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Exploration of New Teachers' Empowerment Approaches via Induction Program: Case of Rwanda

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Abstract: *New teachers' induction approach is taken as an important process for inspiring to join the teaching profession as it offers an introduction to the teaching working conditions and practices, increasing motivation of teachers and enhancing their problem-solving skills. In Rwanda, an induction program for new teachers with a focus on empowerment is being implemented by the Rwanda Education Board in partnership with VVOB – Education for Development and the University of Rwanda – College of Education. The main objective of this paper was to examine the awareness and knowledge of key players on new teacher induction in Rwanda: Key players to this end are: 1. the deans of studies in Teacher Training Centers (TTCs) and; 2. New teacher mentors at TTCs. The data used were collected in April 2018, through questionnaires completed by research participants. The model of new teachers' induction program by Diane Corcoran and colleagues was used as our conceptual framework. Due to a small sample size of 22 participants, we analyzed our data using the quick impressionistic summary investigative method and opted to present our results into affirmations. The study exposed that the role of New Teacher mentors at TTCs was relatively weak. Besides, our results, revealed that deans of studies had different views about the induction concept. The induction implementation in schools was found to be confronted with both limited knowledge on induction activities for the concerned people and time constraints. However, because of a small sample used for such quantitative study, we have not opted to generalize its findings. The paper ends with recommendations to different concerned stakeholders*

Keywords: *Exploration, New teachers, Induction, Empowerment, Rwanda.*

1. Introduction

Induction programmes for new teachers are judged to be invaluable in different domains and in teaching particularly. The induction of new teachers is considered as a backbone towards having quality in teaching activities. This is due to the fact that there is exceptional demand for quality teachers of different subjects. It is well known that teaching is complex and the teaching competencies gained during pre-service education are not sufficient for pre-service teachers to be fully equipped for their work as in service teachers.

What has been identified as a challenge is that when new teachers start working, they work in isolation from their colleagues which makes them to feel alone in their assigned classrooms (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011). It is understandable that there is a need for schools with new teachers to think about the ways that they can create an environment in which new teachers can acquire the skills and be successful as teachers.

Different researchers (Ingersoll and Strong, 2011; Wang et al, 2008), posited that if the induction is done correctly, it can positively influence the learning outcomes of the learners, improve the new teacher's classroom practices which may eventually lead to higher new teachers motivation, commitment and more job satisfaction.

To improve induction programmes for new teachers, the government of Rwanda set an educational strategic plan which stimulates Newly Qualified teachers, trainers and lecturers to participate in school/institution-based coaching and mentoring schemes for the first year of their career, beginning in 2017 (MINEDUC, 2017). This is also in line with the Rwanda Teacher Development and Management Policy, suggesting that the key to retaining teachers, especially teachers in the early years of their career, is to provide a robust system of professional support that

can quickly address job-related challenges and enhance commitment to teaching (MINEDUC, 2015). The policy emphasizes that this support should be need-based for different new teachers.

For New Teachers, new teacher mentors in schools with the support of the Deputy Head Teacher and other colleagues provide school-based induction. Working alongside these school based new teacher mentors are the Teacher Training Centres tutors who monitor and support this process during new teachers' first year of teaching. The in school mentors comprise of the school based mentors, the school subject leaders and Deputy Head Teachers in charge of Studies.

In partnership with Rwanda Education Board and University of Rwanda-College of Education supported by VVOB – Education for Development- a Multi-Year programme known as Leading, Teaching and Learning Together $(LT)^2$/*Umusemburow'Iremerw'ubarezi programme*" (2017-2021) is being implemented. The aims to promote the quality of basic education through enhancing school leadership and setting up an induction system for New Teachers. This programme focuses on advancing the implementation of the Competence Based Curriculum while supporting the improvement of learning outcomes in Mathematics for girls.

To strengthen the capacity of TTC tutors and TTC Deans of studies related to the induction of new teacher, VVOB, in partnership with REB and URCE, developed a training programme on the Pre-service support for School based induction with three school visits in year and one day of getting feedback after each school visit by TTC tutors who have been involved in supporting new teachers. This training programme on pre-service support to school-based induction aimed to equip TTC tutors with the competences needed to: 1. organize the pre-service support to school-based induction, 2. co-monitor the implementation of the induction programme together with the in-school mentor. Also it aimed to strengthen the capacity of TTC Deans of Studies to advice and coach their TTC tutors in fulfilling their role in the induction of NTs. During the training the focus was on the rationale behind the TTC support to new teachers' induction, the key concepts used in induction on NTs like: Mentoring, Coaching, Communities of practice, Inclusive education, Professional ethics, teachers' attitudes and behaviours, dealing with resistance to change and roadmap of TTC support to new teachers' induction in the context of Rwanda. The current proposed induction programme is supported by 6 TTCs that support all primary schools in six districts. The four districts in Eastern province of Rwanda and two districts from Western province of Rwanda. The ultimate goal is to scale the TTC support to all primary schools in all 30 districts. One of the way is to first find out the solution to our research question on what knowledge and *awareness* of key players on new teacher induction in Rwanda.

2. Literature Review

One of the well-known studies on the difficulties met by new teachers at the start of their career is the one of Veenman (1984) in which a compilation of 91 studies was done to identify the common difficulties met by new teachers. In that work, the most apparent difficulties were dealing with problems of individual students, classroom discipline, dealing with individual differences, motivating students, assessing students' work, relationships with parents, organization of class work and insufficient materials and supplies. Those results are not different from what has been found by Ganser (1999) more than 15 years later. That has been enhanced by Richter et al., 2013 who were positing that different mentoring approaches affect beginning teachers' development in the first years of practice. It is then obvious that retaining teachers who meet such difficulties in their first year of teaching is a big challenge, which justify the need of induction programs aimed at empowering teachers.

Because teachers teach their classes on their own, new teachers may feel isolated and in some schools, they do not get regular supervision or support. In this case, Professional development activities can assist to sort out some of these matters. Empowerment is considered as a process through which teachers become capable of engaging in, sharing control of, and influencing events and institutions that affect their lives (Murray, 2010). In doing so, they have to keep in mind that they have to be positive, to have a belief in what they do, be proactive, not reactive and be assertive, not aggressive (Murray, 2010). All these to lead to an improvement in student performance. Cabus et al., 2019 made an argument that mentoring, which aims not to criticize or evaluate, can assist in NTs empowerment. This is misconceived by those who think that as the mentor is more skilled and knowledgeable than the mentee, that s/he has to criticize or evaluate the mentee (Thomas et al., 2020). Mentoring should provide an opportunity to focus on individual teachers support needs by sharing knowledge and experience. This should not be confused with what has been termed as teacher support group by (Murray, 2010) where a group of teachers meet regularly to discuss a particular aspect or issue related to their teaching.
To understand the differences between these two modes of support, the need arises to think about different and valuable programmes which can intervene to empower teachers at different levels; pre- and primary education.

Regardless of the number of educational reforms in Rwanda that have taken place over the past years, limited work has focused on teacher empowerment. In the work of Rakhshinda et al, 2003, they focused on teacher empowerment strategies around curricular content, teaching methods and teacher education. However, they found that the participants were having some other challenges like lack of content knowledge of the subject matter, addressing learners' misconceptions and language constraints**.** Based on the work done by Grimnet, 1994, empowerment is taken as authorizing or licensing someone in her/his everyday duties. However, as confirmed by Short and Greer, 1993 the person to be

empowered needs to believe that s/he is can make changes. Besides, induction programs are to be highly structured by including mentoring, focusing on professional learning, and emphasizing collaboration that is broad and focused (Nielsen et al., 2007).

As previously informed, for this to be executed in Rwanda, the Rwanda Education board, University of Rwanda and Education for Development (VVOB) introduced different training programs with the aim of continuing promoting the quality of basic education through enhancing school leadership and setting up an induction system for New Teachers. After each training of those previously mentioned, the trainers do follow-up visits with main reasons of encouraging the trainees on the implementation of the gained knowledge during the conducted training, to enable the program participants to develop the confidence by putting into practice the gained competences more specifically in their own schools contexts, to advise the participants on the ways to overcome the challenges faced during the implementation of new practices, to help them to well understand their new roles as agents of change starting from their respective school and to collect data from field visits experiences for them to be shared with other stakeholders with aim of improving education quality.

2.1 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of the training under which this work was inspired has roots from the model of new teachers' induction program by Diane Corcoran and colleagues in what they termed 'Components of Great Beginnings' (Nielsen, Barry & Addison, 2007). This suggests that an orientation program should be provided for new teachers. In this activity, all new teachers are paired with someone known as a collegial mentor/orientation partner who provide guidance to a particular new teacher on daily basis. In the same perspective, there is an instructional resource teachers whose role are to serve as instructional mentor to a group of new teachers in their first year of teaching. Those are there to guide and support the work of novice teachers by doing observations, providing feedback, co-planning lessons, modeling effective teaching strategiesand helping teachers analyze student data to guide their instruction. All those are supposed to be accompanied by Standards-Based Evaluation and Reflection between both the mentor and the mentees (Nielsen, Barry & Addison, 2007).

3. Methodology

In the present research, the researchers opted to use a quick impressionistic summary investigative method (Walker, 1956). Researchers judged this to be suitable for this particular work as they needed to examine the studied variables in line with what the above method suggests. The reasons behind were that the induction program is considered as part of continuous professional development, which its planning and its implementation differ. The researchers also thought that the quick impressionistic summary investigative method can assist to get data that can be used for further academic research in this particular area.

The population of the present study targeted the Teacher Training Center tutors and their Deans of Studies who were attending the training on pre-service support on school based induction. Figure 1 shows the description of participants. Researchers have not selected a sample but opted to take into consideration all participants who attended the training.

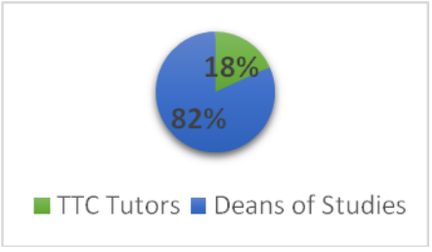

Figure 1: Training Participants

Using questionnaires, pre- and post-training evaluation data were collected from the participants both at the beginning and at the end of the training. All participants (TTC tutors and Deans of Studies) of the training filled in the questionnaires. The interpretation of these data were enriched by the post training phone interview questions on the major difficulties that new teachers faced during the TTC tutors support visits conducted in different schools.

During the analysis, results before and after the training were compared for the question related to their comprehensive knowledge on key concepts of pre-service support to school-based induction. In addition, the analysis was also conducted per category of participants (TTC tutors and Deans of Studies).

The difference between pre-and post-training results was analyzed considering the measure of central tendency (Mean) and the measure of variability (Standard Deviation) for each key concept. The arithmetic mean (M) was used to rate the extent at which the comprehensive knowledge of participants varied from pre- to post-training while Standard Deviation (SD) was used to explain the commonalities found in participants responses.

In this paper researchers considered a table that shows the arithmetic Mean (M), Standard Deviation (SD) and the percentage of the total number of participants per question and in total. The same table was used to explain the extent at which the knowledge of participants had changed from the pre- to the post-training.

4. Results and Discussion

Due to tangible reasons, researchers inform that results being presented, are those of data collected through the pre-post training evaluation questionnaire. In this questionnaire, participants answered questions related to their reaction and learning by the

end of the training of TTC tutors and Deans of Studies on the pre-service support to school-based induction. As such, results are presented in two sections: (1) Evaluation of Participants' reaction and (2) Evaluation of participants' learning with reference to Kirkpatrick model (Bates, 2004).

Evaluation of Participants' Reaction

The post-training evaluation provides an opportunity for increased qualitative program monitoring and evaluation. In this view, participants were asked to evaluate the training in terms of its objectives and for improvement. All respondents were happy about the trainings' objectives. Their reaction is summarized in Figure 2.

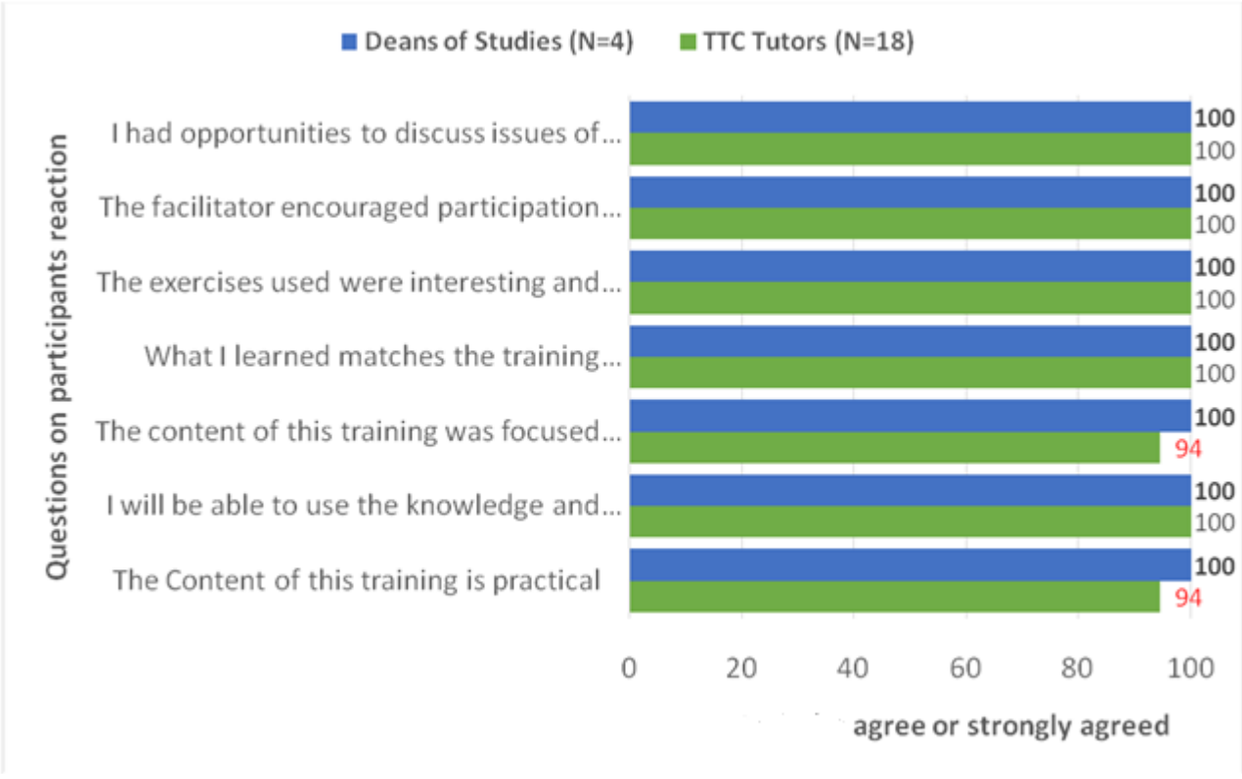

Figure 2: Reaction of training participants

From Figure 2, we noticed that all participants (100%) were satisfied about the achievement of the training's objectives and their involvement in training sessions. Whereas all Deans of Studies (100%) were satisfied about the link between training and what they needed to learn, 94% of TTC tutors could see the training as focusing on what they needed to learn. All Deans of studies (100%) judged the content of the training as practical, whereas on the other side 94% of TTC tutors could see the content of the training as practical.

The participants' learning was measured by rating their self-reported comprehensive knowledge. In Table 1, researchers considered the measure of central tendency (Mean) and measures of variability (Standard Deviation) to interpret the level of comprehensive knowledge about concepts related to teacher support. The score of Mean (M) will explain the level of comprehensive knowledge on a scale from 1 (very weak) to 4 (very strong), the score of Standard Deviation (SD) will explain the variability in respondents 'answers (Field, 2009). Any SD below 0.50 indicates homogeneity in responses (or that respondents tend to have common understand about a concept). Otherwise, any SD above 0.50 indicates heterogeneity in responses or that respondents had very different understanding about a concept (Agresti, 2009).

Table 1: Self-reported comprehensive 'Teacher Support' Knowledge

	TTC tutors						Deans of studies					
	Pre-training			Post training			Pre-training			Post training		
	M	SD	%	M	SD	%	M	SD	%	M	SD	%
Defining New Teachers	2.44	0.78	**61**	3.56	0.61	**89**	2.5	0.57	**63**	3.5	0.57	**87.5**
Continuous professional development	2.94	0.93	**74**	3.89	0.32	**97.3**	3	0.81	**75**	4	0.00	**100**
(School-based) Induction	2.56	1.04	**64**	4	0.00	**100**	2.5	0.57	**63**	3.75	0.5	**93.8**
Refrective practice	2.78	0.94	**70**	4	0.01	**100**	3	0.81	**75**	4	0.00	**100**
Defining Mentoring & Coaching	2.89	1.07	**72**	3.89	0.32	**97.3**	3.5	1.01	**88**	4	0.00	**100**
Pre-service support to school-based induction	2.5	1.09	**63**	3.83	0.38	**95.8**	2.75	0.5	**69**	4	0.00	**100**
The relationship between the key concepts of pre-service support to school-based inducation	2.5	1.09	**63**	3.56	0.7	**89**	3	0.8	**75**	4	0.00	**100**
The stakeholders involved in the induction of new teachers and their respective role	2.44	1.09	**61**	4	0.34	**100**	3	0.81	**75**	4	0.00	**100**
The role of NT mentor of TTC	2.33	1.1	**58**	3.94	0.23	**98.5**	2.5	1.01	**63**	4	0.00	**100**
Identifying teacher learning/improvement needs	2.5	0.98	**63**	3.78	0.73	**94.5**	2.5	0.57	**63**	3.77	0.68	**94.3**
Importance of reporting	2.72	1.07	**68**	4	0.01	**100**	3	0.81	**75**	4	0.00	**100**
Channels of reporting requirements	3.94	7.2	**99**	3.72	0.46	**93**	2.25	0.5	**56**	3.75	0.5	**93.8**
Average	**2.71**	**1.5**	**68**	**3.8**	**0.3**	**96**	**2.8**	**0.7**	**70**	**3.9**	**0.19**	**97.4**

From Table 1 and according to the interpretation of the Means (M) and the Standard Deviation (SD), researchers can note that at the pre-training, TTC tutors (*M = 2.44, SD = 0.78)* and Deans of studies *(M = 2.50, SD = 0.57)* had relatively weak comprehensive knowledge on the concept of '*New Teacher'* and had varied ways of defining this concept. After the training, the comprehensive knowledge on the concept of New Teachers improved for both TTC tutors (*M = 3.56, SD = 0.61)* and Deans of studies (*M = 3.50, SD = 0.57).* At the pre-training, TTC tutors (*M = 2.78, SD = 0.94)* and deans of studies (*M = 3.00, SD = 0.81)* had limited knowledge about the concept of 'reflective practice' and different views about the concept. But, at post-training the knowledge of

TTC tutors (*M = 4.00, SD = 0.00)* and deans of studies (*M = 4.00, SD = 0.00)* improved considerably. At Pre-training, the comprehensive knowledge about the concept of '*The stakeholders involved in the induction of new teachers and their respective role'* was relatively weak for both TTC tutors (*M = 2.44, SD = 1.09)* and Deans of studies (*M = 3.00, SD = 0.81).* At post-training, TTC tutors (*M = 4.00, SD = 0.34)* and Deans of studies (*M = 4.00, SD = 0.00)*, tended to have similar improvement. At the pre-training, the knowledge about '*The role of NT mentor of TTC'* was relatively weak, TTC tutors (*M = 2.33, SD = 1.1)* and deans of studies (*M = 2.50, SD = 1.01)* had different levels of knowledge. However, at post-training the knowledge of TTC tutors (*M = 4.00, SD = 0.34)* and deans of studies (*M = 4.00, SD = 0.00)* improved and respondents had a more common understanding about the role of NT mentor of TTC. This is in line with what Thomas et al., 2020 suggest that a mentor is to be equipped with a knowledge which can help him/her to fulfill that particular task. Even though their knowledge increased at post-training, TTC Deans of Studies could not still have common knowledge about the concepts related to 'Identifying teacher learning/improvement needs' (*M = 3.77, SD = 0.68)*, 'school based induction' (*M = 3.75, SD = 0.54)* and New Teachers (*M = 3.5, SD = 0.57).* Despite a considerable increase in their knowledge at post-training, TTC tutors didn't have common knowledge on the concepts related to New Teachers (*M = 3.57, SD = 0.61),* the relationship between the key concepts of pre-service support to school-based induction (*M = 3.56, SD = 0.7)* and identifying teacher learning/improvement needs (*M = 3.78, SD = 0.73).* On average, at the pre-training, self-reported knowledge about key concepts of 'teacher support' was low for both TTC tutors (*M = 2.71, SD = 1.5)* and deans of studies (*M = 2.8, SD = 0.7)*. However, after training, TTC tutors (*M = 3.8, SD = 0.3) and* Deans of Studies (*M = 3.9, SD = 0.19)* improved their knowledge considerably.

Figure 3 shows the significance of the training of TTC tutors and Deans of Studies on the Pre-service support for School based induction. Specifically, the figure shows that the comprehensive knowledge of TTC tutors on key concepts of pre-service support to school based induction increased from 68% before training to 96% after training. The comprehensive knowledge of TTC Deans of Studies on the pre-service support to school based induction increased from 70% before training to 97% after training.

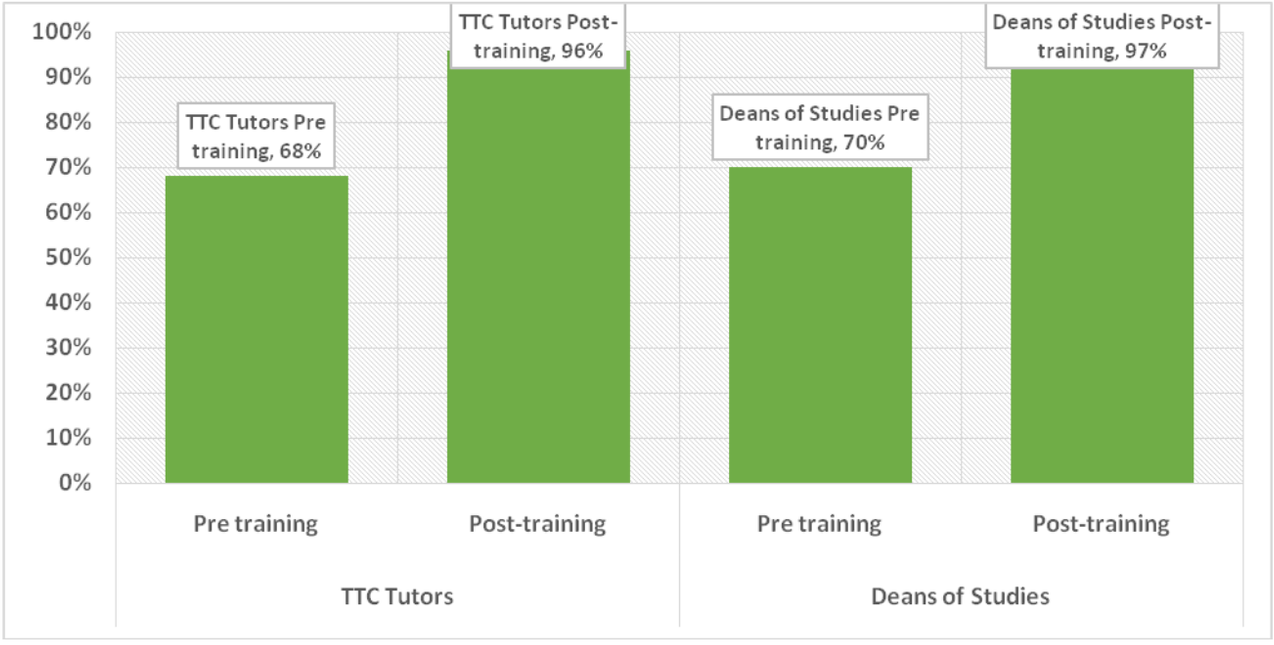

Figure 3: Significance of the training on pre-service support to school based induction

Once such trainings become successful, they can solve issue which has been raised by Nielsen et al., (2007) in relation to the fact that hiring new teachers so that they remain in the profession and become effective teachers need to be accompanied by continuing their professional growth.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This study that was aiming at evaluating how new teachers are empowered through induction program in Rwanda was successfully conducted and has demonstrated that induction program is of great importance. It also highlighted the contribution of TTC tutors and TTC deans of studies in supporting school-based mentors and co-monitoring the

implementation of that induction program. Therefore their training was judged to be of a great value. At pre-training, TTC tutors and Deans of Studies had relatively weak self-reported comprehensive knowledge on the concepts of the pre-service support to school based induction. The Mean (M) of their knowledge on all concepts related to pre-service support to school based induction was below 3 out of 4. At post-training, their knowledge increased for all concepts, the Mean (M) was above 3.5 out of 4, which shows that the training was successful in increasing perceived knowledge on pre-service support. However, after training TTC tutors did not have common knowledge on three concepts of pre-service support to school based induction: (1) Definition of New Teachers, (2) The relationship between the key concepts of pre-service support to school-based induction and (3) Identifying teacher learning/improvement needs. Further investigation is needed to reflect on what could have been the reasons behind those differences. In addition, after training TTC Deans of Studies still differed in their levels of knowledge on: (1) the definition of new teachers, (2) the meaning of school-based induction and (3) Identifying teacher learning/improvement needs and (4) channels of reporting requirements. According to participants' reaction towards the training, all TTC tutors and Deans of Studies were satisfied by the achievements of the training objectives as it inspired them to be finding opportunities to work together with colleagues as the key components of the new-teacher induction program (Nielsen et al., (2007).

5.2 Recommendations

The key findings show that the training on key concepts of the pre-service support to school based induction was effective. At post-training, there was a big variability in respondents' responses to some key concepts (where respondents failed to develop common understanding), which might be explained by differences in educational level or differences in motivation to learn about those concepts, without forgetting the small sample effect. These topics should be explored further in next trainings of TTC tutors and Deans of Studies. The topics to be explored in next trainings are: meaning of New of Teachers; The relationship between the key concepts of pre-service support to school-based induction; Identifying teacher learning/improvement needs; the meaning of school-based induction and Channels of reporting requirements.

In the Rwandan context, as informed elsewhere in this work, the School Based Mentors and School Subject Leaders are considered as the focal points in charge of assisting the new teachers quotidian. However, during the phone interview conducted with them, they raised that they also needed more knowledge and practical training on coaching skills. They also added that they have time constraint due to their workload, which they judge to be heavy. The education managers are advised to look for the solution on the above mentioned issues for the induction program to be sustainable.

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