source; M – Message; C – Channel; R – Receiver. The source also called the sender is the one from whom the thought originates – Figure 4.3.

Source	Message	Chanel	Receiver
Common skills	Elements	Seeing	Common skills
Attitudes	Structure	Hearing	Attitudes
Knowledge	Content	Touching	Knowledge
Social system	Treatment	Smelling	Social system
Culture	Code	Tasting	Culture

FIGURE 4.3. Berlo's Model of Communication (Lee, 1983)

The sender transfers the information to the receiver, carefully placing his or her ideas into words. Ideal communication occurs when both the sender and the receiver have common expertise in communication skills, the same attitude, knowledge, social system and culture. These factors play a significant role in the communication process and level of encoding and decoding. Berlo's model differs from Shannon and Weaver's model mostly because it emphasizes the common understanding, which is significant part of communication. Despite the criticism of Berlo's model (the model leaves no place for feedback, there are no barriers, filters or feedback), it has its own preferences. The most important contribution from Berlo can be the idea that meanings

are not in the message, they are in the message users, and therefore communicators must be explored from the perspective of their background (Petersons & Khalimzoda, 2016).

For primary research purposes there was adapted a communication model between small and medium-sized company and its clients using social media created by Ungerman and Myslivcová (2014) – Figure 4.4. That model emphasizes the significance of quality of content on the stage of content creation which is crucial in the mentoring process. Moreover, Ungerman and Myslivcová's model includes the element of social engagement. Selected levels of the social participation concept (Stelzle & Noennig, 2018) are an important component of the mentoring process.
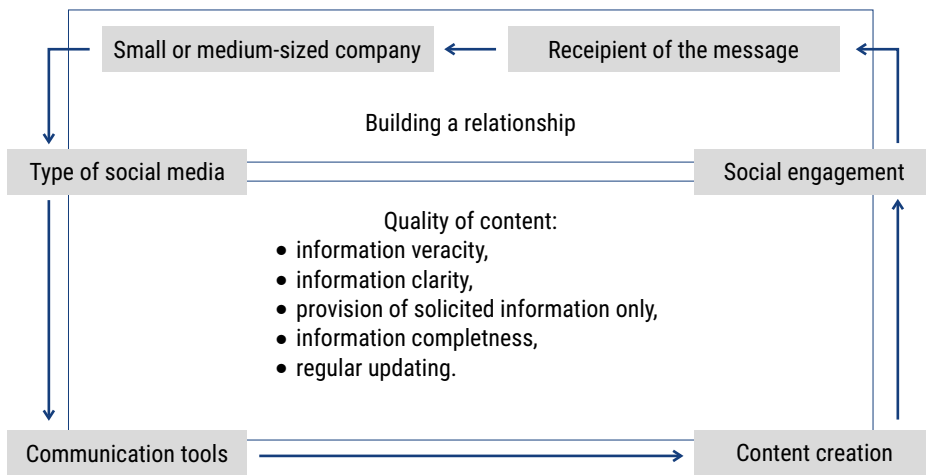
FIGURE 4.4. Ungerman and Myslivcová's Model of Communication (Ungerman & Myslivcová, 2014)

The whole model is based on continuous information circulation. The first stage is a selection of the social media type. At the second stage there is a selection of a communication tool. This factor is very extensive as for its contents.

Content creation forms the third part of the communication model. The authors of the model emphasize two factors significant for the content creation as the factor analysis result. A high-quality message is the first factor, and it has also been the strongest factor of the research. Information content was the second factor. The combination of all factors produced "content creation", which is subject to quality.

Content quality consists of information veracity, information clarity, provision of solicited information only, information completeness and regular updating. At the same time, these attributes are the most important ones, being derived from the research of the communication method. They form a part of the whole model as well since these principles apply to the whole communication process and, therefore, they form the intersection in the model's centre.

Social engagement forms the fourth part of the communication model. It is a supplement added to the message. The authors of the model identified ecology, culture, ethics and sport support as the most important areas of social engagement. At this point, the whole communication circle is closed. However, the process does not end here. This communication model does not have an exactly specified beginning. At the same time, it does not have an ending. If communication was successful, it led to the return contact with the company, which is the best state that could be achieved by the company. Based on such mutual communication, a relationship that leads to acquiring a loyal customer is created.

Communication models in the mentoring network have not been of interest to researchers. Mentoring can be defined as a strategy for developing individuals, both professionally and personally (Farmer, 2005). A mentor is one of a network of developers who provides instrumental, psychosocial, and/or role modeling support on an ongoing basis to a mentee (Ensher et al., 2003). In general, researchers have found that informal mentoring relationships with frequent contact are better than formal relationships, although having any mentor is usually better than not having one at all. Unfortunately, there are a number of barriers that prevent would-be mentees from obtaining a mentor. These prohibitive factors include a lack of available mentors in an industry, profession, or echelon, increasing demands placed on would-be mentors, lack of similarity in attitude or demography, or organizational or geographical boundaries (Allen et al., 1997; Ragins, 1995). One way to overcome these constraints is to participate in mentoring through a variety of communication options. Communication is a key element of mentoring and effective communication is considered as a hallmark of effective mentoring relationships (Farmer, 2005).

The model of communication in mentoring should not only include proper communication channels and tools but principally it should create appropriate content and consider social engagement levels.

Stelzle and Noennig (2018) distinguish five levels of social engagement:
- information – informing the public, supporting the understanding of the problem and solutions;
- consultation – including giving public feedback to the analysis and decisions;
- involvement – working together with the public during the process and giving feedback how the decision was influenced by the public;
- collaboration – working together with the public on every aspect and including public advice and recommendations into the decision to the maximum possible extent;
- empowerment – putting the final decision is the hands of the public.

In the mentoring process the first three levels of social engagement are important – information, consultation and involvement. The forth level – collaboration is understood by the authors of the concept as an element of social participation and in the mentoring process it comes down to a co-decision of the mentor and the mentee in terms of the mentee's personal and professional development.

As a result of the conducted literature analysis, the communication model presented in Figure 4.5 was adopted. It contributed to developing the primary research tool and its elements constituted the basis for the cafeteria of questions.
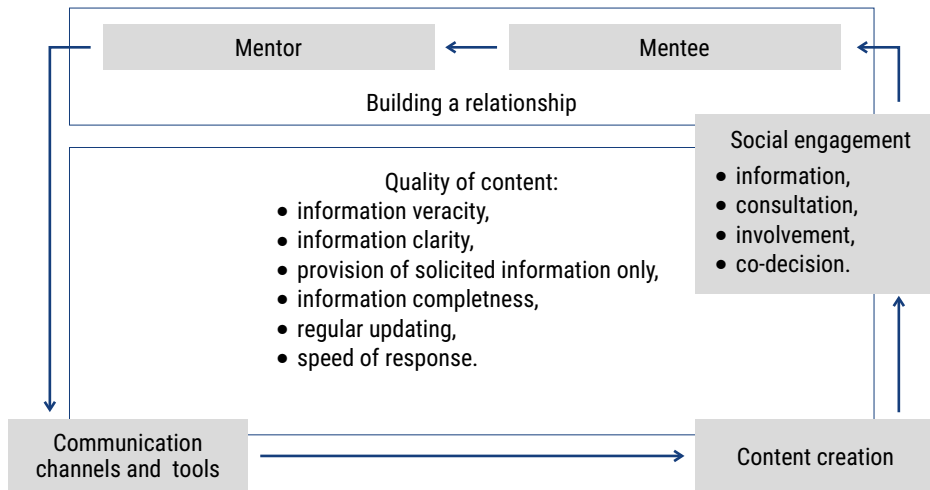

FIGURE 4.5. Model of Communication in Mentoring (own study)

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CHAPTER 5
Mentors and mentees in the digital era

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Introduction

The term mentoring sinks its root in Greek mythology, originating with the goddess of wisdom, Athena (Cheatham, 2010). It refers to Mentor, an older man to whom Odysseus entrusted his son Telemachus, and whose disguise goddess Athena took in order to give advice and guidance to Odysseus and his son. Athena knew that respect for Mentor would facilitate her to achieve her goal.

There is a wide range of definitions of mentoring, from a career sponsor to peer counsellor, but the debate about what actually constitutes mentoring demonstrates the multifaceted nature of this notion (Irby et al., 2020; Mullen & Klimaitis, 2019; Shapira-Lishchinsky & Levy-Gazenfrantz, 2016).

However, the classical view of a mentor is that of someone who facilitates all aspects of the protégé's development.

In Europe, mentoring usually focuses on helping the protégé to develop their high-quality thinking. The mentor "has wisdom and experience, but uses them to help the mentee become courageous and develop their own wisdom rather than to impart knowledge" (Lancer et al., 2016, p. 6).

According to McCarthy [...] *a mentor's focus can be more on the development of employees, exploring with their goals, dreams or ambitions and ways to achieve them, such as undertaking a range of learning and development activities – a form of mentoring common in Europe and becoming more common in North America* (McCarthy, 2014, p. 7).

Mentoring is a specific trusting relationship where someone, the mentor, supports the learning progress and empowerment of another person, the mentee or protégé. A good mentor is inherently an educator and shares the idea that learning is a catalyst to growth (Johnson & Ridley, 2018).

Mentoring con be considered as a teaching-learning process, either non-formal or informal. A mentor should support the learning, development, and success of the mentee without pursuing direct benefits. This means that mentoring is a selfless

process where a mentor should find their gratification in the relationship established with the mentee.

The Figure 5.1 highlights the mentoring process.
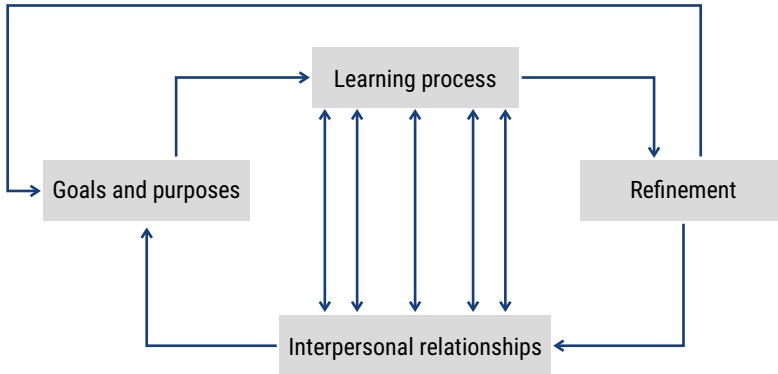
FIGURE 5.1. The mentoring process (own source)

Usually, mentoring includes tutorship and sharing wisdom to foster learning and progress of the mentee.

Practitioners often get confused about the roles of mentors, coaches, learning facilitators, and counsellors. In reality, there are a multitude of concepts that can be associated to the relationship of supporting the professional development of a person, it being a complex and context-sensitive relationship.

Table 5.1 shows various concepts similar to mentoring, whilst Table 5.2 describes the main differences in these roles.

TABLE 5.1. Concepts similar to mentoring (Disch, 2018, p. 438)

Advising: offering suggestions about a course of action or academic program
Advocating: providing personal support of an individual through activities such as connecting them with influential leaders and key networks and nominating them to boards and committees
Coaching: helping a person learn a particular skill or achieve a specific goal
Counselling: professional guidance of an individual through the use of psychologic therapies
Guiding: offering advice along a particular course of action
Role modeling: serving as an example of desired values, behaviours, and attitudes
Sponsoring: an explicit relationship by which a sponsor provides resources and tangible support to a professional colleague
Teaching: a formal, structured process of helping another learn specific content within a given time frame
Tutoring: providing intensive one-on-one teaching to learn specific content or to develop a particular competency

TABLE 5.2. The differences of mentoring, coaching, learning facilitation and counselling (own source)

Role	Relationship to learner	Focal point
Mentor	• Wise counselling • Sharing knowledge and experience gained in a specific professional area	• Supporting an individual or a group to their empowerment and personal development
Coach	• Improving performance in a particular aspect of life/business • Focusing on the solution of a problem	• Improving an individual or a group skills and capabilities to achieve a specific goal
Learning facilitator	• Teaching • Supporting • Guiding	• Using learning methods to enable an individual or a group to acquire knowledge
Counsellor	• Listening to support others	• Using coping strategies and other techniques to help an individual, couple, or family

The UK Mentors Forum (http://www.mentorsforum.co.uk/), a website devoted to mentoring, provides four key elements for the mentor-protégé relationship:
- Coach: show the learner how to carry out a task.
- Facilitate: create opportunities for learners to utilize new skills.
- Counsel: help learners explore consequences of potential decisions.
- Network: refer learners to others when a mentor's experience is insufficient

The mentoring and coaching relationship to learners is slightly different. Mentors elicit less and illustrate, support, and advise more than coaches do.

There is a general consensus that a mentor should provide psychological and emotional support as well as career and instrumental support.

Mentoring is a long-term process based on a trusting and informal relationship between a mentor and a mentee. Whereas, coaching is expected being effective in a short period of time and is based on a more structured and formal approach.

Mentoring is often about the person's professional building up and career development whilst coaching focuses on the person's performance and improvement of specific skills and capabilities.

The first major research into mentoring was conducted by Kram in the early 1980s (Kram, 1983; Kram, 1985). Research on mentoring increasingly rose over the last two decades and, in the same period, business mentoring and business coaching gained their popularity and importance.

According to the Worldwide Association of Business Coaches, business coaching occurs "within an organisational context with the goal of promoting success at all

levels of the organisation by affecting the actions of those being coached" (Klopper & van Coller-Peter, 2018, p. 21). The primary goal of business coaching is the success of the organization and the individual's success is inherently tied to the organization's success (Kahn, 2018).

In the last few years, businesspeople increasingly see business coaching and mentoring as "a valid methodology for assessing and revaluating goals and processes and for creating and delivering effective solutions to business needs" (Taylor & Crabb, 2016, p. 28).

Meanwhile, digital technology is changing the dynamics of many relationships, including business mentoring.

In a recent review by Mullen and Klimaitis (2019), nine mentoring alternatives/types – extracted from the empirically based educational mentoring literature – have been identified (Table 5.3).

TABLE 5.3. **Classification of mentoring alternatives/types (Mullen & Klimaitis, 2019, p. 7)**

Mentoring alternative/type	Key associated dimension
Formal mentoring	Planned programmatic interactions
Informal mentoring	Spontaneous mentor-mentee interactions
Diverse mentoring	Relationally mixed demographics and interests
Electronic mentoring	Interaction at a distance via technology
Comentoring/collaborative mentoring	Transformative relational development
Group mentoring	Shared agendas grounded in differences
Peer mentoring	Peer-based, empowering helping relationship
Multilevel mentoring	Mentoring across organizational levels
Cultural mentoring	Diverse cultures united in mutual goals

In the following paragraphs, the e-mentoring notion, namely online mentoring or telementoring, is analysed and discussed, focusing on communication aspects of the relationship mentor-protégé.

E-mentoring: an overview

In the last decades, digital technologies revolutionized communication relationships. Computer-mediated relations and social media broke down geographical barriers enabling communication and collaboration over distance. Nowadays, people can exchange and store massive volumes of data, messages and multimedia objects instantaneously, easily and at a low cost. Therefore, one should not be surprised that online interaction has also affected mentoring relations.

The notion of e-mentoring, namely electronic mentoring, appeared at the end of the 1990s. It was referred to the use of both digital asynchronous and synchronous means to communicate and support a mentoring relationship.

Several different names were used as e-mentoring synonyms, e.g., telementoring, cybermentoring, virtual mentoring, and online mentoring.

The literature shows that several areas can be addressed in a successful e-mentoring relationship, e.g. manager support, leadership, communication, training and so on.

The term *telementoring* was initially proposed to design the "use of email or computer conferencing systems to support a mentoring relationship when a face-to-face relationship would be impractical" (O'Neill & Gomez, 1996, p. 39).

The first e-mentoring program was the *Electronic Emissary Program* in 1993. It aimed at supporting public school children in their science and science-related projects (Perez & Dorman, 2001).

In 1994, two e-mentoring projects were launched, the project *Telementoring Young Woman in Engineering and Computing* and the pilot project for *International Telementor* (Bennett et al., 1998). These projects shared the idea that getting people online was not enough to implement an effective telementoring program. To fully utilize the strengths of online communication, attention and care should be paid to building and maintaining a sense of community among participants. Indeed, the first e-mentoring programs addressed social inequity issues and were focused mainly on youth and disadvantaged groups.

At the beginning of the 2000s, the notion *of structured e-mentoring* was introduced to design e-mentoring that occurs *within a formalized program environment which provides training and coaching to increase the likelihood of engagement in the e-mentoring process and relies on program evaluation to identify improvements for future programs and to determine the impact on the participants* (Single & Miller, 2001, p. 108).

Telementoring was also considered an advanced form of telemedicine, whereby an experienced surgeon can guide and teach practicing surgeons new operative techniques utilizing current video technology, medical robots, and high-bandwidth telecommunications (Lee et al., 1998).

Single and Muller (2001) described e-mentoring as a computer-mediated relationship between a senior individual, the mentor, and a lesser skilled protégé, aimed at supporting the protégé's development.

Colky and Young (2006) argued that there are several keys to a successful mentoring program in a virtual environment: trust, self-motivation, flexibility, communication skills, and technological skills.

Single and Single (2005) sustained that e-mentoring is a means to provide mentoring opportunities to a broader and more diverse group of people without replacing face-to-face mentoring, but extending it.

Although the literature on e-mentoring is relatively young, it is copious. It is much more extensive than virtual coaching (Passmore et al., 2013). However, often the myriad

of distinct mentoring approaches such as peer, near-peer, novice, mosaic, leadership and group mentoring has a clouded understanding of e-mentoring (Sng et al., 2017). Moreover, it has been argued that although there are many articles about e-mentoring programs, there are "far fewer articles that provide empirical evidence of their overall effectiveness" (Ensher & Murphy, 2007, p. 300).

Ensher and Murphy (2007) proposed a categorization of e-mentoring programs after a thorough search conducted on business and education databases. They indicated the following categories of programs:

- Corporate-sponsored programs for employees;
- Corporate-sponsored programs for students;
- Entrepreneurs;
- Health care;
- Higher education and alumni;
- Education professionals;
- Public relations professionals;
- Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics;
- Special populations;
- State and federal government.

The above list shows that computer-mediated communication involves almost all areas of mentoring.

In the last few years, the view of e-mentoring has changed. In the 2000s, mentoring was mainly deemed an efficient and cost-effective means of orientation and socialization that could help develop the talents of an individual. It was considered an integrative form of face-to-face mentoring: *E-mentoring has the potential to provide to a wider audience the already well-established benefits that come from formal and informal mentoring. However, because e-mentoring occurs in a specialized environment, it may be challenging to ensure that all the richness of FtF [Face-to-Face] in the mentoring relationship is captured. Looking at mentoring as an optional relationship within a developmental network is one way to understand the added career benefits to provide. [...] It may be that e-mentoring will always be a supplemental form of mentoring and possibly never a replace for FtF mentoring relationship* (Ensher & Murphy, 2007, p. 317-318).

Nowadays, specific aspects of mentoring are investigated that are related to the new dimensions of the computer-mediated relationships. They include mentoring interaction in online communities and through social networks. The enormous growth of online communities and smartphones is opening new perspective for mentoring, such as mobile peer-group-based mentoring (Klier, et al., 2019).

A recent research that analyses the Professional Learning and Development (PDL) program in Aotearoa, New Zealand, from 2009 to 2015, shows that: *While some of the findings are likely to have been similar in a face-to-face mentoring context, others can be attributed to the virtual nature of the PLD (Professional Learning*

and Development), in particular those that are reliant on trust, regular and easy access, social modelling and social persuasion from a wide range of practitioners that extends beyond a mentee's immediate professional context (Owen, 2015).

Traditional mentoring and e-mentoring primarily differ in the type of communication media they use. Traditional face-to-face mentoring occurs in personal meetings where mentors and protégés are physically present and interact synchronously whilst e-mentoring when mentors and protégés communicate electronically rather than by meeting in person (Neely, et al., 2017; Punyanunt-Carter & Hernandez, 2011).

In discussing e-mentoring, one also needs to distinguish between blended and virtual e-mentoring (Figure 5.2).

In blended mentoring, mentors and protégés combine face-to-face and online interactions. They can interact not only in face-to-face activities such as focus groups, workshops, and training courses, but also in virtual activities, such as the exchange of emails and messages or conversations in a chatroom.
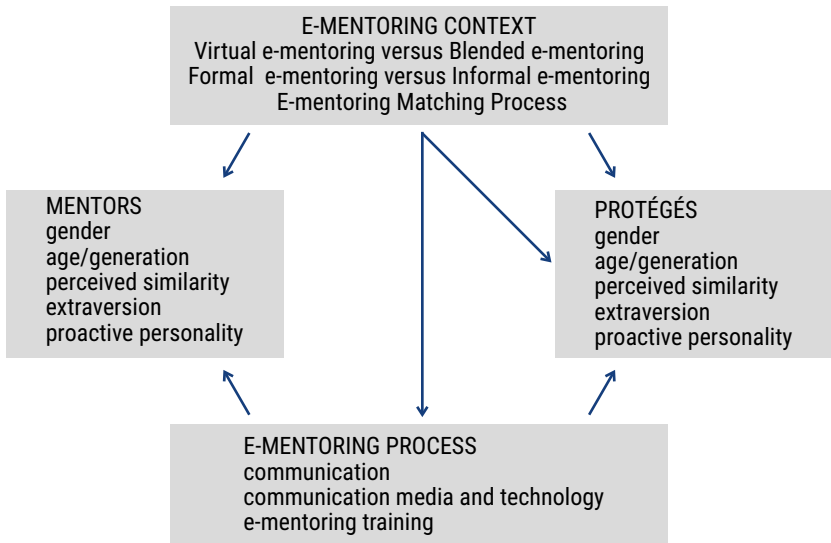
FIGURE 5.2. A model for e-mentoring (elaboration from Neely, et al., 2017, p. 224)

However, today, e-mentoring encompasses a wide range of new dimensions. It is not only the means of giving guided support at distance or providing online facilities anonymously. It can be extended to the use of AI to implement virtual assistants that prompt their advice in an online environment (Klamma et al., 2020; Toala et al., 2019). The recent development of intelligent learning environments provides the technological underpinning for online mentoring. Intelligent learning environments can include mentor-like features based on Artificial Intelligence algorithms to help learners become reflexive practitioners and support them in their professional careers (Kravčík, et al., 2019).

Online mentoring communication

It has been argued that communication is a key element of mentoring, and effective communication is considered a hallmark of effective mentoring relationships (Farmer, 2005).

In the last decades, digital technology has transformed the way people communicate. Due to the advances in the Internet of Things and Artificial Intelligence, nowadays communication is ubiquitous and continuous and can involve humans, smart devices, and virtual agents. Accordingly, the communication model has changed.

In the traditional mass communication model, the source (sender) produces a message that is encoded in media. This message is transmitted through a channel, then it is decoded and received by a receiver who provides feedback. Figure 5.3 shows the essential elements of this model.
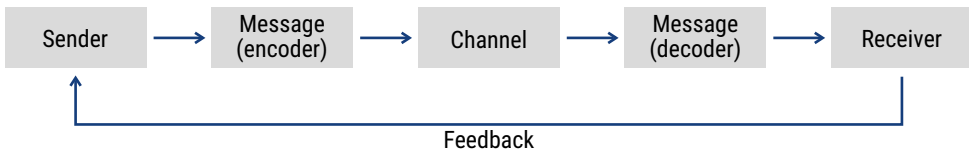
FIGURE 5.3. The traditional mass communication model (own source)

The online communication model is quite different from the mass media communication model. Online communication is not a single-channel linear process but involves a network of platforms and users (Humphreys, 2016). Users can communicate both directly and through platforms, while the content of the communication can be the result of interactions among them. The information does not flow in one linear direction from the sender to the receiver. Everyone in the network can be the sender and the receiver since users can be viewed as nodes of a network (Figure 5.4).
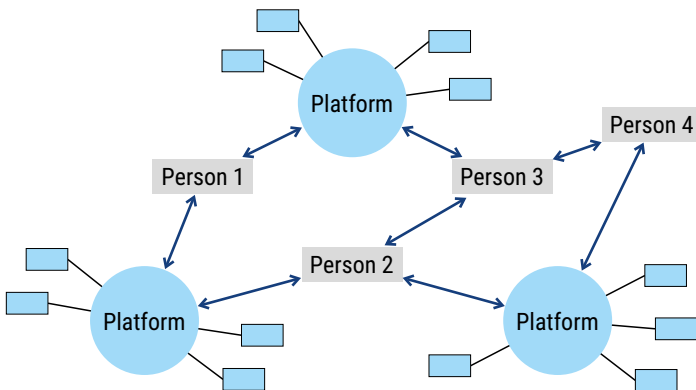
FIGURE 5.4. The social media communication model (Humphreys, 2016, p. 11)

Moreover, users are not passive. They can interact to build, comment, interpret, or modify content. According to Humphrey: *In the traditional communication model, companies both produce the content and control the message. In contrast, in the social media model, users – particularly groups of networked users who collaborate – may often control the message, but corporations often still own the physical and virtual infrastructure on which people communicate* (Humphrey, 2016, p. 12).

Another characteristics of online communication is that it can bring the so-called *online disinhibition* and facilitate self-disclosure and intimacy. Indeed, it seems that people are more likely to act out online than in real life: while online, some people self-disclose or act out more frequently than they would in person (Lapidot-Lefler & Barak, 2015). Suler distinguishes two types of online disinhibitions, *benign disinhibition*, and *toxic disinhibition* (Suler, 2005). Benign disinhibition attempts to better understand and develop oneself to resolve interpersonal and intrapsychic problems or explore new emotional and experiential dimensions to one's identity, whilst toxic disinhibition produces rude language use, harsh criticisms, anger, hatred, and threats.

Today, in complex organizations, mentoring cannot often take place face-to-face. Time and costs of face-to-face communication can be high or sometimes impossible, as in multinational companies where employees work in different countries in different time zones.

Consequently, in most cases, the business mentoring relationship is affected by the nature of online communication (Nigri et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, virtual relationships and multi-participant interactions can enhance the mentoring experience, introducing significant shifts in the mentoring practice. For instance, distance mentoring has the advantage that the mentoring relationship can continue even if one partner relocates.

Finally, it has been observed that in virtual mentoring, clear communication modalities should be defined to avoid negative effects on the mentoring relationship (Scigliano, 2015).

Business e-mentoring software

The literature on mentoring software is scant and, at the moment, there is no significant research evidence on the effectiveness of the use of mentoring platforms.

However, there are many tools and platforms for business mentoring available on the market, such as MentorcliQ Employee Mentoring, Wisdom Share, Mentornity, Graduway, PushFar, Raklet, Mentoring and so on. Some platforms emphasize personalized guidance and big data, whilst many of them claim that they can support government agencies, businesses, non-profit, and youth organizations.

Producers of software mentoring sustain that e-mentoring is as effective as in-person mentoring, and "in most cases, it is the primary type of mentoring offered

by organizations because their employees are spread out in different offices and/or around the globe." (MentorcliQ, https://www.mentorcliq.com/blog/virtual--mentoring-faqs#Question2)

Software mentoring is proposed as a great way to bypass the location barrier and create valuable mentorships. It is based on communication via email, phone, or web chat and can let more individuals participate in the same mentoring program spreading its benefits to a broader audience.

Mentoring platforms can help employees achieve their desired career goals and increase their retention (https://get.chronus.com/rs/910-YDI-216/images/Cox-Auto-Case-Study-Final.pdf). Formal and structured career mentoring programs can be implemented to minimize the risk of employees looking for opportunities outside the company.

In the website of Chronus, one of the most popular mentoring software, it is emphasized that this program: [...] *powers hundreds of successful mentoring programs for some of the world's largest organizations. More than* **1,500,000 people** *have utilized Chronus software worldwide. We make it easy to start, manage and measure a modern mentoring program. Our award-winning, innovative mentoring platform, support and mentoring experts work together to drive success for your mentoring program* (https://chronus.com/software/mentoring-software#enroll).

Mentoring software simplifies the administration of corporate mentoring programs, including matching mentors to mentees, conducting surveys, and tracking mentees' progress. It includes features such as instant messaging, public and private areas for discussion, tools for online meetings, links to external resources, and help desk facilities.

Managing a mentoring platform requires a mentoring program manager. This is a professional that will solve any problems, both relational and technical, that may arise in the mentoring process, e.g. mentor-mentee conflicts and misunderstanding, platform functionalities understanding and so on.

Usually, a mentoring platform allows a mentee to look for a mentor, describing what they want to learn and how. The mentor establishes contact with the mentee, and the mentoring process starts. Platforms should provide the following primary features:

- *Matching*. An algorithm that helps mentees choose the right mentor automatically according to the data they submitted to the platform, filling a form.
- *History*. Data about the progress of the mentoring activity should be available for mentors and mentees, e.g. how many lessons are passed, total time, connections, re-matching and other relevant information.
- *Online forum*. A forum should be provided to discuss new topics, share opinions and collect suggestions for improving the platform.
- *Push notifications*. Platform users should receive notifications of relevant events concerning the mentoring program.
- *Chat*. An online chatroom should be available for communicating with the mentoring program manager and between mentors/mentees.

- *Communication tools*. Tools should be provided for virtual meetings, such as ZOOM, Skype, GoToMeeting, Microsoft Teams etc.
- *Search*. Users should be allowed to search for everything they need on the platform.
- *Rating and reviews*. A system of ratings should be available to refine the mentoring program.

A mentoring platform should support all the three mentoring typologies:
- Individual mentoring. One mentor interacts with one mentee individually. This type is considered the classical and most efficient form of mentoring.
- Group mentoring. One mentor interacts with a group of mentees that share the same goal and follow the same program.
- Collective mentoring. A group of mentors interacts with a group of mentees. It is often applied to business organizations.

Collective mentoring is a new form of mentoring that involves sessions bringing together groups of mentors and mentees. Collective mentoring is a powerful tool for capitalizing on the collective intelligence available at an organization. It combines and integrates the mentee's personal investigation axes into the group dynamic for the construction of their professional identity and objectives to be faced (Wright, 2017).

Conclusion

Business mentoring is a valuable resource to promote employees' and managers' development, especially in a period of transformations.

Nowadays, a company which wishes to gain competitive advantage must simultaneously invest both in technology and training. We argued that, to this end, e-mentoring can be an opportunity for achieving this twofold objective.

In a company, employees and managers often work in different places, sometimes in different countries. E-mentoring can, therefore, diminish barriers due to geographical distance and enable flexibility in timing for mentors and mentees.

Furthermore, it fosters collective mentoring programs, where the responsibility of mentoring may be distributed among several people.

In this chapter, we introduced and discussed the e-mentoring notion, focusing on online communication.

However, we only highlighted the issues related to the communication model's changes due to the ongoing digital revolution. Indeed, online communication is a complex multidimensional phenomenon whose effects are extended to all social activities and which may have different societal consequences.

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PART 2
CASE STUDIES/RESULTS
OF THE RESEARCH

CHAPTER 6
Business mentoring in Bulgaria
– current situation and trends

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Introduction

Business mentoring has been developing more intensively in recent years in Bulgaria. Specialized companies offer the construction of mentoring programs in business organizations according to their stated needs (Georgiev, 2015). The Junior Achievement Program is one of the largest non-governmental organizations in the world, which also operates in Bulgaria. It aims to connect young talents with an affinity for business and entrepreneurship with already proven professionals who can share their business experience and mentor them as business mentors. Although this initiative originated for educational purposes, it is developing as a mentoring network covering all levels of education in Bulgaria. It works annually for up to 30,000 pupils and students in 450 settlements in Bulgaria starting from 1995 to the present day (Junior Achievement Bulgaria, n.d.; Dimitrov et al., 2017).

A current study of the Bulgarian entrepreneurial ecosystem on the model of Spiegel shows that 58% of respondents (a total of 50 respondents – entrepreneurs, investors, mentors, teachers, skilled labour, government officials etc.) believe that Bulgaria already has a developed social network which connects entrepreneurs, mentors, investors and employees. The pyramid as a model of the entrepreneurial ecosystem consists of three levels: cultural, social and material characteristics. The driving force in the development of the social aspects of the ecosystem are precisely social networks. According to the GEM (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor) report for 2016/17, there is a large percentage of start-up entrepreneurial initiatives that survive and are successfully established and that are focused primarily on innovation and efficiency. For the same period of time, 51% of small and medium enterprises in the country declare that they are innovative. Registered innovative products predominantly occur in the information and communication technology sector, which promotes Bulgaria to the 36th place in 2017 according to the Global Innovation Index (Hadjitchoneva, 2018).
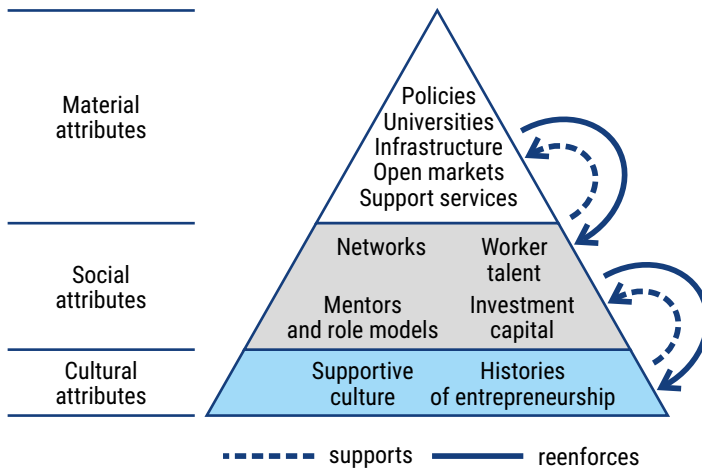
FIGURE 6.1. **Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Model (Spigel, 2015)**

By definition, entrepreneurship is associated with two key characteristics: the creation of new economic opportunities and innovation at all levels from the idea to the marketing of the product (Dimitrov et al., 2017). According to the National Statistical Institute, out of all enterprises in Bulgaria in 2016, 27.2% are innovative; most innovative companies develop in the field of technology, and less – in the field of services. Compared to 2014, the growth is more than 1% (National Statistical Institute). The turnover of the enterprises in which innovations are realized is 58% of the turnover of all enterprises in 2017 (Dimitrov et al., 2017).

The research of "Global Entrepreneurship Monitoring" for Bulgaria shows that in 2016 only 17.5% of entrepreneurs consider their products to be innovative for all or part of their customers. The largest number of entrepreneurs are in the age range of 25 to 44 years, the most active among them are people with secondary education, and more than half of start-ups are in the field of wholesale and retail trade. Only 25% of new enterprises start working in high value-added sectors such as manufacturing, healthcare and education. New companies in the sectors of transport and communications, information and professional services form 15% of the total number of companies in the initial phase of entrepreneurship (Andonova & Krusteff, 2017).

The National Entrepreneurship Context Index (NECI) was introduced in 2018 by "Global Entrepreneurship Monitoring" (GEM) as a measure of national conditions for entrepreneurship development. According to the report of GEM for 2019/2020, Switzerland is at the top of the list with the highest index (6.05), Iran has the lowest index (3.15), and Bulgaria is on a par with Portugal with an index of 4.21. The Index is an indicator of the availability of appropriate local, regional and national conditions for the development of new economic initiatives. It is a complex assessment obtained in the assessment of many indicators such as: access to finance; supportive

government policy; business taxes and bureaucracy; government entrepreneurship programmes; entrepreneurship education; research and development transfers into commercial ventures; commercial and professional infrastructure; market dynamics: free, open and growing market; market burdens and regulations; physical infrastructure; social and cultural norms (provision of role models, mentors and social support for risk-taking) (Bosma et al., 2020).

The key competencies needed by future entrepreneurs and determining the quality of entrepreneurship education in Bulgaria, according to Bulgarian students, are knowledge in the field of management, economics, marketing, advertising and skills for developing project proposals. The second important competency involves the respondents' knowledge of finance and strategic planning (Dimitrov et al., 2017).

The introduction of mentoring in the context of human resource management as a good practice is recommended to business organizations in the training of interns and new employees in Bulgaria. Overcoming the gap between education and the labour market through dual education according to a survey conducted among 102 respondents (52.9% – business representatives, 32.4% – local government and municipal administrations and representatives of educational institutions – 14.7%) requires the inclusion of mentors from the business environment, both in the education of students at universities and at their workplace (Trifonova, 2017; Zheleva & Nakova-Manolova, 2019).

Interesting enough is also the W-Curve theory that describes the re-entry adjustment, often called reverse culture shock (Czinkota et al. in Baltov, 2009). It emphasizes the common process of initial euphoria, irritation and hostility with cultural differences, adjustment and re-entry to the home country (Martin & Harrell in Baltov & Baltova, 2013). The W-curve is actually two U-curves. The first U-curve occurs when the employee enters the new country for the international assignment. The second U-curve occurs upon return to the home country. The pattern is the same. The reverse culture shock on return is intensified because the employee does not anticipate company, community and cultural changes during the absence.

Mentoring is mentioned in the scientific publications of Bulgarian authors as one of the most popular elements of the system for career development of business organizations in Bulgaria and as a part of the process of maturing marketing leadership (Mihova, 2012; Sterev, 2019). Training and mentoring are present in a model for the development of innovations in Bulgaria in order to commercialize scientific achievements (Choi, J., Ruskov, P. & Tsolova, S., 2016).

Unfortunately, the specifics of mentoring as a process and the mentor-protégé relationship have not yet been well empirically studied. The small number of articles by Bulgarian authors represent theoretical developments on various issues: the difference between coaching, mentoring and training; the terminological framework of mentoring; coaching and mentoring in the context of human resources as a tool for development of talented young people in organizations (Arabska, 2019; Tumbeva, 2016).

Methodology Approach

Being an important gathering tool, questionnaires are applied as key parts of many research methodologies. In their essence, they include asking people to respond to a preliminarily composed set of questions in a determined order. The main purpose of each research questionnaire in an arbitrary domain is to obtain relevant information in most reliable and valid way. Questionnaires could be broadly divided into two major categories depending on their questions – quantitative and qualitative – which could be applied separately or in combination (Brannen, 2017). The questions could be of different types – multiple choice, dichotomous, scaling or open answer questions.

The present questionnaire conducted quantitative research with a purpose to examine the current state-of-the-art aspect of business mentoring in Bulgaria. It contained 68 questions, most of them (59 in number) were scaling or ranking questions. Their aim was to determine the respondents' evaluation of certain attitudes towards various aspects of mentor-mentee relationship. They had to rank the available answers to the questions on a scale of given range of values from 0 (of no importance) to 5 (of high importance). Seven questions were multiple choice with a purpose to get information about the respondents' profile – education level, age, gender, industry of occupation, position (mentor/mentee), years of experience, etc. Two questions required open answers, respectively for participants' e-mail addresses and for their opinion/advice to the questionnaire's authors.

For the purpose of measuring an instrument which uses on a five-point Likert Scale with anchors from *strongly disagree* (=1) to *strongly agree* (=5) was used. This framework focuses on cultural traits of involvement. An aggregate measure of involvement was developed and it uses the Likert Scale with anchors from 1 to 5 by the help of different statistical tools. The data were analysed by using SPSS software and Microsoft Excel. The major statistical tools, the correlation matrix, descriptive statistics and regression analysis were used for analysis. Specifically descriptive statistics explored a standard deviation, mean, variance, skewness and frequencies of respondents' answer. The correlation matrix is another strong tool that determines and measures a correlation between successful and unsuccessful public enterprises and their involvement culture. In addition to this, the data were analysed through a regression analysis and pointed to high influence levels of independent variables, i.e. empowerment, team orientation and a succession plan on the involvement in the mentoring adopted by the respondents.

Results

The questionnaire was translated to Bulgarian language and was filled in by 115 respondents during the period March – May 2020. Their gender and age distributions are presented in Figure 2. The prevailing number of respondents are female

(74%), while the rest 26% are male. According to the age group, the majority (32%) of the participants are between 41 and 50 years old, followed by the group between 30 and 40 years (25%). The rest of the respondents are below 30 years (22%), between 50 and 60 years old (17%) and above 60 years old (4%).
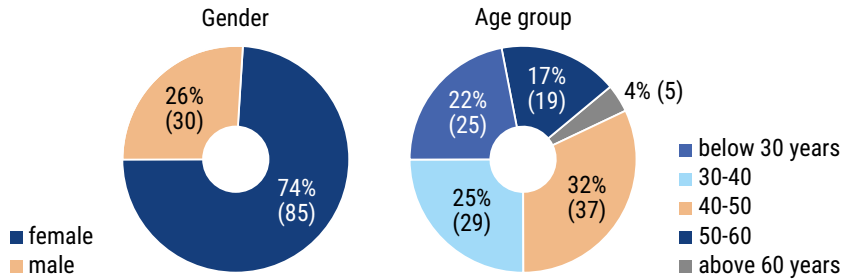
FIGURE 6.2. **Participants' age and gender status (own study)**

Regarding their position, most of the respondents work as specialists (69%), while 18% work as managers, 10% as directors and only 3% as general managers. The distribution is visible on the next pie chart – Figure 6.3. The group of general managers might also be very easily associated with the owners/entrepreneurs behind the business, as those cases concern small companies with a single level of management. In general, bridging the data from Figure 6.2, we may consider the respondents as rather experienced, with competencies, and the only specifics that might bias their opinion will be the fact that women constitute their majority. According to their working experience, most of the participants (77%) have more than 6 years of experience, 15% have less than 2 years of experience and only 8% have between 3 and 5 years of experience, as shown in Figure 6.3.
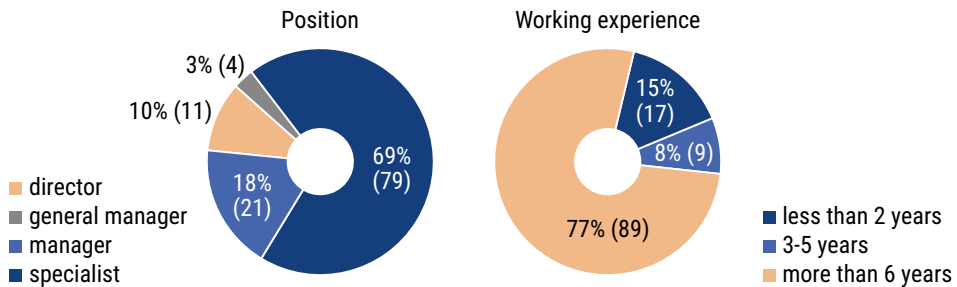
FIGURE 6.3. **Participants' positions and working experience (own study)**

According to their status, the respondents are almost equally divided: 47% are mentors, 43% – mentees, while 10% identify themselves as others, as illustrated in Figure 6.4. Interesting enough is the indication for the sectoral distribution of their

organisation, with three out of four falling in the others category. Definitely those are services, explainable with the fact that the women have dominated the sample, and definitely they might be associated with educational services (schools, centres) and tourism (considering the regional distribution close to the Black Sea). Manufacturing and construction will be a rare case of one tenth of them all.
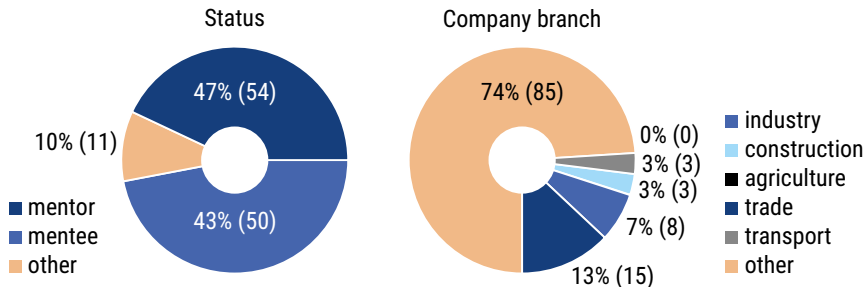
FIGURE 6.4. Participants' status and company branch (own study)

The next section contained a number of scaling questions, intended to evaluate various aspects of mentor-mentee communication. The communication channels were evaluated using a 5-element scale, from 1 (very unimportant) to 5 (very important). Communication methods were divided into oral, written and non-verbal. The results are summarized in Figure 6.5.
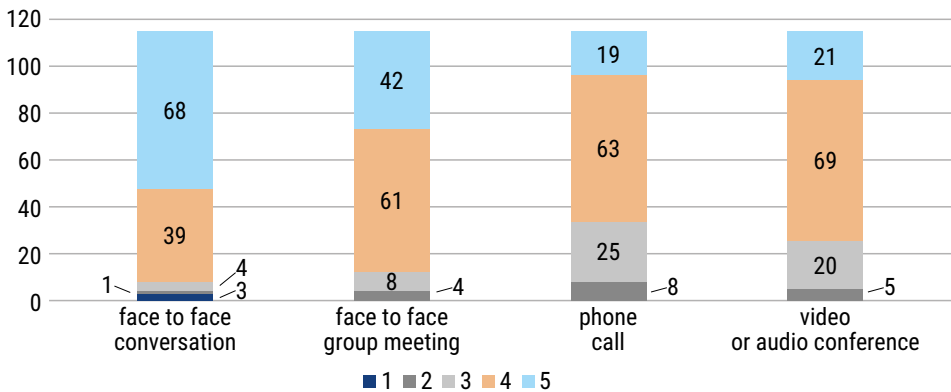
FIGURE 6.5. Oral communication importance evaluation (own study)

The results reveal that oral communication in general is of great importance both for mentors and mentees. As the most important they consider face-to-face communication (a total of 93% for important and very important), followed by face-to-face

group meetings (a total of 90% for important and very important) and video or audio conferences (78% important and very important).

Next, Figure 6.6 summarizes the results for written communication importance for mentors and mentees. The results reveal that written communication in general is very important for the stakeholders. As the most important channels they point out emails (64% important and 32% very important), internal communication platform (39% very important and 45% important), document sharing platform (48% important and 35% very important), notices and announcements (56% important and 30% very important) etc. As least important they have defined blogs (only 3% very important and 33% important), newsletters (41% important and 4% very important), followed by internal podcasts and internal social media.
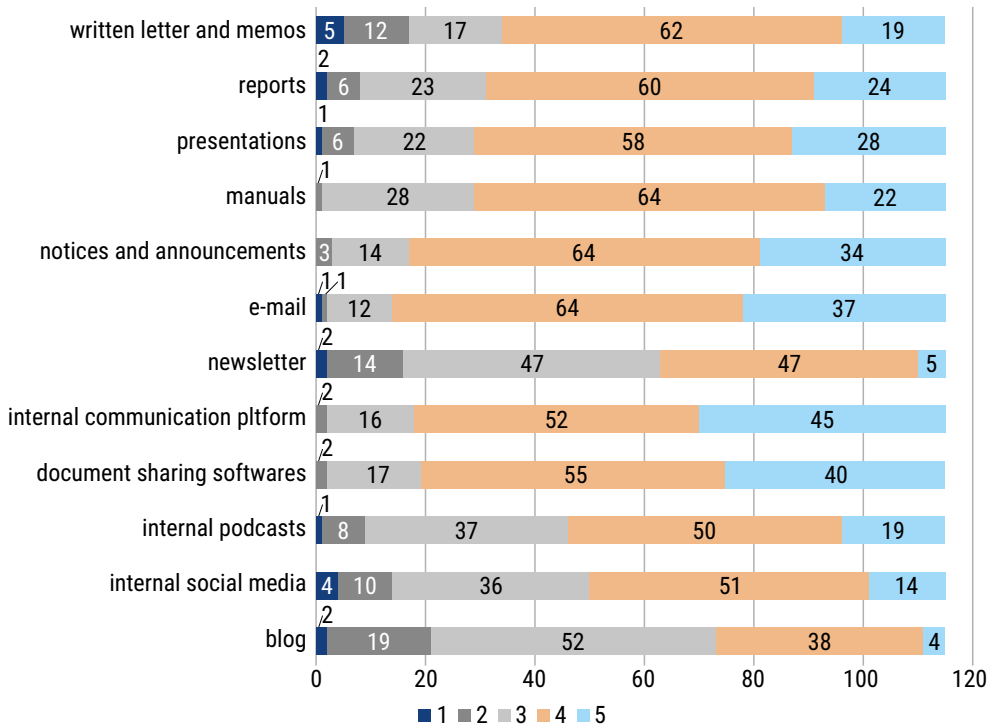
FIGURE 6.6. Written communication importance evaluation (own study)

The modes of communication, both oral and written, demonstrate a high level of capacity for the respondents to manage in the turbulent times of the pandemic. It might surely show that the type of mentoring they require will not be a basic level – IT and language skills, but rather on problem solving and managerial to entrepreneurial dilemmas. It is important that for the mentors themselves, these are skilful people that might cope not only with the represented group of respondents, but also

a younger, potential group or people with lower educational background, where they must provide inputs regarding their communication skills.

Figure 6.7. summarizes the results of non-verbal communication importance for the target group evaluation. As could be noticed, all the channels and tools are of importance for the respondents.
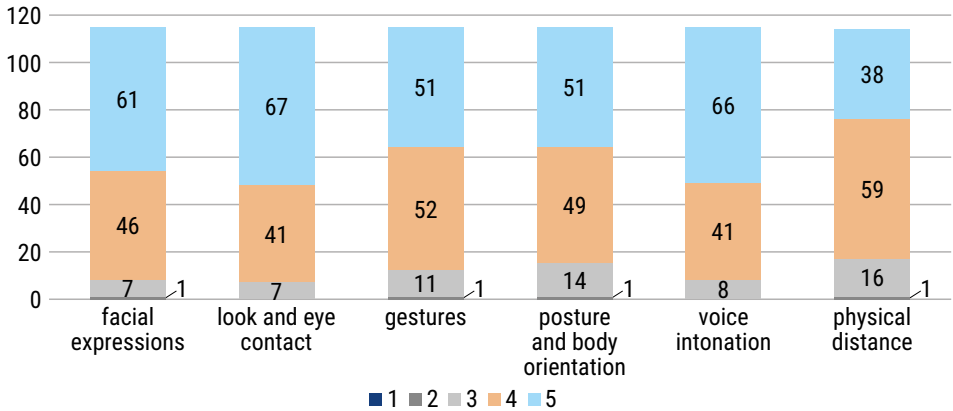
FIGURE 6.7. Non-verbal communication importance evaluation (own study)

Definitely, the variety of non-verbal expression also matches the respondents with the look and eye contact and voice intonation slightly ahead. What is important in this case is that close to zero are the modes of this communication that are ignored.

Next, Figure 6.8 contains the evaluation of content creation importance for the respondents. All the content characteristics are considered as important and only the speed of response is considered as a relatively least important one.
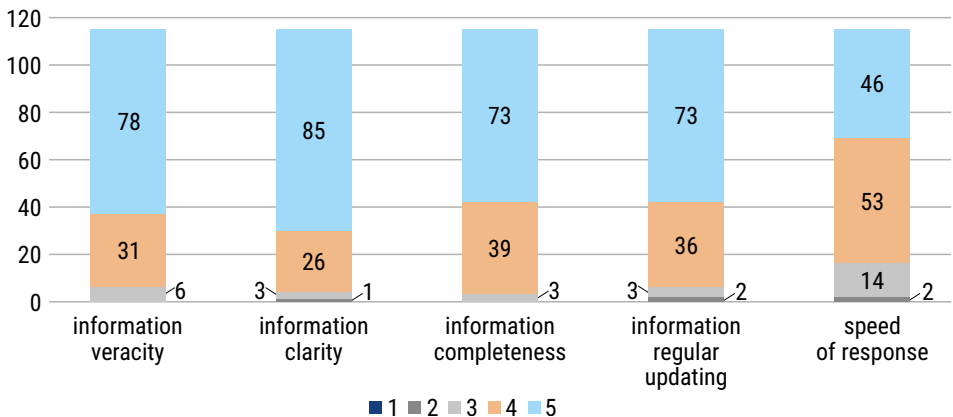
FIGURE 6.8. Content creation importance evaluation (own study)

The respondents attach the smallest content creation importance to the speed of response. It is partly explained by the fact that there are more experienced people in the sample and they may judge and react less emotionally.

Figure 6.9 summarizes the respondents' evaluation of the stakeholders' engagement pyramid. It could be observed that all the elements are with stable fundamentals, with the respondents clearly engaged in them.
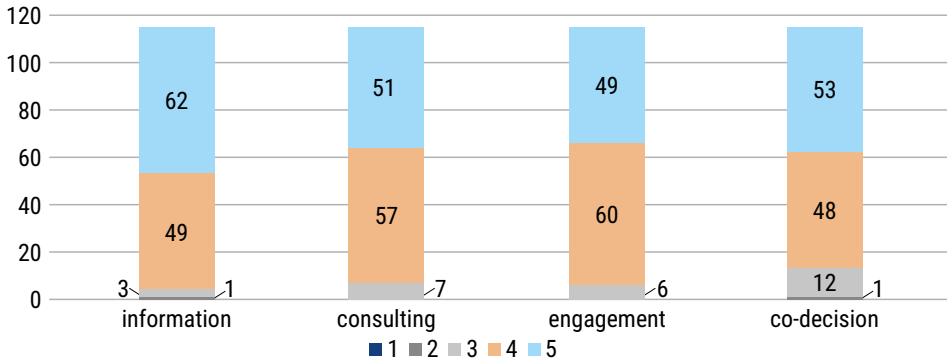
FIGURE 6.9. Social engagement importance evaluation (own study)

Information is the biggest in the layout, with practically all respondents mentioning it is highly and absolutely highly significant for their social engagement with the stakeholders. Still, co-decision provides interesting data, as it might go on the upgrade, with approx. 12% of the respondents are rather neutral for their engagement with the stakeholders.

Further on, Figure 6.10 provides the explanation on how the effectiveness of communication shows a concentration on the goals of the meetings and the goals of the mentoring process being reached. Of medium importance – with approx. 10% of the respondents' declarations – are the statements that the message leads to a specific action and that the emotional support is gained.

When it comes to the importance of rational vs. emotional aspects and specifics of mentor-to-mentee interaction, unlike the previous three interactions, we observed at least two issues on which the community in the survey enjoyed a substantial distribution in provided opinions. Especially when they were asked on their ability to argue – we noted that approx. 14% of the respondents disagree to a certain point, a couple of them at all, and 40% fell in the unsure mode. As to the ability to interpret a person, the vast majority is more than sure with 3 out of 4 reacting positively, still only 33% agreeing strongly.

On the other extreme, there are 73 respondents who are fully sure on the importance with another 40 being sure in general when it comes to the skill to actively listen. We observed the lowest negative bias in terms of the ability to communicate, when just 1 respondent disagreed partly, 8 of them were not sure, and another 110 (66+44) stated they were fully sure on the importance.
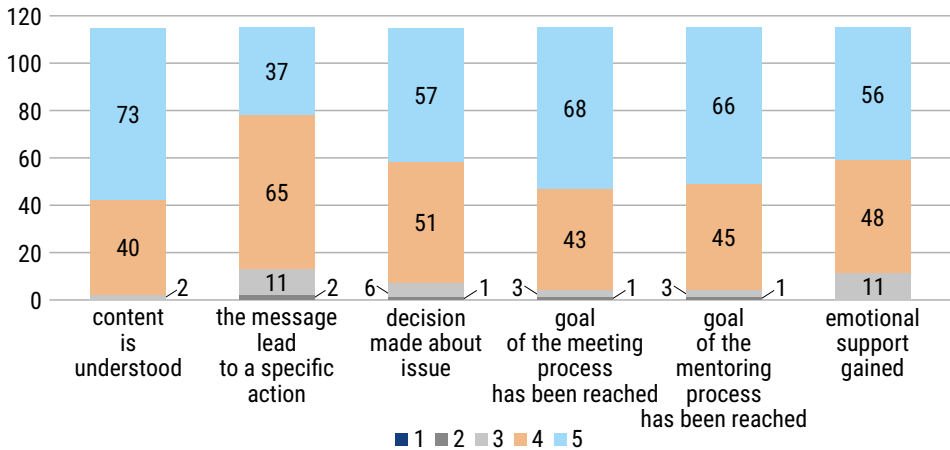
FIGURE 6.10. Communication effectiveness importance evaluation (own study)

Figure 6.12 illustrates the results on another batch of statements on the communication effectiveness importance evaluation. Here, a much diversified understanding from the respondents towards the importance of factors influencing this communication can be observed. Sex is quite neutral, and close to it there are age and nationality. Of utmost importance are honesty, openness and availability.
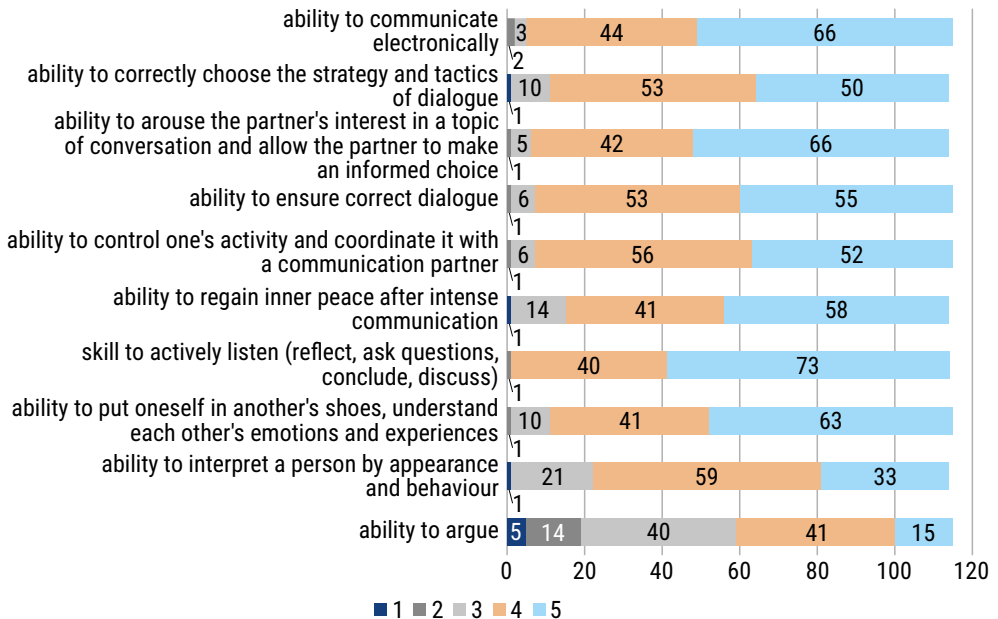
FIGURE 6.11. Communication effectiveness importance evaluation – part 1 (own study)
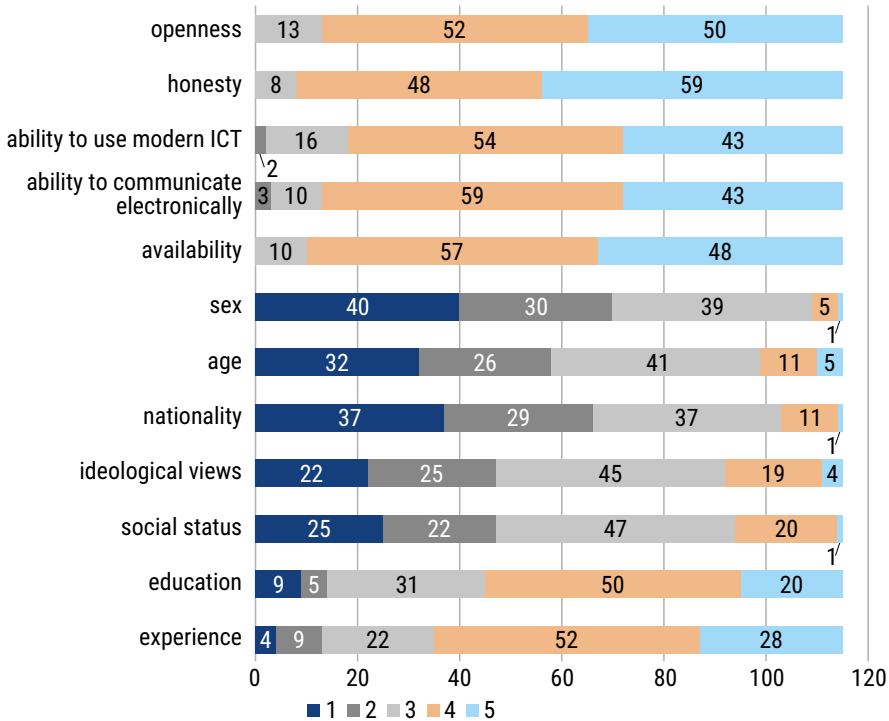
FIGURE 6.12. Communication effectiveness importance evaluation – part 2 (own study)

Some of the evidence from the sample in Bulgaria may come to cross with the dimensions concerning attitudes to risk. In high-uncertainty countries (Bulgaria still in a transition from this type), risk is seen as something which should be avoided or removed – these countries tend to have many rules governing behaviour and procedures. In low-uncertainty countries risk is seen as a normal part of life, there are normally fewer rules and an ad hoc approach is expected. Mentoring in uncertainty environment is much more important, although a difficult approach. On the other hand, individualism as a dimension refers to relationships within groups. Where individualism is high, families tend to be small and each individual is responsible for him/herself. Where individualism is low, families normally tend to be larger, extended families and each person is responsible to their in-group which could be the family or a larger group. This may explain the barriers for the mentors to keep track of and gain high results in Bulgaria.

Conclusion

Evidence from the mentors to mentor-assisted groups of respondents in Bulgaria has explained that involvement is a good practice for organizational betterment.

Employees' involvement in the organization is one factor of organizational success. The conclusion supports research assumptions from other surveys and theoretical frameworks explained as there exists a significant association between involvement and the type of communication of both groups. Likewise, there is a significant difference of the involvement culture between successful and unsuccessful businesses and organisations in Bulgaria. Comparatively successful ones have good practices of empowerment, team orientation and succession plan practices. Regression analysis results revealed that empowerment, team orientation and a succession plan are equally important for the better performance of the representatives in the sample.

Resourcing the functions required undertaking the work as an essential component of organizational success. Without the right people with the right skills and in sufficient number, the organisation cannot meet its performance objectives. Resourcing policies are developed within the context in which the organisation operates, but mentors are highly supported by internal and external factors in the business. Organisations in their own cultural environments develop policies that largely match the values and practices of the local environment.

In parallel to attracting foreign investment, the entrepreneurial promotion skills through mentoring and associated skills have become a major element in the economic development process for many countries, including Bulgaria. However, while there is considerable information on the scale of investment flows, data are limited on the scale and nature of accompanying (or reciprocal) movements of skilled staff that is supported by mentoring. With this survey there seems to be a positive general relationship between flows of skilled labour and the level of communication channels, skills and success in the organisation and inter-businesses interactions.

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CHAPTER 7
Elements of communication in mentoring network – evidence from Poland

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In Poland the survey was carried out among 222 people, of whom 103 were mentors (46% of respondents) and 119 were mentees (54% of the entire sample).

Results among mentors

Every third surveyed mentor held the position of a director (Figure 7.1). A similar percentage of the respondents was made up of managers. The structure of mentors participating in the research also included specialists (17.5%) and senior managers (15.5%).
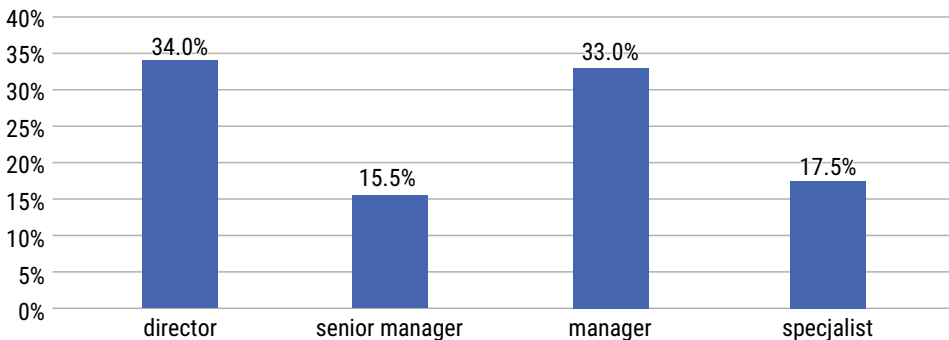
FIGURE 7.1. Structure of mentors by position in the organization (own study)

More than half of the mentors participating in the survey represented entities operating in various economic sectors (Figure 7.2). These were mainly such sectors as: trade (18.4%), industry (15.5%), transport (11.7%), construction (6.8%) and agriculture (1%). Another half of the respondents (46%) fell into the "Other" category. This group of mentors was dominated by people representing the public sector, mainly

universities and education, as well as the health care sector. Here, too, are representatives of various service categories, including banking, finance and consulting.
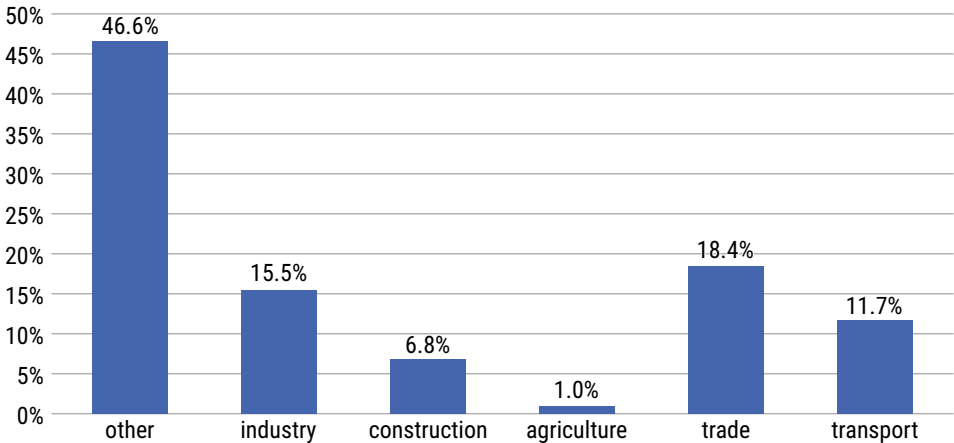
FIGURE 7.2. Structure of mentors by economic sector (own study)

When it comes to the gender structure of the surveyed mentors, it was balanced – half of the sample constituted women and half were men. Every third mentor (35%) surveyed had a technical education. When it comes to the age structure of the analysed respondents, it should be noted that over half of them (51.5%) are people aged 41-50. Approximately 26% of the sample were mentors aged 30-40, and less than 13% – under the age of 30. The remaining group of respondents – about 10% – are people over 50 (Figure 7.3).
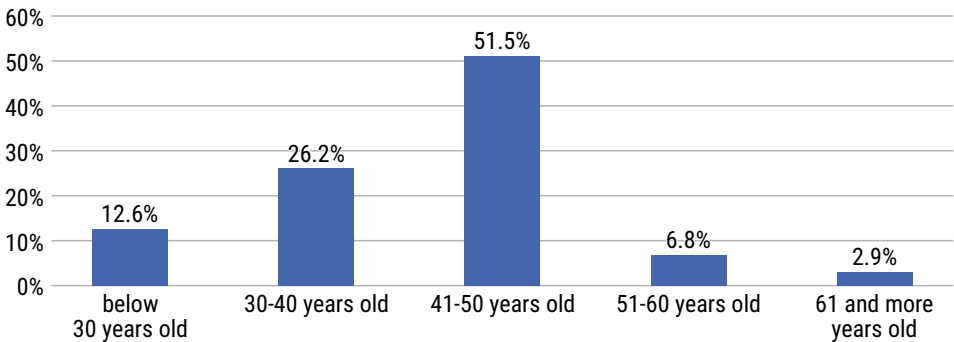
FIGURE 7.3. Structure of mentors by age (own study)

Nearly 2/3 of the surveyed mentors have many years of professional experience – 16 or more (Figure 7.4).
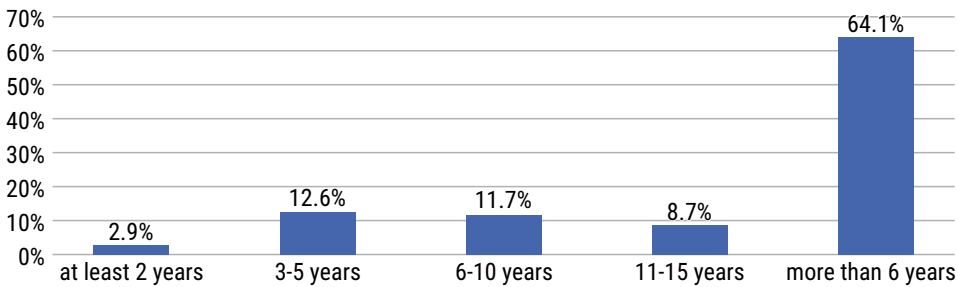
FIGURE 7.4. Structure of mentors by the length of working experience (own study)

The researched group of mentors stated that the most important oral channels and tools of communication in the mentoring process are face-to-face conversations (Figure 7.5). That option was characterized by a mean of answers at a level of 4.81 (median, mode: 5.0). The next important oral channel of communication constituted face-to-face group meetings (mean: 4.16, median and mode: 4). Less important are phone calls (mean: 3.81) as well as video and audio conferences (mean: 3.79).
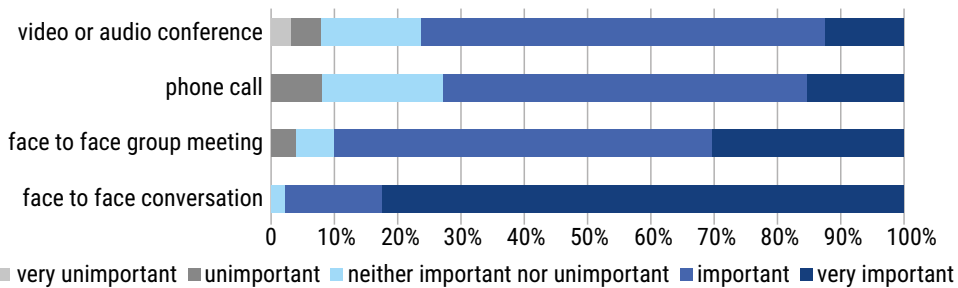
FIGURE 7.5. The significance of oral channels and tools of communication in the mentoring process – mentors' opinions (own study)

Out of written channels and tools of communication in the mentoring process, the most important for the surveyed mentors were emails (mean: 4.17), manuals (mean: 4.17) and reports (mean: 3.95) – Figure 7.6. The least important written channels of communication according to the respondents were blogs (mean: 2.88) and newsletters (mean: 2.78).

The mentors assessed non-verbal channels and tools of communication in the mentoring process. According to their opinion, non-verbal communication is essential in the mentoring process as the majority of respondents assessed those tools (voice intonation, facial expression, look and eye contact, gestures, posture and body orientation) as important or very important (Figure 7.7). The physical distance was assessed as relatively least important in the communication process between the mentor and the mentee (mean: 3.98).
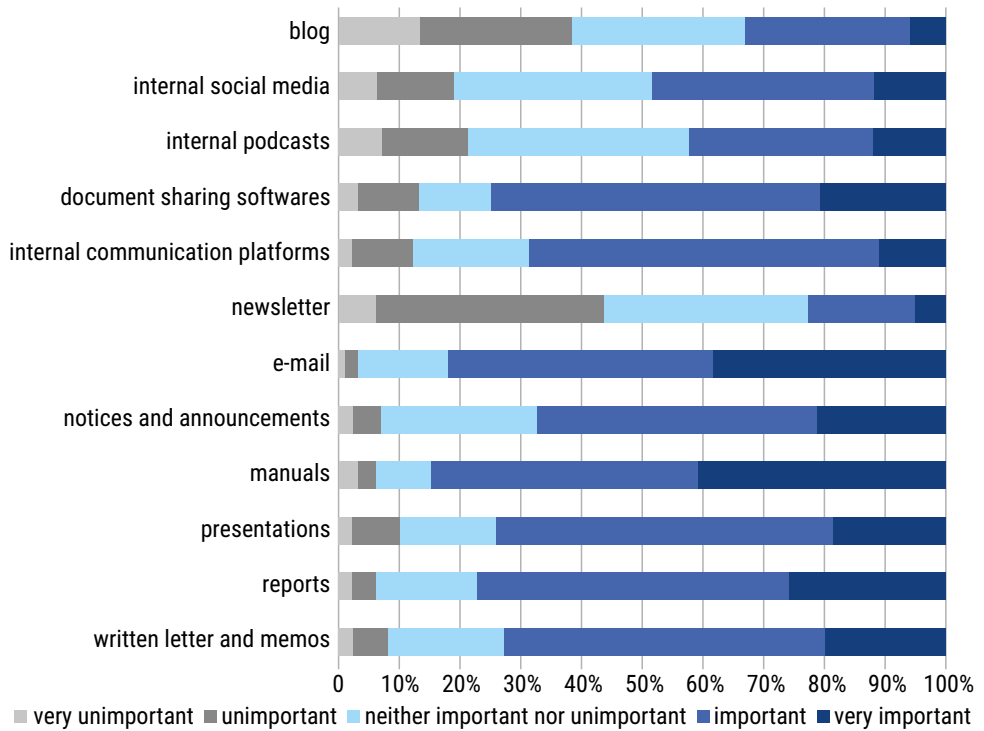
FIGURE 7.6. The significance of written channels and tools of communication in the mentoring process – mentors' opinions (own study)
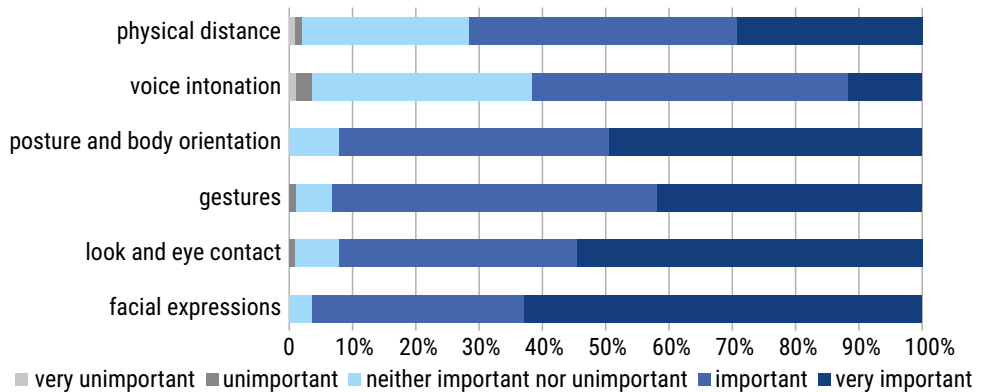
FIGURE 7.7. The significance of non-verbal channels and tools of communication in the mentoring process – mentors' opinions (own study)

The mentors stated that most elements of content creation were very important for the mentoring process – Figure 7.8. These included: information veracity (mean: 4.88, median and mode: 5), information clarity (mean of answers: 4.76, median and mode: 5), provision of solicited information only (mean: 4.66, median and mode: 5), information completeness (mean: 4.60, median and mode: 5) and information regular updating (mean: 4.56, median and mode: 5). Speed of response was assessed as an important element of content creation by half of the respondents and the mean reached the level 4.12.
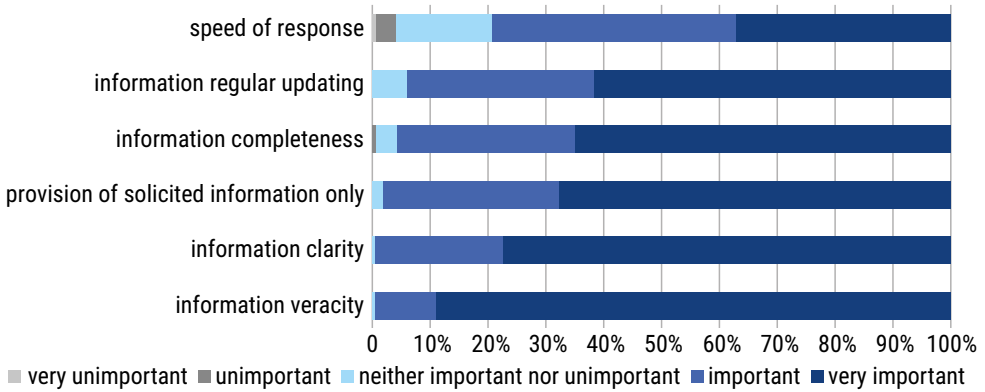
FIGURE 7.8. The significance of the content in the mentoring process – mentors' opinions (own study)

In the opinion of the surveyed mentors, almost all levels of social engagement are significantly important for the relationship between the mentor and the mentee in the mentoring process – Figure 7.9. Engagement reached the mean of answers at a level of 4.79 (median and mode at the level of 5). Information got the mean of answers at a level of 4.39 (median and mode at the level of 5). Consulting obtained the mean of 4.49 (median and mode at the level of 5). Only co-decision had a common value in the sample – 4, the same as median, with the mean of 4.25.
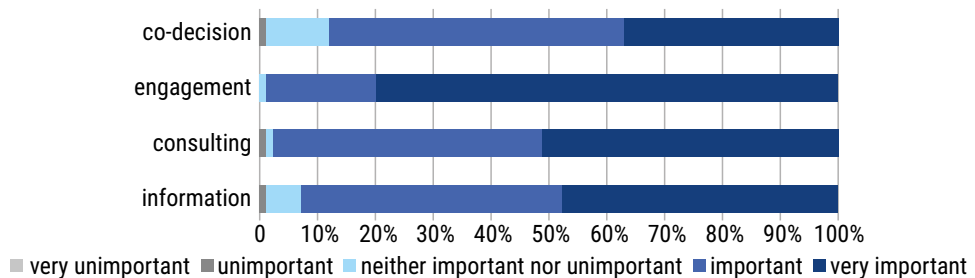
FIGURE 7.9. The significance of social engagement in the mentoring process – mentors' opinions (own study)

The mentors also accessed factors affecting the effectiveness of communication. For the respondents, it was comparatively important when the message leads to a specific action (mean: 4.57, median, mode: 5), the goal of the mentoring process has been reached (mean: 4.56, median, mode: 5), the goal of the meeting has been reached (mean: 4.5, median, mode: 5), the content is understood (mean: 4.43, median, mode: 5) and the decision is made about the issue (mean: 4.42, median: 5, mode: 5). According to the surveyed mentors, gaining emotional support (mean: 3.94, median: 4, mode: 4) was relatively less important for the effectiveness of communication in the mentoring process.
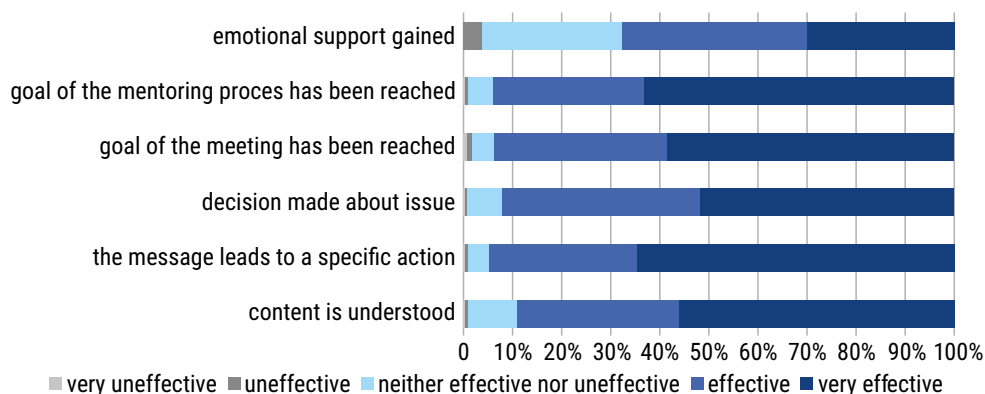
FIGURE 7.10. Factors providing the effectiveness of communication in the mentoring process – mentors' opinions (own study)

In the mentors' opinion, the most important traits of mentors in communication in the mentoring process are: skill to actively listen (reflect, ask questions, conclude, discuss) (mean: 4.68, median, mode: 5), ability to argue (mean: 4.57, median, mode: 5), ability to create a wish to communicate and cooperate (mean: 4.54, median, mode: 5), honesty (mean: 4.53, median, mode: 5), openness (mean: 4.47, median, mode: 5) and ability to arouse the partner's interest in a topic of conversation and allow the partner to make an informed choice (mean: 4.47, median, mode: 5). According to the mentors, unimportant traits of mentors in the mentoring process are their demographic issues, such as sex (mean: 1.91, median, mode: 1), nationality (mean: 1.92, median: 1, mode: 1), social status (mean: 2.20, median: 2, mode: 1), age (mean: 2.20, median: 2, mode: 1) and ideological views (mean: 2.24, median: 2, mode: 1) – Figure 7.11.

The surveyed mentors had the possibility to identify other traits of the mentors which are important in the process of communication with mentees. Among these features were the following: charisma, decisiveness in making and communicating decisions, patience, empathy, high personal culture, intelligence, intuition, creativity, and perseverance. In the opinion of the respondents, the mentor should have knowledge in a given field and the ability to share it.
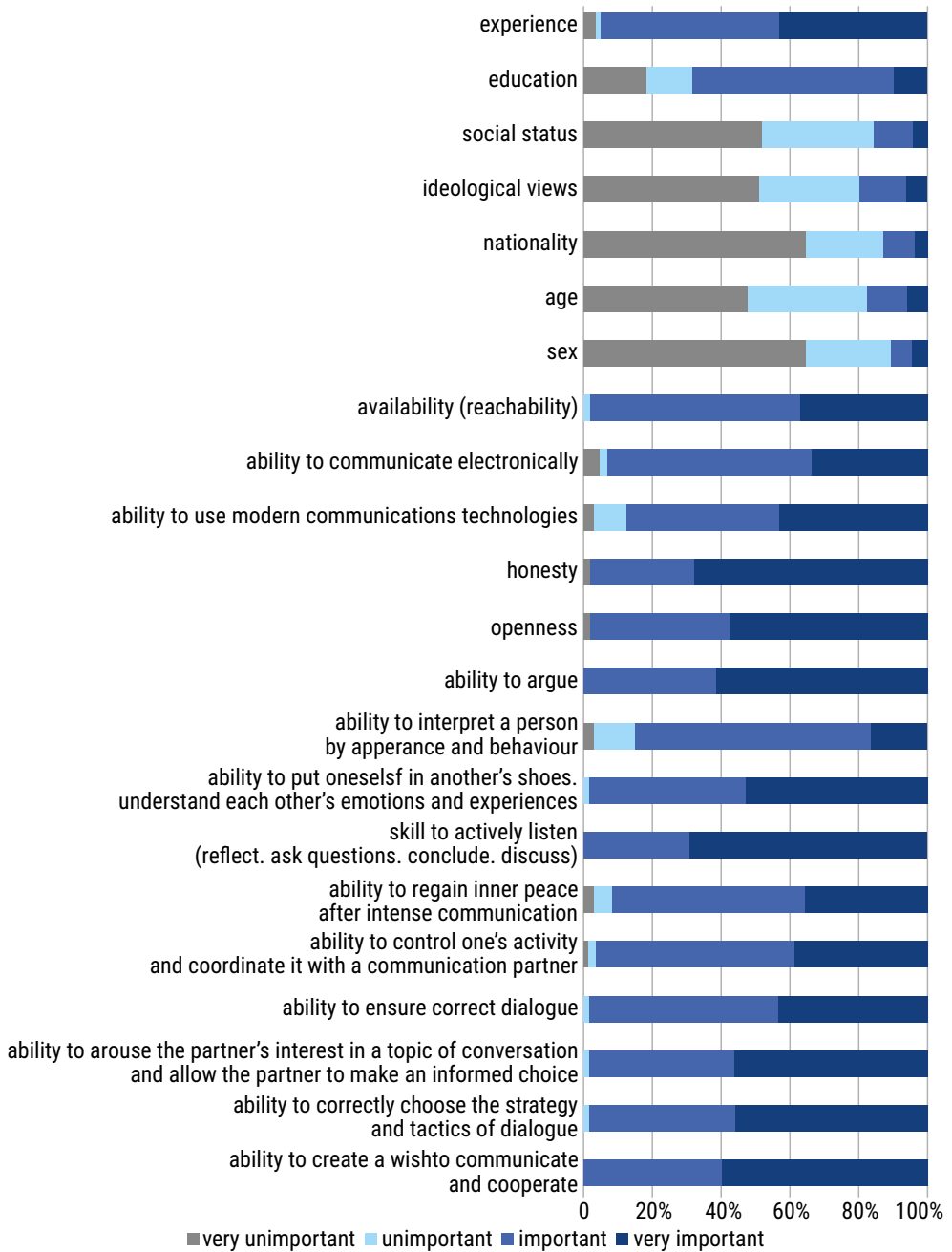
FIGURE 7.11. The significance of mentor traits in communication in the mentoring process – mentors' opinions (own study)

The mentors also evaluated barriers to communication in the mentoring process (Figure 12). The most significant are: source reliability (mean: 4.53, median: 4, mode: 5), lack of time (mean: 4.29, median, mode: 4), selective listening (mean: 4.1, median, mode: 1) and dislike to the form (mean: 4.05, median, mode: 4). According to the respondents, the least significant barriers are cultural and national obstacles (mean: 3.04, median, mode: 3) and social barriers and obstacles (mean: 3.03, median, mode: 3).
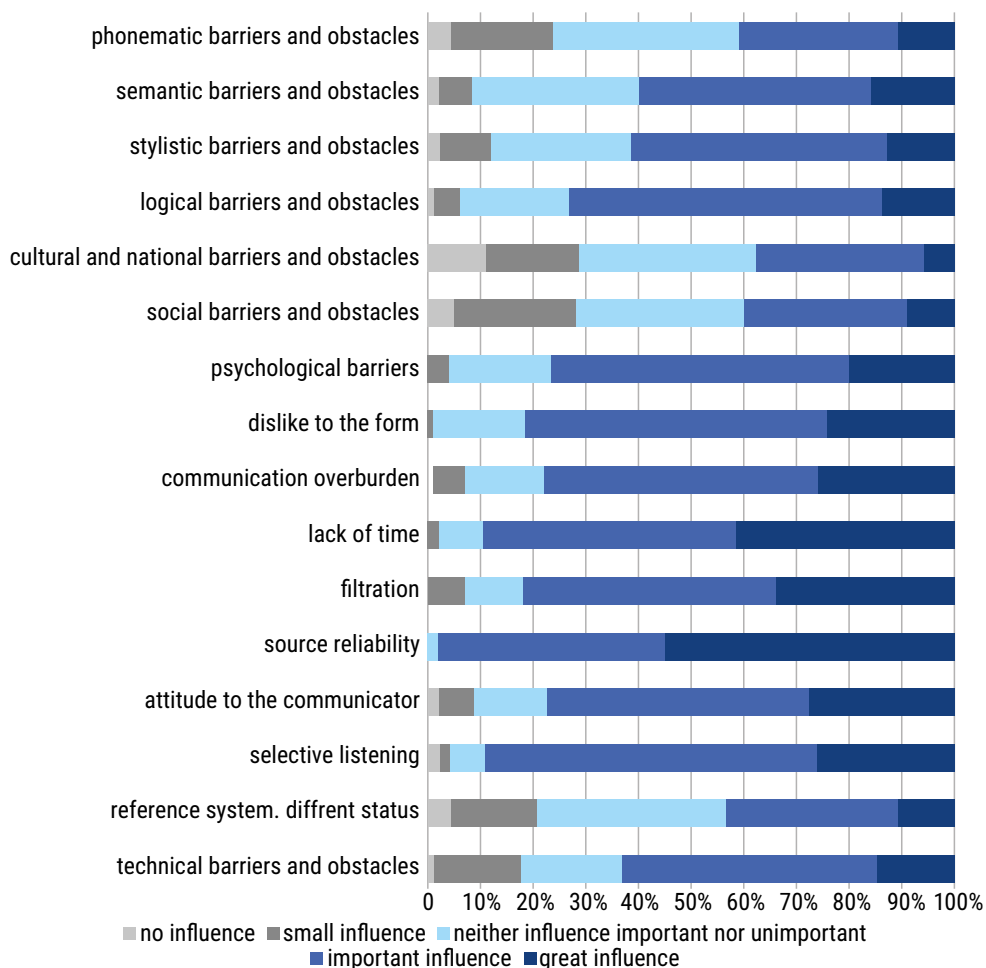
FIGURE 12. Barriers to communication in the mentoring process – mentors' opinions (own study)

Results among mentees

The majority of mentees (77%) were young people below the age of 30– Figure 7.13.
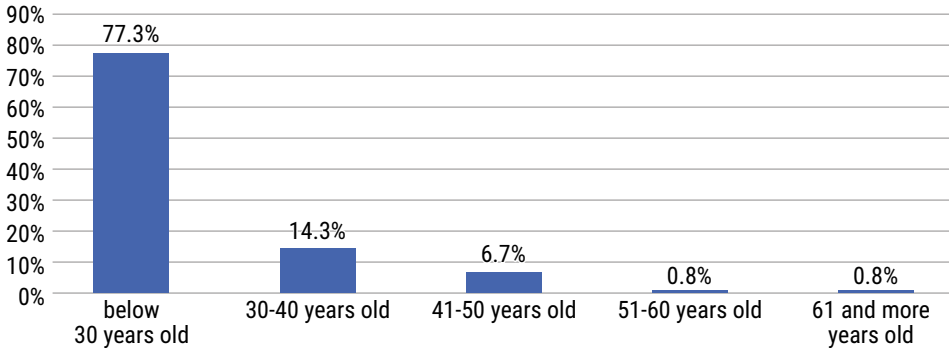
FIGURE 7.13. **Structure of mentees by age (own study)**

The structure of mentees by sex shows that 65% of them were women and 35% were men – Figure 7.14.
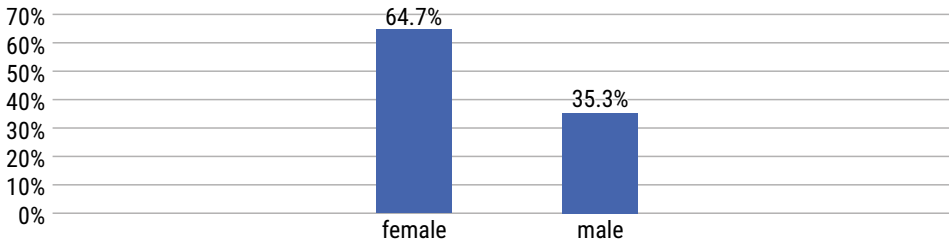
FIGURE 7.14. **Structure of mentees by sex (own study)**

As the majority of mentees were young people, most of them (62%) had little working experience – less than 3 years. Only slightly over 8% of the respondents were characterized by more than 16 years of experience – Figure 7.15.
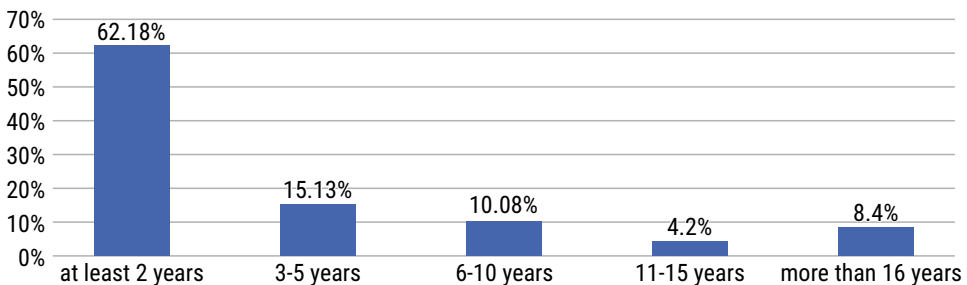
FIGURE 7.15. **Structure of mentees by working experience (own study)**

Analysing the educational background of the mentees, it can be stated that the sample is very balanced when it comes to the technical and non-technical qualifications – Figure 7.16.
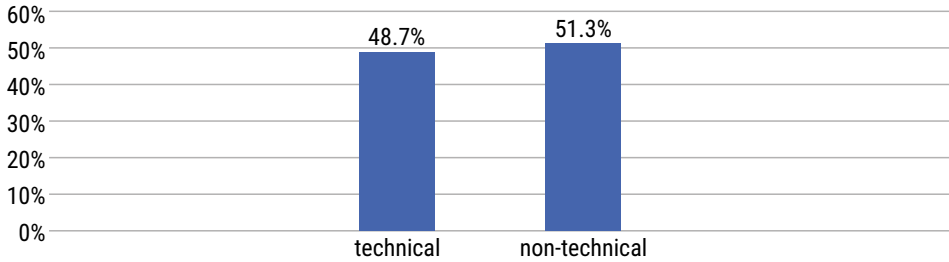
FIGURE 7.16. Structure of mentees by educational background (own study)

The researched group of mentees stated that the most important oral channels and tools of communication in the mentoring process are face-to-face conversations – Figure 7.17. That option was characterized by mean of answers at the level of 4.76 (median and mode: 5.0). Another important oral channel of communication constituted face-to-face group meetings (mean: 4.14). Less important were video and audio conferences and phone calls.
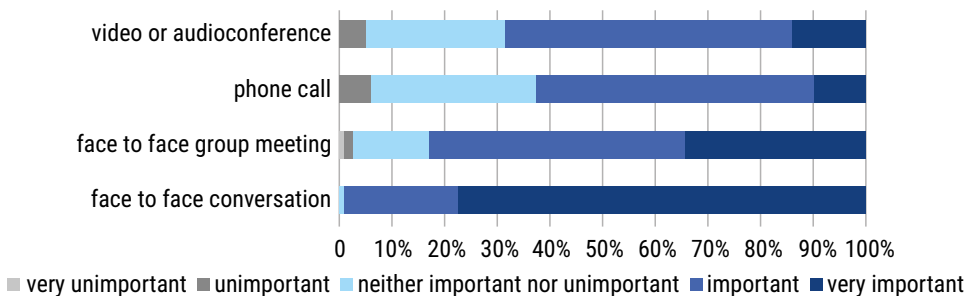
FIGURE 7.17. The significance of oral channels and tools of communication in the mentoring process – mentees' opinions (own study)

Out of written channels and tools of communication in the mentoring process, the most important for respondents were manuals (mean: 4.19), e-mails (mean: 4.10) and reports (mean: 4.02) – Figure 7.18. The least important written channels of communication according to respondents were blogs (mean: 2.82) and newsletters (mean: 2.65).
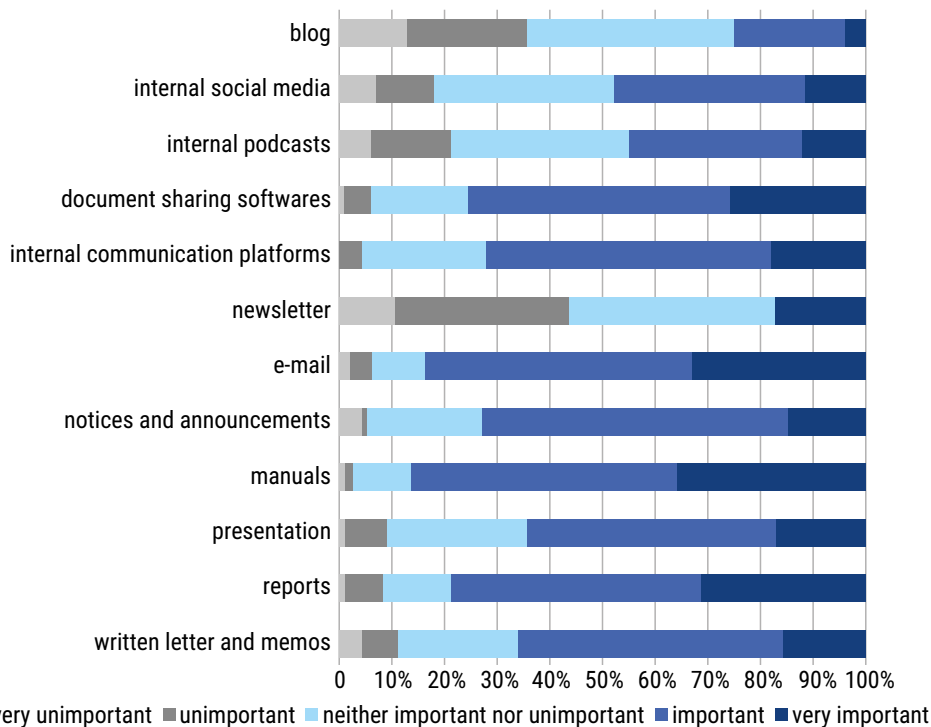
FIGURE 7.18. The significance of written channels and tools of communication in the mentoring process – mentees' opinions (own study)

The mentees also assessed non-verbal channels and tools of communication in the mentoring process – Figure 7.19. Following their opinion, non-verbal communication is essential in the mentoring process as the majority of the respondents assessed those tools (voice intonation, facial expression) as very important (mode: 5) or as important (look and eye contact, gestures, posture and body orientation) (mode: 4). Physical distance is an element of non-verbal communication which generated a relatively high share of lack of opinion in the context of the mentoring process (mode: 4, mean: 3.77).

The mentees stated that most elements of content creation were very important for the mentoring process – Figure 7.20. These were especially: information clarity (mean of answers: 4.78, median and mode: 5), information veracity (mean of answers: 4.77, median and mode: 5), information regular updating (mean of answers: 4.66, median and mode: 5), information completeness (mean of answers: 4.63, median and mode: 5) and provision of solicited information only (mean of answers: 4.51, median and mode: 5). Speed of response was assessed as an important element of content creation by half of the respondents and its mean reached the level of 4.10.
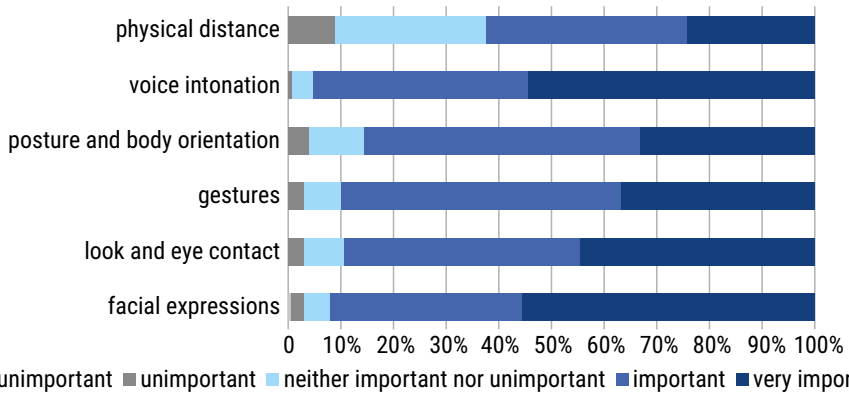
FIGURE 7.19. The significance of non-verbal channels and tools of communication in the mentoring process – mentees' opinions (own study)
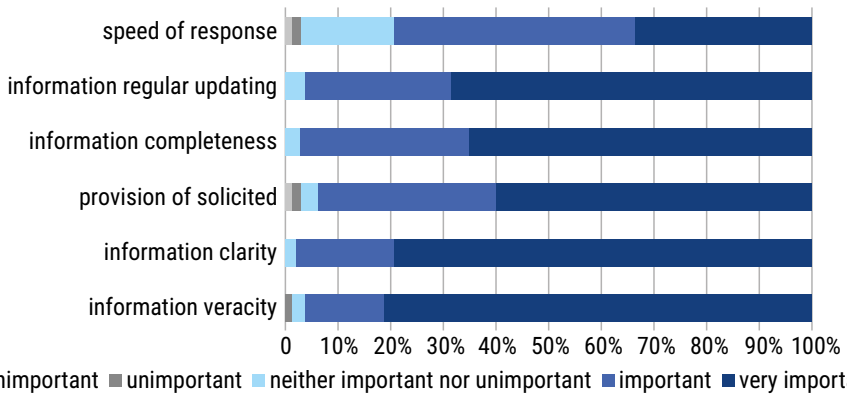

FIGURE 7.20. The significance of the content in the mentoring process – mentees' opinions (own study)

In the opinion of the researched mentees almost all levels of social engagement are significantly important for the relationship between the mentor and the mentee in the mentoring process – Figure 7.21. Engagement reached the mean of answers at a level of 4.71 with the median and mode at the level of 5. Information got the mean of answers at a level of 4.54 and the median and mode at the level of 5. Consulting obtained the mean of 4.51 and the median and mode at the level of 5. Only co-decision had the common value in the sample – 4, the same as median, with the mean of 4.18.

The respondents also accessed factors affecting the effectiveness of communication. For the mentees, it was comparatively important when the message leads to a specific action (mean: 4.59, median, mode: 5), the goal of mentoring process has been reached (mean: 4.50, median, mode: 5), the goal of the meeting has been reached (mean: 4.49, median, mode: 5), the content is understood (mean: 4.47, median,

mode: 5) and the decision is made about the issue (mean: 4.36, median: 4, mode: 5). According to respondents, gaining emotional support was relatively less important for the effectiveness of communication in the mentoring process.
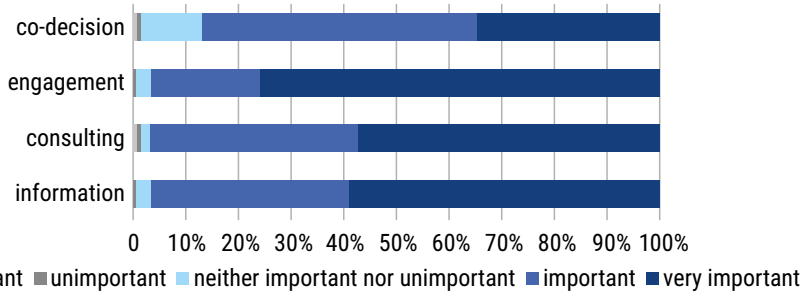

FIGURE 7.21. The significance of social engagement in the mentoring process – mentees' opinions (own study)
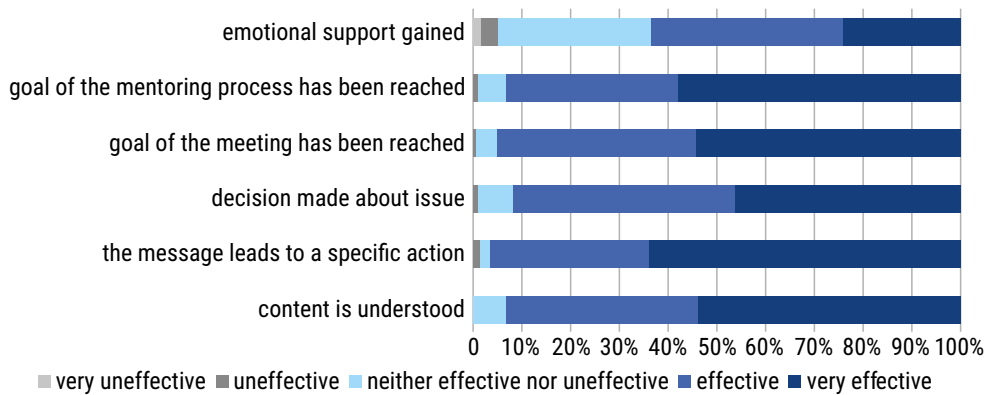

FIGURE 7.22. The factors providing the effectiveness of communication in the mentoring process – mentees' opinions (own study)

In the mentees' opinion, the most important traits of mentors in the communication in the mentoring process are: honesty (mean: 4.54, median, mode: 5), ability to create a wish to communicate and cooperate (mean: 4.47, median, mode: 5), skills to actively listen (mean: 4.45, median, mode: 5), openness (mean: 4.37, median: 4, mode: 5), ability to argue (mean: 4.33, median: 4, mode: 5) and ability to put oneself in another's shoes (mean: 4.31, median: 4, mode: 5). According to the mentees, unimportant traits of mentors in the mentoring process are their demographic issues, such as: sex (mean: 1.87, median, mode: 1), nationality (mean: 1.96, median: 2, mode:1), social status (mean: 2.13, median: 2, mode: 1), age (mean: 2.20, median: 2, mode: 1) and ideological views (mean: 2.25, median: 2, mode: 1) – Figure 7.23.
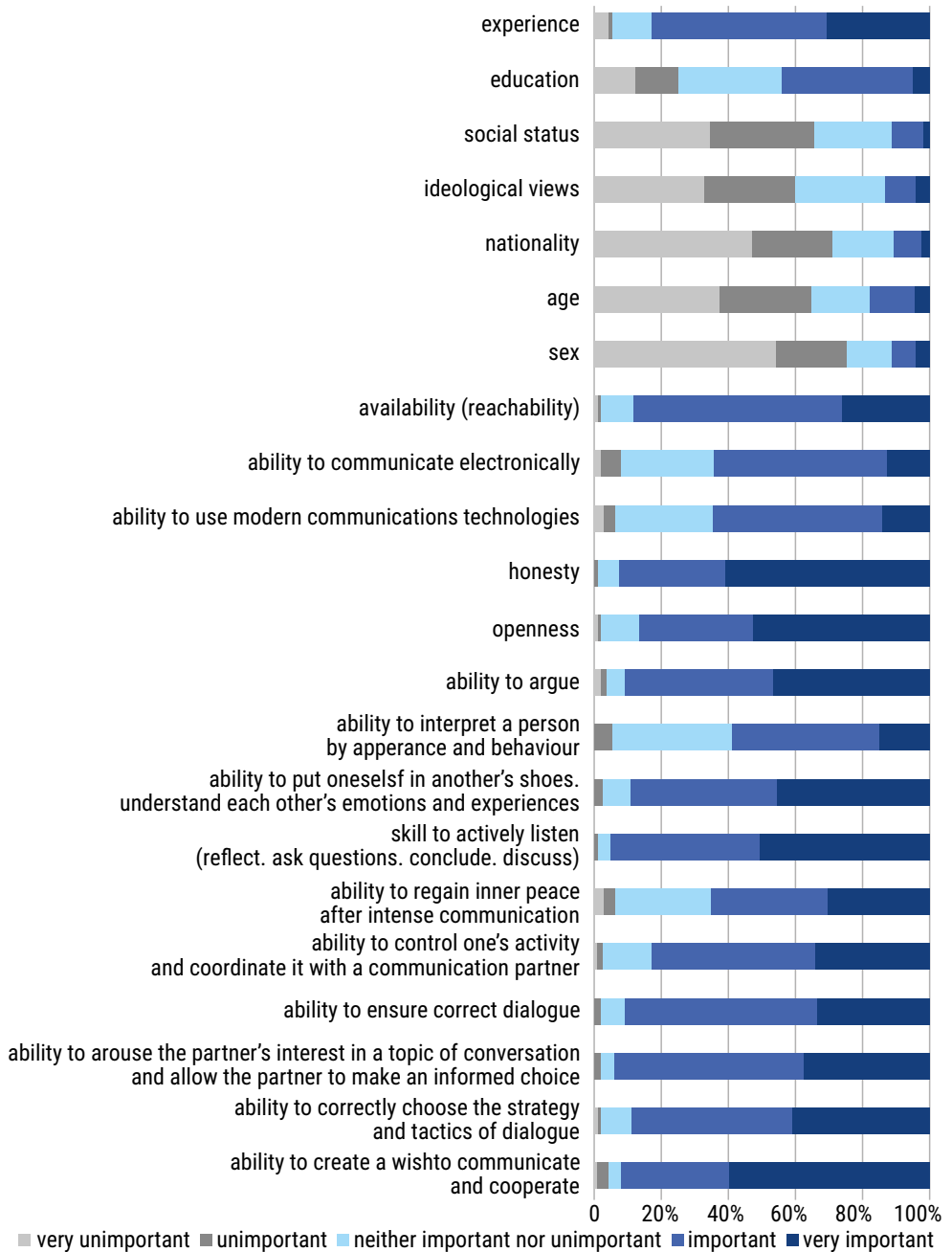
FIGURE 7.23. The significance of mentor traits in communication in the mentoring process – mentees' opinions (own study)

The mentees also selected barriers to communication in the mentoring process. The most significant are source reliability (mean: 4.39, median: 4, mode: 5) and lack of time (mean: 4.37, median, mode: 4) – Figure 7.24. According to the respondents, the least significant barriers are phonematic obstacles (mean: 3.11, median, mode: 3) as well as cultural and national obstacles (mean: 3.13, median: 3, mode: 4).
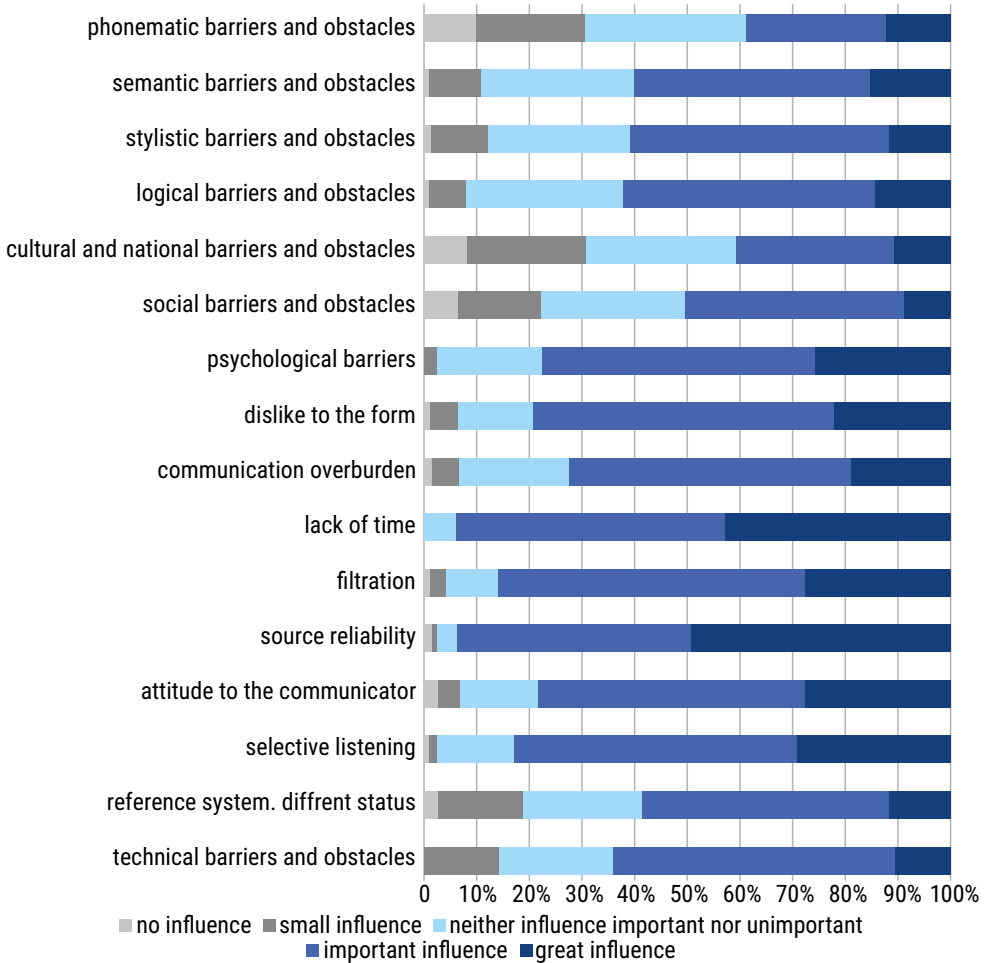

FIGURE 7.24. Barriers to communication in the mentoring process – mentees' opinions (own study)

The mentees who took part in the research suggested what skills a mentor should have. The respondents pointed to both soft competencies as well as specific knowledge and qualification of mentors. They claimed that mentors should have the ability to use knowledge, establish relationships with the mentee and to have motivational skills. Moreover, they stated that mentors should be available for mentees, honest, forgiving

and helpful. They should also be good listeners. Empathy is a crucial skill for mentors, mainly in terms of the mentees' situation so as not to treat mentees with superiority.

At the same time, the mentees regarded that mentors should have qualifications in a given field that mentees can learn something about, and not just have a conversation. Mentors should also have an ability to refer to their own experiences.

According to the respondents' opinions, mentors are responsible for the organization of the mentoring process. They should clearly state the goal towards which the mentee should head and find a way to effectively transfer knowledge and information.

The respondents defined a mentor as a person who has achieved success in the field in which a mentee also wishes to be successful. Otherwise, it would be worth looking for another mentor. The mentor should remember that his/her success consists of the sum of small steps. It would be good to be able to determine at what stages the mentee should take specific steps so as to avoid discouragement.

The comparison of mentor-mentee research results

The research in Poland was carried out on the sample of 222 respondents. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum) were indicated for statements and opinions of the mentees and the mentors with regard to the mentoring process: oral and written channels and tools of communication, the significance of non-verbal channels and tools of communication, the significance of elements of content creation, social engagement in the mentoring process and mentor traits as well as factors influencing the effectiveness of communication and barriers to communication (Tables 7.1-7.8).

TABLE 7.1. Descriptive statistics – mentees' and mentors' opinions about the significance of oral channels and tools of communication in the mentoring process (own study)

Specification	Mean	Std. deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Face to face conversation	4.8	0.4	3.0	5.0
Face to face group meeting	4.2	0.7	1.0	5.0
Phone call	3.7	0.8	2.0	5.0
Video or audioconference	3.8	0.8	1.0	5.0

TABLE 7.2. Descriptive statistics – mentees' and mentors' opinions about the significance of written channels and tools of communication in the mentoring process (own study)

Specification	Mean	Std. deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Written letter and memos	3.8	0.9	1.0	5.0
Reports	4.0	0.9	1.0	5.0
Presentations	3.8	0.9	1.0	5.0

Specification	Mean	Std. deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Manuals	4.2	0.8	1.0	5.0
Notices and announcements	3.8	0.9	1.0	5.0
E-mail	4.1	0.8	1.0	5.0
Newsletter	2.7	0.9	1.0	5.0
Internal communication platforms	3.8	0.8	1.0	5.0
Document sharing software	3.9	0.9	1.0	5.0
Internal podcasts	3.3	1.1	1.0	5.0
Internal social media	3.4	1.0	1.0	5.0
Blog	2.8	1.1	1.0	5.0

TABLE 7.3. Descriptive statistics – mentees' and mentors' opinions about the significance of non-verbal channels and tools of communication in the mentoring process (own study)

Specification	Mean	Std. deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Facial expressions	4.5	0.7	1.0	5.0
Look and eye contact	4.4	0.7	2.0	5.0
Gestures	4.3	0.7	2.0	5.0
Posture and body orientation	4.3	0.7	2.0	5.0
Voice intonation	4.5	0.6	2.0	5.0
Physical distance	3.9	0.9	1.0	5.0

TABLE 7.4. Descriptive statistics – mentees' and mentors' opinions about the significance of information exchange in the mentoring process (own study)

Specification	Mean	Std. deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Information veracity	4.8	0.5	2.0	5.0
Information clarity	4.8	0.5	3.0	5.0
Provision of solicited information only	4.6	0.6	1.0	5.0
Information completeness	4.6	0.6	2.0	5.0
Information regular updating	4.6	0.6	3.0	5.0
Speed of response	4.1	0.8	1.0	5.0

TABLE 7.5. Descriptive statistics – mentees' and mentors' opinions about the significance of social engagement in the mentoring process (own study)

Specification	Mean	Std. deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Information	4.5	0.7	1.0	5.0
Consulting	4.5	0.6	1.0	5.0
Engagement	4.8	0.5	1.0	5.0
Co-decision	4.2	0.7	1.0	5.0

TABLE 7.6. Descriptive statistics – mentees' and mentors' opinions about factors providing the effectiveness of communication in the mentoring process

Specification	Mean	Std. deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Content is understood	4.5	0.7	1.0	5.0
The message leads to a specific action	4.6	0.6	1.0	5.0
Decision made about issue	4.4	0.7	1.0	5.0
Goal of the meeting has been reached	4.5	0.7	1.0	5.0
Goal of the mentoring process has been reached	4.5	0.7	1.0	5.0
Emotional support gained	3.9	0.9	1.0	5.0

TABLE 7.7. Descriptive statistics – mentees' and mentors' opinions about the significance of mentor traits in the mentoring process (own study)

Specification	Mean	Std. deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Ability to create a wish to communicate and cooperate	4.5	0.7	1.0	5.0
Ability to correctly choose the strategy and tactics of dialogue	4.3	0.7	1.0	5.0
Ability to arouse the partner's interest in a topic of conversation and allow the partner to make an informed choice	4.4	0.7	1.0	5.0
Ability to ensure correct dialogue	4.3	0.7	2.0	5.0
Ability to control one's activity and coordinate it with a communication partner	4.2	0.8	1.0	5.0
Ability to regain inner peace after intense communication	3.9	1.0	1.0	5.0
Skill to actively listen (reflect, ask questions, conclude, discuss)	4.6	0.6	1.0	5.0
Ability to put oneself in another's shoes, understand each other's emotions and experiences	4.4	0.7	1.0	5.0
Ability to interpret a person by appearance and behaviour	3.6	1.0	1.0	5.0
Ability to argue	4.4	0.7	1.0	5.0
Openness	4.4	0.7	1.0	5.0
Honesty	4.5	0.7	1.0	5.0

Specification	Mean	Std. deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Ability to use modern communication technologies	3.8	0.9	1.0	5.0
Ability to communicate electronically	3.8	0.9	10	5.0
Availability (reachability)	4.2	0.7	1.0	5.0
Sex	1.9	1.1	1.0	5.0
Age	2.2	1.2	1.0	5.0
Nationality	1.9	1.1	1.0	5.0
Ideological views	2.2	1.2	1.0	5.0
Social status	2.2	1.1	1.0	5.0
Education	3.2	1.1	1.0	5.0
Experience	4.1	0.9	1.0	5.0

TABLE 7.8. Descriptive statistics – mentees' and mentors' opinions about barriers to communication in the mentoring process (own study)

Specification	Mean	Std. deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Technical barriers and obstacles	3.6	0.9	1.0	5.0
Reference system, different status	34	1.0	1.0	5.0
Selective listening	4,1	0.8	1.0	5.0
Attitude to the communicator	4.0	0.9	1.0	5.0
Source reliability	4.5	0.7	1.0	5.0
Filtration	4.1	0.8	1.0	5.0
Lack of time	4.3	0.7	2.0	5.0
Communication overburden	3.9	0.9	1.0	5.0
Dislike to the form	4.0	0.8	1.0	5.0
Psychophysiological barriers	4.0	0.7	2.0	5.0
Social barriers and obstacles	3.2	1.0	1.0	5.0
Cultural and national barriers and obstacles	3.1	1.1	1.0	5.0
Logical barriers and obstacles	3.7	0.8	1.0	5.0
Stylistic barriers and obstacles	3.6	0.9	1.0	5.0
Semantic barriers and obstacles	3.6	0.9	1.0	5.0
Phonematic barriers and obstacles	3.2	1.1	1.0	5.0
Status	1.5	0.5	1.0	2.0

In order to evaluate the statistical differences between statements and opinions of the mentees and the mentors about the mentoring process, the statistical analysis was conducted. The analysis was based on non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test (Tables 7.9-7.16). The results of the test confirmed statistically significant differences

in the distribution of responses in four cases: one element of non-verbal communication – posture and body orientation (U=4811.5, p<0.05) and significance of three mentor traits important in the mentoring process, namely: ability to arouse the partner's interest in a topic of conversation and allow the partner to make an informed choice (U=4890.5, p<0.05); skill to actively listen (reflect, ask questions, conclude, discuss) (U=4713.0, p<0.05) and ability to argue (U=4898.5, p<0.05). In all other cases statistic differences are not significant (p>0.05).

TABLE 7.9. Differences between mentees' and mentors' opinions about the significance of oral channels and tools of communication in the mentoring process – Mann-Whitney U test results (own study)

Specification	Status	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Face to face conversation	Mentor	103	114.4	11786.0	5827.0	-0.9	0.40
	Mentee	119	109.0	12967.0			
Face to face group meeting	Mentor	103	111.5	11487.0	6126.0	0.0	1.00
	Mentee	119	111.5	13266.0			
Phone call	Mentor	103	118.0	12156.5	5456.5	-1.6	0.12
	Mentee	119	105.9	12596.5			
Video or audioconference	Mentor	103	114.0	11738.5	5874.5	-0.6	0.55
	Mentee	119	109.0	13014.5			

TABLE 7.10. Differences between mentees' and mentors' opinions about the significance of written channels and tools of communication in the mentoring process – Mann-Whitney U test results (own study)

Specification	Status	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Written letter and memos	Mentor	100	115.1	11512.5	5437.5	-1.2	0.23
	Mentee	119	105.7	12577.5			
Reports	Mentor	101	107.2	10827.5	5676.5	-0.8	0.44
	Mentee	119	113.3	13482.5			
Presentations	Mentor	101	114.9	11605.5	5564.5	-1.0	0.31
	Mentee	119	106.8	12704.5			
Manuals	Mentor	100	111.7	11164.5	5785.5	-0.4	0.70
	Mentee	119	108.6	12925.5			
Notices and announcements	Mentor	102	111.0	11325.0	6066.0	0.0	0.99
	Mentee	119	111.0	13206.0			

Specification	Status	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
E-mail	Mentor	102	113.0	11524.0	5867.0	-0.5	0.64
	Mentee	119	109.3	13007.0			
Newsletter	Mentor	101	113.0	11413.5	5655.5	-0.7	0.49
	Mentee	118	107.4	12676.5			
Internal communication platforms	Mentor	100	103.9	10394.0	5344.0	-1.4	0.15
	Mentee	119	115.1	13696.0			
Document sharing software	Mentor	101	106.9	10799.5	5648.5	-0.8	0.40
	Mentee	119	113.5	13510.5			
Internal podcasts	Mentor	99	108.0	10691.5	5741.5	-0.3	0.74
	Mentee	119	110.8	13179.5			
Internal social media	Mentor	101	110.6	11166.5	6003.5	0.0	0.99
	Mentee	119	110.5	13143.5			
Blog	Mentor	99	111.5	11033.5	5697.5	-0.4	0.67
	Mentee	119	107.9	12837.5			

TABLE 7.11. Differences between mentees' and mentors' opinions about the significance of non-verbal channels and tools of communication in the mentoring process – Mann-Whitney U test results (own study)

Specification	Status	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Facial expressions	Mentor	102	116.2	11856.0	5535.0	-1.3	0.19
	Mentee	119	106.5	12675.0			
Look and eye contact	Mentor	101	116.8	11801.0	5369.0	-1.5	0.13
	Mentee	119	105.1	12509.0			
Gestures	Mentor	102	115.1	11736.0	5655.0	-1.0	0.33
	Mentee	119	107.5	12795.0			
Posture and body orientation	Mentor	101	120.4	12156.5	4811.5	-2.6	**0.01**
	Mentee	117	100.1	11714.5			
Voice intonation	Mentor	102	115.3	11763.5	5627.5	-1.1	0.28
	Mentee	119	107.3	12767.5			
Physical distance	Mentor	102	118.2	12052.0	5339.0	-1.6	0.10
	Mentee	119	104.9	12479.0			

TABLE 7.12. Differences between mentees' and mentors' opinions about the significance of content in the mentoring process – Mann-Whitney U test results (own study)

Specification	Status	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Information veracity	Mentor	102	115.7	11801.0	5590.0	-1.6	0.10
	Mentee	119	107.0	12730.0			
Information clarity	Mentor	102	109.7	11188.5	5935.5	-0.4	0.69
	Mentee	119	112.1	13342.5			
Provision of solicited information only	Mentor	102	116.0	11827.0	5564.0	-1.3	0.21
	Mentee	119	106.8	12704.0			
Information completeness	Mentor	102	110.2	11241.5	5988.5	-0.2	0.84
	Mentee	119	111.7	13289.5			
Information regular updating	Mentor	102	106.4	10855.5	5602.5	-1.2	0.24
	Mentee	119	114.9	13675.5			
Speed of response	Mentor	102	111.8	11406.0	5883.0	-0.3	0.76
	Mentee	118	109.4	12904.0			

TABLE 7.13. Differences between mentees' and mentors' opinions about the significance of social engagement in the mentoring process – Mann-Whitney U test results (own study)

Specification	Status	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Information	Mentor	102	104.0	10603.5	5350.5	-1.7	0.08
	Mentee	119	117.0	13927.5			
Consulting	Mentor	101	107.6	10868.0	5717.0	-0.7	0.48
	Mentee	119	113.0	13442.0			
Engagement	Mentor	101	113.5	11461.0	5709.0	-0.9	0.38
	Mentee	119	108.0	12849.0			
Co-decision	Mentor	102	113.1	11540.5	5850.5	-0.5	0.61
	Mentee	119	109.2	12990.5			

TABLE 7.14. Differences between mentees' and mentors' opinions about factors providing the effectiveness of communication in the mentoring process – Mann-Whitney U test results (own study)

Specification	Status	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Content is understood	Mentor	102	111.0	11323.0	6068.0	0.0	1.00
	Mentee	119	111.0	13208.0			
The message leads to a specific action	Mentor	102	111.2	11339.5	6051.5	0.0	0.96
	Mentee	119	110.9	13191.5			
Decision made about issue	Mentor	102	114.3	11658.5	5732.5	-0.8	0.43
	Mentee	119	108.2	12872.5			
Goal of the meeting has been reached	Mentor	102	113.1	11537.5	5853.5	-0.5	0.60
	Mentee	119	109.2	12993.5			
Goal of the mentoring process has been reached	Mentor	101	113.7	11480.5	5689.5	-0.8	0.43
	Mentee	119	107.8	12829.5			
Emotional support gained	Mentor	102	114.7	11696.0	5593.0	-1.0	0.34
	Mentee	118	106.9	12614.0			

TABLE 7.15. Differences between mentees' and mentors' opinions about the significance of mentor traits in the mentoring process – Mann-Whitney U test results (own study)

Specification	Status	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Ability to create a wish to communicate and cooperate	Mentor	102	107.8	10995.0	5742.0	-0.1	0.96
	Mentee	113	108.2	12225.0			
Ability to correctly choose the strategy and tactics of dialogue	Mentor	102	112.1	11432.5	5142.5	-1.3	0.20
	Mentee	111	102.3	11358.5			
Ability to arouse the partner's interest in a topic of conversation and allow the partner to make an informed choice	Mentor	102	116.6	11888.5	4890.5	-2.2	**0.03**
	Mentee	113	100.3	11331.5			
Ability to ensure correct dialogue	Mentor	102	109.6	11176.0	5501.0	-0.5	0.60
	Mentee	112	105.6	11829.0			

Specification	Status	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Ability to control one's activity and coordinate it with a communication partner	Mentor	102	108.6	11080.0	5699.0	-0.2	0.88
	Mentee	113	107.4	12140.0			
Ability to regain inner peace after intense communication	Mentor	102	107.5	10968.0	5715.0	-0.1	0.91
	Mentee	113	108.4	12252.0			
Skill to actively listen (reflect, ask questions, conclude, discuss)	Mentor	102	118.3	12066.0	4713.0	-2.7	**0.01**
	Mentee	113	98.7	11154.0			
Ability to put oneself in another's shoes, understand each other's emotions and experiences	Mentor	102	111.2	11343.5	5435.5	-0.8	0.42
	Mentee	113	105.1	11876.5			
Ability to interpret a person by appearance and behaviour	Mentor	101	110.1	11115.0	5348.0	-0.7	0.46
	Mentee	112	104.3	11676.0			
Ability to argue	Mentor	102	116.5	11880.5	4898.5	-2.1	**0.03**
	Mentee	113	100.4	11339.5			
Openness	Mentor	101	109.9	11094.5	5469.5	-0.6	0.56
	Mentee	113	105.4	11910.5			
Honesty	Mentor	101	107.7	10882.0	5581.0	-0.2	0.84
	Mentee	112	106.3	11909.0			
Ability to use modern communication technologies	Mentor	101	113.3	11444.0	5120.0	-1.4	0.17
	Mentee	113	102.3	11561.0			
Ability to communicate electronically	Mentor	100	113.8	11374.5	4975.5	-1.6	0.11
	Mentee	113	101.0	11416.5			
Availability (reachability)	Mentor	102	114.3	11659.5	5119.5	-1.6	0.10
	Mentee	113	102.3	11560.5			
Sex	Mentor	102	109.8	11203.5	5575.5	-0.4	0.65
	Mentee	113	106.3	12016.5			
Age	Mentor	102	108.2	11031.5	5747.5	0.0	0.97
	Mentee	113	107.9	12188.5			
Nationality	Mentor	102	106.6	10868.0	5615.0	-0.3	0.73
	Mentee	113	109.3	12352.0			

Specification	Status	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Ideological views	Mentor	102	107.2	10934.5	5681.5	-0.2	0.85
	Mentee	113	108.7	12285.5			
Social status	Mentor	101	109.2	11029.5	5534.5	-0.4	0.69
	Mentee	113	106.0	11975.5			
Education	Mentor	101	109.5	11056.0	5508.0	-0.5	0.64
	Mentee	113	105.7	11949.0			
Experience	Mentor	102	112.0	11420.0	5359.0	-1.0	0.33
	Mentee	113	104.4	11800.0			

TABLE 7.16. Differences between mentees' and mentors' opinions about the barriers to communication in the mentoring process – Mann-Whitney U test results (own study)

Specification	Status	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Technical barriers and obstacles.	Mentor	101	106.9	10799.5	5562.5	-0.1	0.92
	Mentee	111	1061	11778.5			
Reference system, different status	Mentor	101	99,9	10092.5	4941.5	-1.6	0.12
	Mentee	111	112.5	12485.5			
Selective listening	Mentor	100	106.3	10631.5	5418.5	-0.2	0.83
	Mentee	110	10.,8	11523.5			
Attitude to the communicator	Mentor	101	10.,9	10690.5	5539.5	-0.2	0.87
	Mentee	111	10.,1	11887.5			
Source reliability	Mentor	100	110.1	11007.0	5143.0	-1.0	0.30
	Mentee	111	102.3	11359.0			
Filtration	Mentor	100	107.4	10737.5	5412.5	-0.3	0.73
	Mentee	111	104.8	11628.5			
Lack of time	Mentor	99	103.3	10225.0	5275.0	-0.6	0.58
	Mentee	111	107.5	11930.0			
Communication overburden	Mentor	100	111.3	11132.5	5017.5	-1.3	0.19
	Mentee	111	101.2	11233.5			
Dislike to the form	Mentor	98	107.4	10526.0	5203.0	-0.6	0.54
	Mentee	111	102.9	11419.0			
Psychophysiological barriers	Mentor	100	103.0	10301.5	5251.5	-0.7	0.46
	Mentee	111	108.7	12064.5			

Specification	Status	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Social barriers and obstacles	Mentor	100	100.9	10087.5	5037.5	-1.2	0.23
	Mentee	111	110.6	12278.5			
Cultural and national barriers and obstacles	Mentor	101	104.5	10557.5	5406.5	-0.5	0.64
	Mentee	111	108.3	12020.5			
Logical barriers and obstacles	Mentor	101	111.5	11264.0	5098.0	-1.2	0.21
	Mentee	111	101.9	11314.0			
Stylistic barriers and obstacles	Mentor	101	107.5	10853.5	5508.5	-0.2	0.81
	Mentee	111	105.6	11724.5			
Semantic barriers and obstacles	Mentor	100	106.2	10624.0	5426.0	-0.2	0.86
	Mentee	110	104.8	11531.0			
Phonematic barriers and obstacles	Mentor	101	109.7	11078.0	5284.0	-0.7	0.46
	Mentee	111	103.6	11500.0			

In sum, on the basis of the obtained findings of primary research for Poland it can be stated that the mentors and the mentees have a comparable attitude towards the mentoring process, as their answers do not differ to a significant extent.

CHAPTER 8
Development and introduction
of a communication competencies model
for enhancing and maintaining a business
mentor network in Latvia (survey results)

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A group of researchers from Rezekne Academy of Technologies implements a project entitled "Development and Introduction of a Communication Competencies Model for Enhancing and Maintaining a Business Mentor Network".

The project also aims to survey individuals (current and potential entrepreneurs and businesspersons in Latvia) in order identify the respondents' opinions on the communication skills needed for and the barriers and problems faced by mentors and mentees in their communication.

The survey was conducted in the period from 1 March to 30 June. A total of 102 questionnaires valid for analysis were filled in and received.

After summarizing the results of the survey, it could be concluded that almost half of 102 respondents, or 43.1%, were aged 30 to 40 years (see Figure 8.1).
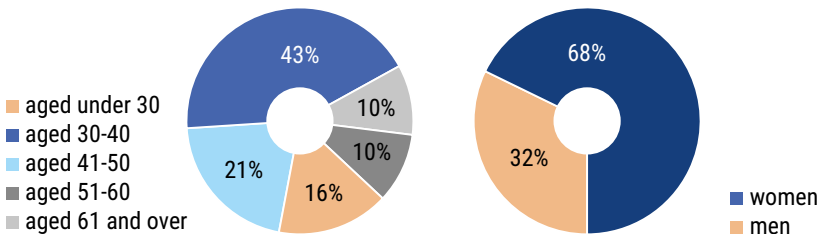
FIGURE 8.1. Distribution of the respondents by age and sex, % (authors' calculations based on survey results)

The next largest age group, 21.6%, were respondents aged 41 to 50.

The distribution of the respondents by sex showed that the highest proportion, or 67.6%, was made up of women (see Figure 8.1).

The analysis of the respondents by occupation revealed that the highest proportion was composed of "specialists" (44.7%), which means that these respondents were familiar with a particular industry and had sector-specific knowledge (see Table 8.1).

TABLE 8.1. Distribution of the respondents by occupation, % (authors' calculations based on survey results)

Occupation	Number of replies	%
Manager (top-level)	27	26.2
Head of a department (medium-level manager)	14	13.6
Manager (lower-level)	6	5.8
Specialist	46	44.7
Other	10	9.7
Total:	**103***	**100**

NOTE: *one respondent indicated him/herself in two categories.

Of the total respondents, 26.2% identified themselves as top-level managers and 13.6% as medium-level managers. The respondents, indicating their occupations as "other", identified themselves as an office administrator, an office clerk, an assistant project manager, a self-employed person etc.

The analysis of the respondents by work experience and education revealed that the highest proportion was composed of those with work experience of more than 6 years (68%) and those having no technical education (72.5 %) (see Figure 8.2). This indicates that the majority of the respondents had education in other fields.
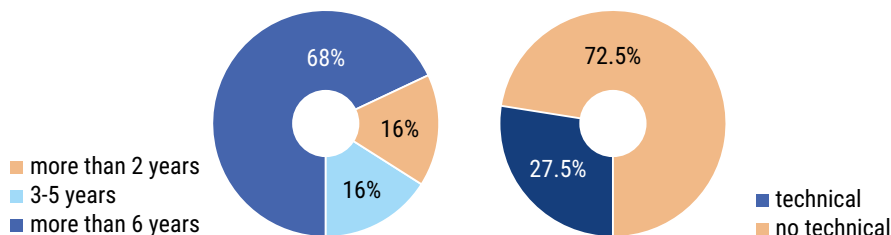
FIGURE 8.2. Distribution of the respondents by work experience and technical education, % (authors' construction based on survey results)

For the research, it was important to find out in which field of economic activity the respondent was involved. As shown in Figure 8.3, agriculture with 40.9%, or 47 respondents, was the most represented field among the surveyed. A high proportion of the respondents, i.e. 31.3% (36 respondents), ticked the option "other", indicating such fields as education (3 times), finance and accounting (3 times), media

and public relations (2 times), as well as fisheries, food processing and catering, economics, medicine etc.

Since the goal of the survey was to identify the respondents' opinions on communication skills needed for and the barriers and problems faced by mentors and mentees in their communication, it was important to understand the respondents' chosen role – the mentor, the mentee or the other option (see Figure 8.3).
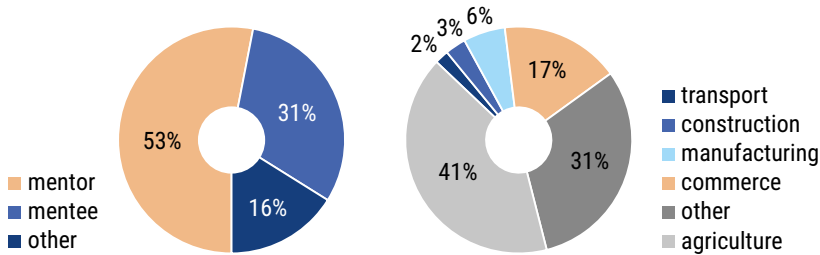
FIGURE 8.3. Distribution of the respondents by role in the survey and by occupation, % (authors' construction based on survey results)

More than half of the respondents, or 53.2%, indicated that they considered themselves mentors. However, 31.2% of the respondents chose the role of a "mentee". The remaining 15.6% chose the option "other", indicating that they lacked experience in mentoring or were interested in it etc.

In the further course of the research, the roles of the respondents were examined in depth across various age groups (see Table 8.2), taking into account their sex, age, occupation, experience and field of economic activity.

TABLE 8.2. Distribution of the respondents by role, sex, age, occupation, work experience and field of economic activity (authors' calculations based on survey results)

Criteria	Mentor		Mentee		Other	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
By age						
Below 30	3	5.2	11	32.4	2	11.8
Aged 30-40	23	39.7	17	50.0	7	41.2
Aged 41-50	16	27.6	3	8.8	5	29.4
Aged 51-60	6	10.3	2	5.9	3	17.6
61 and above	10	17.2	1	2.9	0	0.0

Criteria	Mentor		Mentee		Other	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
By sex						
Women	34	58.6	23	67.6	15	88.2
Men	24	41.4	11	32.4	2	11.8
By occupation						
Manager (higher-level)	23	39.0	6	17.6	2	11.8
Head of a department (medium-level manager)	7	11.9	5	14.7	4	23.5
Manager (lower-level)	5	8.5	1	2.9	0	0.0
Specialist	19	32.2	19	55.9	8	47.1
Other	5	8.5	3	8.8	3	17.6
By work experience						
More than 2 years	2	3.4	10	29.4	4	23.5
3-5 years	6	10.3	8	23.5	2	11.8
More than 6 years	50	86.2	16	47.1	11	64.7
By field of activity						
Manufacturing	4	6.2	2	5.0	1	5.0
Construction	2	3.1	2	5.0	0	0.0
Agriculture	25	38.5	19	47.5	8	40.0
Commerce	11	16.9	8	20.0	2	10.0
Transport	1	1.5	1	2.5	0	0.0
Other	22	33.8	8	20.0	9	45.0

As shown in Table 8.2, younger respondents preferred the role of a mentee (11 respondents), which could be explained by the fact that the respondents lacked experience. However, only 3 respondents chose the role of mentor in the above-mentioned age group.

The respondents aged 30-40 were more likely to assume the role of a mentor or willing to share their experience with others. In this age group, there were also quite many respondents who indicated that they would like to take on the role of a mentee. Admittedly, the respondents could also choose both roles.

The results of the Chi-square test revealed that the older the respondent was, the less frequently s/he chose the role of mentee.

Based on the generated empirical and theoretical frequency distributions, the empirical Chi-square was calculated using the following equation:

$$x^2 = \sum_{i=1}^{k} \frac{(n_{1i} - n_{2i})}{n_{2i}}$$

where:

n_{1i} – empirical frequency distribution for the i-th group;

n_{2i} – theoretical frequency distribution for the corresponding group;

i – serial number;

k – number of groups*.

The sample survey showed that the older the respondent was, the less frequently s/he chose the role of a mentee. Besides, Table 8.2 shows the roles of the respondents broken down by sex. As the previous analysis revealed, women were more represented in the survey.

The analysis of the survey data showed that the choices of roles by women were almost evenly distributed: the role of a mentor was preferred by 34 respondents, yet the role of a mentee – by 23. However, 24 male respondents believed that they mostly fit the role of a mentor, yet the role of a mentee was preferred by more than two-fold fewer men, or 11. The distribution of the respondents by occupation revealed that 39.0% managers (top managers) chose the role of a mentor, and only 17.6% chose the role of a mentee. Specialists, however, preferred the role of a mentee (55.9%).

The results of the Chi-square test revealed that the higher-level manager the respondent was, the more frequently the role of mentor was chosen by the respondent.

The sample survey showed that top-level managers preferred the role of a mentor.

In relation to the respondents' work experience, as shown in Table 8.3, it could be concluded that, mostly, the role of a mentor was chosen by the respondents with more experience – more than 6 years – 86.2%. In contrast, the role of a mentee was chosen by the respondents with less experience – more than two years (but less than three years) –29.4%.

The results of the Chi-square test revealed that the more experience the respondent had, the more frequently the role of a mentor was chosen.

The survey showed that 76.5% respondents with no technical education chose the role of a mentee. However, the role of a mentor was chosen proportionally equally – 50.0%.

Assessing the role and functions of each element during the development of the questionnaire, the aspects that are considered the most important in the mentoring process at each stage – sender, message, channel and recipient – were selected. The following aspects of communication related to the nonverbal behaviour of a sender and a recipient were rated as the most important: *facial expressions, look and eye contact, gestures, posture and body orientation, voice intonation and physical distance.* The respondents' replies were rated on a five-level scale (very unimportant (1 point),

* Arhipova, I., Bāliņa, S. (2003), *Statistika ekonomikā. Risinājumi ar SPSS un Microsoft Excel (Statistics in Economics. Solutions with SPSS and Microsoft Excel)*, Datorzinību centrs, Rīga

unimportant (2 points), neither important nor unimportant (3 points), important (4 points) and very important (5 points)).

Rating the nonverbal means of communication, the respondents gave the highest ratings to voice intonation (4.27) and the look and eye contact (4.23), whereas the lowest ratings – to gestures (3.99) and physical distance (3.84) (see Table 8.3).

The mentors rated nonverbal communication elements as important (4 points) or very important (5 points). Out of the mentors, 51.7% believed that *gestures, posture and body orientation* were important. *Voice intonation and physical distance* were important to the mentees. As shown in Table 8.3, the most significant difference between a mentor and a mentee was represented by *physical distance*, i.e. it was very important to the mentees, whereas body language was important to the mentors – to express themselves as well as to see and comprehend the intention of the communication partner. For example, the mentors regarded gestures as important, whereas the mentees considered them to be neither important nor unimportant (38.2%). Besides, the mentors considered voice intonation to be very important (48.3%), and half of the mentees (50%) regarded it as important. In contrast, the other respondents considered the *look and eye contact, gestures, posture and body orientation* to be important elements. Out of other respondents' answers, 52.9% of them regarded the *look and eye contact* as very important.

TABLE 8.3. Ratings of nonverbal communication elements by the respondents, % and points (authors' calculations based on survey results)

Nonverbal communication elements	Average rating, points	Mentors		Mentees		Other	
		%	points	%	points	%	points
Facial expressions	4.16	46.6	4	44.1	4	47.1	4
Look and eye contact	4.23	48.3	4	41.2	4	52.9	5
Gestures	3.99	**51.7**	4	38.2	3	41.2	5
Posture and body orientation	4.10	**51.7**	4	41.2	4	47.1	5
Voice intonation	4.27	48.3	5	50	4	47.1	5
Physical distance	3.84	37.9	4	50	4	47.1	4

As shown in Table 8.4, an analysis of verbal communication elements reveals that *face to face communication* with an average rating of 4.56 points was the primary element for the mentors (62.1%), the mentees (50%) and the other respondents (70.6%), and was rated as very important.

Phone calls with an average rating of 3.96 points as well as *face to face group meetings* with an average rating of 3.91 points were important means of communication. *Circulars* had the lowest average rating (3.01), indicating that informative,

impersonal communication is not as important as personal communication. For example, 72.4% of the mentors considered a phone call to be important, as did the mentees (67.6%) and the other respondents (64.7%). Electronic communication or emails were also highly rated by the mentees (61.8%); out of the mentors, though, 51.7% gave a rating of 4 points to them, and 47.1% of other respondents also rated them as important.

The mentors rated nonverbal communication elements as important (4 points) or very important (5 points). Out of the mentors, 51.7% believed that *gestures, posture and body orientation* were important. *Voice intonation and physical distance* were important to the mentees. As shown in Table 8.3, the most significant difference between a mentor and a mentee was represented by *physical distance* that was very important to the mentees, whereas body language was important to the mentors – to express themselves as well as to see and comprehend the intention of the communication partner. For example, the mentors regarded gestures as important, whereas the mentees considered them to be neither important nor unimportant (38.2%). Besides, the mentors considered voice intonation to be very important (48.3%), and half of the mentees (50%) regarded it as important. In contrast, the other respondents considered the *look and eye contact, gestures, posture and body orientation* to be important ones. Out of the other respondents, 52.9% regarded the *look and eye contact* as very important.

TABLE 8.4. Ratings of the kind/means of communication by the respondents, % and points (authors' calculations based on survey results)

Verbal communication elements	Average rating, points	Mentors		Mentees		Other	
		%	points	%	points	%	points
Face to face communication	4.56	**62.1**	**5**	**50.0**	**5**	**70.6**	**5**
Face to face group meetings	3.91	48.3	4	44.1	4	**58.8**	**4**
Phone calls	3.96	**72.4**	**4**	**67.6**	**4**	**64.7**	**4**
Video or audio conferences	3.59	**53.4**	**4**	**47.1**	**4**	**64.7**	**4**
Written letters and comments	3.63	50.0	4	41.2	4	**52.9**	**4**
Reports	3.38	48.3	4	**47.1**	**3**	**58.8**	**4**
Presentations	3.55	48.3	4	44.1	4	**47.1**	**4**
Manuals	3.44	41.4	4	**50.0**	**3**	**52.9**	**4**

Verbal communication elements	Average rating, points	Mentors		Mentees		Other	
		%	points	%	points	%	points
Notices	3.45	39.7	**3**	**41.2**	**3 and 4**	**58.8**	**4**
Emails	3.82	51.7	4	**61.8**	4	**47.1**	**4**
Circulars	3.01	44.8	3	50.0	3	**64.7**	**3**
Internal communication platforms	3.61	37.9	**4**	**35.3**	**3**	47.1	**4**
Document sharing software	3.63	43.1	**4**	**50.0**	**4**	47.1	**4**
Internal podcasts	3.16	50.0	**3**	**52.9**	**3**	47.1	**3**
Internal social media	3.30	**36.2**	**3 and 4**	32.4	**3.4**	52.9	**4**
Blogs	3.04	46.6	3	58.8	3	**41.2**	**3.4**

It could be concluded that the respondents considered the role of written communication and the form of communication and expression of the 21ˢᵗ century – blogs – to be less important for mentoring, rating them as neither important nor unimportant (3.04 points). This indicates that dialogue is important in the mentoring process, not the information that the mentor provides in the form of a blog and that is accessible to everyone. *Emails* were also highly rated by the mentors (51.7%) and the mentees (61.8%), which confirmed the importance of interpersonal communication. Official reports, statements and written letters also did not seem important to the respondents. In order that a message is properly understood and an effective response is made, the effectiveness of communication content has to be assessed. As showed by the replies, the mentors, the mentees and the other respondents rated the effectiveness of communication content or a message quite equally. The average ratings for the elements composing content ranged from 4.60 to 3.85 points, and the lowest rating was given to the assertion *only solicited information is provided*.

In terms of the effectiveness of communication content, the clarity (62.1%) and reliability (60.3%) of information were very important for the mentors in the process of creating a message; besides, the mentors rated the assertion a *message is understandable* as very important (53.4%) (see Table 8.5).

For the mentees, the fact that a *message led to a certain action* (67.6%) as well as *consulting* (67.7%) were important, which confirmed the mentees had an intention to participate in the consulting.

TABLE 8.5. Ratings of the effectiveness of communication content by the respondents, % and points (authors' calculations based on survey results)

Effectiveness of communication content	Average rating, points	Mentors		Mentees		Other	
		%	points	%	points	%	points
Message is understandable	4.52	53.4	5	58.8	4	88.2	5
Message leads to a certain action	4.35	50.0	4	**67.6**	4	47.1	5
Decision is made on the issue	4.40	51.7	4	**58.8**	4	70.6	5
Goal of the meeting has been achieved	4.37	46.6	4 and 5	52.9	4	52.9	5
Goal of mentoring has been achieved	4.26	44.8	5	61.8	4	52.9	5
Emotional support has been received	4.25	48.3	5	52.9	4	47.1	4
Reliability of information	4.60	60.3	5	58.8	5	88.2	5
Clarity of information	4.55	62.1	5	52.9	5	64.7	5
Provision of solicited information only	3.85	44.8	4	58.8	4	41.2	4
Completeness of information	4.47	50	5	50	5	58.8	5
Regular updating of information	4.34	51.7	4	52.9	4	64.7	5
Response time	4.36	46.6	4	50	4	58.8	5
Information	4.33	48.3	4	44.1	4	76.5	5
Consulting	4.27	46.6	4	67.6	4	64.7	5
Engagement	4.26	46.6	5	58.8	4	58.8	5
Joint decision	4.04	36.2	5	52.9	4	76.5	5

There were some differences in the ratings of the role "other" given by the respondents. The creation of a message was mainly given 5 points, except for the elements: *emotional support has been received*, as well as *only solicited information is provided* – the mentioned elements were given 4 points and chosen by respectively 47.1% and 41.2% other respondents. However, the other respondents rated a *message is understandable* (88.2%) and *reliability of information* (88.2%) as very important. *Joint decision-making* was also very important, 76.5% of the other respondents gave it 5 points, while only 36.2% of the mentors rated it as very important.

In the survey, the respondents were asked to describe a mentor's personality and social traits. The highest rating – 4.52 points – was given to the trait of *honesty* and *ability to create a wish to communicate and cooperate* – 4.51 points. In addition, an *ability to argue* (4.44 points), *openness* (4.37 points) as well as a *skill to actively listen (reflect, ask questions, conclude, discuss)* (4.37 points) were rated highly. As shown in Table 8.6, the lowest ratings in the range of 2.25-2.68 were given to a mentor's *sex, nationality, age* as well as *social status* and *ideological views*.

The analysis of the distribution of the respondents by role reveals that 72.4% mentors gave a rating of 4 points to an *ability to arouse the partner's interest in a topic of conversation* and allow the partner to make an informed choice. In the opinion of the mentors (62.1%), an *ability to create a wish to communicate and cooperate* was also important (see Table 8.6).

TABLE 8.6. Ratings of the mentor's communication skills and social traits by the respondents, % and points (authors' calculations based on survey results)

Communication skills	Average rating, points	Mentors		Mentees		Other	
		%	points	%	points	%	points
Ability to create a wish to communicate and cooperate	4.51	62.1	5	50.0	5	64.7	5
Ability to correctly choose the strategy and tactics of dialogue	4.31	48.3	4	44.1	4	58.8	5
Ability to arouse the partner's interest in a topic of conversation and allow the partner to make an informed choice	4.35	72.4	4	67.6	4	64.7	5
Ability to ensure correct dialogue	4.32	53.4	4	47.1	4	58.8	4
Ability to control one's activity and coordinate it with a communication partner	4.25	50.0	4	41.2	4	52.9	4
Ability to regain inner peace after intense communication	4.28	48.3	4	47.1	3	52.9	5
Skill to actively listen (reflect, ask questions, conclude, discuss)	4.37	48.3	4	44.1	4	52.9	5

Communication skills	Average rating, points	Mentors		Mentees		Other	
		%	points	%	points	%	points
Ability to put oneself in another's shoes, understand each other's emotions and experiences	4.27	41.4	4	50.0	3	52.9	4
Ability to interpret a person by appearance and behaviour	3.88	39.7	3	41.2	3 and 4	70.6	4
Ability to argue	4.44	51.7	4	61.8	4	58.8	5
Openness	4.37	44.8	3	50.0	3	52.9	5
Honesty	4.52	37.9	4	35.3	3	70.6	5
Ability to use modern communication technologies	4.12	43.1	4	50.0	4	58.8	4
Ability to communicate electronically	4.05	50.0	3	52.9	3	58.8	4
Availability (reachability)	4.25	36.2	3 and 4	32.4	3 and 4	52.9	5
Sex	2.25	46.6	3	58.8	3	35.3	1
Age	2.32	34.5	1	41.2	1	29.4	2.3
Nationality	2.40	29.3	3	26.5	3	35.3	2
Ideological views	2.68	31	4	35.3	1	35.3	3
Social status	2.52	29.3	3	32.4	1	41.2	3
Education	3.36	46.6	4	41.2	4	41.2	4
Experience	4.14	46.6	5	50	4	52.9	5

Out of the mentees, 67.6% believed it is important that a mentor has an *ability to arouse the partner's interest in a topic of conversation* and *allow the partner to make an informed choice*, meaning that the mentees appreciated an opinion that is not imposed. Unlike the mentors, more than half of the mentees considered an *ability to argue* (61.8%) and an *ability to ensure correct dialogue* (53.4%) to be important. In contrast, more than half of the other respondents considered an *ability to interpret a person by appearance and behaviour* (70.6%) and *honesty* (70.6%) to be important, and gave a rating of 5 points to an *ability to create a wish to communicate and cooperate* (64.7%) and an *ability to arouse the partner's interest in a topic of conversation and an ability to allow the partner to make an informed choice* (64.7%). It is important that less than half of the mentors (39.7%) and the mentees (41.2%) rated an *ability to interpret a person by appearance and behaviour* highly. Most of the other respondents rated highly the trait of *honesty*, compared with the mentors and the mentees, respectively 37.9% and 35.3%.

Unlike the mentors and the mentees, who rated an *ability to use modern communication technologies* as well as an *ability to communicate electronically* as neither important nor unimportant (3 points), the other respondents (58.8%) rated these abilities as important.

For communication to be effective, it is necessary to identify the hindrances that should be eliminated; therefore, the respondents were asked to rate the barriers that hindered successful mentoring (see Table 8.5). The highest average rating was given to *source reliability* (4.36), as well as a *lack of time* (4.04) and *psychological barriers and obstacles* (4.01). An inability to hear the other or a lack of empathy (*individuals tend to hear what they want to hear and do not hear what they do not want to hear*) was also given a high average rating (3.94) (see Table 8.7).

TABLE 8.7. Ratings of communication barriers by the respondents, % and points (authors' calculations based on survey results)

Communication barriers	Average rating, points	Mentors		Mentees		Other	
		%	points	%	points	%	points
Technical barriers and obstacles	3.66	48.3	5	64.7	4	35.5	3
Psychological barriers and obstacles	4.01	56.9	4	57.6	4	64.7	4
Reference system, different status	3.35	44.8	4	52.9	3	76.5	3
Differences among individuals – their personalities, experiences, knowledge, skills and status	3.63	55.2	4	47.1	4	52.9	4
Selective listening	3.74	56.9	4	52.9	4	64.7	4
Individuals tend to hear what they want to hear and do not hear what they do not want to hear	3.94	44.8	4	52.9	4	41.2	4
Attitude to the communicator	3.91	48.3	4	50	4	47.1	4
Source reliability	4.36	44.8	4	47.1	5	52.9	5
Filtration	3.81	51.7	4	47.1	4	41.2	4
Lack of time	4.04	58.6	4	55.9	4	41.2	4
Communication overburden	3.93	51.7	4	50	4	58.8	4

Communication barriers	Average rating, points	Mentors		Mentees		Other	
		%	points	%	points	%	points
It is due to the abundance of information	3.90	39.7	4	41.2	4	41.2	3.4
Dislike to the form (dislike to arguments, the communication style)	3.74	58.8	4	52.9	4	35.3	3.4
Psychophysiological barriers	3.86	58.6	4	50	4	52.9	4
Social barriers and obstacles	3.56	46.6	4	44.1	4	35.3	3
Cultural and national barriers and obstacles	3.59	53.4	4	41.2	3 and 4	41.2	4
Logical barriers and obstacles	3.82	65.5	4	52.9	4	41.2	4
Stylistic barriers and obstacles.	3.72	55.2	4	61.8	4	41.2	4
Semantic barriers and obstacles	3.72	50	4	52.9	4	58.8	4
Phonematic barriers and obstacles	3.56	46.6	4	52.9	4	41.2	3

The respondents considered the reference system and differences in status to be a less important barrier (3.35 points). However, there are differences in the distribution of roles – more than half of the mentors (65.5%) believed that *logical barriers and obstacles* were important, as well as another semantically related barrier – *dislike to the form (dislike to arguments, the communication style)* – received the support of more than half of the mentors (58.8%). The mentees, in contrast, considered *technical barriers and obstacles* (64.7%) and *stylistic barriers* (61.8%) to be important. A *lack of time* also received the indication of more than half of the mentors (57.6%). More than half of the other respondents, or 76.5%, rated the reference system and differences in status with 3 points. *Psychophysiological barriers* as well as *selective listening* were important barriers – 67% of the other respondents regarded them as important. Less than half of the other respondents (35.3%) rated *social barriers and obstacles* as neither important nor unimportant, and the mentors (46.6%) and the mentees (44.1%) also rated them as important. Unlike the mentors, the other respondents (35.3%) did not rate highly the *dislike to the form, or dislike to the arguments and communication style.*

The respondents were asked to write by themselves the skills that a mentor should possess. The received replies showed that the mentor has to be, first of all, a person

with experience and knowledge; at the same time, humanity must be maintained. The mentor has to be an understanding person – *mainly humane, not proud, not arrogant, communicative and open* – and able to *develop and grow together with the mentee*; in addition, the mentor needs to be *creative and innovative* and able *not to show his/her superiority*. There was also a reply that the mentor has to have an ability to teach, which means that the mentor is not only the facilitator of the process and an advisor, but s/he is given the role of a teacher. It could be concluded that the respondents mainly emphasized good traits of a mentor and the mentor's ability to "influence" the mentees; less emphasis was placed on the activity of the mentees themselves because the mentor's communication competencies determined the outcome.

Conclusions

The survey on the role of communication revealed trends in the mentoring environment in Latvia as well as identified the functions of mentors and mentees and, consequently, the opinions of mentors, mentees and other respondents on the mentoring process. The survey allows us to distinguish similar as well as different trends.

The survey data showed that the respondents aged between 30 and 40 were more likely to take on the role of a mentor or willing to share their experience with others. In this age group, there were also quite many respondents who indicated that they would like to take on the role of a mentee.

Overall, communication was important for all the respondents, namely face-to-face or personal communication, which was supportive and encouraging. The desire to shape and direct communication, which ensured the received information was reliable and allowed making a decision, was important as well.

It could be concluded that expression is important for mentors, i.e. how the mentor's message is understood and interpreted, what arguments are used, as well as the logic of the conversation and the established cooperation.

Any mentee, however, makes judgements from his/her point of view. First of all, the mentee expects the mentor to observe the distance, use appropriate voice intonation, namely the mentee expects encouraging communication. Communicative competencies of the mentor are important for the mentee so that the message given by the mentor guides the mentee towards doing a certain activity. For the other respondents, the following traits were important: honesty, an ability to assess the communicative situation, namely rational and emotional aspects. The written replies provided by the respondents themselves revealed that in mentoring, it is important to maintain a person's good traits, i.e. the mentor loses his/her status, ideology, age and sex and becomes an advisor and a teacher. The survey data showed that demographic and social aspects did not play a significant role in mentoring.

CHAPTER 9
Development and introduction
of a communication competencies
model for enhancing and maintaining
a business mentor network – DICCMEM.
A survey at Italian companies

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The structure of the mentoring survey questionnaire

The survey was based on structured interviews submitted to mentors and mentees.

The questionnaire included questions about the respondents' profile – education level, age, gender, occupation, role (mentor / mentee), years of experience – and questions related to main communication aspects:
- Communication methods in mentoring:
    - oral communication,
    - written communication,
    - non-verbal communication,
    - content construction;
- Relation and communication effectiveness;
- Rational-emotional mentors' skills;
- Communication barriers.

The primary aim of the survey was to investigate various factors underlying the mentor-mentee relationship. A five-point Likert scale was used *to* measure the intensity and direction of responses. The Likert scale values were: 1 = Completely irrelevant; 2 = Irrelevant; 3 = Neither relevant nor irrelevant; 4 = Relevant; 5 = Very relevant. Moreover, the impact of each item was evaluated in the following phases of the mentoring process: first meeting; setting goals; mentoring activities; evaluating results; concluding.

Sample and questionnaire submission

The target groups of the survey were composed of mentors in private organizations. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the respondents were contacted virtually. The managers of companies collaborated, allowing to present the survey at a video-conference to company employees. DICCMEM project partners prepared the questionnaire in English, but it was translated into Italian and submitted to 99 subjects (51 mentors and 48 mentees).

The mentors were 38 males and 13 females, distributed into the following age ranges:

- 30 – 40 years (45.10%);
- 41 – 50 years (23.53%);
- 51 – 60 years (31.37%).

All the interviewed mentors had a work experience of more than six years (29% as a manager, 53% as a director, 18% as a professional). 51% of mentors worked in social enterprises, 39% in insurance companies and 10% in trading companies.

The mentees were 22 males and 26 females, 20 – 30 years old. Their work experience was: 74% – two years' work experience and 16% – three-to-five years' work experience. All mentees had a professional position, 74% in social enterprises, and 26% in insurance companies.

Results

The data resulting from the interviews were processed to obtain frequency presentations. The data obtained in mentor and mentee groups are illustrated below.

Mentors

The first part of the interview considered the evaluations of oral communications factors in mentor-mentee communication. The mentors considered "face to face conversation" the most relevant channel in their relationship with a mentee (a total of 72.91% relevant and very relevant) followed by "face to face group meeting" (a total of 47.71% relevant and very relevant) and "phone call" (a total of 44.32 relevant and very relevant). "Video or audio conference" obtained mostly neutral evaluations.

Figure 9.2 presents the mentors' evaluation with regard to the relevance of various forms of written communication; "emails" and "social media methods" were considered the most relevant, respectively 40% and 56.10% in total for relevant and very relevant. "Blog" and "newsletter" were least important (only 13.12% and 6.27% for relevant and very relevant).
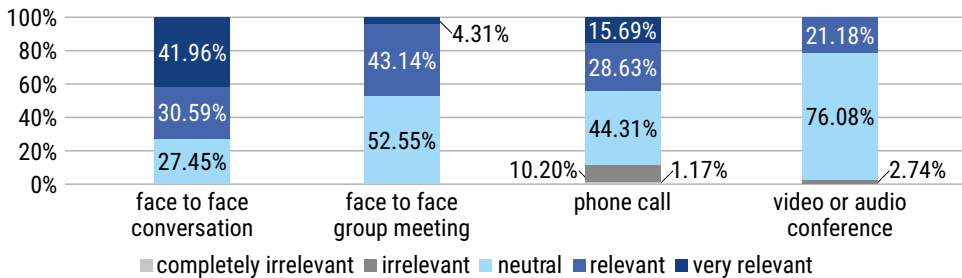
FIGURE 9.1. Mentors: oral communication relevance (own study)
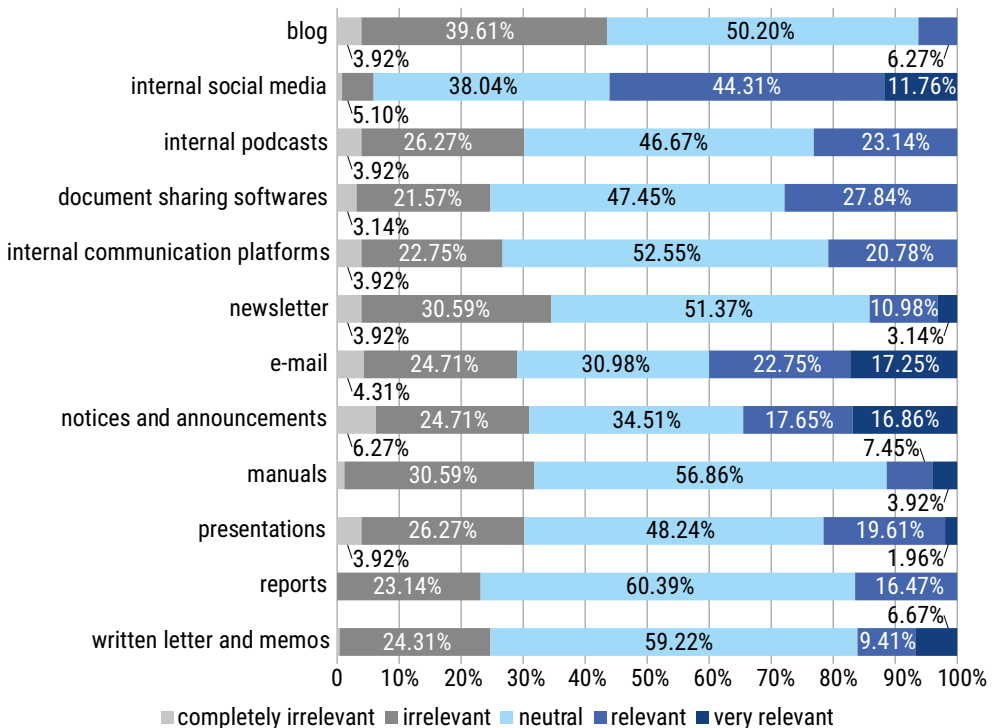
FIGURE 9.2. Mentors: written communication relevance (own study)

Figure 9.3 summarizes the results of non-verbal communication relevance for the mentor group. As it could be noticed, most of the channels are important for the respondents, out of them especially: "facial expressions" (86.3%) "posture" (84.3%) and "gestures" (64.31%) (totals of relevant and very relevant). The percentages for irrelevant and very irrelevant answers for almost all channels equalled 0.
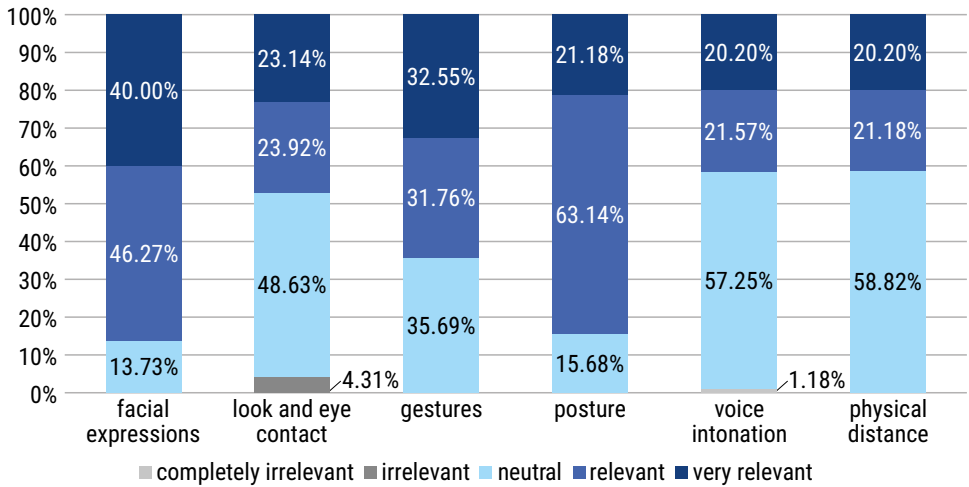
FIGURE 9.3. Mentors: non-verbal communication relevance (own study)

Figure 9.4 contains evaluations of content construction relevance. More than 80% of the mentors considered "information veracity" and "information clarity" relevant or very relevant. "Information completeness" and "Information regular updating" obtained relevant or very relevant scores for more than 50% of respondents. The relatively least important factors are "speed of response" and "provision of solicited".
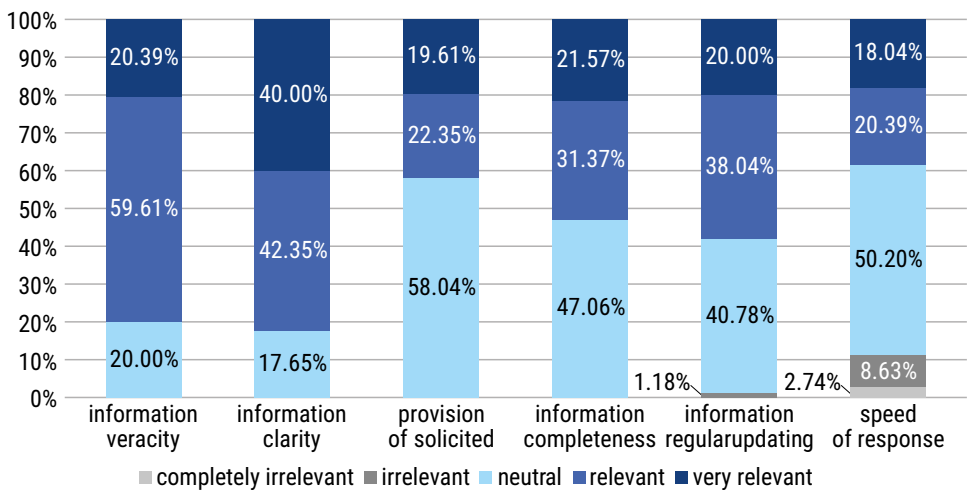
FIGURE 9.4. Mentors: content construction relevance (own study)

Figure 9.5 shows how the mentors considered the relation and communication effectiveness in the mentoring activity. Almost all factors (except "emotional support gained") are considered relevant or very relevant for more than 65% of the mentors. The most important factors were:

- The message leads to a specific action (87.80%);
- Decision made about issue" (82.70);
- Goal of the mentoring process has been reached (80.40%).
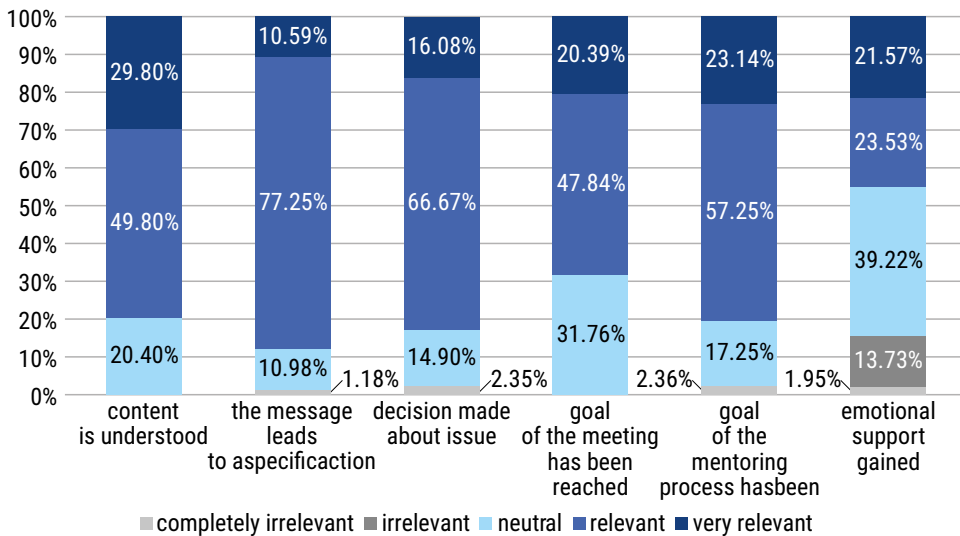
FIGURE 9.5. Mentors: relation and communication effectiveness (own study)

Figure 9.6 presents the levels of relevance for emotional-rational aspects of the mentor-mentee communication. Most mentors considered almost half of these factors as relevant or very relevant:

- 95.70% "openness";
- 92.20% "ability to argue";
- 91.40% "ability to put in another's shoes";
- 89.80% "skills to actively listen";
- 80.39 "ability to create a wish";
- 75.70% "ability to ensure correct dialogue";
- 76.10% "honestly".

Figure 9.7 shows that the respondents considered "experience" (98.92%) and "education" (88.62%) relevant or very relevant. They considered "sex" and "social status" quite irrelevant.
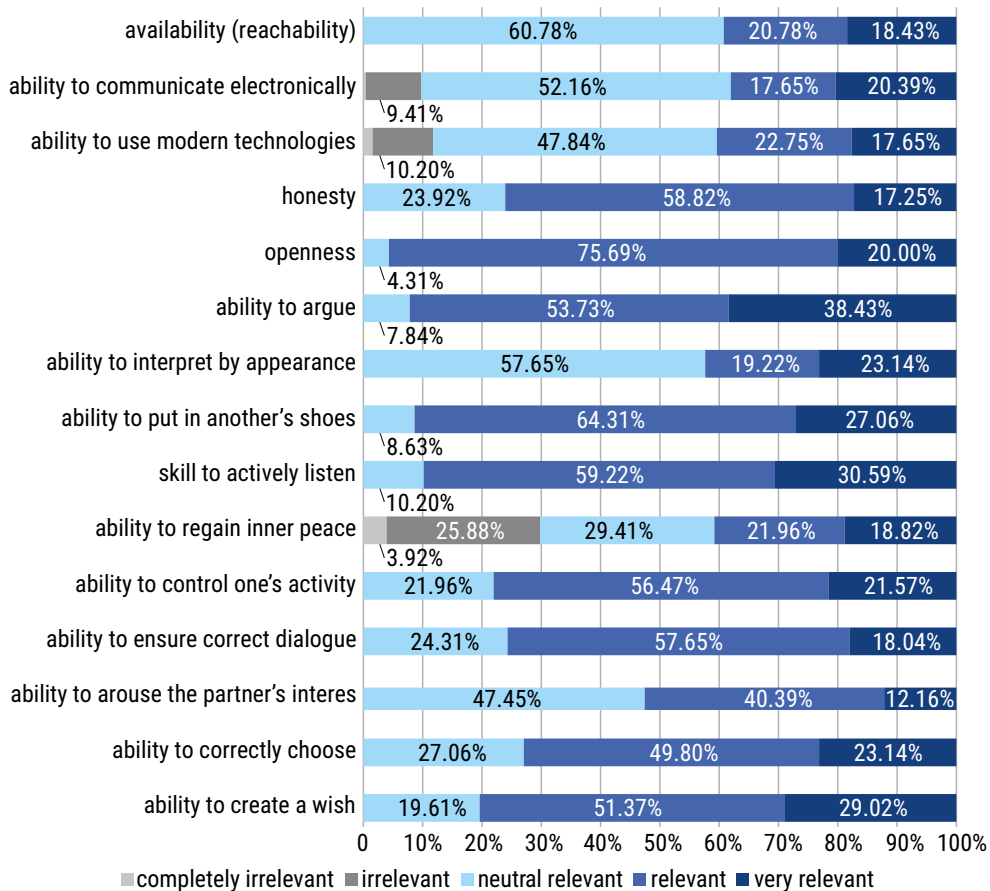
FIGURE 9.6. Mentors: rational-emotional skills relevance (own study)
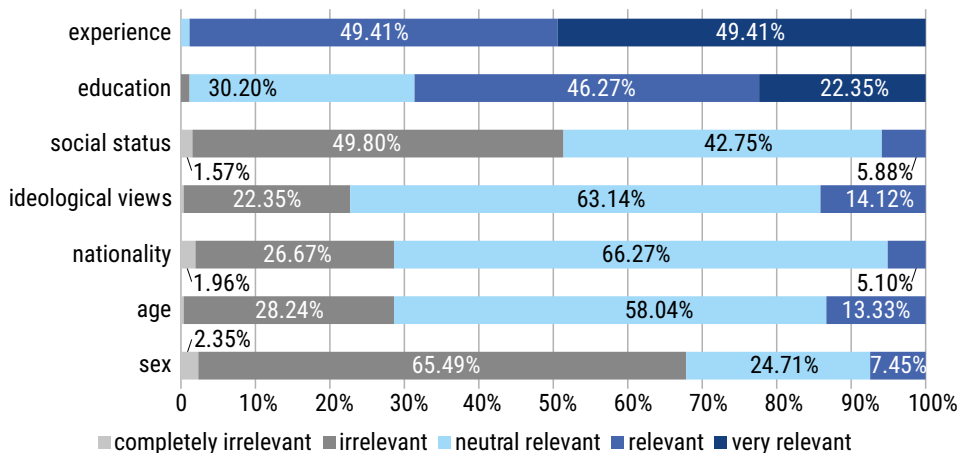
FIGURE 9.7. Relevance of individual characteristics (own study)

The respondents considered "attitude to the communicator" (92.2%), "psychological barriers" (84.3%) and "selective listening" (72.5%) as relevant or very relevant. They considered "phonematic barriers", "stylistic barriers", and "psychophysiological barriers" not so relevant.
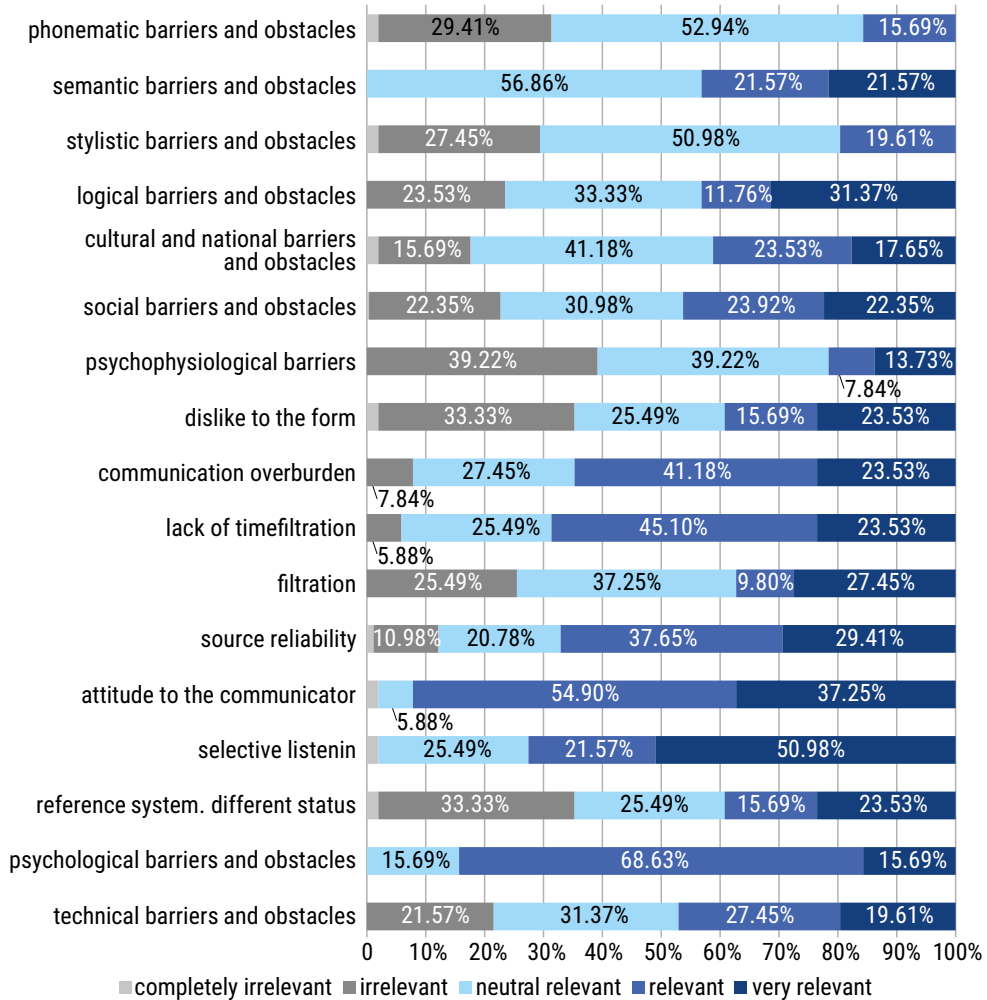
FIGURE 9.8. Mentors: communication barriers perceived (own study)

Mentees

The mentees, similarly to mentors, considered "face-to-face conversation" (88.95%) and "phone call" (67.37%) the most important channels in oral communication. "Video or audio conference" were considered quite irrelevant (23.16%).
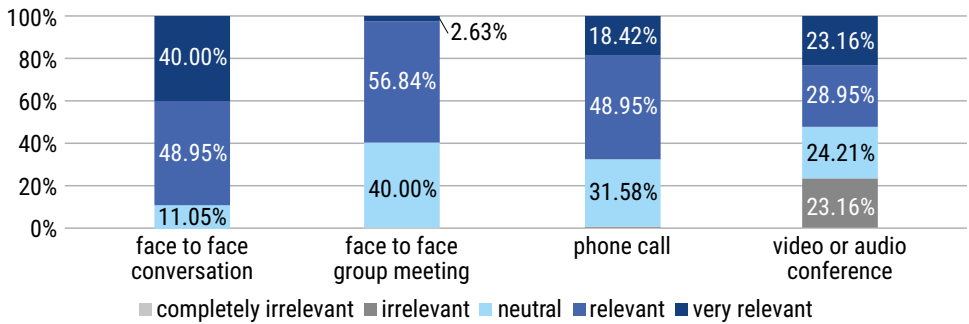
FIGURE 9.9. Mentees: oral communication relevance (own study)

Figure 9.10 shows that the tools that were rated most important (relevant and very relevant) in written communication were: "blog" (52.11%), "presentations" (45.26%) and "internal social media" (42.63%).
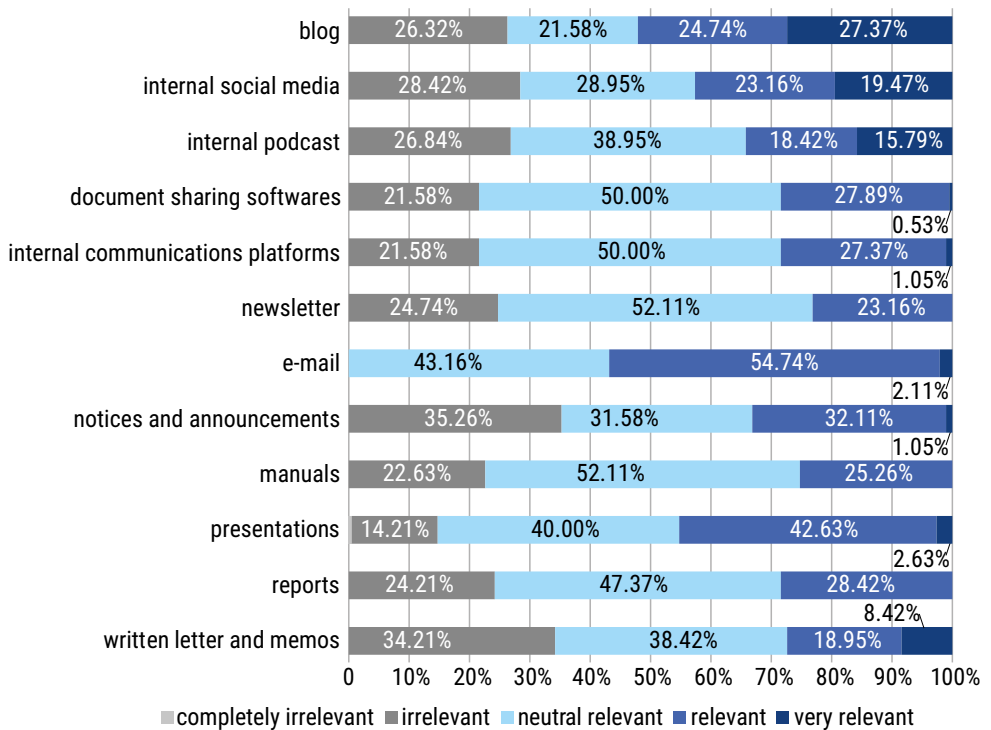
FIGURE 9.10. Mentees: written communication relevance (own study)

The mentees indicated "look and contact eyes", "facial expression" and "posture" as the most important factors of non-verbal communication (respectively 64.21%, 70%, 71.5% in total for relevant and very relevant).
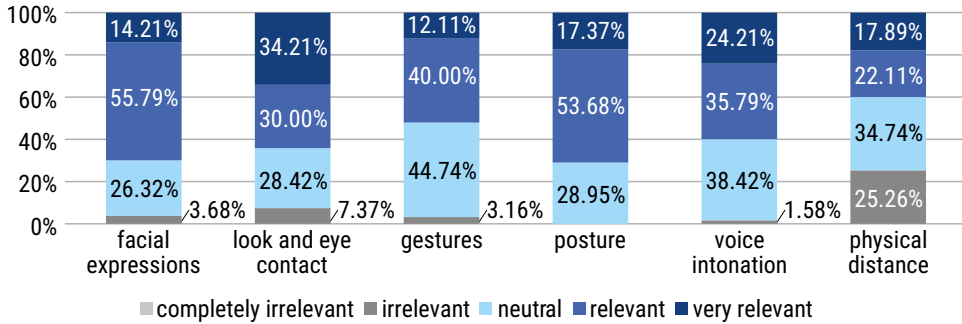
FIGURE 9.11. Mentees: non-verbal communication relevance (own study)

Figure 9.12 reports the mentees' evaluation of content creation. "Clarity of information" is considered the most relevant aspect (75%) followed by "information veracity" (58,94%).
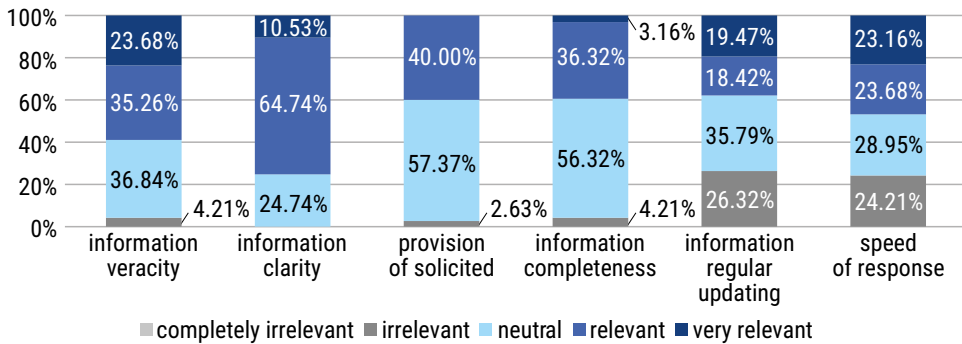
FIGURE 9.12. Mentees: content construction relevance (own study)

The mentees' evaluations of the importance of relation and communication effectiveness factors are shown in Figure 9.13. "Content understanding" (83.16%) and "emotional support gained" (60.53%) were considered the most crucial aspects.

The levels of importance for emotional-rational aspects and specifics of communication assessed by the mentees are shown in Figure 9.14. The highest percentages of relevant and very relevant scores were for "honesty" (87.37%), "ability to argue" (73.16%), and "ability to put in another's shoes" (73.16%). Most of the aspects were considered relevant or very relevant by more than 50% of respondents, except "ability to communicate electronically," "ability to use modern technologies," and "ability to interpret by appearance."
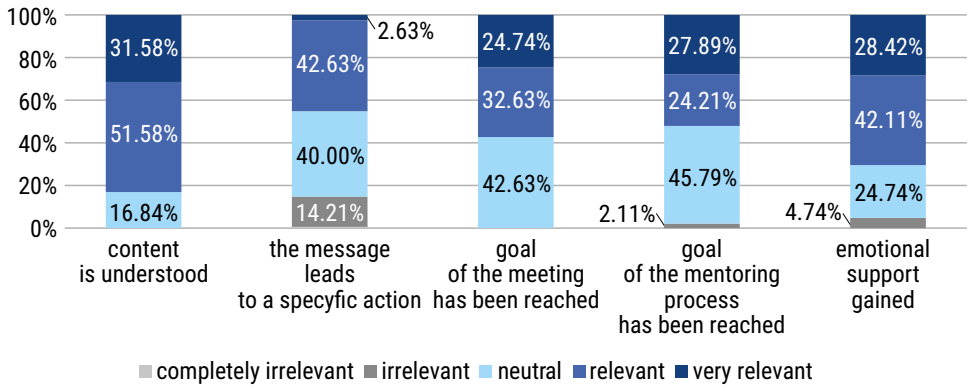
FIGURE 9.13. Mentees: relation and communication effectiveness (own study)
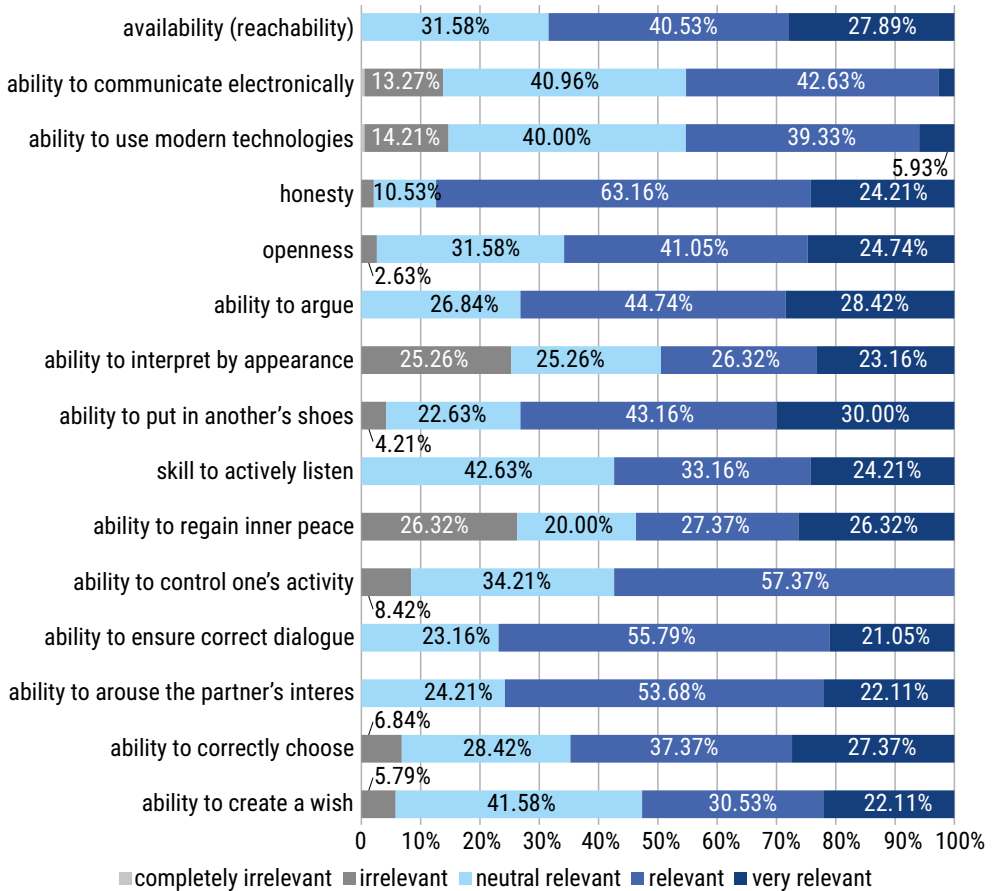
FIGURE 9.14. Mentees: rational-emotional mentor's skills relevance (own study)
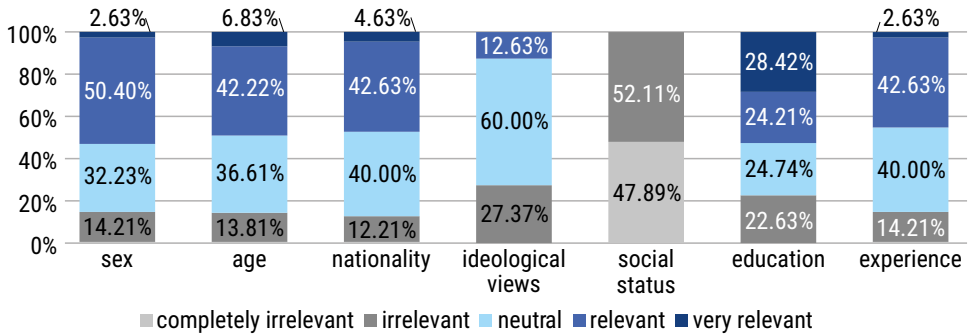
FIGURE 9.15. Mentees: relevance of individual characteristics (own study)
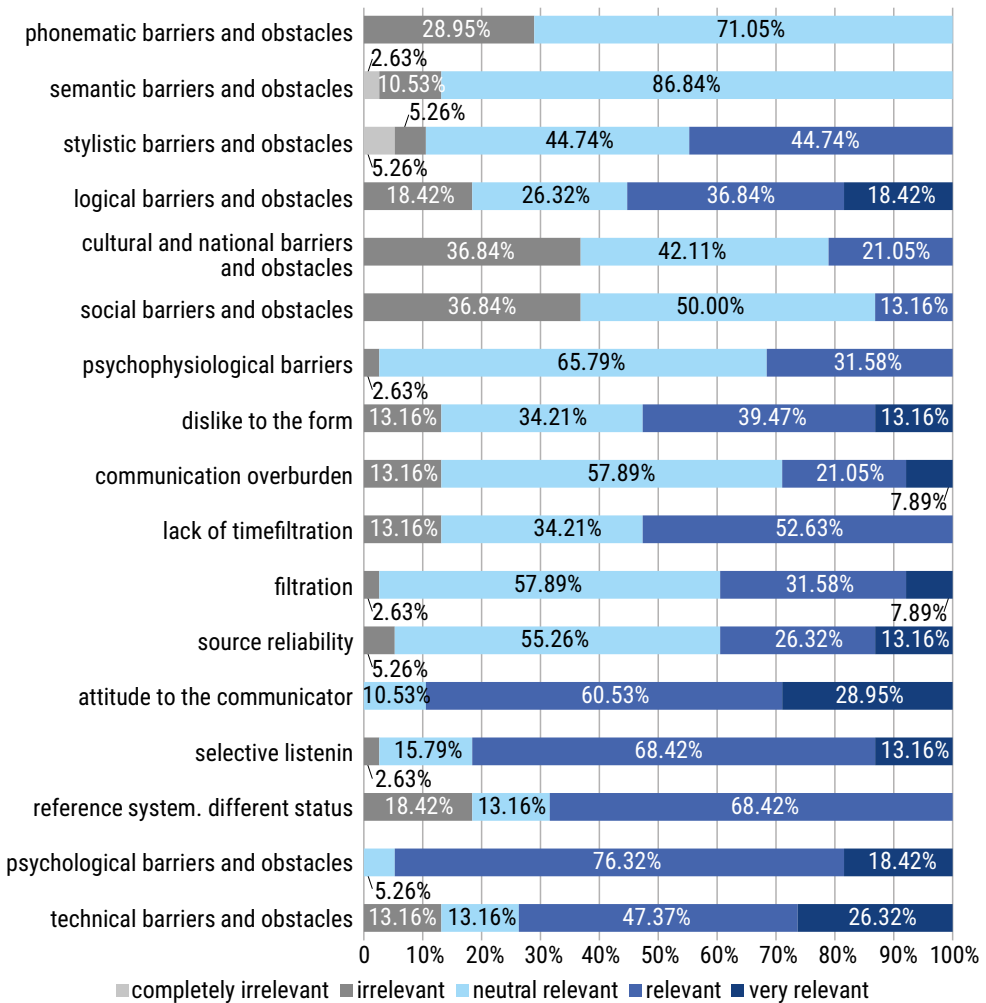
FIGURE 9.16. Mentees: communication barriers perceived (own study)

Figure 9.15 shows the evaluations of individual characteristics in mentor-mentee communication: no respondent considered "social status" as a relevant characteristic of a mentor, whilst "education" and "experience" were deemed relevant or very relevant, respectively by 45% and 52% of the respondents.

Figure 9.16 illustrates the mentees' perceived communications barriers. Almost all participants consider "psychological barriers" as relevant or very relevant (94.74%). The respondents mostly indicated "attitude to the communicator" (89.47%)" and "selective listening" (81,58%) as relevant or very relevant barriers. They didn't consider "semantic barriers" and "phonematic barriers" as relevant.

Some considerations

Despite the sample's limitations, some differences emerge between the mentors' and the mentees' attitudes towards communication (Figure 9.17).
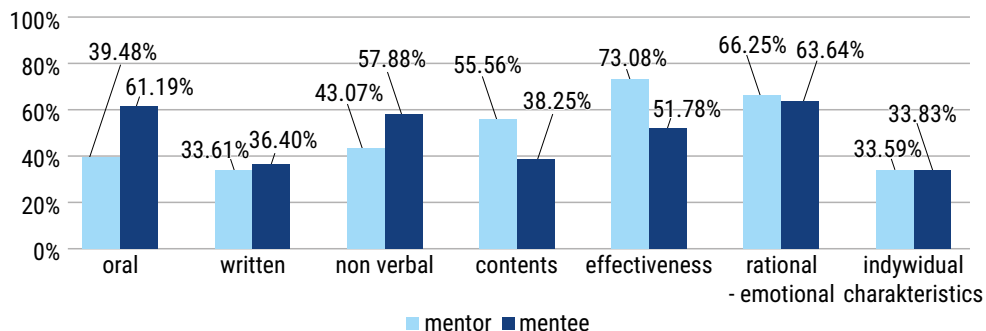
FIGURE 9.17. Mentors and Mentees attitudes towards communication (own study)

Written communication is less preferred for both mentors and mentees than oral and nonverbal communication. However, the mentees appreciate oral and non-verbal communication more than the mentors.

Indeed, the mentees try to take advantage of their relationship with a mentor. Accordingly, oral and non-verbal communication is important to understand the mentor's attitudes and his/her perspective. The mentees appear more interested in the communication climate.

The mentors' interest in *contents* and *effectiveness* can be justified by their role. They aim to build a supportive relationship with their mentees. However, "communication overburden" and "social barriers" can influence their behaviour, confirming that the mentor-mentee relationship is not a pair relationship (Figure 9.18).
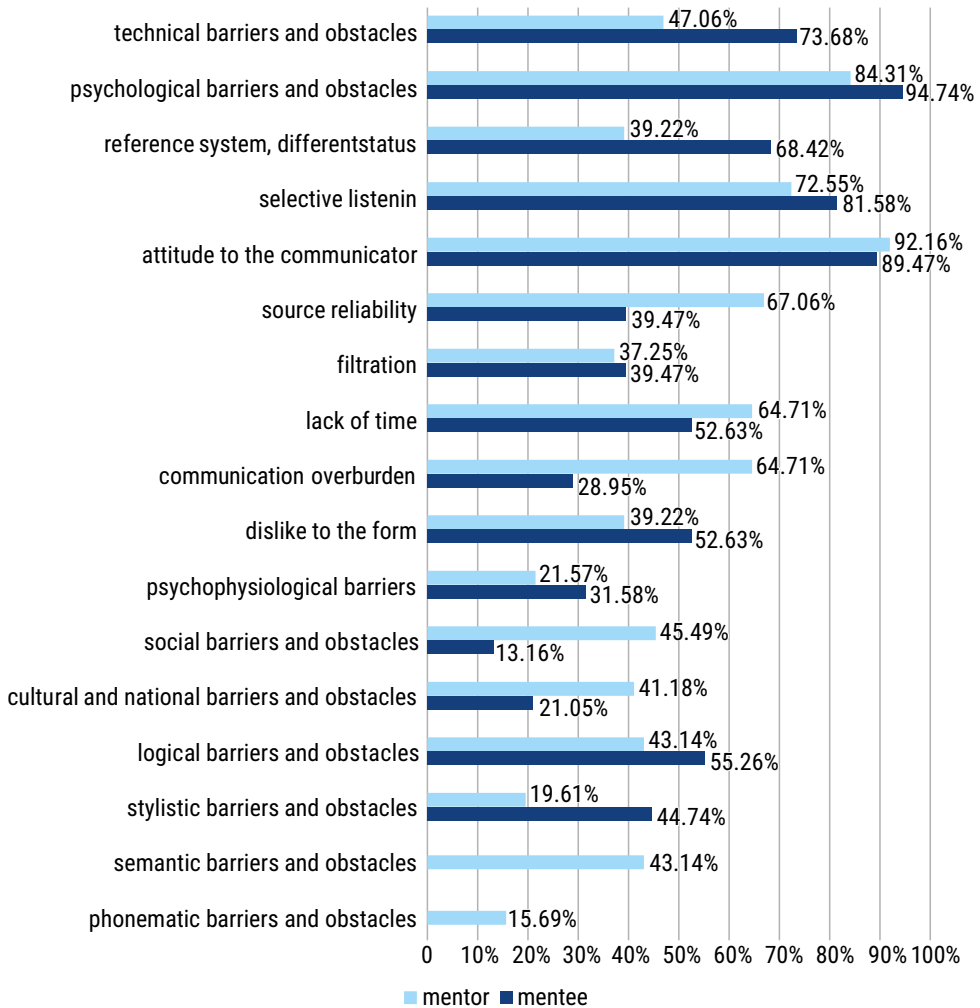
FIGURE 9.18. **Mentor and Mentee: communication barriers perceived (own study)**

Conclusion

This survey represents a preliminary step in the study of communication competence in mentoring. It should be important to extend the investigation to specific aspects of the mentor-mentee relationship, e.g., considering the different types of mentoring: individual mentoring, group mentoring, and collective mentoring.

Furthermore, it should be considered that the ongoing digital revolution has changed the traditional communication model. Nowadays, online communication affects all social activities with broad societal consequences.

CHAPTER 10
The results of the research – Lithuania

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This part presents the results of the survey on communication competencies in mentoring in Lithuania. In mentoring it is very important to examine barriers to communication competencies between business consultants (from now on referred to as "mentors") and start-up entrepreneurs or those intending to start a business (from now on referred to as "mentees") and propose solutions on how to enhance and maintain the business mentor network utilising communication technologies.

Research Methodology

The object of the research. The approach of mentors and mentees to their communication skills, barriers and problems encountered in communication.

The method of the research. The quantitative method of raw data collection – a question-based survey – was chosen for the research. A standard questionnaire for all project partner countries was compiled to perform the survey, but it was adapted to the Lithuanian business consulting context and translated into Lithuanian. The research data was collected using two questionnaires. One questionnaire was meant for mentors, the other – for mentees. Both questionnaires are standardised, closed-ended, with pre-designed questions. The questions were the same for all the respondents replying to the same questionnaire.

The questionnaire for mentors consists of 9 questions and the questionnaire for mentees – 8 questions. All questions cover 5 thematic blocks. In the first, which differentiates the questionnaires of mentors and mentees in terms of the demographics of the respondents: in the questionnaire for mentors – age, position, sector in which the company/institution operates (questions 1-5), and in the mentees' questionnaire – age, gender, sector in which the company/institution operates, education (questions 1-4). The questions of the other four blocks are the same in both questionnaires. The second block asks about the importance of the communication elements of mentors and mentees, asking the respondents to rate the elements of oral, non-verbal communication, written communication and information content development

according to importance (question 6 in the mentors' questionnaire and 5 in the mentees' questionnaire). The third block contains a question on the effectiveness of communication in business networks (question 7 in the mentors' questionnaire and 6 in the mentees' questionnaire), the fourth contains a question on mentors' and mentees' communication skills and factors influencing their communication (question 8 in the mentors' questionnaire and 5 in the mentees' questionnaire), the fifth block contains a question regarding the assessment of the impact of communication barriers on communication (question 9 in the mentors' questionnaire and question 5 in the mentees' questionnaire).

Nominal, interval, rank and Likert scale formats were used to answer the questions of the questionnaires. The nominal scale format was provided for the answers to the questions of the demographic block, covering the position, the sector in which the company/institution operates (education in the mentors' questionnaire), gender, sector, education (in the mentees' questionnaire). The interval scale format was used for the questions about the respondents' age and work experience (in the mentors' questionnaire). The answers to the questions of blocks 2 and 3 of both questionnaires were given to the respondents, which they could evaluate on a ranked 5-point scale, where 1 meant not important at all, 2 – not important, 3 – neither important nor not important, 4 – important, 5 – very important. For the answers to the questions of the blocks 4 and 5, a 5-point Likert scale was used, where 1 meant not important at all/no influence, 2 – not important/little influence, 3 – neither important nor not important/influence neither important nor insignificant, 4 – important/important influence, 5 – very important/strong influence.

The questionnaire is published on the www.apklausa.lt platform. The information about the questionnaire was distributed by email to the mentors registered within the national mentors' network* and through them to mentees.

The survey sample. Following the decision of the Steering Group of the Project *Development and Introduction of a Communication Competencies Model for Enhancing and Maintaining a Business Mentor Network* (DICCMEM, 2019-1-LV01--KA203-060414), at least 50 mentors and 50 mentees were to be interviewed in each participating country. Fifty-six mentors residing in Lithuania and having business consulting experience and 50 mentees participated in this survey.

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*   In order for the communication between an experienced entrepreneur and the one who intends to start his/her own business to run smoothly and efficiently, in Lithuania in 2014, a National Network of Business Consultants was established. There are currently 170 experienced mentors in the network and about 500 start-ups. Mentoring takes place in two directions. One of them is carried out in the co-operation centre "Spiečius", where young entrepreneurs (including start-ups) who need the advice of mentors gather. The duration of the whole program is six months, every two months discussion sessions on progress take place, and until then the mentor and the mentee meet several times a month, as well as communicate remotely if they agree. Another direction is an electronic platform, where the registered start-up finds the mentor(s) he/she needs and directly applies to him/her for help (https://mentoriai.verslilietuva.lt/)

Analysis of the research data. The method of descriptive statistical analysis was applied to analyse the obtained questionnaire survey data, calculating the Mode, Median, standard deviation indicators. Data analysis was performed using SPSS 22.0 statistical package. To determine statistically significant relationships between respondents' demographic characteristics and respondents' replies, a correlation analysis of the data was performed, and the Pearson's chi-squared test criterion with a $p<0.05$ credibility level was calculated. Hypotheses of the equality of the averages between two independent samples were tested using the *t* criterion. Differences in indicators were considered statistically significant when $p <0.05$.

Demographics of the Respondents

Figure 10.1 shows the demographic data of the participants by age. The most active in the survey were mentees under 30 (38% of 50 mentees, which is 19 mentees) and mentors aged 31-40 (30.4% of the 56 mentors in the survey, which is 17 mentors). The least involved in the survey were older respondents, i.e. participants over 61: only 2% (1 mentee) of all mentees in the survey and 10.7% of mentors – 6 mentors out of 56. The majority of mentors and mentees in the research have non-technical education (Figure 10.2).
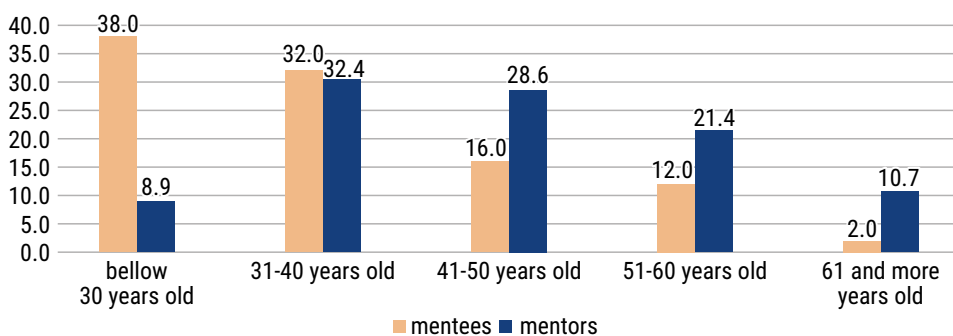
FIGURE 10.1. Distribution of mentors and mentees by age (%), (own study)

Depending on which sectors of economic activity in which the mentors are involved or in which the prospective mentees intend to start their own business (Figure 10.3), we observe that the survey involved trade, transport, agriculture, construction, industry representatives or individuals intending to start their own business in the respective sectors. More than half of the mentors surveyed (51.8%) represented other sectors of economic activity, such as recruitment, selection and management of staff, services, training, non-formal education, public sector, IT, start-up consulting, event organisation, rental of premises, finance and business consulting

etc. Of the mentees surveyed, the majority, i.e. as many as 38% would intend to start their own business in the trade sector, at least in the industrial sector – 4%. Meanwhile, 17.9% of the mentors represented the industrial sector, while only 8.9% of the mentors operate in the trade sector. 24% of the mentees surveyed would intend to start their own business in other sectors, such as services, training, beauty services, gastronomy, IT, wellness.
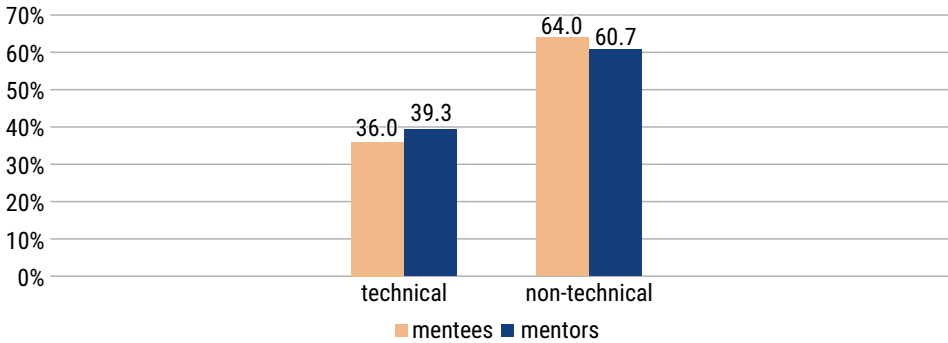
FIGURE 10.2. Distribution of mentors and mentees by educational background (%), (own study)
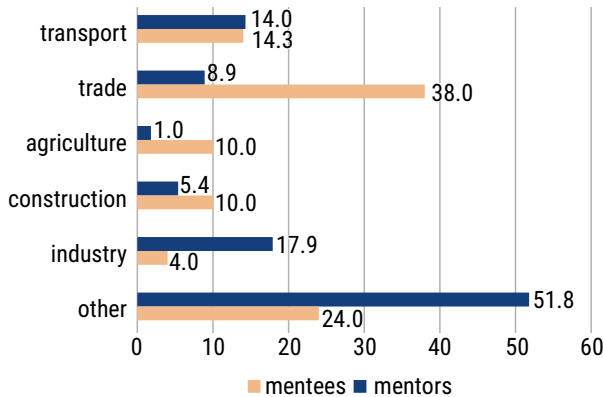
FIGURE 10.3. Breakdown by sector in which the mentors' companies operate or mentees would start their business (%), (own study)

In terms of positions held (Figure 10.4) and work experience (Figure 10.5), the survey of the mentors was dominated by company managers (as many as 50% of all mentors surveyed) with more than six years of managerial experience.
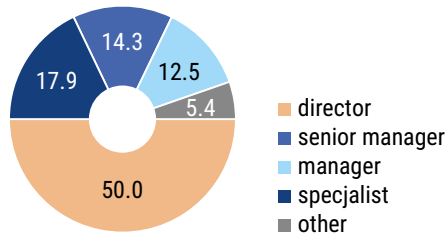
FIGURE 10.4. Distribution of mentors by position (%), (own study)
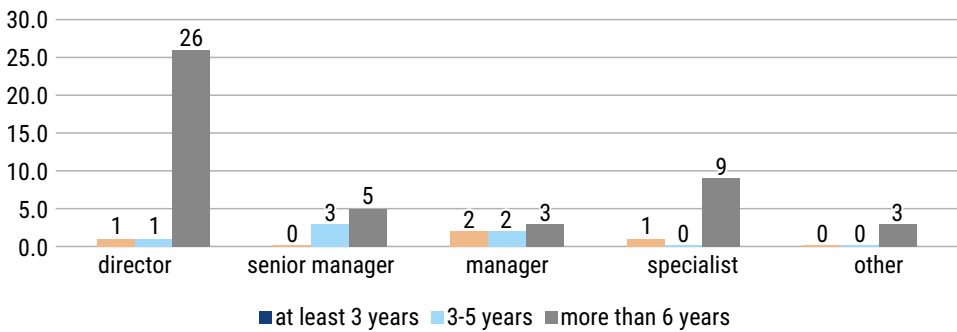
FIGURE 10.5. Distribution of mentors by position and work experience (own study)

The Importance of Communication Elements of Mentors and Mentees

In researching the attitudes of mentors and mentees towards the importance of various elements of communication in oral, non-verbal and written communication, they were asked to mark the answer that best corresponded to the respondents' opinion, rating from 1 – not important at all to 5 – very important (Table 10.1). In verbal communication, both mentors and mentees highlighted face-to-face communication: mentors value the importance of this element on average 4.82 ∓0.606, and mentees 4.70 ∓0.678, the least important both for mentors and mentees is face to face group meeting: the average value of mentors is 3.71 ∓0.868, and of mentees – 3.92 ∓1.027. In written communication, the least important are written letters sent by ordinary mail: mentors' assessment is 3.16 ∓1.247, mentees' – 3.66 ∓1.189. Mentors acknowledged emails as the most critical element in written communication: 4.36 ∓0.773, and by mentees, these are websites and blogs: 4.14 ∓0.808. Mentors see websites and blogs in the second place according to their importance (4.13 ∓0.788), while mentees list social media in the second place (4.04 ∓0.832). In nonverbal communication, the essential aspect for mentors is the look and eye contact (4.52 ∓0.603), while mentees highlight voice

intonation (4.48 ∓0.580). According to mentors, physical distance is the least important (3.96 ∓0.713), while mentees find gestures to be the least important (4.02 ∓0.769).

To test the hypothesis that the means of different communication elements in the population of mentors and mentees differ significantly, the Student's *t*-test criterion is used for independent sets. We can see from the obtained results, pt values presented in Table 10.1, that pt>0,05, therefore the evaluation of the elements of verbal and non-verbal communication of mentors and mentees do not differ significantly. When evaluating the elements of written communication, there is a significant difference between the evaluation of emails (pt=0,038<0,05) and letters delivered by conventional mail (pt=0,045<0,05), expressed by mentors and mentees. The importance of letters sent by mail in written communication is significantly lower by mentors than that of mentees. However, mentees rated the importance of emails in written communication significantly lower than mentors.

Using Pearson's chi-squared criterion to identify statistically significant relationships between respondents' demographic characteristics and respondents' responses in assessing the importance of communication elements, we can record statistically significant differences both between mentees (Pearson's chi-squared p 0.048<0.05) and between mentors (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.017<0.050) regarding the importance of age and voice intonation in nonverbal communication, i.e. older mentors, as well as mentees, attribute more importance to this element of nonverbal communication, although this connection is fragile. When analysing the dependence of the mentors' evaluation of communication elements on their education (technical or non-techni-cal), we can record statistically significant differences in the evaluation of gestures (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.029<0.05), posture (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.017<0.05) and voice intonation (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.004<0.05) in nonverbal communication, i.e. mentors with non-technical education indicated that intonation, gestures, and posture were very important to them in non-verbal communication than those with technical education. Mentees' education influences the evaluation of some elements of verbal and nonverbal communication. Data analysis revealed significant differences between mentees of different age in assessing the importance of face-to-face communication in a group (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.049<0.05) and mail (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.021<0.05). The older the mentee, the greater the importance of the elements as mentioned earlier. When assessing the importance of communication elements depending on the gender of the mentee, we can observe that female mentees, unlike male mentees, highlight statistically a significant preference for direct communication in a group (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.040<0.05), letters sent by mail (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.027<0.05), reports (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.005<0.05) and methodological manuals or instructions (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.048<0.05). The analysis of the influence of mentors' work experience in assessing the importance of communication elements showed that mentors with immense work experience indicate statistically significant greater importance to methodological manuals or instructions (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.012<0.05), social media (Pearson's

chi-squared p=0.014<0.05) and websites, blogs (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.038<0.05). No other significant dependencies were identified.

TABLE 10.1. The importance of communication model elements between mentors and mentees at every stage (own study)

	Mentors				Mentees			
	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation
Oral communication								
Face to face conversation pt=0.332	**4.82**	**5**	**5**	**0.606**	**4.70**	**5**	**5**	**0.678**
Face to face group meeting pt=0.266	3.71	4	4	0.868	3.92	4	4	1.027
Phone call pt=0.406	3.89	4	4	0.947	4.04	4	4	0.856
Video or audio conference pt=0.085	3.68	4	4	0.956	3.98	4	4	0.937
Written communication								
Written letter **pt=0.038**	3.16	3	4	1.247	3.66	4	4	1.189
Reports pt=0.781	3.61	4	4	0.846	3.66	4	4	1.099
Presentations pt=0.989	3.98	4	4	0.726	3.98	4	4	0.869
Manuals pt=0.258	3.73	4	4	0.842	3.94	4	4	1.038
Notices and announcements pt=0.480	3.48	3,5	3a	0.953	3.62	4	4	1.048
E-mail **pt=0.045**	**4.36**	**5**	**5**	**0.773**	4.02	4	4	0.937
Internal communication platforms pt=0.593	3.86	4	4	0.749	3.94	4	4	0.843
Document sharing systems pt=0.302	3.86	4	4	0.819	4.02	4	4	0.795

	Mentors				Mentees			
	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation
Social media pt=0.641	3.96	4	4	0.830	4.04	4	4	0.832
Websites, blogs pt=0.923	4.13	4	4	0.788	**4.14**	**4**	**4**	**0.808**
Non-verbal communication								
Facial expressions pt=0.917	4.29	4	5	0.731	4.30	4	4	0.678
Look and eye contact pt=0.626	**4.52**	**5**	**5**	**0.603**	4.46	5	5	0.613
Gestures pt=0.483	4.13	4	4	0.764	4.02	4	4	0.769
Posture and body orientation pt=0.877	4.18	4	4	0.690	4.20	4	4	0.728
Voice intonation pt=0.228	4.34	4	4	0.611	**4.48**	**5**	**5**	**0.580**
Physical distance pt=0.346	3.96	4	4	0.713	4.10	4	4	0.763

The next table contains the evaluation of the importance of content creation for the respondents (see Table 10.2). From the mentors' point of view, the most crucial thing in content creation in communication is to present content clearly (4.89 ∓0.312), the second important issue is the correctness of the content (4.80 ∓0.401), the third important issue is the speed of response (4.50 ∓0.739). According to mentees, information veracity is the most important (4.74 ∓0.443), then – information clarity (4.72,70.497), and the third most important issue is information completeness (4,58 ∓0,538). The least important issue for both mentors and mentees is the provision of solicited information only (mentors – 4.23 ∓0.660, mentees – 4.30 ∓0.707).

Examining the hypothesis that the means of evaluation of various aspects of information content creation in mentors' and mentees' sets differ significantly, we see that the importance of content clarity in information content creation is evaluated significantly differently by mentors and mentees (pt=0.032<0.05), i.e. mentees rated this aspect significantly lower than mentors. The assessment of other aspects does not differ significantly.

Having established statistically significant relationships between the respondents' demographic characteristics and the respondents' responses, we can record that only the importance of providing the requested information depends statistically significantly on mentors' age (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.016<0.05) and education (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.036<0.05). Older mentors, as well as mentors with non-technical education, attribute more importance to this element of communication compared to mentors with technical education. Mentors' work experience has a statistically significant influence on the importance of the speed of response provided (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.049<0.05). No other significant dependencies were identified.

TABLE 10.2. The evaluation of the importance of content creation (own study)

	Mentors				Mentees			
	Mean	**Median**	**Mode**	**Std. Deviation**	**Mean**	**Median**	**Mode**	**Std. Deviation**
Information veracity pt=0.440	4.80	5	5	0.401	**4.74**	**5**	**5**	**0.443**
Information clarity **pt=0.032**	**4.89**	**5**	**5**	**0.312**	4.72	5	5	0.497
Provision of solicited information only pt=0.611	4.23	4	4	0.660	4.30	4	4	0.707
Information completeness pt=0.287	4.46	4,50	5	0.571	4.58	5	5	0.538
Information regular updating pt=0.382	4.38	5	5	0.822	4.50	5	5	0.614
Speed of response pt=0.665	4.50	5	5	0.739	4.44	5	5	0.675

Evaluation of the effectiveness of communication in business networks

The experience of successful entrepreneurs shows that communication in various business networks contributes to the development of business partnerships, investment,

business success, etc. Table 10.3 demonstrates when communication in business networks is effective. Mentors agree that communication is the most effective when the message leads to a specific action (mentors' estimate – 4.39 ∓0.652). Mentees agree that the most effective communication in the network is when the content is understood (4.44 ∓0.541). The least effective communication in the network for both mentors and mentees is when emotional support is gained: 3.75 ∓0.879 for mentors and 4.00 ∓0.833 for mentees. The most common assessment of this aspect among mentors was 3 (neither agree nor disagree) and among mentees – 4 (agree).

Examining the hypothesis that the means of evaluation of the assumptions of the effectiveness of communication in business networks in mentor and mentee sets differ significantly (Table 10.3), we see that the effectiveness of communication depends on the content being understood the way it was transmitted (pt=0.029<0.05), and is valued significantly differently by mentors and mentees, i.e. mentors agree with this assumption significantly less than mentees. The assessment of the other assumptions does not differ significantly.

TABLE 10.3. The evaluation of the importance of the effectiveness of communication in business networks (own study)

	Mentors				Mentees			
	Mean	**Median**	**Mode**	**Std. Deviation**	**Mean**	**Median**	**Mode**	**Std. Deviation**
Content is understood **pt=0.029**	4.18	4	4	0.664	**4.44**	**4**	**4**	**0.541**
The message leads to a specific action pt=0.918	**4.39**	**4**	**5**	**0.652**	4.38	4	4[a]	0.635
Decision made about an issue pt=0.730	4.30	4	4	0.658	4.26	4	4	0.633
The goal of the meeting has been reached pt=0.895	4.36	4	5	0.672	4.34	4	4	0.658
Emotional support gained pt=0.137	3.75	4	3	0.879	4.00	4	4	0.833
Note: [a] – Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown								

After establishing statistically significant relationships between the respondents' demographic characteristics and the respondents' responses in assessing the assumptions of effective communication in business networks, we can record statistically significant differences between mentors' work experience and the impact of emotional support on effective communication in networks (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.018<0.05). This means that mentors with more work experience are more likely to communicate effectively in business networks when emotional support is received. A statistically significant relationship was also found between mentees' gender and the encouragement of the information transmitted/received to take specific actions in business (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.042<0.05). This means that female mentees more than male mentees agree that communication in business networks is useful when the information transmitted/received encourages a specific action in business. No other significant dependencies were identified.

Communication skills of mentors and mentees and factors influencing communication

When assessing the importance of rational and emotional aspects and the specificity of communication with a mentor and of the mentor's communication skills (Table 10.4) we see that, according to mentors' and mentees' point of view, the least important is the gender of the parties involved in communication (mentors' point of view – 1.73 ∓0.924, mentees' point of view – 1.78 ∓1.016), nationality (mentors' point of view – 1.88 ∓1.028, mentees' point of view – 1.96 ∓1.029) and age (mentors' point of view – 1.95 ∓1.052, mentees' point of view – 2.12 ∓1.100). The most critical skills according to mentors are the skill to actively listen (reflect, ask questions, conclude, discuss) – 4.66 ∓0.478, ability to create a wish to communicate and cooperate (4.57 ∓0.535) and honesty (4.57 ∓0.657), while mentees' preferences are – the ability to create a wish to communicate and cooperate (4.58 ∓0.499), skill to actively listen (4.42 ∓0.673) ability to adjust oneself to the strategy and tactics of a conversation (4.38 ∓0.530).

Examining the hypothesis that the means of evaluating communication skills and communication influencing factors in mentor and mentee sets differ significantly (Table 10.4), we see that the ability to actively listen (pt =0.039<0.05) and honesty (pt=0.026<0.05) among mentors and mentees are treated significantly differently, i.e. mentees value the importance of active listening and honesty significantly lower than mentors. The assessment of other skills and factors does not differ significantly.

Having established statistically significant relationships between the respondents' demographic characteristics and the respondents' responses in assessing the importance of communication skills and communication influencing factors, we can record statistically significant differences between mentees' gender and assessment

of the importance of the ability to communicate and collaborate (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.020<0.05), interest in the topic of communication (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.041<0.05), the ability not to judge a person by his/her appearance and behaviour (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.037<0.05), gender (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.028<0.05) and age (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.025<0.05) in communication, i.e. female mentees see these abilities and factors more important than male mentees. When mentors assess the importance of communication skills and factors influencing communication, we can record statistically significant differences between mentors' education and assessment of the importance of nationality (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.047<0.05), ideological attitudes (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.047<0.05) and accessibility (easy to call, quick response, etc.) (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.045<0.05) in communication, i.e. mentors with non-technical education pay more attention to these factors than mentors with technical education.

TABLE 10.4. **The importance of rational and emotional aspects and the specificity of communication with a mentor and the mentor's communication skills (own study)**

	Mentors				Mentees			
	Mean	**Median**	**Mode**	**Std. Deviation**	**Mean**	**Median**	**Mode**	**Std. Deviation**
Ability to create a wish to communicate and cooperate pt=0.932	4.57	5	5	0.535	**4.58**	**5**	**5**	**0.499**
Ability to correctly choose the strategy and tactics of dialogue pt=0.524	4.45	4	4	0.537	4.38	4	4	0.530
Ability to arouse the partner's interest in a topic of conversation pt=0.865	4.34	4	4	0.581	4.32	4	4	0.587
Ability to ensure correct dialogue pt=0.319	4.39	4	4a	0.623	4.28	4	4	0.536
Skill to actively listen (reflect, ask questions, conclude, discuss) **pt=0.039**	**4.66**	**5**	**5**	**0.478**	4.42	5	5	0.673
Ability to put oneself in another's shoes, understand each other's emotions and experiences pt=0.400	3.93	4	4	0.783	4.06	4	4	0.818

	Mentors				Mentees			
	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation
Ability to interpret a person by appearance and behaviour pt=0.119	4.05	4	4	0.773	4.28	4	4	0.701
Ability to argue pt=0.761	4.13	4	4	0.740	4.08	4	4	0.778
Openness pt=0.490	3.84	4	4	0.848	3.96	4	4	0.947
Honesty **pt=0.026**	4.57	5	5	0.657	4.28	4	4	0.671
Ability to use modern communication technologies pt=0.686	4.30	4	5	0.807	4.36	4	4	0.598
Availability (reachability) pt=0.912	4.39	4	4	0.593	4.38	4	4	0.602
Sex pt=0.800	1.73	1	1	0.924	1.78	1	1	1.016
Age pt=0.408	1.95	2	1	1.052	2.12	2	1	1.100
Nationality pt=0.672	1.88	1	1	1.028	1.96	2	1	1.029
Ideological views pt=0,655	2.16	2	1	1.092	2.26	2	1	1.192
Social status pt=0.642	2.18	2	1	1.081	2.28	2	1	1.161
Education pt=0.394	3.21	4	4	1.171	3.40	3.5	4	1.050
Experience pt=0.073	3.73	4	4	0.963	4.06	4	4	0.890

Evaluation of the Impact of Communication Barriers between Mentors and Mentees

For communication to be effective, it is n ecessary to identify the barriers that should be eliminated; therefore, the respondents were asked to rate the barriers that hindered successful mentoring (see Table 10.5). From mentors' point of view, of all possible barriers, the reliability of the information source and its significance have the greatest

impact on communication between a mentor and a mentee, i.e. whether the recipient is confident that s/he can rely on the communicator and the information s/he provides (4.41 ∓0.596), and in terms of mentees, in addition to this barrier, a lack of time is also indicated (4.20 ∓0.700). Communication is least affected, in terms of mentors and mentees, by cultural and national barriers, i.e. they represent the influences of various national social norms, values and traditions during communication (mentors' attitude – 3.29 ∓0.986, mentees' attitude – 3.22 ∓1.130).

Examining the hypothesis that the means of the assessment of the influence of communication barriers in mentor and mentee sets differ significantly (Table 10.5), we see that only the mean assessment of the influence of a single communication barrier, the attitude towards the speaker, differ significantly (pt=0.029 <0.05) among mentors and mentees, the assessment of the impact of all other barriers does not differ significantly among mentors and mentees.

Having established statistically significant relationships between the respondents' demographic characteristics and responses regarding the assessment of the impact of communication barriers, we can record statistically significant differences between mentors' age and social impact assessment (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.047<0.05). Work experience of mentors also has a statistically significant difference in the assessment of the impact of social barriers (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.016<0.05). Mentors' education plays a statistically significant difference in assessing the influence of stylistic barriers (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.039<0.05) and barriers associated with ambiguous word use (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.003<0.05) on communication. Mentees' assessment found a statistically significant difference only between mentees' sex and the effect of auditory barriers (Pearson's chi-squared p=0.046<0.05).

TABLE 10.5. The influence of barriers on communication between a mentor and a mentee (own study)

	Mentors				Mentees			
	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation
1. Technical barriers and obstacles. pt=0.308	3.84	4	4	0.804	4.00	4	4	0.808
2. Psychological barriers and obstacles: 2.1. Differences among individuals – their personalities, experiences, knowledge, skills, and status. pt=0.442	3.57	4	4	0.850	3.70	4	4	0.863

	Mentors				Mentees			
	Mean	**Median**	**Mode**	**Std. Deviation**	**Mean**	**Median**	**Mode**	**Std. Deviation**
2.2. Selective listening. pt=0.901	4.02	4	4	0.618	4.00	4	4	0.833
2.3. Attitude to the communicator. **pt=0.029**	3.82	4	4	0.936	3.42	3	3	0.928
2.4. Source reliability. pt=0.074	**4.41**	**4**	**4**	**0.596**	**4.20**	**4**	**4**	**0.606**
2.5. Filtration ‒ the manipulation of information by the communicator. pt=0.973	4.13	4	4	0.662	4.12	4	4	0.849
2.6. Lack of time. pt=0.184	4.02	4	4	0.700	**4.20**	**4**	**4**	**0.700**
2.7. Dislike to the form (dislike to arguments, the communication style). pt=0.080	3.73	4	4	0.798	4.00	4	4	0.756
3.Psychophysiological barriers. pt=0.914	4.05	4	4	0.553	4.04	4	4	0.727
4. Social barriers and obstacles. pt=0.498	3.45	4	4	0.971	3.58	4	4	1.052
5. Cultural and national barriers and obstacles. pt=0.750	3.29	3	3	0.986	3.22	3	4	1.130
6. Logical barriers and obstacles. pt=0.581	3.86	4	4	0.672	3.94	4	4	0.867
7. Stylistic barriers and obstacles. pt=0.361	3.68	4	4	0.811	3.84	4	4	0.997
8. Semantic barriers and obstacles. pt=0.586	3.70	4	4	0.711	3.78	4	4	0.864
9. Phonematic barriers and obstacles. pt=0.776	3.59	4	4	0.869	3.64	4	4	0.964

Conclusions

1. **The assessment of the importance of communication elements between mentors and mentees showed that:**

- **in oral communication**, mentors and mentees distinguish face-to-face communication as the most important, and face-to-face group meeting is the least important for both groups of respondents; female mentees, unlike male mentees, prefer direct communication in a group. The analysis of the survey data showed that the older the mentee, the greater the importance of face-to-face communication in a group;

- the essential **element of written communication** from the mentors' point of view is emails, and from the mentees' point of view – websites and blogs. Mentors rank websites and blogs as the second important element in order of importance, while mentees rank social media as the second important. The least important in written communication is written letters sent by regular mail, but the analysis of the survey data showed that the older the mentee, the greater the importance of written letters sent by regular mail. Mentors with immense work experience consider methodological manuals, instructions, social media, websites, blogs to be statistically significantly more essential elements of written communication; female mentees, unlike male mentees, prefer letters, reports and methodological manuals, instructions;

- **in non-verbal communication**, the most critical element for mentors is the look and eye contact, and for mentees – voice intonation. For mentors, physical distance is the least important, and according to mentees – gestures; for the mentors with non-technical education and mentors of all ages, voice intonation, gestures and posture of the communication partner are very important in non-verbal communication;

- from the mentors' point of view, **when creating the communication content**, the most important aspect is a clear presentation of the content, the second significant – the correctness of the content, the third critical issue – the speed of response. From the mentees' point of view, the most critical issue is information veracity, the second important – information clarity, the third critical issue – information completeness. The least important in both groups of respondents is the provision of solicited information only, and the clarity of the content of the information is more critical for mentors than mentees; in communication, older mentors with non-technical education highlight more importance on the element of providing the requested information in comparison to mentors with technical education; mentors with immense work experience consider the speed of response to be more critical than mentors with less experience.

2. **When evaluating the effectiveness of communication in business networks:**

- mentors indicated that communication is most effective when the message leads to a specific action, while mentees said that the most effective communication in the network is when content is understood. The least effective online communication in the opinion of both groups of respondents is when emotional support is gained;

- mentees, unlike mentors, believe that the effectiveness of communication depends significantly on whether the content of the information is understood as conveyed;

- according to mentors with immense work experience, communication in business networks is more effective when emotional support is gained; female mentees more than male mentees think that communication in business networks is useful when the information transmitted/received encourages specific action in business.

3. **The research highlighted critical communication skills of mentors and mentees**. According to mentors, the essential communication skills are the ability to actively listen (reflect, ask questions, conclude, discuss), the ability to create a wish to communicate and cooperate and honesty, and according to mentees – the ability to create a wish to communicate and cooperate, skill to actively listen and the ability to adapt to conversation strategy and tactics. It was found that in comparison to mentors, mentees see the ability to actively listen and the honesty of the communication partner as less significant; for female mentees skills such as the ability to communicate and collaborate, an interest in the topic of conversation, the ability not to judge a person by their appearance and behaviour, gender and age of the interlocutor are more critical than to male mentees.

4. **When assessing the factors influencing communication between mentors and mentees, it turned out that** the least important factors, both for mentors and mentees, are gender, nationality and age of the parties involved in communication; mentors with non-technical education, unlike those with technical education, identified factors such as education, nationality, ideological attitudes, and accessibility (easy to call, get a quick response etc.) as more important than other factors when assessing the importance of factors influencing communication.

5. **The evaluation of the impact of communication barriers between mentors and mentees** showed that:

- for mentors, communication between a mentor and a mentee is mainly influenced by such barriers as the reliability of the information source, i.e. whether the recipient is confident that s/he can rely on the communicator and the information s/he provides. Whereas, for mentees, additional barrier next to this one is the lack of time. Communication is least affected, in terms of mentors and mentees, by cultural and national barriers, i.e. they represent the influences of various national social norms, values and traditions during communication;

- mentors and mentees assess the communication barrier "attitude towards the speaker" differently – the mean of mentors' assessment is statistically significantly higher than that of mentees;
- the assessment of the impact of social barriers depends statistically significantly on the work experience of mentors – in the opinion of mentors with immense work experience, this barrier has a more significant impact on communication; the assessment of the impact of stylistic barriers and the barriers related to the ambiguous use of words is statistically significantly dependent on the education of mentors – mentors with non-technical education consider this barrier to be more significant. Statistically, a significant difference was identified in the assessment by mentees only regarding mentees' sex and the effect of the auditory barrier – this barrier is more significant to female mentees.

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SUMMARY

Part 1
THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The purpose of this monograph is to examine barriers to communication competencies between mentors and mentees and propose solutions how to enhance and maintain the business mentor network.

In the first chapter, the authors' theoretical literature review indicates that mentoring refers to relationships and communication that involve sharing experience and support provided by an individual who shares his/her knowledge, experience and wisdom to another individual – a mentee – who is ready and who has a wish to benefit from the exchange and to improve his/her professionalism. Since mentoring requires the mentor to go deep into in the mentee's problems and the matters to be discussed, the mentor does not teach but encourages the mentee to make a decision him/herself.

The authors conclude that mentoring is a knowledge transfer process implemented by experienced mentors and mentees. Mentoring in entrepreneurship is based on the mentor's knowledge and experience, which allows the mentee to assess the opportunities and resources being at his/her disposal and use them to solve a particular problem or achieve a goal.

The authors believe that mentoring is one of the most effective ways that contribute to a number of new entrepreneurs and economic growth. Overall, entrepreneurship expands and develops if experienced entrepreneurs give guidance to beginners in entrepreneurship. Mentoring positively affects the national economy as new enterprises are founded, unemployment declines and the competitiveness of enterprises increases.

In the second chapter, the authors analyse mentoring in business. They conclude that business mentoring is a process of positively influencing a contact between a mentor, usually an experienced and respected professional, who offers their knowledge, wisdom and advice to a less-experienced mentee or protégé with a purpose to enhance their professional performance and development. From the psychological point of view, the mentor acts as a role model, supporting the mentee's activities. Both functions – business and psychological – provide explicit and implicit lessons related to professional development, as an individual entrepreneur or a company's employee.

Usually the term mentee implicates a broad range of individuals who are in the role of a "learner" or a trainee in mentoring relationships. Business mentoring usually goes through different stages. During the initial stage mentors select potential mentees deliberately or accidentally. They usually look for motivated, positive and talented people who lack some experience. In the next phase the both parties should know each other, establish realizable relations and determine their roles. This stage includes application and selection processes, and finally matching the mentor and mentee(s). The next stage includes the mentoring process itself as well as defining a set of objectives and an action plan, followed by regular meetings between the parties, using various types of communication until the final outcomes are met. This stage could last from a couple of days to years, if the mentor and the mentee establish a long-lasting partnership, providing the mentee with access to consistent guidance and resources. The final phase is mentorship conclusion, while the entire process and its results should be analysed and redefined, if necessary.

In the third chapter, the authors research communication skills for mentors and mentees in the context of business consulting where discussing the communication and mutual understanding of communicators, the issue of communication efficiency is inevitable. The information sent utilizing effective communication is coded in such a way that it is understood by the recipient as intended by the sender of the information. One of the most common problems encountered both in day-to-day communication and in the process of business consulting arises when the communicating parties do not understand each other. Such a situation arises when the information being sent is misrepresented, the sender of the information is unable to express him/herself properly, and in this situation, the recipient of the information is unable to understand it properly. It is because of these factors that problems of non-communication or ambiguity arise. Therefore, in both general communication and business communication, the skills of communicators are crucial.

Business consulting activity plays the role of business promotion and contributes to the development of other competencies of a start-up entrepreneur. Quality counselling is one in which relevant content is presented and discussed, and counselling participants make an effective use of verbal and nonverbal communication skills.

In order to develop effective business communication, the mentor and mentee must have and demonstrate such verbal, oral communication skills: active listening, presenting/asking questions, clear speech (formulation of cohesive sentences), feedback, reflection (emotional perception), constructive disputing, conflict, stress management skills.

In the fourth chapter, the authors conclude the communication models in mentoring network have not been of interest to researchers.

In the mentoring process the first three levels of social engagement are important – information, consultation and involvement. The forth level – collaboration is understood by the authors of the concept as an element of social participation and in mentoring process it comes down to co-decision of a mentor in a mentee in terms of the mentee's personal and professional development.

In general, researchers have found that informal mentoring relationships with frequent contact are better than formal relationships, although having any mentor is usually better than not having one at all. Unfortunately, there is a number of barriers that prevent would-be mentees from obtaining a mentor. The model of communication in mentoring should not only include proper communication channels and tools but, principally, create appropriate content and consider social engagement levels.

In the fifth chapter, the authors introduce and discuss the e-mentoring notion, focusing on online communication. They underline that the online communication model is quite different from the traditional mass communication model since online communication doesn't correspond with a single-channel linear process but involves a network of platforms and users.

Furthermore, the authors argue that virtual relationships and multi-participant interactions can enhance the mentoring experience, introducing significant shifts in the mentoring practice. For instance, distance mentoring has the advantage that the mentoring relationship can continue even if one partner relocates.

The authors claim that the literature on mentoring software is scant and, at the moment, there is no significant research evidence on the effectiveness of the use of mentoring platforms. The literature on mentoring software is scant, and, at the moment, there is no significant research evidence on the effectiveness of the use of mentoring platforms.

However, there are many tools and platforms for business mentoring available on the market. To manage a mentoring platform, it is necessary to have a mentoring program manager. This is a professional that will solve any problems, both relational and technical, that may arise in the mentoring process, e.g. mentor-mentee conflicts and misunderstanding, platform functionalities understanding and so on.

Part 2: CASE STUDIES/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

In the sixth chapter, the key results of the examination of the current business mentoring situation in Bulgaria are highlighted. Evidence from the mentors to mentor-assisted groups of respondents in Bulgaria has explained that involvement is a good practice for organizational betterment.

In parallel to the attracting foreign investment, entrepreneurial promotion skills through mentoring and associated skills have become a major element in the economic development process for many countries, including Bulgaria. However, while there is considerable information on the scale of investment flows, data are limited to the scale and nature of accompanying (or reciprocal) movements of skilled staff that is supported by mentoring. With this survey there seems to be a positive general relationship between flows of skilled labour and the level of communication channels, skills and success in the organisation and inter-businesses interactions.

In the seventh chapter, the key results of the examination of the current mentoring situation in Poland are highlighted. Summarizing the obtained findings of primary research for Poland, it can be stated that mentors and mentees have a comparable attitude towards the mentoring process as their answers do not differ to a significant extent.

In the eight chapter, the key results of the examination of the mentoring situation in Latvia are analysed. Overall, communication was important for all respondents, namely face-to-face or personal communication, which was supportive and encouraging. The desire to shape and direct communication, which ensured the information received was reliable and allowed making a decision, was important as well.

It could be concluded that expression is important for mentors, i.e. how the mentor's message is understood and interpreted, what arguments are used as well as the established logic of the conversation and the cooperation. The survey data showed that demographic and social aspects did not play a significant role in mentoring.

In the ninth chapter, the results of the survey conducted in Italy are presented. Mentees, likewise mentors, considered "face-to-face conversation" and "phone call" the most important channels in oral communication. Written communication is less preferred for both mentors and mentees than oral and nonverbal communication. However, mentees appreciate oral and non-verbal communication more than mentors.

Indeed, mentees try to take advantage of their relationship with a mentor. Accordingly, oral and non-verbal communication are important to understand the mentors' attitudes and their perspective. Mentees appear more interested in the communication climate.

In the tenth chapter, the results of the survey on communication competencies in mentoring in Lithuania are presented. In oral communication, mentors and mentees distinguish face-to-face communication as the most important, and a face-to-face group meeting is the least important for both groups of respondents When evaluating the effectiveness of communication in business networks, mentors indicated that communication is most effective when the message leads to a specific action, while mentees said that the most effective communication in the network is when the content is understood. The least effective online communication in the opinion of both groups of respondents is when emotional support is gained. The research highlighted critical communication skills of mentors and mentees. According to mentors, the essential communication skills are: the ability to actively listen (reflect, ask questions, conclude, discuss), the ability to create a wish to communicate and cooperate and honesty, and according to mentees – the ability to create a wish to communicate and cooperate, the skill to listen actively and the ability to adapt to conversation strategy and tactics. It was found that, in comparison to mentors, mentees consider the ability to listen actively and the honesty of the communication partner as less significant.

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