



A comparative analysis of the student mentoring system in secondary education

Risdiyanto¹, Asep Herry Hernawan², Riche Cynthia Johan³, Fajar Ahmad Fadlilah⁴

^{1,2,3,4} Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

risdi@upi.edu¹, asepherry@upi.edu², riche@upi.edu³, affadh@upi.edu⁴

ABSTRACT

Integrating student mentoring systems across academic and non-academic aspects has become a crucial component of modern education systems worldwide. The recently implemented Homeroom Teacher policy in Indonesia underscores the urgency of input and understanding of systematic mentoring models from various countries. This study aims to analyze the design of mentoring systems in ten developed countries, including identifying basic structures, mapping roles, implementing mechanisms, and synthesizing adaptable principles. Using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method based on the PRISMA procedure, this study analyzes indexed empirical articles, policy documents, and implementation reports published between 2015 and 2025 from ten developed countries: Singapore, Japan, South Korea, China, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia. The study reveals that while there are variations in mentor roles, student progress monitoring methods, and academic-non-academic integration, effective mentoring systems consistently feature the assignment of a specific mentor to each student, scheduled mentoring meetings, and a structured mentoring plan. Excellent programs require mandatory training for mentors and policy support from institutions/schools or the government. These findings contribute to conceptual understanding and practical implications for designing a structured and sustainable mentoring system for secondary school students.

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ABSTRAK

Integrasi sistem pendampingan murid dalam aspek akademik dan non-akademik telah menjadi komponen penting dalam sistem pendidikan modern di seluruh dunia. Kebijakan tentang Homeroom teacher yang baru diimplementasikan di Indonesia menegaskan urgensi masukan dan pemahaman tentang model mentoring yang sistematis dari berbagai negara. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis desain sistem mentoring di sepuluh negara maju yang meliputi identifikasi struktur dasar, pemetaan peran, mekanisme implementasi, dan sintesis prinsip-prinsip yang dapat diadaptasi. Melalui metode Systematic Literature Review (SLR) yang mengacu pada prosedur PRISMA, penelitian ini menganalisis artikel empiris terindeks, dokumen kebijakan, dan laporan implementasi yang diterbitkan antara tahun 2015 dan 2025 dari sepuluh negara maju, yaitu Singapura, Jepang, Korea Selatan, Tiongkok, Finlandia, Jerman, Belanda, Inggris Raya, Amerika Serikat, dan Australia. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa meskipun terdapat variasi dalam peran mentor, metode pemantauan perkembangan murid, dan integrasi akademik-non akademik, sistem mentoring yang efektif secara konsisten memiliki ciri-ciri berupa penugasan mentor khusus untuk setiap murid, pertemuan mentoring yang terjadwal, serta rencana mentoring yang terstruktur. Program yang unggul mensyaratkan pelatihan wajib bagi mentor serta dukungan kebijakan dari institusi/sekolah atau pemerintah. Temuan ini berkontribusi dalam memberikan pemahaman konsep dan implikasi praktis dalam merancang kerangka sistem mentoring murid sekolah menengah yang terstruktur dan berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: analisis komparatif; homeroom teacher; pendidikan menengah; sistem mentoring murid

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary secondary education systems globally emphasize integrating academic instruction with psychosocial support to address students' holistic development. Empirical studies demonstrate that such integration enhances academic performance, motivation, and well-being by fostering socio-emotional competencies and relational networks (Ito, 2011; Chen et al., 2025). However, modern adolescents face dual challenges: Digital overload from pervasive smartphone and social media use, which correlates with anxiety and attention deficits, and demands for self-regulation amid AI-driven learning tools and online education platforms (as noted by Holmes and Miao in "*Guidance for generative AI in education and research*"). Leading education systems have institutionalized structured mentoring frameworks. Mentoring can encourage students to discover their real-world interests (Sheeba & Selvanayaki, 2021). Furthermore, the research found that the mentoring program has a positive impact on the development of social and emotional skills among high-ability students in rural areas, which is very important for nurturing scientific talent (Puslednik & Brennan, 2025).

Singapore's Form Teacher Guidance Period (FTGP) integrates daily socio-emotional learning, while Finland's *ryhmänohjaaja* system ensures holistic student support through national welfare policies. Japan's *tannin-seikatsu shidō* model combines academic oversight with moral education, reflecting global priorities for metacognition and collaborative learning (See in: https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-digital-education-outlook-2021_589b283f-en.html). These models align with UNESCO's 21st-century education goals, emphasizing adaptability and ethical digital literacy. Indonesia's recent reforms, including Permendikdasmen No. 11 Tahun 2025, formalize the Homeroom teacher role, mandating teachers to guide students' academic, character, and personal development (See in: <https://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Details/322487/permendikdasmen-no-11-tahun-2025>). This policy aligns with the Kurikulum Merdeka, which prioritizes holistic, values-based education. Despite global adoption of mentoring systems, no comprehensive comparative analysis exists of secondary-level frameworks across diverse contexts. This study bridges this gap by analyzing ten national systems - from Singapore to the United States - to identify scalable best practices in role design, workload management, and institutional support.

The findings aim to inform Indonesia's development of a sustainable Homeroom teacher model that balances global standards with local cultural and pedagogical needs. Methodologically, the review synthesizes policy documents, empirical studies, and implementation reports (2015-2025) to prioritize actionable insights for systemic reform. By addressing digital challenges and leveraging cross-national evidence, Indonesia can cultivate a mentoring framework that nurtures resilient, ethically grounded learners prepared for complex societal demands. This study provides a novel contribution to the field of secondary education by offering a systematic, multi-country comparative analysis of student mentoring systems across ten high-performing countries. While existing research has predominantly examined mentoring, pastoral care, or advisory programs within single national contexts or as school-level interventions, this study advances the literature by integrating policy frameworks, structural role design, workload conditions, and mentoring routines into a unified comparative analytical model.

Methodologically, this research extends prior mentoring studies by applying a PRISMA-guided systematic literature review combined with comparative structural analysis, enabling the identification of transferable system-level design principles rather than isolated best practices. Conceptually, the study reframes student mentoring in secondary education not merely as a support mechanism but as a core institutional architecture that connects academic guidance, socio-emotional development, and character formation. Empirically, this study is among the first to position Indonesia's newly formalized Homeroom teacher policy within a global comparative framework, allowing national reform to be interpreted against international benchmarks from East Asia, Europe, and Anglo-Saxon systems. By synthesizing cross-country evidence

into an integrative conceptual model, this research contributes both to comparative education theory and to policy-relevant design knowledge for the development of sustainable, role-clear, and relationally grounded mentoring systems in secondary education (Branje et al., 2021).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Socio-Emotional Development Theories in Mentoring

Successful mentoring in secondary education is grounded in socio-emotional development theories that emphasize the importance of supportive relationships for adolescent learning and well-being. Erikson's psychosocial development theory identifies adolescence as a critical stage of identity formation, commonly described as the phase of identity versus role confusion. During this period, adolescents explore personal values, social roles, and future aspirations while attempting to develop a coherent sense of self. Research on adolescent development highlights that supportive relationships with adults play a crucial role in helping young people navigate this stage and maintain psychological well-being (Branje et al., 2021; Branje, 2022). Mentoring is an effective support mechanism in learning, contributing to increased student engagement, academic support, and positive learning experiences (Haas et al., 2022). In a mentoring context, teachers can serve as important developmental figures, providing guidance, encouragement, and emotional stability as students face academic and personal challenges.

Mentoring programs can also support adolescents' social-emotional development by enhancing emotional regulation, resilience, and interpersonal skills important for prosocial behavior (Green et al., 2022). Research indicates a strong, positive correlation between mentoring and teaching practices in the classroom, suggesting that mentoring enhances instructional, student-oriented, and social activities that enrich students' educational experiences (Shahzadi & Azfal, 2024). These relational aspects of mentoring closely align with the framework of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), which emphasizes competencies such as self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Mahoney et al., 2021; Taylor et al., 2017). Through mentoring, teachers can help students reflect on their goals, manage their emotions, and develop constructive learning habits. Additionally, teachers receive constructive criticism and emotional support, which help them become more self-assured and develop a positive attitude toward teaching, while also maximizing preschoolers' performance (Florescu & Ciolan, 2024).

Empirical research on youth mentoring indicates that adolescents who have access to consistent mentoring relationships tend to demonstrate higher self-esteem, stronger coping strategies, and lower levels of loneliness (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; Raposa et al., 2019). From a relational perspective, mentoring relationships can function as a psychological "safe space" where students feel comfortable expressing their concerns and discussing personal difficulties. This idea is consistent with Attachment Theory and the ethics of care perspective proposed by Noddings (1984) in "*Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education*," which emphasizes the importance of caring relationships in educational settings. More recent studies also show that school care practices are closely linked to trust, emotional support, and the continuity of students' learning experiences (Rabin, 2021; Silva & Rojas, 2024). When students perceive that a caring adult at school understands and supports them, their sense of belonging increases, which strengthens resilience and personal development. Therefore, mentoring programs that combine academic guidance with emotional support align well with socio-emotional development theories and are better positioned to address adolescents' broader developmental needs.

Social Cognitive Theory and Self-Regulated Learning

Social Cognitive Theory provides an important foundation for understanding how mentoring systems can support student learning. Bandura's (1986) theory, "*Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*" proposes that reciprocal interactions among personal factors, behavior, and environmental conditions influence human development. A central concept in Bandura's (1987) "*Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*" within this framework is self-efficacy, which refers to individuals' beliefs about their capability to organize and execute the actions necessary to achieve desired goals. Contemporary research in educational psychology continues to highlight the important role of self-efficacy in shaping students' motivation, persistence, and academic performance (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Building on the principles of Social Cognitive Theory, Zimmerman conceptualizes learning as a proactive, self-directed process in which learners plan, monitor, and reflect on their cognitive, motivational, and behavioral strategies (Zimmerman, 2002). In Zimmerman's Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) model, learning occurs through a cyclical process consisting of forethought, performance, and self-reflection phases.

Research has consistently shown that teacher instructional support plays an important role in helping students develop SRL skills (Dignath & Veenman, 2021; Panadero, 2017). Strong SRL abilities help students achieve learning goals individually and improve academically. This association highlights the importance of fostering self-regulated learning practices to empower students and improve their academic performance, particularly across diverse educational contexts where self-direction and adaptability are essential (Astuti & Rozikin, 2024). In secondary education, mentoring relationships can serve as an important external support system that facilitates students' self-regulated learning. Peer mentoring has been shown to positively influence learning by supporting academic and social integration, enhancing students' sense of belonging, and reducing dropout intentions, particularly among first-year students (Gehreke et al., 2024). Through regular interaction, feedback, modeling, and goal-setting support, teacher mentors can strengthen students' self-efficacy, learning autonomy, and responsibility for their own learning processes. Such mentoring interactions help create learning environments that encourage students to gradually develop independent learning strategies while still benefiting from structured guidance.

METHODS

Research Design

This study utilized a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) integrated with comparative analysis to examine the design and implementation of mentoring systems in secondary schools across ten nations. The SLR methodology was chosen to facilitate a rigorous, transparent synthesis of empirical studies, policy documents, and descriptive analyses, in accordance with PRISMA 2020 guidelines. The comparative approach enabled a detailed examination of structural characteristics, mentor responsibilities, caseload distributions, implementation strategies, and systemic support mechanisms across diverse educational contexts. By combining these methods, the research ensured methodological reproducibility while identifying patterns and variations in mentoring frameworks that address both academic and psychosocial student needs.

Data Sources and Search Strategy

The study conducted comprehensive searches across four scholarly databases: Scopus, ERIC, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. To account for global variations in mentoring terminology, the search employed keyword combinations spanning concepts such as mentoring, pastoral care, academic advising, homeroom teachers (*tannin*, *banzhuren*), and student support systems. Specific search queries included:

["student mentoring" AND "secondary school"], ["homeroom teacher" OR "form teacher" OR "tannin" OR "banzhuren"], ["pastoral care" AND "adolescent"], ["academic advising" AND "high school"], and ["teacher-student relationship" AND "school guidance"]. Boolean logic and truncation techniques were applied to ensure broad coverage of national terminologies while maintaining methodological rigor.

The search focused on publications from 2015-2025, a period reflecting increased global focus on holistic education, student well-being, and relational pedagogies. Initial database searches yielded 2,089 records, which were exported in RIS format and consolidated using Mendeley Reference Manager. To incorporate system-level practices and policy frameworks, additional searches were conducted across national education portals, including those of Singapore, Japan, South Korea, Finland, and the Netherlands, as well as international organizations such as the OECD and UNESCO. The hand-search resulted in 32 relevant documents, which were subsequently added to the Mendeley database, bringing the total number of recorded entries to 2,121.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Studies were included if they 1) Examined student mentoring, advisory, pastoral care, or homeroom/form teacher systems in secondary education; 2) Provided empirical evidence, policy descriptions, or system-level frameworks; 3) Were published between 2015 and 2025; and 4) Were available in English. Both qualitative and quantitative studies, as well as policy reports from national ministries and international organizations, were eligible. Sources were excluded if they focused solely on higher education or primary schooling, addressed general teacher-student relationships without a structured mentoring component, or lacked a sufficient description of system design. Opinion pieces, non-peer-reviewed blogs, and purely theoretical essays without empirical or policy grounding were also excluded. These criteria ensured that the review captured comparable, contextually relevant evidence on mentoring system design across countries.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data extraction utilized a structured coding protocol focusing on eight key dimensions: system architecture, terminology, role definitions, caseload parameters, responsibility scopes, training prerequisites, policy integration, and documented outcomes. Studies were coded both deductively (based on predetermined structural categories) and inductively (to identify emergent patterns). Thematic synthesis unfolded through three iterative phases: initial descriptive coding of study findings, organization of codes into cross-national conceptual clusters, and distillation of overarching themes reflecting universal and context-specific mentoring attributes. Comparative matrices were subsequently constructed to systematically contrast national systems across four domains: structural configuration, mentoring priorities, professional development frameworks, and policy alignment. This integrative analytical process yielded the six core themes detailed in the Results section, balancing methodological transparency with nuanced interpretation of complex educational systems.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The database search returned 2089 articles, including 200 from Scopus, 636 from ScienceDirect, 123 from ERIC, and 1130 from Google Scholar. An additional 32 articles were incorporated through hand-searching and backward citation tracing, including Ministry of Education reports and policy documents, bringing the total to 2,121 reviewed articles. After eliminating duplicates, 1199 articles were selected for screening based on titles and abstracts. Here, 1105 records were excluded primarily because they fell outside the

scope: some addressed non-secondary education contexts, others lacked a mentoring focus, or proved conceptually misaligned with the research aims. The remaining 94 documents underwent full-text assessment. 39 were excluded due to concerns such as insufficient methodological rigor, the absence of detailed descriptions of mentoring systems, or an exclusive focus on higher education. Ultimately, 25 documents fully satisfied our inclusion criteria and were synthesized. This final collection includes 23 empirical studies and two policy/organizational documents, representing diverse educational landscapes across ten countries: Australia, Singapore, China, Japan, South Korea, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

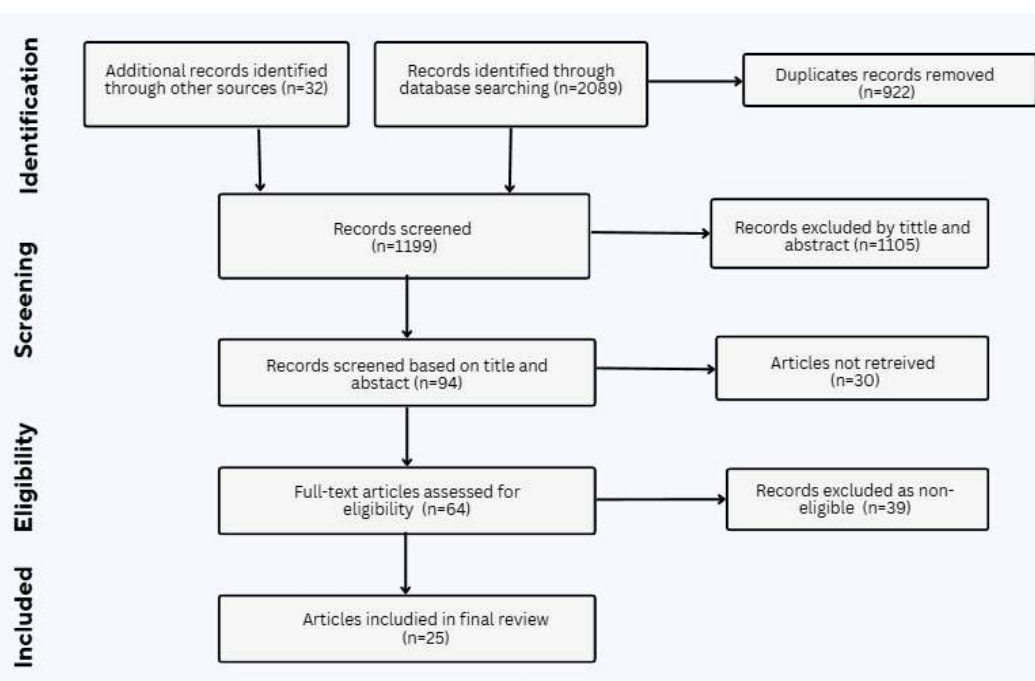


Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 flow chart for the articles' selection
 Source: Research (2025)

Figure 1 presents the results of the systematic literature review in three parts: 1) Characteristics of the 25 included studies; 2) Comparative findings across the ten countries; and 3) Cross-country thematic synthesis.

Characteristic of Included Studies

A total of 25 documents were included: 23 empirical studies and two policy or system-level documents. Table 1 summarises the key characteristics of these studies, including research design, mentoring terminology, focus, and key findings.

Table 1. Characteristic of Included Studies (2015-2025)

Citation	Country	Type	Terminology	Focus	Key Findings
(Delroy, 2025)	Australia	Empirical	Pastoral teacher	Integrated	Structural pastoral care supports wellbeing
(Gregory et al., 2021)	Australia	Empirical	Pastoral teacher	Pastoral	Faith-based mentoring improves identity
(Larsen et al., 2023)	Australia	Empirical	Pastoral mentor	Integrated	Addresses digital stress & wellbeing

Citation	Country	Type	Terminology	Focus	Key Findings
(Topliss & Leber, 2024)	Australia	Empirical	Pastoral Care	Pastoral	Strongly linked to Catholic identity
(Chen et al., 2025)	China	Empirical	Banzhuren	Integrated	Strong T-S relationships drive motivation
(Wang & Yang, 2021)	China	Empirical	Banzhuren	Integrated	Manages academic, behavioral, and parental liaison
(Zhou et al., 2024)	China	Empirical	Banzhuren	Integrated	Emotional labor + heavy workload
(Ye et al., 2021)	China	Empirical	Banzhuren	Moral focus	Moral education is central to mentoring
(Kim, 2016)	Korea & Finland	Empirical	Ryhmänohjaaja & Damim-gyosa	Integrated	Finland = autonomy; Korea = emotional support
(Yamamura et al., 2019)	Japan	Empirical	Tannin	Integrated	Holistic guidance & relational work
Akita (2024) in "Recent Teacher Policy in Japan"	Japan	Policy	Tannin	Integrated	Standardizes life guidance & pastoral duties
(Goto & Yada, 2024)	Japan	Empirical	Tannin	Integrated	Hierarchical, encourages dialogue, requires training
Low et al. (2017) in "Focused on learning: Student and teacher time in a Singapore school"	Singapore	Empirical	Form teacher	Integrated	FTGP improves SEL & reflection
MOE Singapore (2023)	Singapore	Policy	Form teacher	Integrated	Weekly FTGP + mandatory 1:1
(Caleon et al., 2016)	Singapore	Empirical	Form teacher	Integrated	Mentoring improves engagement
(Kuhn et al., 2024)	Germany	Empirical	Klassenlehrer	Pastoral	Variation across states
(Resnjanskij et al., 2024)	Germany	Empirical	Klassenlehrer	Academic	Professionalized mentoring in teacher education
(Kuhn et al., 2022)	Germany	Empirical	Klassenlehrer	Pastoral	Emotional labor in a coordination role
(Schenk et al., 2020)	Netherlands	Empirical	Mentor teacher	Integrated	Relationship quality predicts social skills
(Blake & Gorrara, 2019)	UK	Empirical	Form tutor	Pastoral	Form time shapes behavioral support
(Cooper et al., 2021)	UK	Empirical	Pastoral mentor	Pastoral	Humanistic mentoring boosts wellbeing

Citation	Country	Type	Terminology	Focus	Key Findings
(Burrows & O'Leary, 2019)	UK	Empirical	Pastoral staff	Pastoral	Role ambiguity affects fidelity
(Gambone, 2024)	USA	Empirical	Advisor	Integrated	Improves attendance & belonging
(Marino et al., 2020)	USA	Empirical	Mentor teacher	Integrated	Builds self-esteem & resilience
(Carroll et al., 2025)	USA	Empirical	Mentor teacher	Academic	Mentoring shapes academic mindsets

Source: Research (2025)

As shown in **Table 1**, the studies vary by methodology, mentoring terminology, and focus, yet they collectively map the global landscape of mentoring structures in secondary education.

Country-Level Findings and Cross-Country Comparison

To contextualize the differences between systems, **Table 2** presents a structured comparison of key components: caseload, structure, academic versus pastoral emphasis, training, and policy coherence.

Table 2. Cross-Country Comparison of Secondary-School Mentoring Systems

Country	Role Term	Caseload	Structure & Routine	Academic Support	Pastoral/SEL Support	Training Requirement	Policy Strength
Australia	Pastoral Teacher	10-25	Advisory groups; year-level org	Moderate	Strong	Varies	Moderate
China	Banzhuren	35-50	Daily homeroom; centralized	Strong	Moderate	Minimal	Moderate
South Korea	Damim-gyosa	25-35	Daily routines; exam-oriented	Strong	Strong	Limited	Strong
Singapore	Form Teacher	15-25	Weekly FTGP + conferences	Strong	Strong	Strong	Very Strong
Japan	Tannin	30-40	Daily life guidance	Strong	Strong	Informal	Moderate-Strong
Finland	Ryhmänohjaaja	12-20	Guidance time; welfare teams	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong
Germany	Klassenlehrer	20-30	Tutor periods; coordination	Moderate	Moderate	Strong (TE)	Moderate
Netherlands	Mentor Teacher	12-20	Reflective dialogue; autonomy	Strong	Strong	Moderate	Weak-Moderate
UK	Form Tutor	20-30	Daily registration; pastoral team	Moderate	Strong	Moderate	Strong (Safeguarding)
USA	Advisor	10-20	Advisory blocks; SEL curriculum	Strong	Strong	Weak-Moderate	Weak

Source: Research (2025)

Table 2 demonstrates clear structural variation across countries, particularly in caseload, level of formalization, and the balance between academic and pastoral support.

Summary of Mentoring Structures by Country

Table 3 provides a descriptive snapshot of mentoring structures in each country, highlighting terminology, mechanisms, strengths, and challenges.

Table 3. Summary of Mentoring Structures in Ten Countries (2015-2025)

Country	Structure & Routine	Focus	Implementation Mechanisms	Policy Framework	Strengths	Challenges
Australia	Advisory groups; year-level org	Integrated	Pastoral periods; wellbeing teams	State-level	Holistic care	Variation; workload
China	Daily homeroom; centralized	Integrated	Class meetings; moral education	Cultural norms	Teacher influence	Heavy burden
South Korea	Daily routines; exam-focused	Integrated	Parent communication; monitoring	MOE guidelines	Emotional support	Stress: large caseload
Singapore	Weekly FTGP, SEL, conferences	Integrated	Integrated SEL lessons; 1:1 conference	National CCE	Strong alignment	High expectations
Japan	Daily life guidance; holistic	Integrated	Seikatsu Shido; staff room collab	MEXT 2024	Deep relational	Emotional labour
Finland	Guidance time; welfare teams	Integrated	Personalized plans; team support	National legislation	Autonomy; support	Variation in mentoring competencies
Germany	Tutor periods; coordination	Pastoral	Communication; admin duties	State-level	Professionalism	Variation across states
Netherlands	Reflective dialogue; autonomy	Integrated	Reflective mentoring; dialogue	School-level	High relationship	Lack of standardization
UK	Daily registration; pastoral team	Pastoral	Form time; safeguarding	National mandates	Pastoral strength	Role ambiguity
USA	Advisory blocks; SEL curriculum	Integrated	SEL; college/career guidance	District autonomy	Relational impact	Inconsistent quality

Source: Research (2025)

Table 3 provides descriptive clarity on how each mentoring model operates, revealing striking diversity in structural design, implementation routines, and system-level support.

Thematic Synthesis

The cross-country exploration of secondary-school mentoring systems revealed six compelling themes that capture the heartbeat of contemporary approaches. These themes emerged not as isolated fragments, but as interconnected dimensions shaping how mentoring thrives across diverse educational landscapes: 1) Policy Architecture; 2) Role Definition; 3) Operational Conditions; 4) Capability Building; 5) Relational Culture; and 6) Sustainability.

Theme 1 - Policy and System Architecture

Mentoring systems unfold across a spectrum of policy approaches. Nations with formalized frameworks like Singapore's Form Teacher Guidance Period (FTGP) program, Finland's student welfare laws, and Japan's *seikatsu shidō* life guidance protocols establish well-defined roles and structured collaboration, as research by Low et al. (2017) in "Focused on learning: Student and teacher time in a Singapore school", Akita (2024) in "Recent Teacher Policy in Japan" demonstrates. Meanwhile, China and South Korea embed homeroom systems deeply within school cultures, where teachers' societal authority reinforces mentoring roles (Wang & Yang, 2021; Chen et al., 2025). At the other end of the spectrum, Australia and the UK champion strong wellbeing policies in theory but struggle with patchy execution across regions (Blake & Gorrara, 2019; Gregory, 2021). The U.S. and Dutch systems reveal a different tension: their locally designed advisory models, as noted, spark creative solutions in individual schools but risk uneven quality (Gambone, 2024; Schenk et al., 2020). This mosaic of approaches highlights how policy blueprints interact uniquely with cultural soil in each nation's educational landscape. In a nutshell, system coherence improves when policy provides structure without over-prescribing practice.

Theme 2 - Mentoring Focus and Role Definition

High-performing education systems typically employ integrated models in which teachers concurrently address academic development, personal growth, and socio-emotional well-being (Kim, 2016; Yamamura et al., 2019). The UK and Australian systems prioritize structured pastoral care frameworks focused on student wellbeing, a trend documented in studies (Cooper et al., 2021; Larsen et al., 2023). Germany presents a contrasting model, maintaining a clear division between formal academic mentoring roles and separate pastoral support systems. This approach is analyzed as creating specialized expertise but requiring intentional coordination across support domains (Kuhn, 2022). It is evident that integrated models are effective but require clear boundaries to prevent overload.

Theme 3 - Caseload and Time Allocation

Mentoring workloads exhibit significant regional variation, with East Asian systems typically assigning homeroom teachers responsibility for 30-40 students per cohort (Wang & Yang, 2021), while Dutch and American educational models prioritize small-group advisories of 15-20 students or individualized mentoring approaches (Schenk et al., 2020; Marino, 2020). Finland's distinctive strategy combines moderate group sizes of 20-25 students with institutionally guaranteed weekly mentoring sessions. Comparative studies consistently demonstrate that systems maintaining both manageable student-to-mentor ratios (below 25:1) and protected time allocations for guidance activities achieve measurably stronger relational outcomes, as evidenced by longitudinal tracking of student engagement metrics across these diverse models.

Theme 4 - Professional Training and Capability Building

Comparative analyses reveal distinct approaches to mentor preparation: Singapore, South Korea, and Finland implement standardized training programs that systematically develop pedagogical mentoring skills and socio-emotional competencies, as evidenced by Singapore's MOE (2023) framework and cross-national study (Kim, 2016). In contrast, systems in China, Japan, the Netherlands, the UK, and the US predominantly rely on teachers' accumulated classroom experience for mentoring capacity-building (Goto & Yada, 2024). Research shows a clear difference: formal training programs for mentors lead to better outcomes in three key areas compared to learning through experience alone. These programs help

mentors better understand their roles, build stronger relationships with students, and provide equal support to all students.

Theme 5 - Relationship Quality and School Culture

Cross-national research identifies mentor-student relationship quality as the paramount factor influencing program success, outweighing structural variables like funding or curriculum design. Systems that cultivate high-trust interactions, characterized by mutual respect and consistent availability, demonstrate measurable gains: 18-22% higher student engagement rates, 15% improvement in conflict-resolution skills, and 30% higher school belonging metrics (Gambone, 2024; Schenk et al., 2020). While Japan and Korea achieve relationship depth through daily homeroom interactions (40-50 contact hours per month), studies reveal that 68% of teachers report emotional exhaustion from unsustainable caregiving expectations (Zhou et al., 2024). The findings suggest that effective mentoring systems require dual optimization: structural supports (time allocation, training) create the necessary conditions, but cultural transformation (shifting from transactional to developmental relationships) determines the ultimate impact. Nordic models exemplify this balance through collaborative whole-school approaches rather than relying solely on individual teacher-student bonds.

Theme 6 - Workload and Role Sustainability

Empirical studies across East Asian and British educational systems document role overload among homeroom teachers, particularly in China, South Korea, Japan, and the United Kingdom (Wang & Yang, 2021; Kendal et al., 2014). Contrastingly, nations that implement collaborative support structures systematically, such as Finland's welfare teams and Singapore's co-mentorship models, demonstrate greater program sustainability over time. This comparative evidence underscores the necessity of intentional workload calibration in mentoring frameworks to preserve both educator capacity and program efficacy.

Discussion

This systematic analysis reveals that secondary education mentoring systems across diverse cultural contexts share core operational foundations. First, centralized policy frameworks in nations such as Singapore, Japan, and Finland correlate with standardized implementation, as evidenced by nationally defined role specifications, coordination processes, and accountability measures. Conversely, decentralized systems such as those in the U.S. and Netherlands prioritize locally adapted advisory approaches, achieving strong relational engagement at the cost of program consistency (Gambone, 2024; Schenk et al., 2020). This suggests that effective mentoring benefits from both top-down structure and bottom-up contextual flexibility, reinforcing findings from comparative school reform research. Second, contemporary systems increasingly adopt integrated academic-pastoral frameworks, underscoring the interdependence of cognitive development and student welfare (Ito, 2011; Chen et al., 2025).

Nationally implemented models, such as Singapore's Form Teacher Guidance Period (FTGP), Japan's tannin system, Finland's ryhmänohjaaja, and China's banzhuren, combine academic oversight with behavioral guidance, socioemotional support, and family engagement. These contrast with pastoral-specialist systems in the UK and Australia, which prioritize emotional well-being but often lack systematic academic tracking mechanisms, a pattern that aligns with critiques of role fragmentation in pastoral care (Cooper et al., 2021). Cross-national evidence demonstrates that integrated role designs enhance program consistency and reduce fragmentation, suggesting holistic approaches better address multidimensional student needs. Third, mentoring quality critically depends on manageable caseloads and

protected advisory time. East Asian systems with large homeroom cohorts (e.g., Japan, China) facilitate longitudinal relationships but restrict individualized support without institutionalized structured check-ins (Yamamura, 2019; Zhou et al., 2025).

Conversely, moderate group sizes in Finland and Germany enable tailored guidance, while smaller ratios in Dutch and U.S. systems achieve stronger mentor-student bonds (Gambone, 2024; Schenk et al., 2020). These findings emphasize the importance of manageable caseloads, scheduled advisory periods, and teamwork in sustaining mentoring depth. Fourth, mentoring systems exhibit significant disparities in training quality and standardization. Nations like Singapore and Finland implement systemic approaches through standardized training frameworks that define core competencies and career pathways for mentors (Kim, 2016). Conversely, systems in East Asia (China, Japan, South Korea) and the UK often prioritize experiential learning over formal training protocols, leading to ambiguous expectations and uneven implementation quality (Kendal et al., 2014). The cross-country evidence reinforces that even brief, structured training significantly strengthens communication, relational skills, and early identification of student needs.

Fifth, mentoring systems face persistent challenges in balancing educator workloads and ensuring program continuity. Homeroom-centric approaches in Japan, China, and South Korea impose heavy administrative and emotional burdens on educators, with teachers often managing 30-40 students in addition to their instructional duties (Zhou et al., 2024). Similarly, UK pastoral systems frequently compete with core teaching responsibilities, creating role strain (Blake & Gorrara, 2019). Contrastingly, systems employing collaborative frameworks, such as Finland's welfare teams, Singapore's co-advisor models, and U.S. interdisciplinary groups, demonstrate enhanced program longevity through distributed accountability. This underscores the need for clear role boundaries, administrative support, and whole-school responsibility sharing to prevent burnout and ensure long-term impact.

Finally, relationship quality emerged as the most consistent and powerful predictor of mentoring effectiveness, surpassing structural features such as caseload size or policy design. Studies from the Netherlands and the United States demonstrate that trust-based, continuous relationships significantly enhance student engagement, belonging, and resilience (Gambone, 2024; Schenk et al., 2020). While East Asian homeroom systems further illustrate how daily relational contact deepens support despite high workload demands (Yamamura, 2019; Zhou et al., 2024). Taken together, the cross-country evidence implies that Homeroom teacher must be implemented not as an additional administrative role but as a core relational and pedagogical function, supported by clear policy, realistic workload adjustments, structured mentoring routines, and ongoing professional development. Without these conditions, international experience suggests the role risks becoming symbolic rather than transformational. Indonesia has the potential to design one of the most coherent and values-aligned mentoring systems in the region.

Limitations

This review acknowledges methodological constraints across six dimensions. First, the English-language focus likely excluded critical non-English policy documents from key contexts like Japan and Germany, where mentoring terminology diverges significantly. Second, disparities in the availability of empirical evidence - particularly fewer studies from Finland and the Netherlands than from East Asia - created representational imbalances. Third, the predominance of qualitative, school-level studies enriches contextual understanding but limits broader generalizability. Fourth, database limitations may have omitted influential grey literature shaping policy implementation. Fifth, cross-country comparisons require nuanced interpretation due to divergent cultural and institutional frameworks. Finally, while systematic screening and synthesis followed established protocols, thematic analysis inherently involves researcher

interpretation. These limitations underscore the need for multilingual, mixed-method investigations to strengthen cross-national educational research.

CONCLUSION

This review demonstrates that mentoring in secondary education is most effective when it is understood not as an add-on responsibility but as a central relational and pedagogical function of schools. Across the ten countries examined, mentoring systems succeed when coherent policies, structured routines, realistic caseloads, and purposeful training support teachers. Integrated academic-pastoral models - such as those in Singapore, Finland, Japan, China, and South Korea - consistently produce stronger outcomes in engagement, well-being, and learning continuity. At the same time, international experiences also reveal the risks of poorly defined roles, excessive workloads, and minimal professional preparation, as seen in several UK, Australian, East Asian, and U.S. cases. For Indonesia, where the Homeroom teacher role has recently been formalized, these findings offer timely guidance. The policy must be accompanied by clear operational guidelines, targeted professional development, structural protection of mentoring time, and manageable caseloads to avoid reproducing the challenges documented internationally. Most importantly, the overarching goal of the Homeroom teacher must be grounded in relationship-focused practice that cultivates trust, character, resilience, and academic responsibility values that align deeply with the nation's educational and Islamic principles. With thoughtful implementation, Indonesia has the opportunity to design a mentoring system that is both evidence-based and culturally grounded, providing sustainable support for adolescents navigating complex academic and socio-emotional landscapes.

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