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Youth Mentoring Programs of Hong Kong SAR (China) and Overseas: A Bibliographic Review

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Abstract

Youth mentoring programs have proliferated in Hong Kong SAR (China) and internationally as tools for positive youth development. This paper provides a bibliographic review comparing youth mentoring models in Hong Kong SAR (China) with those in the United States and United Kingdom. We trace the evolution of mentoring practices, program formats, policy support, target populations, and challenges across these contexts. In the U.S., formal youth mentoring began in the early 20th century and expanded through waves addressing juvenile delinquency, corporate glass ceilings, and at-risk youth, with widespread volunteerism and some government initiatives. The U.K. embraced mentoring in the 1990s via school-business partnerships and robust government-backed networks to tackle educational and social issues. Hong Kong SAR (China)'s mentoring efforts are more recent, emerging in the 2000s through NGO programs, university schemes, and government-funded initiatives, and have rapidly gained public traction. Despite shared goals of youth empowerment and notable similarities, differences are evident in historical timing, scale, and structural support. Hong Kong SAR (China)'s programs benefit from learning experiences overseas but face unique cultural and developmental considerations. The review highlights challenges such as ensuring mentor quality, sustaining mentor-mentee engagement, and adapting programs to local contexts. Notably, research on Hong Kong SAR (China)'s mentoring remains limited (a relatively new concept), indicating a gap in scholarship. The paper discusses implications for policy and practice, and recommends future studies to address identified research gaps and further refine mentoring models for diverse youth populations.

Keywords

Youth Mentoring, Hong Kong SAR (China), Comparative Analysis, Youth Development, Mentorship

1. Introduction

Mentoring is broadly defined as a relationship in which an experienced, trusted advisor (a mentor) guides a less experienced individual (a mentee) in personal, academic, or professional development. The concept of the "mentor" originates from ancient literature—in Homer's Odyssey, Mentor was entrusted with guiding Odysseus's son Telemachus (Roberts, 1999). The term "mentor" entered the English lexicon by the 18th century to mean an experienced and trusted advisor (Gough, 2008). Modern youth mentoring programs formalize this age-old practice of intergenerational guidance, pairing young people with supportive non-parental adults. These programs have gained global popularity as a strategy to foster positive youth development in areas such as education, career readiness, and psychosocial well-being. Positive Youth Development (PYD) is a framework that emphasizes building on youths' strengths and assets rather than focusing on deficits. It posits that all young people can develop positively when given adequate support and opportunities (Damon, 2004). Within this perspective, researchers have identified a set of "Five Cs" model—competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring—as key indicators of thriving youth development. When a young person cultivates these five qualities, a sixth "C"—contribution—is expected to emerge, wherein the individual gives back to their community. According to the PYD perspective, effective mentoring can play a critical role in helping youth build the Five Cs, which are linked to healthy development (Lerner et al., 2013; Lerner et al., 2005; Damon, 2004).

In recent years, youth mentoring programs have expanded rapidly in both Hong Kong SAR (China) and overseas. Hong Kong SAR (China), in particular, has seen growing interest in mentorship as a tool to support its youth, although formal mentoring is a relatively new idea in the local context (Cheung, 2021). By contrast, countries like the United States and United Kingdom have longer histories of organized youth mentoring, with well-documented models and outcomes. These differing trajectories offer a valuable opportunity for comparative analysis. A comparative bibliographic review can illuminate how mentoring practices in Hong Kong SAR (China) align with or diverge from those in Western contexts, shedding light on cultural and structural influences. This paper examines the literature on youth mentoring programs in Hong Kong SAR (China) vis-à-vis the U.S. and U.K., focusing on the evolution of mentoring models, program formats, policy support, target populations, and implementation challenges in each context. We aim to highlight key similarities and differences and draw out implications for future research and practice in youth mentoring.

Following this introduction, we first review the development of youth mentoring programs in the United States and United Kingdom, as representative overseas contexts with rich mentoring traditions. We then detail the emergence of youth mentoring in Hong Kong SAR (China). A comparative analysis section then discusses cross-cutting themes, program structure, institutional support, target beneficiaries, and challenges, comparing Hong Kong SAR (China) with the U.S.

and U.K.. Finally, we discuss the gaps in current research and consider future directions for enhancing youth mentoring practice and scholarship.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Youth Mentoring in the United States

Organized youth mentoring in the United States traces back over a century. Big Brothers Big Sisters, founded in New York City in the early 20th century, is widely recognized as the first formal youth mentoring program. Initiated by court clerk Ernest Coulter to support boys in the juvenile justice system, Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) began as a volunteer-based one-to-one mentoring model pairing caring adult "Big Brothers" with at-risk male youth (Beiswinger, 1985). The program's goal was to provide guidance and positive adult influence to prevent recidivism and social breakdown among vulnerable youth. By 1916, the BBBS movement had gained momentum, and similar mentoring efforts for girls ("Big Sisters") soon followed (Beiswinger, 1985). This early wave established the paradigm of using volunteer mentors to support disadvantaged children and adolescents.

Over the ensuing decades, youth mentoring in the U.S. evolved in several distinct waves (Miller, 2002). A second wave mid-century extended mentoring concepts to new domains, including programs to help women advance in corporate careers, thereby addressing professional "glass ceiling" challenges (Miller, 2002). As a result, mentoring practices broadened beyond delinquency prevention to career and personal development for both women and minority groups entering professional fields. The third wave, emerging in the late 1980s, saw a rapid expansion of mentoring as a widespread intervention for disadvantaged and at-risk youth (Miller, 2002). This period was catalyzed by growing public and political support for mentoring in response to educational and social concerns. Notably, a 1983 report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education recommended forging partnerships among schools, corporations, and universities to provide mentors for youth (Guetzloe, 1997). By the mid-1990s, it was estimated that between 5 and 15 million young Americans could benefit from a mentoring relationship (Lauland, 1998). In line with these estimates, public initiatives began to bolster mentoring. For example, during the Clinton Administration, the U.S. federal government expanded the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) initiative to reach more low-income middle school students with mentoring and college preparation support (Miller, 2002). This infusion of support aimed to help hundreds of thousands of underprivileged youth stay in school and aspire to higher education.

Several factors contributed to the surge in popularity of youth mentoring in the U.S. by the late 20th century. Freedman (1992) identifies a confluence of social trends: 1) media attention to the isolation of youth from caring adults and the associated risks of exclusion and delinquency, 2) a rise in volunteerism and philanthropy among the post-1960s "baby boomer" generation, and 3) a growing recognition of middle-aged adults' desire to pass on knowledge and values to the

younger generation. This third factor reflects a psychological motivation for mentoring, sometimes described as generativity—a need to nurture and guide younger people (Freedman, 1992). By the 1990s, mentoring had thus become a mainstream youth intervention in the U.S., characterized by a diverse landscape of programs: community-based one-to-one mentoring (exemplified by BBBS), school-based tutoring and mentoring, workplace and career-oriented mentoring, and many others. These programs were supported by a robust culture of volunteerism and increasing acknowledgement from policymakers that mentors could play a role in addressing youth development challenges.

2.2. Youth Mentoring in the United Kingdom

Youth mentoring initiatives in the United Kingdom developed slightly later, gaining traction in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Early mentoring efforts in the U.K. often took the form of business-education partnership programs in secondary schools (Miller, 2002). By the early 1990s, approximately 700 schools had implemented business mentoring schemes that paired students with volunteer mentors from the business community. These programs were designed to enhance students' employability skills, motivation, and achievement, particularly for those on the threshold of key academic qualifications (Miller, 2002). Mentors from corporate backgrounds provided guidance aimed at improving coursework and helping "borderline" students achieve essential academic benchmarks (such as attaining five GCSE passes). In this way, early U.K. mentoring programs had a strong academic and vocational focus, leveraging external mentors to support school goals.

A distinctive feature of the U.K. approach was the formation of national networks and government-supported frameworks for mentoring. In 1994, the National Mentoring Network (NMN) was established to coordinate and promote mentoring programs across the country (Miller, 2002). The NMN served as a hub for sharing best practices, providing training resources, and setting quality standards for mentoring initiatives. Importantly, the NMN brought together stakeholders from various government departments (Home Office, Department of Education and Employment, Health Department, and Social Exclusion Unit) and the voluntary sector, signaling a multi-agency commitment to mentoring as a social intervention (Miller, 2002). Through the late 1990s, U.K. government policy increasingly endorsed mentoring as a tool to address youth issues such as academic underachievement, social exclusion, youth crime, drug abuse, and homelessness. For instance, in 1999 the government created the Active Community Unit to encourage volunteering, including mentoring, and launched a dedicated Mentoring Fund to financially support new programs targeting vulnerable groups (Miller, 2002). These funds prioritized innovative formats such as peer mentoring, intergenerational mentoring, and mentoring for youths during key transitions (e.g. school-to-work). By around 2000, the U.K. boasted an extensive mentoring infrastructure: an estimated 750,000 volunteer mentors were involved (primarily in school settings) through roughly 2000 organizations nationwide (Miller, 2002).

This level of scale and coordination, underpinned by government involvement, distinguished the U.K.'s mentoring landscape from that of many other countries.

Historically, the evolution of youth mentoring programs in the U.K. has paralleled that of the U.S. in several ways. Miller (2002) observes that both countries went through comparable phases: an initial phase of pioneering local programs for specific target groups, a second phase of expanding pilot programs and experimentation, and a third phase of broad uptake supported by national policies and funding to achieve "mass mentoring" coverage. However, the U.K.'s timeline was shifted later, with its major expansion occurring in the 1990s rather than the 1980s. Additionally, the U.K. placed relatively greater emphasis on formal structures and standards from the outset—for example, by embedding mentoring in government agendas to promote active citizenship and community building (Miller, 2002). Mentoring in the U.K. has been seen not only as an educational support, but also as a means to encourage volunteerism and strengthen community cohesion. This philosophy reflects the context of 1990s Britain, where policies sought to address social exclusion through greater civic engagement. By the turn of the century, mentoring programs in Britain had diversified beyond the initial business-education link model to serve a wide array of youth populations (approximately 19 different groups, according to Miller, 2002), including those in non-school settings and marginalized communities.

In summary, the U.K.'s development of youth mentoring was marked by rapid growth, significant government facilitation, and the integration of mentoring into broader social policy initiatives.

2.3. Youth Mentoring in Hong Kong SAR (China)

Hong Kong SAR (China)'s experience with youth mentoring programs is more recent and still evolving. Historically, mentoring as a formal youth development strategy was not prominent in Hong Kong SAR (China) until the late 20th and early 21st century. Researchers note that mentorship programs remain a relatively new concept in Hong Kong SAR (China), and consequently the body of local research on mentoring is small (Cheung, 2021). Despite its later start, Hong Kong SAR (China) today hosts a thriving array of youth mentorship programs aiming to empower young people in various domains of personal growth. These programs have been initiated by a mix of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), educational institutions, and government agencies, reflecting a multi-sector interest in leveraging mentoring for youth development.

Several major NGOs and community organizations in Hong Kong SAR (China) spearheaded early mentorship initiatives. For example, the Hong Kong SAR (China) Federation of Youth Groups (HKFYG)—the city's largest youth-serving NGO – incorporated youth mentorship into its services as a way to foster leadership, social responsibility, and career exploration (HKFYG serves over 450,000 youth annually). One flagship HKFYG program, the Innovation and Technology Scholarship, pairs secondary school student awardees with professionals in fields

like science and engineering, allowing mentors to guide students' academic and career trajectories. Similarly, the Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong SAR (China) (BGCA), a long-established children's charity, runs a mentoring program called "Growing Partners" to connect disadvantaged youth with adult role models. Through regular mentor-mentee activities (e.g. sports, arts, life skills workshops), BGCA's program focuses on building mentees' self-confidence, resilience, and sense of belonging. Another prominent initiative is Junior Achievement (JA) Hong Kong SAR (China)'s Company Program, in which business professionals volunteer as mentors to teams of secondary students who are learning to start and run small enterprises. This program, adapted from an international model, emphasizes entrepreneurship and workplace skills, demonstrating Hong Kong SAR (China)'s interest in career-related mentoring similar to early U.K. models.

Hong Kong SAR (China)'s universities have also institutionalized mentorship schemes, primarily to support undergraduate student development. All local universities now offer mentorship programs that typically match current students with alumni or professionals in relevant industries. These university-based programs are often designed to help students navigate academic challenges, prepare for careers, and expand their professional networks by learning from mentors' experiences. The involvement of higher education institutions indicates recognition that mentoring can play a role at multiple stages of youth development, not only in secondary schooling but also in the transition to adulthood and employment.

In recent years, the Hong Kong SAR (China) Government has become an active supporter and sponsor of youth mentoring initiatives. A milestone was the establishment of the Children Development Fund (CDF) in 2008 (launched in 2012 under the administration of the Social Welfare Department). The CDF is primarily a child development savings program for low-income families, but it explicitly incorporates mentorship as one of its core components (Children Development Fund, 2023). Through CDF projects, eligible children (aged 6 - 18 from low-income households) are each matched with a volunteer mentor who provides guidance, encouragement, and life-planning support over a few years. The CDF mentors help mentees set personal development goals, learn new skills, and gain exposure to opportunities that might otherwise be inaccessible. The program also offers mentor training and carefully monitors the mentoring relationships to ensure positive outcomes. By integrating mentoring into a government-funded social program, the CDF underscored the public sector's belief in mentorship as a means to enhance social mobility and inclusion for underprivileged youth.

More recently, in 2022 the Hong Kong SAR (China) government launched the "Strive and Rise Programme", which is the most large-scale mentorship initiative in Hong Kong SAR (China) to date. Strive and Rise targets underprivileged junior secondary students with the aim of fostering upward social mobility and broadening their horizons (Strive and Rise Programme, 2023). Each participating student is paired one-on-one with a volunteer adult mentor who commits to guide the student for one year. The program emphasizes both personal development

and financial literacy: mentors help mentees build self-confidence, set goals, and also impart knowledge on effective use of financial resources and planning for the future. Beyond regular mentor-mentee meetings, Strive and Rise includes structured components such as orientation and training sessions, group activities (e.g. workplace visits or community service), and a closing graduation ceremony cum extended alumni network. As an incentive, mentees who successfully complete the program receive a scholarship grant to support their development plans, administered with mentor guidance. The first cohort of Strive and Rise in 2022 involved 2000 students, reflecting a significant commitment of resources. The government's direct leadership in this program has greatly raised public awareness of mentoring; indeed, it has helped popularize the mentorship concept in Hong Kong SAR (China) society at large. This top-down support signals that mentoring is becoming embedded in Hong Kong SAR (China)'s youth policy toolkit.

In addition to large programs, Hong Kong SAR (China) has numerous smaller community-based mentorship projects. Various NGOs run mentorship schemes targeting specific groups such as recent immigrant youth, ethnic minority students, or teens with particular social needs. These programs, though modest in scale, provide valuable personalized support to young people who might lack supportive adult guidance in their lives. Common to these initiatives is the aim of leveling the playing field for disadvantaged youth by leveraging mentors' expertise and networks. Overall, while the mentoring sector in Hong Kong SAR (China) is relatively young, it is characterized by diverse formats (one-to-one, group mentoring, peer mentoring) and a growing ecosystem of stakeholders (schools, universities, NGOs, businesses, and government). The convergence of efforts from these sectors illustrates a collective recognition in Hong Kong SAR (China) of the benefits mentoring can offer in youth development.

It should be noted that empirical research on Hong Kong SAR (China)'s youth mentoring programs is still emerging. As of the early 2020s, only a limited number of studies have examined the implementation and impacts of these programs (Cheung, 2021). Nonetheless, initial findings are encouraging. For example, Chan and Luo (2022) found that a structured secondary school mentoring program in Hong Kong SAR (China) yielded significant improvements in students' holistic competencies (such as social skills, resilience, and academic attitudes) as reported by mentors and mentees. Harrison, Luk, and Lim (2018) qualitatively documented Hong Kong SAR (China) secondary students benefiting from mentors through emotional support and practical advice, though they noted the importance of cultural context (e.g. respecting traditional teacher-student boundaries) in program design. Cheung (2021) identified key mentor traits (empathy, goal clarity, etc.) and positive developmental outcomes in a Hong Kong SAR (China) school-based mentoring case study, reinforcing that well-designed mentoring relationships can enhance youths' academic, psychological, and career development. These studies, while few, underscore the potential of mentoring in Hong Kong SAR (China) and also highlight the need for more research to fully understand how and under what

conditions mentoring is most effective for Hong Kong SAR (China)'s youth. With this background of Hong Kong SAR (China) and overseas mentoring models established, the next section provides a comparative analysis of their similarities, differences, and evolution.

3. Comparative Analysis

In comparing youth mentoring programs of Hong Kong SAR (China) with those of the United States and United Kingdom, several key dimensions emerge: the historical evolution of mentoring, program formats and delivery models, the extent of policy and institutional support, the target populations and objectives, and the challenges faced in implementation. This section discusses each of these dimensions, highlighting similarities and differences between the Hong Kong SAR (China) context and the U.S./U.K. contexts.

3.1. Evolution and Historical Timeline

One striking difference lies in the timing and duration of mentoring program development. The U.S. and U.K. have considerably longer histories of formal youth mentoring. The U.S. began institutionalizing mentoring over a century ago with initiatives like Big Brothers Big Sisters (established 1904 in NYC) and saw major national expansion by the 1980s. The U.K.'s formal mentoring movement took off in the early 1990s, reaching nationwide scale by the early 2000s through government facilitation. In contrast, Hong Kong SAR (China)'s wide-scale adoption of mentoring programs did not occur until the 2000s and 2010s. While there were smaller mentorship efforts earlier (e.g. isolated programs in universities or NGOs around the turn of the century), the concept only gained significant momentum in the past two decades (Cheung, 2021). Hong Kong SAR (China) is effectively in a phase analogous to what the U.S. and U.K. experienced some years earlier—a period of rapid growth and normalization of mentoring as a youth development strategy. For instance, the launch of the territory-wide Strive and Rise Programme in 2022 marks Hong Kong SAR (China)'s entry into a large-scale, government-endorsed mentoring phase, comparable to the "mass mentoring" expansion seen in the U.K. around 1999-2000 (Miller, 2002). Thus, Hong Kong SAR (China)'s mentoring evolution is recapitulating patterns observed overseas, but on a delayed timeline.

Despite this temporal lag, the evolutionary patterns show similarities. All three contexts began with small-scale or localized programs targeting specific needs, followed by pilot expansions and eventual mainstreaming with broader support (Miller, 2002). For example, early U.S. mentoring focused on specific at-risk youth groups (juvenile offenders, etc.), and early Hong Kong SAR (China) efforts often focused on particular schools or populations (such as gifted students in a university mentoring scheme; Chan, 2000). Over time, programs diversified in both locales. When comparing Hong Kong SAR (China) to the U.K., Miller's (2002) observation of parallel phases is apt—Hong Kong SAR (China)'s current phase of government-supported expansion mirrors the U.K.'s Active Community/mentor-

ing fund era, albeit Hong Kong SAR (China)'s is happening now rather than two decades ago. One difference, however, is scale: the U.S. and U.K. have engaged far larger portions of their youth in mentorship historically, supported by millions of volunteers, whereas Hong Kong SAR (China)'s programs (while growing) still reach a more limited segment of youth (e.g., a few thousand in flagship programs like Strive and Rise). Population size and societal context play a role in this difference.

3.2. Program Formats and Delivery Models

Youth mentoring programs across Hong Kong SAR (China), the U.S., and the U.K. share many common formats. The cornerstone model in all contexts is the one-to-one mentorship, in which an adult volunteer is matched with a single young person for an ongoing relationship. This model is exemplified by Big Brothers Big Sisters in the U.S., by numerous school-based schemes in the U.K., and by Hong Kong SAR (China) programs like Strive and Rise and the Children Development Fund mentorship component. In all cases, one-to-one mentoring is valued for providing individualized attention and a personal bond that can support the youth's growth. Key features—such as regular meetings, goal-setting, and activities tailored to the mentee's interests—are universally present, though the specifics may vary. For instance, BBBS mentors in the U.S. often meet mentees in community settings on weekends, U.K. business mentors might meet students at school or workplaces, and Hong Kong SAR (China)'s Strive and Rise mentors engage through structured group events in addition to one-on-one sessions. These variations aside, the fundamental structure of a caring adult guiding a youth remains consistent.

Beyond one-to-one relationships, many programs incorporate group mentoring or mixed models. The U.K. has been a leader in experimenting with models like peer mentoring (older youth mentoring younger ones in school), team mentoring (multiple mentors or multiple mentees in a group), and e-mentoring (using online communication), especially since the 2000s (Miller, 2002). In Hong Kong SAR (China), group activities are often used to supplement one-to-one mentoring. For example, BGCA's Growing Partners program brings mentors and mentees together in group workshops and outings to build social skills. Strive and Rise similarly includes group visits and networking events as part of its design. University mentorship programs in Hong Kong SAR (China) sometimes operate in a group format, such as panels of alumni mentors advising small groups of students. The U.S. also has group mentoring models (for instance, some after-school programs use a single mentor for a group of youth), though the one-to-one model remains dominant in the American context as the ideal.

A notable format in the U.S. and U.K. has been site-based mentoring, where the mentoring occurs in a specific institutional setting like a school or workplace. U.K. business mentoring in schools is one example, and the U.S. has widespread school-based mentoring where community volunteers or older peers meet youth on school grounds for mentoring sessions (Jekielek et al., 2002). Hong Kong SAR (China)'s mentorship programs are often coordinated through institutions (schools,

universities, youth centers), but community-based matches (meeting outside in the community) are also common especially in NGO-run programs. Hong Kong SAR (China) does not yet have a significant culture of purely informal or spontaneous mentoring networks; nearly all reported mentoring takes place via organized programs (Cheung, 2021). In contrast, in Western contexts a portion of youth benefit from "natural" mentoring relationships (e.g. coaches, teachers, relatives acting as mentors outside formal programs) in addition to formal program matches (Rhodes & Lowe, 2009). The literature suggests that while natural mentoring relationships certainly exist universally (Miller, 2002; Philip & Hendry, 2000), the focus of development in Hong Kong SAR (China) has been on planned mentoring programs as deliberate interventions. This is likely due to Hong Kong SAR (China)'s mentoring agenda being driven by organizations aiming to fill a recognized gap in youth support structures.

It is worth elaborating on the concept of natural mentoring from the Western literature, and how it contrasts with the Hong Kong SAR (China) context. In Western scholarship, a natural mentor is typically defined as a non-parental adult from a youth's existing social network who provides guidance and support in a mentoring capacity, without the relationship being formally arranged by a program. These can include extended family members, family friends, teachers, coaches, religious leaders, or employers who, over time, develop a close, supportive bond with a young person. Research has shown that such organically formed mentorships can have significant benefits. For example, youth who report having a natural mentor tend to have better emotional health, higher aspirations, and lower involvement in problem behaviors compared to those without a mentor (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; Hurd & Zimmerman, 2010). Mentored youth in general are often found to be happier, healthier, and more resilient than their non-mentored peers. Western countries have increasingly recognized that encouraging and leveraging these informal mentoring relationships (for instance, through youth-initiated mentoring initiatives) can complement formal programs.

In Hong Kong SAR (China), however, the notion of natural or informal mentoring is not yet prominent in discourse or research. Culturally, Hong Kong SAR (China) (like many East Asian societies) has traditionally relied on family and school for youth guidance—for example, a child might turn to parents, elder siblings, or teachers for advice. These relationships serve some mentoring functions but may not be identified as mentoring per se. The relatively nascent state of mentoring research in Hong Kong SAR (China) means that few studies have explicitly examined the prevalence or impact of natural mentors in youths' lives. Cheung (2021) and others imply that because formal mentoring is new, informal mentorship bonds have been under-recognized. It may also be that in Hong Kong SAR (China)'s collectivist culture, the boundary between "family" and "mentor" is blurred—an aunt or uncle guiding a teenager might be seen as fulfilling a family duty rather than a mentoring role, for instance. The upshot is that the Western concept of natural mentoring is under-researched in Hong Kong SAR (China) and possibly operates differently in practice. This represents a potential area for future

local studies: to investigate whether Hong Kong SAR (China) youth have natural mentors (such as teachers who take a special interest in them) and how those relationships influence development. Greater acknowledgment of natural mentoring could broaden Hong Kong SAR (China)'s approach beyond just formal programs.

Another emerging delivery mode across all contexts is e-mentoring (electronic or online mentoring). The rise of digital communication technologies has introduced opportunities for mentors and mentees to connect virtually, either as a supplement to face-to-face meetings or as the primary mode of interaction. The COVID-19 pandemic in particular accelerated the transition of many youth mentoring programs to digital formats, as lockdowns and social distancing forced traditional programs to go online. E-mentoring typically involves communication via email, messaging apps, video conferencing, or purpose-built online platforms. Studies have found that while moving to virtual platforms can be challenging, mentoring relationships can be effectively maintained and even initiated entirely online (Kaufman et al., 2022). For example, a recent systematic review concluded that e-mentoring has the potential to reach youth who might not participate in in-person programs and can achieve positive outcomes in areas like career development and health awareness (Kaufman et al., 2022). Many programs have now adopted hybrid models, where mentors and mentees supplement occasional in-person meetings with frequent text messages, WhatsApp conversations, or Zoom calls. Programs during 2020-2022 reported moderate confidence in using e-mentoring in place of in-person meetings, though there were challenges in technology access and maintaining engagement. Researchers have even developed tools like an E-Mentoring Readiness Scale to help organizations assess their preparedness to implement digital mentoring (Kaufman et al., 2024).

In Hong Kong SAR (China), with its high internet penetration and tech-savvy youth population, digital communication has naturally woven into mentoring. Even before 2020, mentors and mentees in Hong Kong SAR (China) often stayed in touch via messaging (e.g. WhatsApp or WeChat) between scheduled meet-ups. The pandemic period saw some programs, including university mentoring schemes, shift entirely to online meeting formats for many months. Hong Kong SAR (China) examples include virtual peer-mentoring programs launched at universities to support students' coping and well-being during class suspensions. While formal evaluations of e-mentoring in Hong Kong SAR (China) are not yet prevalent in the literature, anecdotal reports suggest that mentors and youth adapted reasonably well to online interaction, especially given Hong Kong SAR (China) students' familiarity with digital learning during the pandemic. That said, there remain cultural preferences for face-to-face communication, and some mentors noted it was harder to build initial rapport without in-person contact. Going forward, e-mentoring is likely to remain a complementary model in Hong Kong SAR (China). It offers flexibility and can expand reach (for instance, a busy professional can mentor via video chat from home, increasing the pool of possible mentors). However, programs will need to ensure mentors are trained in online

communication skills and in safeguarding youth in virtual settings (Kaufman et al., 2024). In summary, the inclusion of technology-mediated mentoring is a contemporary development that all three contexts are navigating, blending traditional relationship-building with modern communication channels.

3.3. Policy Support and Institutional Involvement

One of the clearest contrasts between Hong Kong SAR (China) and the Western contexts is in the role of government and policy frameworks. In the United States, government support for mentoring has historically been more indirect and fragmented. The U.S. federal and state governments have funded specific initiatives (such as the GEAR UP expansion, or grants via the Office of Juvenile Justice for mentoring at-risk youth), but there has never been a centralized national mentoring policy or a single government body coordinating mentoring programs. Much of the drive in the U.S. came from non-profit organizations and public-private partnerships, with political leaders lending support rhetorically or via funding incentives (Freedman, 1992). The volunteer sector and philanthropy were primary engines for growth in the U.S., resulting in a rich but decentralized landscape of programs.

The United Kingdom, on the other hand, integrated mentoring into national policy strategies by the late 1990s. The establishment of the National Mentoring Network with cross-departmental backing and the Active Community Initiative are evidence of a top-down approach to institutionalize mentoring (Miller, 2002). Government departments in the U.K. set mentoring targets and provided funding lines, effectively mainstreaming mentoring into education and social welfare practice. This high level of policy support ensured that mentoring programs could scale up and adhere to quality standards (e.g. through national training resources and evaluation frameworks). The U.K. example demonstrates how policy can amplify mentoring's reach but also formalize it—mentors in U.K. programs often underwent standardized training, and programs were encouraged to meet certain benchmarks to receive funding.

Hong Kong SAR (China)'s trajectory shows increasing government involvement, albeit starting from a lower base. Initially, Hong Kong SAR (China)'s mentoring scene was primarily civil-society driven (NGOs, schools, charities) with little government intervention or funding. However, recognizing the benefits observed elsewhere, the Hong Kong SAR (China) government in the 2010s began to invest in mentorship as part of youth development policy. The Children Development Fund, as a government program launched in 2008/2012, represents a significant policy commitment to mentoring low-income youth (Children Development Fund, 2023). By embedding mentorship in the CDF projects, the government signaled that mentorship is not just an optional add-on, but a core strategy for helping youth overcome disadvantages. The more recent Strive and Rise Programme (2022) further solidifies this stance—it was initiated at the Chief Executive's policy level, reflecting high-level endorsement. With Strive and Rise, the government took on direct management of mentor recruitment (enlisting profes-

sionals and civil servants as volunteer mentors), program curriculum design, and outcome monitoring. This approach parallels the U.K.'s in that mentorship is being used as a deliberate policy tool to address social mobility and youth poverty issues, supported by public funds and oversight.

Another layer of institutional support in Hong Kong SAR (China) comes from the education sector. All universities and many secondary schools have internal mentoring schemes, often supported by school leadership and occasionally by Education Bureau guidelines encouraging alumni mentorship. While not as centralized as the U.K.'s NMN, Hong Kong SAR (China)'s Education Bureau has acknowledged mentorship as a beneficial practice (e.g. some secondary schools incorporate mentoring under the "Other Learning Experiences" framework for whole-person development). In effect, Hong Kong SAR (China) is moving toward a model where mentoring is both a grassroots community effort and a supported element of youth policy. This hybrid resembles a blend of the U.S. (strong NGO presence) and U.K. (government-supported structure) models. One challenge Hong Kong SAR (China) faces is ensuring coordination and quality across programs without a formal national mentoring network equivalent. As the sector grows, there may be calls for creating a platform to share best practices among Hong Kong SAR (China) mentoring organizations, akin to the role the NMN played in Britain.

3.4. Target Populations and Objectives

All three contexts direct youth mentoring programs toward broadly similar goals, which improve youth outcomes in academic, vocational, and personal domains, but they sometimes prioritize different target populations reflecting local needs.

In the United States, mentoring programs historically targeted vulnerable youth populations: children in single-parent families, youth involved in or at risk of delinquency, ethnic minorities facing opportunity gaps, and later, youth seeking academic or career guidance (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). Big Brothers Big Sisters continues to focus on children facing adversity (e.g. low-income, parent incarcerated, etc.), and numerous specialized U.S. programs serve foster youth, juvenile justice-involved youth, or first-generation college aspirants. The unifying idea is to provide these youth with extra support and social capital through mentors. The objectives can range from delinquency prevention and improved school performance to soft skills development and simply providing a caring adult friend. Given the diversity of the U.S. population, programs have also been tailored for culturally specific contexts (for instance, mentoring programs for Indigenous youth or migrant youth). However, in the literature provided, the primary emphasis is on at-risk and socially excluded youth benefitting from mentoring to improve life outcomes (Freedman, 1992; Lauland, 1998). Additionally, some U.S. mentoring initiatives aim at talent development, such as STEM mentoring for girls or minorities to enter those fields, illustrating that mentoring is used both remedially and proactively.

The United Kingdom's mentoring initiatives have similarly served at-risk and

socially disadvantaged groups, but also had a strong initial focus on academic underachievers in the school system. Many early U.K. programs targeted students who were on the cusp of failing to meet academic standards (like the GCSE benchmark) and paired them with mentors to boost motivation and attainment (Miller, 2002). This reflects the educational policy drive in the 1990s to improve school performance and reduce dropout rates. Over time, U.K. programs expanded to practically every conceivable group: from teen mothers and unemployed youth to immigrant youth and young offenders, as noted by Miller (2002) with 19 target groups identified. There was also an interest in encouraging volunteerism among older adults and cross-generational exchange, which led to programs where retirees mentored youth (to promote mutual learning and community solidarity). In summary, the U.K. used mentoring broadly to support those at risk of social exclusion, whether due to educational failure, economic disadvantage, or other social ills, and also as a general youth development and community-building tool.

Hong Kong SAR (China)'s mentoring programs, given their newer development, have clearly been influenced by these international examples in selecting target groups. A significant portion of Hong Kong SAR (China) programs concentrate on underprivileged or disadvantaged youth—for instance, mentees in the Children Development Fund and Strive and Rise are explicitly low-income students lacking resources or social capital. The emphasis here is on breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty by giving these youths additional guidance, confidence, and exposure to opportunities (Hong Kong SAR (China)'s concern with upward mobility in a highly unequal society is a driving rationale). Likewise, many NGO-led mentorships (such as those by smaller community groups) target youth in vulnerable situations: from those living in public housing estates to ethnic minority students who may lack local role models. However, Hong Kong SAR (China) also invests in mentoring for high-achieving or motivated students as a way to nurture future talent. HKFYG's Innovation and Technology Scholarship mentorship is one example, focusing on academically promising students with interest in STEM careers. Similarly, Junior Achievement's Company Program mentors are aimed at students with entrepreneurial potential. These are more analogous to U.K. programs where mentors help youth develop specific competencies and career goals, rather than remedial support.

An interesting target group in Hong Kong SAR (China) is university students and young adults, reflecting a cultural value on educational and career success. While in Western contexts mentoring of college students exists, Hong Kong SAR (China)'s widespread alumni mentoring for undergraduates suggests a norm that even academically successful youth benefit from mentorship to transition into the professional world (Lee & Bush, 2003). In the U.S., career mentoring often occurs informally or through employer programs after college; Hong Kong SAR (China) tends to formalize it earlier through university support.

In terms of objectives, there is broad overlap: academic improvement, career

development, and psychosocial support are common aims across all contexts. Hong Kong SAR (China)'s programs explicitly list goals like building self-confidence, improving academic attitudes, expanding networks, and providing guidance on life choices (Chan & Luo, 2022; Cheung, 2021). These match the goals of many U.S./U.K. programs, rooted in the idea of positive youth development. Cultural context can shape the expression of these objectives. For example, Hong Kong SAR (China) mentors in school settings might also address values or character (sometimes including moral or civic education components, especially in church-based or values-driven organizations), resonating with the Confucian-influenced emphasis on character development. U.S. mentoring might be more likely to measure outcomes like improved grades or reduced risky behavior, whereas Hong Kong SAR (China) mentors and educators often talk about developing "positive attitudes" and "resilience" in a more general sense. The provided literature indicates Hong Kong SAR (China) studies measuring "holistic competencies" (Chan & Luo, 2022) and "positive development" (Cheung, 2021)—concepts very much in line with global mentoring outcomes research (Rhodes et al., 2006). Overall, while target populations may differ in specifics, all three contexts view mentoring as a versatile intervention adaptable to youths of varying needs—whether the goal is keeping a teen in school, guiding a first-generation college student, or enriching a high achiever's learning experience.

3.5. Challenges and Implementation Issues

Implementing youth mentoring programs entails challenges that can vary by context. Some challenges are universal: recruiting and training a sufficient number of quality mentors, ensuring good mentor-mentee matching and relationship building, and sustaining long-term engagement on both sides. These issues have been noted in mentoring research globally (Rhodes & DuBois, 2006). In comparing Hong Kong SAR (China) with the U.S. and U.K., certain challenges stand out due to cultural and structural differences.

One major challenge is mentor supply and quality. In the U.S. and U.K., a culture of volunteerism supports large pools of mentors, but even their demand often outstrips supply—millions of youth who could benefit are not yet in programs (Lauland, 1998). The U.K.'s solution was partly to institutionalize volunteering (e.g. corporate social responsibility programs encouraging staff to mentor, retirees as mentors, etc.). Hong Kong SAR (China), with a relatively shorter tradition of volunteer mentoring, faces the task of cultivating a robust mentor volunteer base. Early signs are positive: the Strive and Rise Programme reportedly drew significant public interest, with many professionals willing to volunteer. However, sustaining that enthusiasm and ensuring mentors are adequately prepared is an ongoing challenge. Hong Kong SAR (China)'s busy work culture and long working hours could limit the time adults have for volunteering, making it challenging to recruit mentors in the needed quantities. Mentor training is another aspect—the U.K. put systems in place for training (Miller, 2002), whereas Hong Kong SAR

(China) programs are developing training modules (e.g. CDF and Strive and Rise include training workshops for mentors on communication and child development). Maintaining consistency in mentor training across various programs is something Hong Kong SAR (China) will need to monitor as programs proliferate.

Another challenge is ensuring effective mentor-mentee relationships given cultural expectations. In Western contexts, a more egalitarian, friendship-like model of mentoring is common (the mentor as a "guide on the side"). In Hong Kong SAR (China) (and Chinese culture more broadly), hierarchical norms in adult-youth relationships can influence mentoring dynamics. Harrison et al. (2018) noted that Hong Kong SAR (China) students benefited once a more informal, mutually trusting relationship was established, but getting to that point required sensitivity to cultural norms of respect and authority. Mentees might initially be reserved or view mentors as authoritative figures rather than confidants. Thus, Hong Kong SAR (China) mentors may need to consciously adopt approaches that encourage open communication and reduce power distance, which might not come naturally in a traditional teacher/student paradigm. This is a challenge unique to contexts where cultural values of respect for elders and saving face are strong. Programs in Hong Kong SAR (China) have started to acknowledge this; for example, training mentors in "cultural sensitivity" (even within Hong Kong SAR (China)'s local culture, understanding the mentee's perspective) is part of CDF's mentor support. Western programs have their own cultural considerations (e.g. in the U.S., matching mentors and mentees by race or background is often discussed as a way to strengthen identification), but the mentor role is generally understood similarly by both parties due to social norms around volunteering. In Hong Kong SAR (China), setting the expectations for both mentors and mentees about the purpose and style of mentoring is an important implementation step to avoid misunderstandings or under-engagement.

Program sustainability and funding are also challenges. U.S. mentoring programs often rely on charitable funding and grants, which can lead to instability. The U.K.'s approach of government funding addressed this but depended on continued political will. Hong Kong SAR (China)'s mentoring programs initially ran on charitable funds and corporate sponsorships (for NGO programs), and now some on government funding. The sustainability question looms as Hong Kong SAR (China) integrates mentoring into official policy—will there be consistent budget allocations and support structures in the long term, or might programs fade if political priorities shift? The presence of mentoring in a flagship government program (Strive and Rise) suggests some level of commitment, but long-term success will require demonstrating impact to maintain that support. Additionally, coordinating efforts among many small NGOs to avoid duplication and ensure quality is a logistical challenge in Hong Kong SAR (China). There is a need for perhaps a more consolidated network or at least forums where mentoring practitioners can exchange knowledge (Cheung, 2021 highlights that current research and evaluation is sparse, making it hard to know which practices are most effective).

Finally, a critical challenge highlighted in the literature is the need for further research and evaluation, particularly in Hong Kong SAR (China). While the U.S. and U.K. have decades of studies, meta-analyses, and established evidence for best practices (DuBois & Karcher, 2013), Hong Kong SAR (China) is still building its evidence base. Chan and Luo (2022) point out the necessity of understanding the mechanisms by which mentoring produces positive changes for youth—e.g. what specific mentor behaviors or relationship qualities lead to improvements in mentees' competencies—and this likely requires locally conducted research. Without such knowledge, programs may not be optimized for Hong Kong SAR (China)'s cultural and educational context. Additionally, Harrison et al. (2018) note that research in Hong Kong SAR (China) should also include mentors' perspectives and longer-term outcomes, which have been under-examined. This gap is both a challenge and an opportunity: it underscores that Hong Kong SAR (China)'s mentoring field is still in a developmental stage where systematic improvements can be guided by ongoing research. In comparison, the U.S. and U.K. can draw on a larger body of literature to refine their programs, though even in those contexts there are calls for more nuanced research (such as investigating how mentoring can best support specific subgroups, or how to leverage technology in mentoring).

In summary, while Hong Kong SAR (China), the U.S., and the U.K. face many of the same operational hurdles in running mentoring programs (volunteer management, matching, training, funding, evaluation), Hong Kong SAR (China)'s challenges are amplified by its relatively nascent stage of development and the need to adapt a largely Western-derived practice to an Asian context. Conversely, Hong Kong SAR (China) has the advantage of learning from the experiences and mistakes of its Western counterparts, allowing local stakeholders to proactively address issues such as mentor training and program design.

4. Discussion

The comparative review above reveals both convergence and divergence in youth mentoring practices between Hong Kong SAR (China) and Western contexts. Convergence is evident in the shared understanding that mentoring can significantly benefit youth development. Across all contexts, mentoring is leveraged to provide young people with additional social support, guidance, and opportunities that they might not otherwise receive. Whether in Hong Kong SAR (China) or overseas, successful mentoring relationships tend to foster greater confidence, improved interpersonal skills, and enhanced aspirations in young people (Chan & Luo, 2022; Rhodes et al., 2006). The literature suggests that certain core principles of effective mentoring—such as building trust, ensuring regular and engaging interactions, and setting developmental goals—are universal. Hong Kong SAR (China)'s emerging research aligns with global findings on the importance of mentor characteristics like empathy and consistency (Cheung, 2021) and on the positive influence of mentoring on academic and emotional outcomes (Chan & Luo, 2022). This indicates that, at a human level, the mentor-mentee dynamic

transcends cultural boundaries in many respects.

At the same time, differences in historical context, culture, and institutional frameworks lead to different expressions of mentoring practice. Hong Kong SAR (China)'s late adoption of mentoring has meant that it could borrow models from abroad (for instance, the Big Brothers/Big Sisters style, or school-business partnership model) and implement them in a concentrated timeframe. The role of government in Hong Kong SAR (China)'s mentoring development is relatively stronger at the early stage compared to the U.S., likely because proven models exist to justify public investment. Meanwhile, cultural nuances in Hong Kong SAR (China)—such as the mentor's role overlapping with teacher or elder roles—require adaptation of program training and design. The discussion by Harrison et al. (2018) of cultural factors implies that Western mentoring approaches cannot be transplanted wholesale; they must be calibrated to local expectations around adult-youth interactions, communication styles, and family involvement. One practical implication is that Hong Kong SAR (China) programs might incorporate more parental engagement or school collaboration to gain trust, whereas in the U.S. mentors often operate more independently from parents and schools.

Policy and societal support for mentoring appear to be a critical factor in scaling programs. The U.K.'s experience shows that institutional backing can embed mentoring into the fabric of youth services, but it also raises the bar for accountability and quality control. Hong Kong SAR (China) is at a juncture where it could consider establishing something akin to a national mentoring council or quality framework, learning from the U.K.'s NMN model, to ensure consistency across the burgeoning array of programs. This could help address challenges like training standards and screening processes uniformly. On the other hand, maintaining the passion and personal touch of community-driven programs is important—an overly bureaucratic approach could stifle the volunteer spirit. The balance between formal structure and grassroots enthusiasm is a point of discussion for Hong Kong SAR (China) as it moves forward.

The evolution of mentoring practices also invites reflection on how mentoring has expanded conceptually. Initially seen largely as a remedial or support strategy for "at-risk" youth, mentoring in all contexts has evolved into a broader developmental approach that can benefit all young people (Lerner et al., 2013). This inclusive view is now evident in Hong Kong SAR (China): even high-performing students seek mentors to gain a competitive edge or broaden their learning (as with the Innovation and Technology Scholarship). Thus, mentoring is not solely a safety net for the disadvantaged; it is also a means of enrichment and talent development. Policymakers and educators should recognize this dual role. In Hong Kong SAR (China), expanding mentoring opportunities to different segments (e.g. mentorship for youth with special educational needs, or peer mentoring to foster youth leadership) could be fruitful areas, drawing on overseas precedents.

Gaps in current research were noted, especially in Hong Kong SAR (China)'s context. Given that formal mentoring is new to Hong Kong SAR (China), it is

unsurprising that research trails practice. The literature review highlighted the need for deeper investigation into how mentoring works in the local cultural milieu (Chan & Luo, 2022). For instance, what mentoring styles are most effective for Hong Kong SAR (China) adolescents? How do factors like mentor-mentee gender or background matching influence outcomes in Hong Kong SAR (China) compared to Western settings? Future studies could examine whether the predictors of successful mentoring (such as relationship duration, frequency of contact, or mentor professional background) align with those found in U.S. studies (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008) or whether Hong Kong SAR (China)'s unique environment (e.g. highly dense urban living, exam-centric education system) introduces new dynamics. Moreover, Hong Kong SAR (China) researchers might explore the role of technology in mentoring (for example, using social media or messaging apps to supplement face-to-face meetings), which is increasingly relevant globally but particularly in tech-savvy Hong Kong SAR (China) youth.

Another research implication is evaluating the long-term impact of mentoring programs in Hong Kong SAR (China). Longitudinal studies could assess if mentored youth have improved educational attainment, career outcomes, or social mobility in adulthood, compared to non-mentored peers—data that exists in some form in the U.S. but would be valuable to replicate locally. Such evidence would also help justify the continuation and expansion of government-funded programs. Additionally, as Harrison et al. (2018) pointed out, including multiple perspectives (mentees, mentors, parents, program staff) in research would give a holistic understanding of program effectiveness and areas for improvement.

Future studies and innovation can also address challenges identified: for example, investigating mentor recruitment strategies (what motivates Hong Kong SAR (China) citizens to become mentors, and how to retain them) could guide programs in volunteer management. Culturally adapted mentor training modules could be developed and tested for efficacy. Overall, the gaps in Hong Kong SAR (China)'s research represent opportunities to contribute knowledge to the international mentoring field, potentially offering insights on cross-cultural mentoring practices that are currently under-studied.

5. Limitations

While this review offers a broad overview of youth mentoring programs across three contexts, it has certain limitations. First, the scope of literature included is constrained by the availability of documented sources in formal publications. The review may not fully capture unpublished evaluations, internal program reports, or mentoring initiatives that have not been written about in academic or policy literature. This could bias the analysis toward well-known or well-funded programs, potentially overlooking smaller community-driven efforts (especially in Hong Kong SAR (China)) that are less documented. Second, the comparative approach, by necessity, simplifies complex social and cultural differences; not every nuance of the U.S., U.K., or Hong Kong SAR (China) situation can be covered.

The Hong Kong SAR (China) mentoring landscape is evolving so rapidly that any review can become outdated as new programs and policies emerge. Additionally, there is an inherent publication bias in that successful programs and positive findings are more likely to be reported. Mentoring failures or challenges might be underrepresented in the literature, which could skew the review's tone toward optimism. Finally, as a bibliographic review, this paper synthesizes existing knowledge but cannot provide the kind of empirical verification that original research would. The conclusions drawn are therefore tentative and meant to guide future inquiry. In moving forward, a more systematic review or meta-analysis could strengthen the evidence base, and on-the-ground studies in Hong Kong SAR (China) will be crucial to validate and extend the insights gathered from overseas comparisons.

6. Conclusion

Youth mentoring programs have become an integral component of youth development strategies in Hong Kong SAR (China) and elsewhere. This bibliographic review, grounded in a comparative analysis of literature from Hong Kong SAR (China), the United States, and the United Kingdom, highlights the parallel rise of mentoring as a response to common developmental needs of youth, as well as contextual differences shaped by culture and policy. Hong Kong SAR (China)'s mentoring landscape, though emergent, is rapidly expanding with support from both civil society and government. It draws inspiration from Western models evidenced by similarities in one-to-one mentoring structures, volunteer engagement, and target outcomes yet it also navigates unique local challenges such as cultural expectations and relatively limited research precedents.

The similarities identified include a shared recognition of mentoring's value in promoting academic success, career readiness, and psychosocial growth, and common program elements like volunteer mentors, structured activities, and a focus on underserved youth. The differences lie in the maturity and scale of mentoring ecosystems (with Hong Kong SAR (China) catching up to the breadth seen in the U.S./U.K.), the degree of institutionalization (high in the U.K., increasing in Hong Kong SAR (China), moderate in the U.S.), and cultural adaptations in mentorship interactions. Hong Kong SAR (China)'s case demonstrates how a society can accelerate the adoption of mentoring by learning from abroad, but also underscores the importance of tailoring approaches to local norms and needs.

The review also underscores that effective mentoring, regardless of locale, relies on investing in mentor training, careful matching, and ongoing support for the mentoring relationship. Challenges such as mentor recruitment, consistency of program quality, and evaluation are universal but manifest differently across contexts. Hong Kong SAR (China) will need to continue addressing these as it consolidates its mentoring efforts. Encouragingly, initial outcomes from Hong Kong SAR (China) programs mirror the positive impacts reported internationally, suggesting that with refinement and support, mentoring can be as transformative for Hong Kong SAR (China)'s youth as it has been elsewhere.

In conclusion, youth mentoring in Hong Kong SAR (China) and overseas is both an art and a science, which is an art in the nurturing of human relationships and a science in accumulating evidence of its benefits and best practices. Bridging the experiences of Hong Kong SAR (China) with those of the U.S. and U.K. provides a richer understanding of how mentoring can be effectively implemented across different social contexts. It emphasizes that although the essence of mentoring, which involves a caring adult guiding a young person, is universal, the success of programs hinges on their thoughtful integration into the unique fabric of each society. For Hong Kong SAR (China), continued research, cross-sector collaboration, and cultural calibration will be key to evolving its youth mentoring models. As gaps in knowledge are filled, Hong Kong SAR (China) can both benefit from and contribute to the global dialogue on mentoring as a powerful catalyst for youth development. By learning from overseas experiences and rigorously examining local practice, stakeholders can ensure that youth mentoring programs, in Hong Kong SAR (China) and beyond, reach their full potential in shaping the next generation.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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