International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring
2023, Vol. 21(2), pp.5-20. DOI: 10.24384/wz20-6f68

Academic Paper

A comprehensive model for implementing an inter-organizational mentoring program based on a bibliography review and experts' experiences

Nuria Gisbert-Trejo ✉ (Centre for Cooperative Research on Alternative Energies (CIC energiGUNE) and University of the Basque Country)
Eneka Albizu (University of the Basque Country)
Jon Landeta (University of the Basque Country)
Pilar Fernández-Ferrín (University of the Basque Country)

Abstract

Inter-organizational mentoring (IOM) occurs whenever the mentor and mentee belong to different organisations. IOM has grown recently in the light of professional associations. This work proposes a model for implementing IOM programs based on a literature review on mentoring best practices and experts' experience. The model, completed with a focus group with 20 experts in IOMPs, highlights differences to be considered in implementing IOMPs, compared to traditional mentoring programs. This paper fills the gap in implementing IOMPs and provides keys to mentors and program coordinators for their efficient implementation.

Keywords

inter-organizational mentoring, cross-organizational mentoring, alternative mentoring, mentoring program design, implementation, and evaluation, human resource development

Article history

Accepted for publication: 11 July 2023
Published online: 01 August 2023

© the Author(s)
Published by Oxford Brookes University

Introduction

Mentoring is typically a dyadic relationship in which the mentor (a more experienced person) guides and counsels the junior mentees in developing their skills and competencies for the challenges ahead. Scholars have categorised several forms of mentoring according to the nature of the mentee (executive, entrepreneur, gender); the nature of the mentor (supervisor, peer, experienced executive); the relationship type (formal-informal, conventional-reverse, supervisory-non supervisory) and the number of participants (individual, group or mixed) (Gisbert-Trejo, Landeta, Albizu, & Fernández-Ferrín, 2022).

Traditional mentoring occurs whenever the mentor and mentee belong to the same organisation. However, other forms of alternative mentoring (Eby, 1997), such as inter-organizational mentoring (IOM), are appearing on the horizon. IOM applies whenever mentors and mentees belong to different organisations. IOM enables mentees to develop beyond the boundaries of their organisation (Mains & MacLean, 2017). Scholars have identified and quantified several advantages of IOM (Gisbert-Trejo, Azpiazu, Landeta, Albizu, & Fernández-Ferrín, 2018a), such as that it: provides alternative perspectives for analysis and problem solving; encourages networking between people from different organisations that can lead to joint projects; and gives access to a higher number of experienced mentors: good practices, technical expertise, different experiences, new trends.

Mentees learn from the IOM process, obtaining improved professional performance and career advancement that transcends the limits of the work and the organisation (Mains & MacLean, 2017). Likewise, mentors learn from the mentoring process extracting outcomes (Allen, Lentz, & Day, 2006a; Gisbert-Trejo, Azpiazu, Landeta, Albizu, & Fernández-Ferrín, 2019b).

Mentees that do not have access to an in-company mentoring program (MP) may recourse to professional associations and other external agents (public or private economic development agencies, coordinating teams of technology parks, science parks or sectoral clusters, universities and business schools, etc.) to have access to reliable inter-organizational mentoring programs (IOMPs) for developing professional competencies and obtaining professional progression (Murrell, Blake-Beard, Porter, & Perkins-Williamson, 2008). Besides, small and medium-sized companies that cannot afford to organise this kind of program internally promote that their employees attend to external MPs (Davidson & Middleton, 2007).

Professional associations and other external agents (for the sake of simplicity, hereafter only referred to as professional associations) can strengthen their position by offering MPs (mainly inter-organisational) that are recognised and of interest to their members (Vance, Tanenbaum, Kaur, Otto, & Morris, 2017; Zabel, 2008). However, although the use of IOM programmes is becoming more common, scholars have mainly focused on the research of traditional MPs (Allen, Eby, & Lentz, 2006b; Giancola, Heaney, Metzger, & Whitman, 2016; Laiho & Brandt, 2012). Therefore, there is a gap in academic knowledge regarding implementing IOMPs within professional associations. This gap must be clarified and systematised. Besides, Matarazzo & Fikelstein (2015) and Giancola et al. (2016) assert that additional research is required about best practices in formal MPs.

This paper also responds to the call for research on human resources in Ibero-America (Pedraja-Rejas et al., 2022). It aims to offer a valid model for implementing IOM, pointing out its main differences from the models tested for traditional mentoring. To this end, the rest remainder of this article is structured as follows: first, based on a rigorous review of the literature, we present the phases and usual practices for the implementation of MPs. Second, we offer qualitative research on experts in IOMPs, this part is focused on extracting the most significant differences between the implementation of traditional and IOMPs. Third, we propose a model for IOMPs highlighting the main differences with conventional MPs. Fourth we present the discussion, conclusion, and implications; and finally, we suggest the limitations and future lines of research.

Literature review: practices and phases in the implementation of MPs

The origins of the IOM date back to the studies of Eby, who, in 1997, proposed an alternative mentoring model that would be the prelude to these kinds of MPs. The author alluded that mentees search for external organisations to access this alternative mentoring practice. Concerning IOMPs, the literature has addressed the study of the characteristics of IOMPs in an incipient manner, with

the publication of papers making general recommendations (Ritchie, 1999; Murrell et al., 2008) or proposing a complete model for these programs (Vance et al., 2017). Ritchie (1999) studied the implementation of mentoring in professional associations for the professional development of librarians proposing seven recommendations: setting defined objectives, designating a coordinator and a support committee, focusing on mentor characteristics, training, granting accessibility of mentors, holding regular meetings, and focusing on what needs to be done rather than on personalities. Friedman (2002) studied the relevance of MPs in professional associations for professional development within the lifelong learning framework. Murrell et al. (2008) performed a longitudinal study for IOMP to enhance diversity. The authors provided some recommendations for avoiding mistakes during the implementation. Zabel (2008) studied the role of mentoring in professional librarian associations with a focus on matching. Likewise, Gisbert-Trejo et al. (2018b) quantified and prioritised in the light of a sample of IOM experts some essential elements of the IOM process to be considered in the design of these programs, being the three most critical elements: good matching, role clarification and the setting of objectives. Arruti (2021) studied the perceived benefits of IOMP among entrepreneurs and women mentees.

Vance et al. (2017) proposed an eight-step guide for MPs within the American Statistical Association (ASA). The developed model is the following: establish the purpose; form a mentoring committee; structure the program; recruit program participants; match mentors and mentees; communicate with program participants and provide guidance; solicit feedback from program participants; produce a concluding report and evaluation. This is the only model found in the literature for IOMPs. Figure 1 shows the eight-step model proposed by Vance et al. (2017):

Figure 1. Eight-step model by Vance et al. (2017)

Source: Vance et al. (2017).

Although other authors have developed models for the practice of traditional mentoring (Giancola et al., 2016; Hegstad & Wentling, 2004), no author except Vance et al. (2017) has developed a model within the practice of IOM, the latter being, therefore, a good reference point for our evolved model. Our model proposal will be based on the literature review presented in this section and on the information presented in the following sections and obtained through a focus group with experts in implementing traditional and IOMPs. As a starting point, the way to organise the information from the literature review presented in this section is based on the model of Vance et al. (2017), which is the best baseline for IOMPs.

Step 1: Establishment of the purpose

One of the success factors in the implementation of IOMPs is the establishment of the purpose. In this sense, Vance et al. (2017) recommend planning the program in light of the organisation's mission and needs. Concerning the subjects of the program, the authors suggest organising specific workshops to draw up a first outline of the areas of interest. These authors recommend, if possible, launching a small pilot program with about 5-10 pairs to design the final program in light of the lessons learned.

Hegstad & Wentling (2004) recommend identifying the objectives of the program (career management, skills development, etc.) as well as considering the target audience (junior, mid-

career, gender, etc.). These two parameters can be identified through focus groups, surveys, or individual interviews.

Step 2: form a mentoring committee

The mentoring committee is crucial for deploying IOMP. Several authors, such as Giancola et al. (2016) and Vance et al. (2017), recommend establishing a **program committee** with a chair. This committee will identify the target audience and determine the program's objectives and program planning through a series of questions: How many mentors and mentees are available? For which target groups (junior, mid-career, gender, etc.)? What resources are available? Etc.

Giancola et al. (2016) state that the committee should also make suggestions for the improvement of the program in light of the final evaluations of mentors and mentees.

Some scholars highlight the need for a **program coordinator** (PC) or administrator to guide the entire process (Giancola et al., 2016; Gisbert-Trejo et al., 2018b) in areas such as helping in the program planning and implementation, preparing training workshops for mentors and mentees, helping as an expert (giving instructions, clarifying expectations, orienting to objectives, guiding mentors, assisting in program evaluations etc.). Besides, the coordinator is responsible for the governance of the program, its close monitoring, and follow-up.

Step 3: structure the program

IOMPs must have a defined and known structure. According to Vance et al. (2017), the program's structure design includes several elements: communication and dissemination strategies, the recruitment strategy, the matching criteria, the evaluation tools and the creation of a program schedule.

It is essential to plan **adequate time** for meetings and preparation (Mains & MacLean, 2017) to ensure the **contact frequency** (Cull, 2006) and the program duration. Some authors on traditional formal MPs recommend a period from 1 to 2- 3 years (Giancola et al., 2016; Hegstad & Wentling, 2004). Giancola et al. (2016) recommend that mentors and mentees meet at least twice a month for the first few months and then continue monthly. Gisbert-Trejo et al. (2018b) distinguish the duration of IOMPs according to the type of mentoring: mentoring on skills- 6 sessions every 3-4 weeks with a minimum duration of 6 months, and career mentoring with sessions for 3-4 weeks with a minimum duration of one year.

Alonso-García et al. (2012) point to the need to draw up a timetable for implementation. The timeline suggested by Vance et al. (2017) confers three months for the previous planning (previous work on the structure of the program) and one year for the development of the program. The first month is for dissemination and forms, the following two months for receiving candidates, the next two months for matching and kick-off, then the relationship takes place for six months and ends in month 11, and the evaluation and final report are carried out in month 12.

Hegstad & Wentling (2004) indicate that the **program's design** can be done by subcontracting a consultant or using benchmarks and literature reviews. Alonso-García et al. (2012) point to the need to decide the type of mentoring used (individual or group-mentoring). Group-mentoring (Huizing, 2012) may be an alternative whenever the number of mentees is significant, and there are not enough mentors.

Step 4: recruit program participants

IOMP coordinators should pay special attention to recruiting candidates for mentors and mentees. This point begins with the dissemination of the MP. Vance et al. (2017) recommend advertising the

program to recruit mentors and mentees. The advertising should include expected mentoring outcomes, the selection processes, and the matching deadlines. These authors recommend using different channels such as distribution lists, newsletters, social media, and podcasts.

The candidates' form deserves special attention (Forret, 1996; Gisbert-Trejo et al., 2018b). In this form, on the one hand, the mentors highlight their experience, describe their position, identify their strengths in mentoring, determine what they expect to gain from this experience, and present their hobbies and interests. On the other hand, the mentees explain their professional careers, identify their weaknesses and strengths, review the areas where they wish to be mentored, and declare their expectations of mentor characteristics.

Mentees should be evaluated for their willingness and involvement in the program (Murrell et al., 2008). Sometimes, the committee may decide that one mentee may work with different mentors to complete all the objectives (Alonso-García et al., 2012; Giancola et al., 2016).

Before the first meeting, mentees must reflect on their **objectives** that will be discussed with the mentor later. In this sense, Mains & MacLean (2017) determine that discussing the mentee´s objectives can help guide the conversation, clarify expectations, and establish career aspirations. The objectives statement helps the pair evaluate the progress (Kyrgidou & Petridou, 2013).

Step 5: match mentors and mentees

The matching is reported to be one of the most relevant processes for the success of the program (Armstrong, Allinson, & Hayes, 2002) since it establishes a common ground for the mentor-mentee pair, either by the similarity of personal traits, professional field (Cox, 2005; Menges, 2016) objectives in the program (Forret, 1996) shared backgrounds and interest, developmental needs (Hegstad & Wentling, 2004).

Some authors determine that mentors and mentees should have an opinion on the matching process (Allen et al., 2006a; Parise & Forret, 2008). Others specify that it is sufficient for the matching to be carried out by the PC (Hansford, Ehrich, & Tennent et al., 2003). However, the work of Mains & MacLean (2017) stipulates that most participants prefer that an external coordinator carry out the matching. Poulsen (2013) states that the criteria for matching participants should be transparent, and the reasons for their choice should be known and transmitted after the matching.

In the same way, it is vital to consider the mentor's characteristics when pairing. Scholars that have studied IOMPs agree that the mentor's skills and desire to enhance the mentee's evolution are more critical than the mentor's seniority and organisational rank (Gisbert-Trejo, Landeta, Albizu, & Fernández-Ferrín, 2019a; Mains & MacLean 2017). Mentors are role models (Poulsen, 2013), although there must be a significant balance between trying to role model the mentor and developing the mentee's decision-making. Hamlin & Sage (2011) also point out that mentors need soft skills such as listening without judging and other complex skills such as the ability to review the mentee's plans with a complete and objective vision; for these authors, the experience in the same field of the mentee is relevant.

Some scholars highlight that, depending on the program's goals, not everybody can be a mentor and their potential to be mentors should be determined (Hegstad & Wentling, 2004; Murrell et al., 2008). However, some scholars assert that with the appropriate training of mentors, there is no need for matching beyond the availability of time and geographical proximity (Cox, 2005).

Many authors confirm that a widespread error is a bad match (Brodie et al., 2017; Eby, McManus, Simon, & Russell, 2000). In this sense, Allen et al. (2006b) determine that incompatibility in values, personalities, or work styles is a barrier to the program's effectiveness.

Step 6: communicate with program participants and provide guidance

Program development supervision and mentors-mentees support are vital to IOMP's success. Vance et al. (2017) determine the importance of email communications to mentors and mentees at each stage of the process. These communications can be made by the committee or by the PC. At the beginning of the program, these communications are: reminders about deadlines for completing the matching, the final designation of the mentor-mentee pairs, and for the first meeting (including a guide for a successful first meeting). After the first meetings, the coordinator will send emails reminding participants about the need for frequent contact during the process and the assessment on intermediate evaluation. The final emails will thank the pair for their participation and ask them to participate in the last evaluation of the MP.

The program committee and the coordinator are responsible for supporting, and assisting mentors and mentees, preparing training and events, and sharing essential points with the stakeholders involved. Some scholars indicate that these programs should provide **initial training** for mentors, mentees, or both, as they must be prepared for their roles (Allen et al., 2006b; Laiho & Brandt, 2012).

Chao (2009) suggests that the program training should include: mentoring definition, functions and phases; the pros and cons of mentoring for the mentor and mentee; and possible difficulties that can arise during the relationship. The roles of mentor and mentee and the steps to initiate, build, and maintain the relationship should also be addressed. Besides, Hansford et al. (2003) assert that part of the mentor training should be focused on teaching how to ask questions that will enable the growth and evolution of the mentee. Giancola et al. (2016) also affirm that these sessions should focus on how to conduct effective coaching, give feedback, address difficult conversations, and make mentees evolve through the Socratic Method. Hegstad & Wentling (2004) stipulate that mentee training should include relationship-building, misconceptions, roles, and communication. Forret (1996) and Hegstad & Wentling (2004) examine different complementary methods for training (manuals, conferences, role-play, videos, testimonials, practice interviews, and online courses).

In the first stage of the program, **clarifying the mentor and mentee's roles** is of the utmost importance to the success of the relationship and the program (Brodie et al., 2017; Forret, 1996). Savoie et al. (2008) describe that the most crucial role of the mentor is to be a personal advisor and a problem solver. Schreiner & Block (2010) also stipulate additional roles for the mentor as someone who helps the mentee find the way, a master, a motivator, a supporter, an advisor, a facilitator, and someone who gives constructive feedback.

Regarding the mentee's role, Mains & MacLean (2017) and Hamlin & Sage (2011) determine that on mentees rely the most significant responsibility of the relationship (attending to meetings and commitments and giving feedback to the mentor) while the mentor has to help the mentees reach their conclusions.

Concerning the first meeting, some researchers suggest that conducting a **face-to-face kick-off meeting** with the help of the PC can help increase the speed at which the relationship is built (Chao, 2009). During this meeting, the program's objectives should be discussed with both (Hansford et al., 2003; Matarazzo & Finkelstein, 2015). In this first session, the mentors introduce themselves with their areas of experience and the limits of this experience; the mentees also introduce themselves by clarifying their needs and points for improvement and establishing communication channels, such as face-to-face meetings, emails, chats, and other computer tools (Alonso-García et al., 2012; Gisbert-Trejo et al., 2018b). The first session typically ends with a mentoring agreement, confidentiality, and a no-fault termination clause (Giancola et al., 2016). These authors suggest a mentoring agreement with the following content: mentoring purpose; meeting logistics (where, when), duration of the program, frequency between sessions; responsible

for promoting them; how to find out that the process is succeeding, and list of objectives; an action plan for each objective; confidentiality clause; no-fault termination clause; signature of the mentor and signature of the mentee.

Alonso-García et al. (2012) suggest that it is necessary to point out to the pair that the mentee should develop minute for each meeting with at least these components: date, mentor name, mentee name, session number, topics discussed, ongoing actions, future actions, and observations. The minutes would be agreed with the mentor. Besides, Forret (1996), and Hegstad & Wentling (2004), determine that it is usually advisable that the coordinator performs follow-up action on the pair once or twice a year. Other authors recommend that coordinators be stricter and more exhaustive in their monthly follow-ups (Murrell et al. (2008).

Some researchers stress the importance of having an **intermediate meeting or workshop** where mentors, on the one hand, and mentees, on the other, share their experiences throughout the process, clarify their doubts and establish new approaches (Giancola et al., 2016; Gisbert-Trejo, 2018b; Mains & MacLean, 2017). During the meeting, the mentee and mentor can extract learning and implications for the relationship's future, and PCs obtain helpful information for upcoming programs. Intermediate workshops with mentors and mentees are crucial to maximising the program's success (Alonso-García et al., 2012) because they allow the group to learn, motivate the mentors, increase their confidence and give the coordinator a global vision of how the program is going on.

It is essential to know **how to end the relationship** either because the program has ended or because the relationship is not working. In the second instance, multiple causes may exist; in this case, some authors stipulate the importance of terminating the relationship to save frustration and discomfort (Forret, 1996). Alonso-García et al. (2012) explain some of the reasons why the relationship ends: because they do not get along well, because one of them has a circumstance that makes it impossible for them to continue (relocation, family circumstances, etc.), because the mentee managed to complete their objectives ahead of time, or because the program ends. Cull (2006) outlines how to detect during a follow-up that a mentoring relationship did not going well; for example, if the mentee recurrently avoids addressing an objective or does not meet the commitments agreed upon in the previous session.

Hamlin & Sage (2011) states that mentors can disappoint mentees by not focusing on them or not meeting the mentee's developmental needs. Clutterbuck (2014) refers to those mentors who are not committed to the process and have an alternative agenda as "mentors from hell". Cull (2006) claims that sometimes inexperienced mentors might misunderstand their roles, so it is essential that the program has clear guidance and that PCs request reports from the sessions. Eby et al. (2000) establish some of the inappropriate behaviours of the mentor, such as distancing and manipulative behaviour.

Managing time is another cause of program failure. Many authors assert that insufficient time allocated to the process is a significant barrier (Laiho & Brandt, 2012; Schreiner & Block, 2010). From another perspective, Hansford et al. (2003) state that neither party should make excessive demands on the other's time. Noe (1988) adds to the lack of time the physical distance as one of the causes of poor interaction.

Step 7: solicit feedback from program participants

The continuous improvement of the program starts with program assessment; this is why several authors (Alonso-García et al., 2012; Chao, 2009; Giancola et al., 2016) suggest mentor and mentee feedback as part of any program evaluation. There are two levels of assessment. The first level is the evaluation of mentors and mentees. The form provided to the mentee evaluates the meetings (total number, average duration, average frequency), degree of satisfaction with the

mentor (concerning the duration of the meetings, accessibility, degree of experience, help provided, feedback provided), the mentees also evaluate their work as a mentees and progression on the program. The form provided to the mentor can evaluate the meetings (total number, average duration, average frequency), degree of satisfaction with the mentee (concerning the duration of the meetings, initiative, ability to accept feedback and evolution). The mentors also evaluate their work as a mentor as they also learn from the process (Gisbert-Trejo, Azpiazu, Landeta, Albizu, and Fernández-Ferrín, 2019b).

The second level is the evaluation of the program itself. At this level, Alonso-García et al. (2012) and Vance et al. (2017) suggest placing questions for both participants, such as: whether the participation was rewarding, if they would recommend the program to their colleagues, and whether there are plans to continue the relationship after the program, what aspects of the program have contributed to a successful mentoring experience, what impact the program has had on their personal life and their professional life, what are the strengths of the program and what recommendations they would give for program improvement. They can also be requested to evaluate the usefulness of the means provided by the program (PC, training, support tools, and workshops).

Alonso-García et al. (2012) highlight the importance of closing the program with interviews between the coordinator, the mentors, and the mentees. These interviews can be based on the following script: about the relationship (assessing the current situation and how it has changed since the beginning), about the objectives worked on (evaluating the evolution, describing what has been the progress in the professional and personal field) and about the future (future goals of the mentee and actions to achieve them). The coordinator should also compile a dossier with: mentor and mentee profiles, meeting reports, workshop reports, follow-up forms, problem-solving procedures, and opinions of members who do not participate in the program but interact with it.

Program evaluations must be used to refine MPs (Bagnoli, Estache & Fourati, 2022). The PC segregates the data and analyses it to lead to conclusions. The assessment is used for the couple and the program improvement (Giancola et al., 2016). The PC should also consider for program evaluation these indicators as a minimum basis: the number of pairs, duration of relationships, frequency of meetings, assessment of the evolution of objectives, and the relationship (Alonso-García et al., 2012). According to Giancola et al. (2016), some clues about the program's success are that in the short term, 80% of couples are still active after the first year, and 90% of them attend organised events and recommend the program. In the long term, the program is successful if both rate their partners highly and report satisfaction with the relationship.

Weinberg & Lankau (2011) established the number of sessions that affect the mentoring relationship and program evaluation incrementally. PCs should allow adequate time for the relationship to develop and not make decisions too early. The 4-5 month assessment may vary significantly from the 9-10 month assessment. Therefore, special attention should also be paid to program design in terms of length.

Some authors (Giancola et al., 2016; Hegstad & Wentling, 2004) recommend holding a recognition event at the end of the program. It is a celebration event where the work of mentors and mentees is recognised. Sometimes a testimonial video with interviews with couples is projected. Alonso-García et al. (2012) encourage the PC or the committee chairperson to send a letter of congratulations and recognition to mentors and mentees for well-done work throughout the program.

Step 8: produce a concluding report and evaluation

After evaluating mentors and mentees, the assessment of the PC and the mentoring committee is necessary. It is performed through various actions; in this sense, Vance et al. (2017) suggest some content for the written evaluation of the program. This includes an executive summary, a statement

on whether or not the program has met its objectives, a timeline, a statistical overview of participation (how many mentors, mentees, duration of meetings, number of sessions, etc.), a statistical summary of the program evaluation (satisfaction, recommendations for program improvement, etc.), a summary of lessons learned for that year, a decision on whether the program should continue in the coming years, and names of program committee members and PC for next year.

Alonso-García et al. (2012) point out the need to communicate to participants and stakeholders the final report that reflects the objectives set out in the program, the achievements made, and the improvements to be made for the next edition. Vance et al. (2017) suggest a review of the program after three years of operation to improve its design, matching, and evaluation in the light of lessons learned.

Methodology of qualitative research

On 7 February 2021, a meeting was held with 20 experts in inter-organizational mentoring and traditional mentoring, 42% representing professional associations, 25% entrepreneurial associations, 8% women associations, and 25% expert consultants in MPs. The research team presented these experts with the usual phases and practices collected from the literature on MPs. The Nominal Group Technique (NGT) (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975) was used to collect from the participating experts the main differences in the model between traditional MPs and IOMPs. NGT is a technique designed to stimulate the creativity and knowledge contribution of a group of experts but limits the possible negative influences that open interaction may have on the quality and quantity of individual contributions, e.g. due to dominant personalities, status differences, communication difficulties, etc. For this purpose, experts individually draft their ideas and then present them, in the form of sentences or short phrases, in turn, and one at a time, to the rest of the group until all contributions are presented. If necessary, they explain their contributions to others so that all can understand them. If during the sharing process, an expert comes up with an additional idea derived from the ideas they have heard, they can formulate it when it is their turn, and the researchers take it up.

In our case, a member of the research team collected each of the experts' contributions on a computer, projecting them at the same time on a screen so that the experts could confirm the correctness of the data collected. After gathering all the results, the research team shared the differences collected in each phase through the NGT dynamics, and the experts validated the specific model for IOMP.

Findings: differences between Traditional MP and IOMP

Table 1 provides the phases of a model of implementation of an IOMPs based on and evolved from the model of Vance et al. (2017), this model includes the main characteristics of each phase collected from the literature and synthesised by the authors, and the differential characteristics of the IOMPs, contributed by the experts and classified and organised by the authors.

Table 1: Differences between traditional and IOMPs evolved from the structure of the Vance et al. (2017) model

Characteristics of the program (Vance et al., 2017)	**Traditional mentoring (intra-organizational)**		**Inter-organizational mentoring (in bold the differences with intra-organizational mentoring)**
1-Establishment of the purpose • Aligned mission, objectives, and needs of the company or organisation.	• Managed by the company -> Organizational culture consolidation, development of managers/succession, newcomer's socialisation. • Tool for attracting and retaining talent.		• Managed by an association or external organisation -> According to the purpose of the organisation's collective-> **development of managerial skills of members of the organisation**. • **Institutionalization of the organisation (justifying the organisation's existence and gaining notoriety inside and outside the organisation). Adding value to the associated collective.**
2-Form a mentoring Committee • Appointment of the Committee. • Designation of the mentoring champion (program coordinator).	• HR Management and sometimes more members of Senior Management-> Management and evaluation of the program. • Frequent close supervision of the program by Senior Management. • Necessary alignment with company culture, vision, and knowledge of HR selection and development processes.		• **Program coordinator/coordinating team, often members of the organisation's Direction**-> Management and evaluation of the program. • Frequently, **amateurism at the beginning**. • Very often, the organisation's management delegates to **the program coordinator or the coordinating team**. • Exceptional **communication skills, persuasion, and broad social relations are necessary**.
3- Structure the program • Design of communication and dissemination strategies. • Design of the recruitment strategy. • Design of matching criteria. • Design of evaluation tools. • Creation of a calendar/program plan.	• The program's objectives respond to the company's managerial development objectives. • Communication design and dissemination (go to step 4.1). • Recruitment of mentors and mentees (go to step 4.2). • Design of matching tools/criteria (go to step 5). • Design tools for monitoring and evaluation (go to step 8). • Establishment of the program agenda.		• The program's objectives respond to the goals of the **development of the mentee collective of the association**. • Communication design and **dissemination** (go to step 4.1). • **Recruitment of mentors and mentees** (go to step 4.2). • **Design of matching tools/criteria** (go to step 5). • **Design tools for monitoring and evaluation** (go to step 8). • Establishment of the program agenda.
4.1-Recruit participants: communication and dissemination • Establishment of dissemination channels.	• Sometimes, there is specific dissemination using internal communication channels (newsletters, distribution lists, and the company's internal website), although individualised communication between the committee and mentor/mentee predominates.		• Use **internal and external communication channels** to maximise the impact of the communication and notoriety of the organisation. Use of different social networks depending on the age of the group.
4.2- Recruit participants: • **Recruitment of Mentors and Mentees.**	Mentors.	• Generally, high-ranking executives from the company itself. • Participation suggested by the company. • A tiny number concerning the size of the company.	• **Recognized experts in their professional field.** • **Management effort to identify and attract high-level mentors. Also, to encourage continuity of mentors and to renew the base of mentors with the passing of the editions.** • Generally, organically **detached from the organiser** of the program. • **Voluntary and altruistic participation.** • **A high number (important mentors' base).**
	Mentees.	• Junior employees with potential. • Participation suggested by the company. Belonging to the group of "the chosen." • Few, concerning the company as a whole.	• **Members/associates/beneficiaries of the external organisation or association** promoting the mentoring program. • **Voluntary participation** and **free** participation in the mentoring process. • **Increased possibilities of access to the program**. • Depending on the program and year, **a relatively large number** of mentees are managed through group processes.

5-Match mentors and mentees.	• At the committee's discretion and aligned with the objectives pursued by the company. • Based on skills, experience, and proximity. • It usually avoids the coincidence in the hierarchical line between mentor and mentee.		• Use **different criteria depending on the program's objectives and the coordinators' expertise** (personal affinity, thematic affinity, gender affinity ...). • Mentor and mentee from the same company are usually avoided. • Use of matching **round tables (*speed-date-matching*)**.
6- Communicate with program participants and provide guidance. • Communication with participants. • **Program implementation (*).** • Provide support. **(*) Parts not included in Vance et al. (2017) model. Complemented by other authors.**	Communication with participants.	• Generally, by email, when the program coordination is carried out through an internal committee and not by an external consultant.	• By email and personalised through telephone calls and follow-up sessions.
	Launch (*).	• Initial training. • Establishment of the mentee's objectives aligned with the company's. • Mentor and mentee contract in which the company can participate as a third party.	• Initial training. • Establishment of the objectives of the mentees **aligned with their development needs**. • Mentor and mentee contract with the **exclusive participation of the couple**.
	Development (sessions).	• Duration of the processes: generally several years. • Modality: generally individual presence. • Duration of the sessions: frequently, around 90 min. The periodicity of the sessions depends on the moment of the relationship (initial frequency is less than one month, in advanced stages, it can be every several months). • The non-voluntary nature of the process allows for a stricter follow-up of the sessions.	• **Duration of the processes**: generally, **one year or less** -> more attrition in program management (and program coordinator). • **Modality**: **face-to-face, group or mixed** (depending on the program's objectives). • **Duration of the sessions:** Frequently, around 90 min. (idem). **In-group mentoring, about 2h30min.** The most frequent periodicity is monthly. • **More flexibility in the frequency of sessions.**
	Formative evaluation (*).	• Training mentors in their skills as mentors and workshops with other mentors.	• Training mentors in their skills as mentors and workshops with other mentors. • Training mentors in **other transversal skills** as a reinforcement and reward tool. **Reinforcement of mentors with specific experts to address some topics**.
	Improvement actions/development (*).	• Formal and professionalised programs have measurable objectives.	• The youngest programs do not measure the **level of progress of the objectives.**
	Closing and recognition event (*).	• In limited cases, the recognition event for mentors and mentees. Sometimes with the delivery of certificates.	• Usually, a recognition event for mentors and mentees is a form of **fidelity and intangible reward**. The event serves as a **means to attract mentors and mentees for future editions and to publicise the program**. • **Letter of gratitude from mentee to mentor.**
7-Solicit feedback from program participants.	• Systematic evaluations at the end of the program as a minimum.		• There are systematic evaluations that tend to be more complete as the number of editions progresses. **In the first editions, only satisfaction is measured.**
8- Produce a concluding report and evaluation.	• Complete report with quantitative and qualitative evaluation, improvement actions, and recommendations on the program's continuation in the following year. • The report is used to propose the program committee for the following year.		• **Amateurism, in the beginning,** makes the initial report very simple, and the improvement actions are not introduced annually but triennially.

Note. Aspects not mentioned in the model by Vance et al. (2017) in step 6 are marked with an asterisk (*). The elements drawn in bold are the most notable differences between IOMPs.
Source: authors' elaboration.

This article aims to offer a detailed model that would serve the PCs as a theoretical base for the practical implementation of the IOMPs. This model has been worked through an exhaustive bibliographic review and a contrast with experts. The authors have taken the model proposed by Vance et al. (2017) as a starting point, expanding and complementing it by paying attention to the details of each aspect of the program.

In step 6 of this model (communicate and provide guidance) a crucial step for the correct development of the IOMP, the experts considered it necessary to provide additional sub-steps such as formative evaluation of mentors, the development of improvement actions in the MP, and the closing and recognition event. According to experts, although there are elements of coincidence in the design and implementation of IOMPs and traditional MPs, there are also differential aspects between the two types of programs.

Firstly, in IOM, the program's purpose corresponds to the development needs of its associated collective and the increase in the notoriety of the organisation that offers the program. Besides, the PC plays a differential role and has much more relevance than traditional mentoring. The coordinators must manage a more complex program because they must find mentors and mentees outside their organisation. They also operate a more significant number of pairs, and the program duration is shorter, so the same number of processes must be handled in a shorter time. This differential role of the coordinator corroborates the research by Gisbert-Trejo et al. (2018b), which shows that despite being the PC, a "hidden figure", not taking into account the PC, can lead to the failure of the program.

Moreover, in IOM, the mentors' collective is made up of volunteers and is usually numerous; mentors are eager to give back to society what society once did for them. At the same time, the mentees' collective is made up of volunteers, and those mentees attending IOMPs have greater accessibility to being mentored than if they were only "chosen" by their companies. PCs often use affinity criteria for matching in the case of IOM (gender, topics, expertise); also, there are practices never reported by academia to date, such as speed-date-matching.

Regarding the experience field of mentors, Hamlin & Sage (2011) determine that the experience in the same area of the mentee is relevant in traditional mentoring; however, in IOM, some of the practitioners give relative importance to this circumstance always bearing in mind that the mentor is not an expert in all areas and that they can constantly be reinforced with additional training. Mentors are trained in skills around mentoring and transversal skills that complement their background as a form of retaining them and providing them with intangible rewards.

The duration of these IOMPs is generally shorter (less than a year). Moreover, the recognition event for mentors and mentees is crucial as this event strengthens the fidelity of the collective, attracts new mentors and mentees, serves for dissemination, and gives prestige to the organising entity. Finally, our research demonstrates an exhaustive differentiation between implementing traditional mentoring programs and IOMPs

Conclusions and implications

Professional associations offer IOMPs to provide opportunities for career development, facilitate managers' and professionals' accessibility to this HRD tool which may not be available in mentees' companies. In this sense, those organisations that offer IOMPs have an additional element that justifies their existence and makes them gain notoriety and prestige.

For IOMPs to be a success, they need a systematic design and implementation that guarantees this success. In this sense, our work has offered a clear and simple model for implementing these programs. Likewise, this research provides differential aspects for implementing IOMPs concerning

traditional mentoring. Finally, by expanding the model of Vance et al. (2017), we have offered a complete model that explains the eight steps in designing and implementing both types of programs (traditional and IOMPs).

A differential aspect of this research is that we have counted the feedback of 20 expert practitioners in IOMPs. They have provided us with their expert vision in this practice and the critical differences between traditional and IOM when implementing these programs.

This paper presents relevant contributions to face more excellent solvency in implementing IOMPs. Likewise, it represents a guide that any MP coordinator could follow to provide a program with greater efficiency and quality. Considering the above, professional associations that offer IOMPs would have a potent tool for developing their associated collective.

Besides, this paper contributes to closing the gap between academic knowledge and practice in implementing IOMPs, providing professional associations with guidance for designing and implementing this type of IOMP. To our knowledge, this is the first work comparing the management of two types of mentoring programs, classic intra-organizational mentoring and inter-organizational mentoring. The differential elements of managing both types of programs have been highlighted. These results should be considered in the design of new academic research to establish the determining factors for the success of both types of programs. In this sense, it should be noted that the totally voluntary nature of the participation of both mentors and mentees in the IOMPs can guide future research towards a greater theoretical justification of the causes of this participation to align and adequately meet the objectives of both groups, as a key to understanding the success of this type of programme.

Limitations

The first of the limitations of this work is the number of experts that have participated in the contrast. Even though 20 participants are beginning to be a reasonable number to arrive at clarifying conclusions regarding IOMPs, a larger sample size would have been advisable to provide greater solvency to the results. On the other hand, all the participants in this study are limited to Spanish territory. In the future, it would be desirable to study similar characteristics in a larger geographical area such as Europe.

Besides, although all practitioners have extensive experience in the field of IOM, the nature of the mentoring they carry out (business, entrepreneurial, women) could make some differences concerning the program's implementation. In any case, it is estimated that these differences will be minor but should be explored in the light of IOMPs specific to their nature.

Acknowledgements

The research group would like to thank the members of the Expert Group in mentoring that are collaborating with the Research Project: Iluminada Aparicio and Jesús Mari González (CVE); Nerea Aranguren (EHUalumni); Isabel Iturbe (AED); Oscar Garro, Araceli Cabezón (Vesper Solutions); Sofía Barturen and Ana Arrieta (Bilbao Ekintza); Inma Ramos and Ana Artetxe (Gaztenpresa); Lucía Graña (Beaz); María Luisa de Miguel and Ana San Juan (Escuela de Mentoring); Carmen Mellina (PWN Network), Cristina Andrés (Parque Tecnológico de Bizkaia), Luciano Azpiazu (Colegio Oficial de Ingenieros Industriales de Bizkaia); Alberto Díaz (Colegio Oficial de Ingenieros Industriales de Álava); Sara Gómez (Real Academia de Ingeniería); Julio Rodríguez (Asociación Española de mentoring); María Angeles Fernandez and Gloria Lorenzo (Oracle); Miguel Aurelio Alonso (Universidad complutense de Madrid); Isabel Montals (Barcelona Activa); Elena Villanueva (Iberdrola); Karina Talone (Xerox); Javier García (Azti-Basque Research & Technology Alliance); Jaime Sagardui (Achucarro Basque Center for Neuroscience).

References

Allen, T.D., Lentz, E. & Day, R. (2006a). Career success outcomes associated with mentoring others: A comparison of mentors and nonmentors. *Journal of Career Development*, 32(3), 272-285.

Allen, T.D., Eby, L.T. & Lentz, E. (2006b). The relationship between formal mentoring program characteristics and perceived program effectiveness. *Personnel Psychology*, 59(1), 125-153. DOI: 10.1111/j.1744-6570.2006.00747.x.

Alonso-García, M.A., Calles-Doñate, A.M., & Sánchez-Ávila,C. (2012). *Diseño y desarrollo de programas de mentoring en organizaciones*. Síntesis. ISBN: 9788499587080

Armstrong, S. J., Allinson, C. W., & Hayes, J. (2002). Formal mentoring systems: An examination of the effects of mentor/protégé cognitive styles on the mentoring process. *Journal of Management Studies*, 39(8), 1111-1137 DOI: 10.1111/1467-6486.00326.

Arruti, A. (2021). A study of perceived benefits of mentoring among nascent entrepreneur women: the case of MET mentoring community in Spain. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching & Mentoring*, 19(1), 105-120. DOI: 10.24384/tnw9-4225.

Bagnoli, L., Estache, A., & Fourati, M. (2022). Mentoring as a Pathway to Labour Market Integration: Evidence from a Belgian Programme. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 20(1), 3-19 DOI: 10.24384/sxrr-ec22.

Brodie, J., Huib Van Saane, S. & Osowska, R. (2017). Help Wanted! Exploring the Value of Entrepreneurial Mentoring at Start-Up. *Industry and Higher Education*, 31(2), 122-131 DOI: 10.1177/0950422217691666.

Chao, G.T. (2009). Formal Mentoring: Lessons Learned From Past Practice. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 40(3), 314-320. DOI: 10.1037/a0012658.

Clutterbuck, D. (2014). *Everyone needs a mentor*. 5th Ed. Chatered Institute of Personnel and Development. ISBN: 9781843983668

Cox, E. (2005). For better, for worse: the matching process in formal mentoring schemes. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 13(3), 403-414. DOI: 10.1080/13611260500177484.

Cull, J. (2006). Mentoring young entrepreneurs: what leads to success?. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 4(2), 8-18 Available at: https://radar.brookes.ac.uk/radar/items/31e8c42e-3db8-4634-9a94-5cec735397c7/1/.

Davidson, J.R. & Middleton, C.A. (2007). Networking, networking, networking: The role of professional association memberships in mentoring and retention of science librarians. *Science & Technology Libraries*, 27(1-2), 203-224. DOI: 10.1300/J122v27n01_14.

Delbecq, A. L., Van de Ven, A. H., & Gustafson, D. H. (1975). *Group techniques for program planning: A guide to nominal group and Delphi processes*. Scott Foresman. ISBN: 9780673075918

Eby, L. T. (1997). Alternative forms of mentoring in changing organizational environments: A conceptual extension of the mentoring literature. *Journal of vocational behavior*, 51(1), 125-144. DOI: 10.1006/jvbe.1997.1594.

Eby, L. T., McManus, S. E., Simon, S. A., & Russell, J. E. (2000). The protege's perspective regarding negative mentoring experiences: The development of a taxonomy. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 57(1), 1-21. DOI: 10.1006/JVBE.1999.1726.

Forret, M. L. (1996). Issues facing organizations when implementing formal mentoring programmes. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 17(3), 27-30. DOI: 10.1108/01437739610116966.

Friedman, A., & Phillips, M. (2002). The role of mentoring in the CPD programmes of professional associations. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 21(3), 269-284. DOI: 10.1080/02601370210127864.

Giancola, J. K., Heaney, M. S., Metzger, A. J., & Whitman, B. (2016). An organizational-development approach to implementing mentoring partnerships: Best practices from physician programs. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 68(3), 208. DOI: 10.1037/cpb0000067.

Gisbert-Trejo, N., Azpiazu, L., Landeta, J., Albizu, E. & Fernández-Ferrín, P. (2018a). Impact of inter-organizational mentoring on the quality of the process and performance for organizations. *DYNA*, 93(5), 483-487. DOI: 10.6036/8646.

Gisbert-Trejo, N., Azpiazu, L., Landeta, J., Albizu, E. & Fernández-Ferrín, P. (2018b). Mentoring in professional associations: a tool for career development. *DYNA*, 93(3), 257-261. DOI: 10.6036/8478.

Gisbert-Trejo, N., Landeta, J., Albizu, E. & Fernández-Ferrín, P. (2019a). Determining effective mentor characteristics in inter-organizational mentoring for managers: an approach based on academics' and practitioners' perspectives. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 51(2), 85-103. DOI: 10.1108/ICT-06-2018-0051.

Gisbert-Trejo, N., Azpiazu, L., Landeta, J., Albizu, E. & Fernández-Ferrín, P. (2019b). Inter-organizational mentoring: mentor outcomes. *DYNA*, 94(3), 248-252. DOI: 10.6036/8808.

Gisbert-Trejo, N., Albizu, E., Landeta, J. & Fernández-Ferrín, P. (2022), "Mentoring programs implementation: differences between group and individual mentoring", *Development and Learning in Organizations*, 36 No. 4, 1-4.

Hamlin, R. G., & Sage, L. (2011). Behavioural criteria of perceived mentoring effectiveness: An empirical study of effective and ineffective mentor and mentee behaviour within formal mentoring relationships. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 35(8), 752-778. DOI: 10.1108/03090591111168311.

Hansford, B. C., Ehrich, L. C., & Tennent, L. (2003). Does mentoring deserve another look?. In *Human resource management: Challenges and future directions*. John Wiley & Sons. ISBN: 9780470800959.

Hegstad, C. D., & Wentling, R. M. (2004). The development and maintenance of exemplary formal mentoring programs in Fortune 500 companies. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 15(4), 421-448. DOI: 10.1002/hrdq.1114.

Huizing, R. L. (2012). Mentoring together: A literature review of group mentoring. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 20(1), 27-55. DOI: 10.1080/13611267.2012.645599.

Kyrgidou, L. P., & Petridou, E. (2013). Developing women entrepreneurs' knowledge, skills and attitudes through e-mentoring support. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 20(3), 548-566. DOI: 10.1108/JSBED-04-2013-0061.

Laiho, M. & Brandt, T. (2012). Views of HR specialists on formal mentoring: current situation and prospects for the future. *Career Development International*, 17(4-5), 435-457. DOI: 10.1108/13620431211269694.

Mains, I. & MacLean, S. (2017). Developing across boundaries – mentor and mentee perceptions and experiences of cross-organisational mentoring. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 49(4), 189-198. DOI: 10.1108/ICT-02-2017-0008.

Matarazzo, K. L., & Finkelstein, L. M. (2015). Formal mentorships: examining objective-setting, event participation and experience. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 30(6), 675-691. DOI: 10.1108/JMP-02-2012-0041.

Menges, C. (2016). Toward improving the effectiveness of formal mentoring programs: Matching by personality matters. *Group & Organization Management*, 41(1), 98-129. DOI: 10.1177/1059601115579567.

Murrell, A.J., Blake-Beard, S., Porter, D.M., Jr. & Perkins-Williamson, A. (2008). Interorganizational formal mentoring: Breaking the concrete ceiling sometimes requires support from the outside. *Human Resource Management*, 47(2), 275-294. DOI: 10.1002/hrm.20212.

Noe, R. A. (1988). An investigation of the determinants of successful assigned mentoring relationships. *Personnel psychology*, 41(3), 457-479. DOI: 10.1111/j.1744-6570.1988.tb00638.x.

Parise, M. R., & Forret, M. L. (2008). Formal mentoring programs: The relationship of program design and support to mentors' perceptions of benefits and costs. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 72(2), 225-240. DOI: 10.1016/j.jvb.2007.10.011.

Pedraja-Rejas, L., Rodríguez-Ponce, E., & Muñoz-Fritis, C. (2022). Human resource management and performance in Ibero-America: Bibliometric analysis of scientific production. *Cuadernos de Gestión*, 22(2), 123-137. DOI: 10.5295/cdg.211569lp.

Poulsen, K. M. (2013). Mentoring programmes: Learning opportunities for mentees, for mentors, for organisations and for society. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 45(5), 255-263

Ritchie, A., & Genoni, P. (1999). Mentoring in professional associations: Continuing professional development for librarians. *Health Libraries Review*, 16(4), 216-225 DOI: 10.1046/j.1365-2532.1999.00241.x.

Savoie, A., Lapointe, D., Laroche, R., & Brunet, L. (2008). Formal mentoring at work: from research to practice. *Pratiques Psychologiques*, 14(2), 171-184.

Schreiner, B., & Block, J. (2010). Mentoring in the pharmaceutical industry: Developing an effective program for a field-based medical team. *Drug Information Journal*, 44(1), 81-86. DOI: 10.1177/009286151004400109.

Vance, E. A., Tanenbaum, E., Kaur, A., Otto, M. C., & Morris, R. (2017). An eight-step guide to creating and sustaining a mentoring program. *The American Statistician*, 71(1), 23-29. DOI: 10.1080/00031305.2016.1251493.

Weinberg, F. J., & Lankau, M. J. (2011). Formal mentoring programs: A mentor-centric and longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Management*, 37(6), 1527-1557. DOI: 10.1177/0149206309349310.

Zabel, D. (2008). The mentoring role of professional associations. *Journal of Business and Finance Librarianship*, 13(3), 349-361. DOI: 10.1080/08963560802183187.

About the authors

Dr Nuria Gisbert-Trejo is the General Manager of CIC EnergiGUNE, a Basque Research & Technology Alliance (BRTA) member, and a researcher at the Institute of Applied Business Economics at the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU).

Dr Eneka Albizu is a researcher at the Institute of Applied Business Economics at the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU).

Dr Jon Landeta is the Director of the Executive MBA of the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU) and a researcher at the Institute of Applied Business Economics at the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU).

Dr Pilar Fernández-Ferrín is a researcher at the Institute of Applied Business Economics at the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU).