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Empowering teachers

NATIONAL REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION

FIELD TRIALS IN ITALY

WP3 VALIDATION THROUGH FIELD TRIALS IN REAL ENVIRONMENTS

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EMPOWERING TEACHERS PERSONAL, PROFESSIONAL AND SOCIAL CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT THROUGH INNOVATIVE PEER - INDUCTION PROGRAMMES

Executive Summary

The Italian National Report aims to analyse the outcomes of field trials involving 149 Italian teachers in the LOOP program. Employing a quasi-experimental design, it compares the effects of varying intervention intensities on two groups: a control group, receiving less formal intervention, and an experimental group, experiencing more structured intervention. The analysis focuses on how these interventions influence the perceptions and attitudes of both new and experienced teachers regarding proposed educational policy measures.

Nevertheless, the Italian National Report, while aligned with the overarching goals of the consortium, features a different approach due to Italy's existing formal induction program for new teachers. The report focuses on the trial of the Mentor Capacitation Program, assessing its impact within the established framework. This adaptation acknowledges Italy's unique educational context and allows for a nuanced evaluation of mentor training effectiveness, its influence on teacher development and retention, and the integration of new teachers into the educational system. The report thus provides tailored insights and recommendations specific to the Italian context, particularly in enhancing the existing induction program through mentor capacitation. The LOOP Mentor Capacitation Course was effectively delivered fully online via the ministerial platform S.O.F.I.A., ensuring accessibility and standardization across Italy. With the support of INDIRE and Regional Education Offices (USR), the program achieved extensive national reach, demonstrating a successful model for implementing mentorship programs within Italy's structured framework for teacher induction.

The report, through its comprehensive analysis and strategic implementation, provides valuable insights into the enhancement of Italy's teacher induction process, emphasizing the crucial role of mentor capacitation in fostering a robust educational system. Specifically:

1. **Perception of Formal Training Programs (Hypothesis 1):** Experienced teachers favourably view formal training programs, indicating a broad acceptance and recognition of their value in the teachers' career development framework.
2. **Mentorship as a Career Motivator (Hypothesis 2):** The consistent interest in mentorship roles, seen as a viable career alternative, confirms its motivational impact and potential for career diversification.
3. **Role of Mentoring in Professional Development (Hypothesis 3):** Mentoring is crucial in supporting the professional development of novice teachers, significantly contributing to their retention and sense of belonging within the educational system.
4. **Impact of Structured, Context-Adapted Mentoring Programs (Hypotheses 5 and 6):** The report underscores the positive effects of structured mentoring programs that are sensitive to contextual needs, enhancing the professional roles and success of participants.

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5. **Resource Allocation and Guidance (Hypothesis 7):** Recognizing challenges in resource allocation and guidance, the report partially supports the hypothesis, pointing to ongoing advancements in overcoming these barriers.

Furthermore, the qualitative data further enrich the report's findings, underlining the necessity of mentor training that is adaptable, comprehensive, and context sensitive. Discussions highlight the need for professional and economic recognition of mentors, advocating for training that encompasses reflective practice and practical application. The significance of the probationary year, coupled with additional in-school support, is emphasized as vital for the effective induction of new teachers.

Thus, the joint analysis of the quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the field trials allows us to conclude the following:

Hypothesis	Partially Verified	Fully Verified
1 - Formal training of mentors' programmes to train experienced teachers and school leaders facilitates the deployment of effective and formal teacher induction programmes		√
2 - The opportunity for experienced teachers and school leaders to diversify their career options and act as mentors of their peers contributes to their motivation and maintenance of the system		√
3 - Peer-developed teachers induction programmes based on mentoring activities support the professional development of teachers initiating their careers and their maintenance on the system		√
4 - Formal induction programmes applied at the school level contribute to the social and cultural inclusion and development of new teachers		√ *(Based on Qualitative Analysis)*
5 - Structured mentoring programmes adapted to the context increase the interest and success of its participants		√
6 - The training of mentors facilitates the implementation of teachers' induction programmes		√
7 - Lack of resources and guidance are the reasons for not implementing induction programmes in schools	√	

Table 1: Hypothesis Validation Overview

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In conclusion, the evaluation of both quantitative and qualitative data in the Italian National Report confirm the effectiveness of the Mentor Capacitation Program within Italy's specific educational context. The study demonstrates significant positive impacts on teacher development, affirming the value of mentorship in the Italian educational system. Nevertheless, the findings underscore the importance of structured but adaptable mentor training and the need for ongoing support and resources in teacher induction.

The Italian teachers also identified a set of recommendations to support the successful implementation of the induction programme in schools. At the Policy Level, it is important to acknowledge mentoring as a critical element in the teaching profession for experienced teachers and to invest in preparing these teachers for mentor roles within formal induction programs. Adapting the length of the induction program to suit individual teacher needs, possibly extending it beyond a single school year, is also vital. Implementing a monitoring plan can help in sharing experiences, best practices, and solutions, and it's crucial to define a personalized professional development path for experienced teachers.

At the School Level, the focus should be on emphasizing the importance of training mentors, ensuring that they are prepared and willing to take on their roles effectively, without the burden of evaluation responsibilities. It's important to match mentor characteristics with the needs and expertise of new teachers and to facilitate interactions with external organizations and professionals, promoting the school as a collaborative entity. Establishing a cooperative environment among teachers in the induction program is also key.

At the Teachers' Level, processes, moments, and communication channels should be collaboratively defined and continuously aligned with the needs of new teachers. It's beneficial to highlight best practices in mentoring and to recommend collaborative planning and practice exchange among experienced teachers during the program. Implementing practical activities along with theoretical materials on how to build effective mentor-mentee relationships is recommended.

These conclusions and policy recommendations are geared towards enhancing the effectiveness of the LOOP program in Italy, aiming to contribute to the professional development of both new and experienced teachers and thereby strengthening the overall educational system.

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Introduction

The aim of this national report is to present and analyse the results of the field trials regarding the Mentor Capacitation Programme conducted on a sample of 149 teachers in Italy (67 in the experimental group and 82 in the control group) in the context of the LOOP program. The methodology used in the program consists of a quasi-experimental research design that seeks to identify and evaluate the relationship between the proposed policy measures and the change they might induce in teachers' perceptions of their career opportunities, professional development, and motivation. Nevertheless, it should be noted that although we received an excellent response from the experimental group (100% of response rate) we had only 44 answer from the control group (53% response rate). In this context, the quantitative evaluation of the field trials (Part A) considers only the teachers who replied to the two questionnaires. As such, the sections below presented the data related to the 111 teachers who answered the questionnaires and not all teachers involved in the field trials in Italy.

Specifically, the present analysis aims at testing the following seven hypotheses:

1. Mentors' formal training programmes for experienced teachers and school leaders facilitates the deployment of effective formal teacher induction programmes.
2. The opportunity for experienced teachers and school leaders to diversify their career options and act as mentors contributes to their motivation and maintenance on the system.
3. Peer-developed teacher induction programmes based on mentoring activities support the professional development of teachers initiating their careers and their maintenance on the system.
4. Formal induction programmes applied at the school level contribute to the social and cultural inclusion and development of new teachers.
5. Structured mentoring programs adapted to the context increases the interest and success of its participants.
6. The training of mentors facilitates the implementation of teacher induction programmes.
7. Lack of resources and guidance are the reasons for not implementing induction programmes in schools.

The report is structured as follows: Section 1A of Part A presents the statistical profiles of the field trial participants. Section 2A briefly describes how the field trials were organized, from the initial phase of training and information sessions to their completion. Section 3A presents the results of the analysis of the data collected during the ex-ante and post-intervention surveys.

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Part A: The quantitative evaluation of the field trials

The primary objective of this national report is to examine and discuss the outcomes of the field trials associated with the Mentor Capacitation Programme, a key component of the LOOP program. This detailed analysis encompasses a total of 149 teachers in Italy, strategically divided into two groups: 67 in the experimental group and 82 in the control group. The research methodology employed in this program is a well-structured quasi-experimental research design. This approach is specifically tailored to explore and assess the potential impact of the proposed policy measures on teachers' perspectives, particularly focusing on how these measures might influence their views on career advancement opportunities, professional development, and overall motivation.

It is important to highlight a notable disparity in the response rates between the two groups. The experimental group exhibited an outstanding 100% response rate, providing a complete set of data. However, the control group had a significantly lower response rate, with only 44 responses, equating to a 53% response rate. This discrepancy is a critical factor in our analysis.

In light of this, the quantitative evaluation of the field trials, referred to as Part A, is based solely on the responses received. Consequently, the subsequent sections of this report will present and dissect data pertaining to the 111 teachers who actively participated by responding to both questionnaires. It is crucial to clarify that this data representation exclusively includes the responses received and does not encompass all the teachers who were initially involved in the field trials across Italy. This distinction is vital for a thorough understanding of the study's scope and the interpretation of its findings.

To sum it up, from the 111 teachers that replied to both questionnaires…

1. 44 are experienced teachers of the control group (53% answered)
2. 67 are experienced teachers of the experimental group (100% answered)

The characterization of the teachers of these two groups is presented below.

Section 1A: The samples of the quantitative evaluation of the field trials

The sample of the control group (experienced teachers)

Figure 1 presents a detailed profile of the control group's participants within the Mentor Capacitation Programme's field trials, comprising a sample of 44 experienced teachers from Italy. The gender composition of this group is predominantly female, with 77% (34) of the participants being women, and 23% (10) being men, which mirrors the gender distribution typically observed in the educational sector. Regarding the age, the sample is largely constituted by experienced educators: 66% (29) of the participants are within the 46-55 age range, while 20% (9) fall into the 56-65 age bracket. A smaller segment of 11% (5) is represented by the 36-45 age group, with a singular teacher, accounting for 2%, being in the 26-35 age range. There are no participants in the youngest (<25) or oldest (>66) age categories.

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The experience level of the teachers is quite high, with a significant 68% (30) having more than 20 years of teaching experience. Those with 16-20 years of experience represent 16% (7) of the sample, followed by 14% (6) who have 6-10 years of experience, and a minimal 2% (1) with 11-15 years of experience. Notably, no teachers reported having less than 5 years of experience.

With respect to the educational levels at which these teachers are currently teaching, the distribution spans from primary to upper secondary education: 39% (17) teach at the primary level, 34% (15) at lower secondary, and 27% (12) at upper secondary schools. Looking at the geographical location of their schools, a significant majority of 75% (33) work in urban areas, contrasting with 25% (11) in rural settings, suggesting a higher concentration of the sample in more densely populated areas.

In terms of the educational sectors they represent, a vast majority of 95% (42) teach in regular education, with a small minority of 5% (2) involved in special education. There are no participants from vocational education and training (VET) sectors. Finally, regarding mentorship experience, a substantial 75% (33) of the participants have served as mentors to new teachers at some point, which highlights the group's engagement with professional development and support within the educational community, while the remaining 25% (11) have not had mentoring experience.

This profile paints a picture of an experienced and predominantly female group of teachers, primarily based in urban regular schools, with a strong proclivity for mentorship and a considerable wealth of experience in the education sector.

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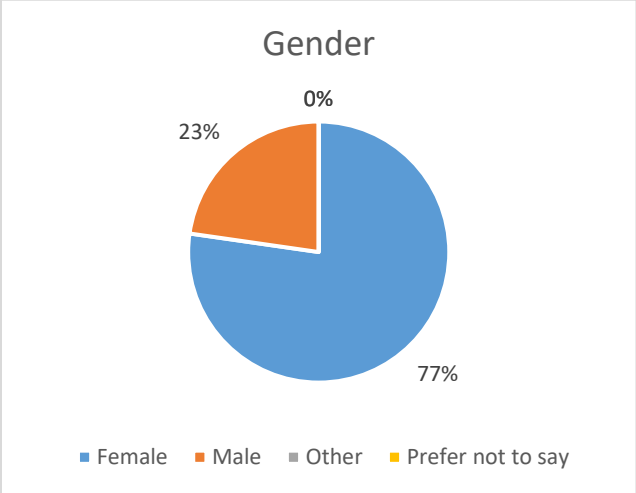

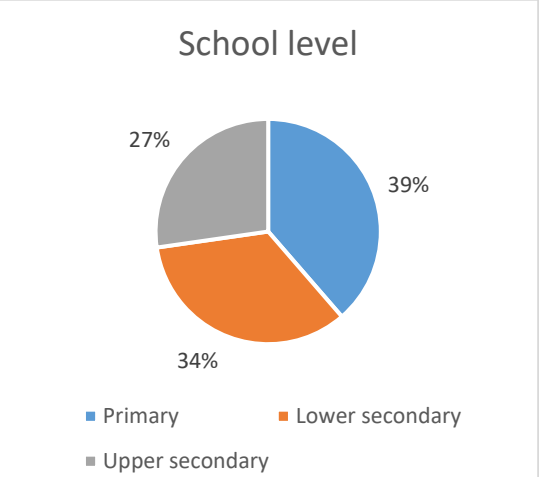

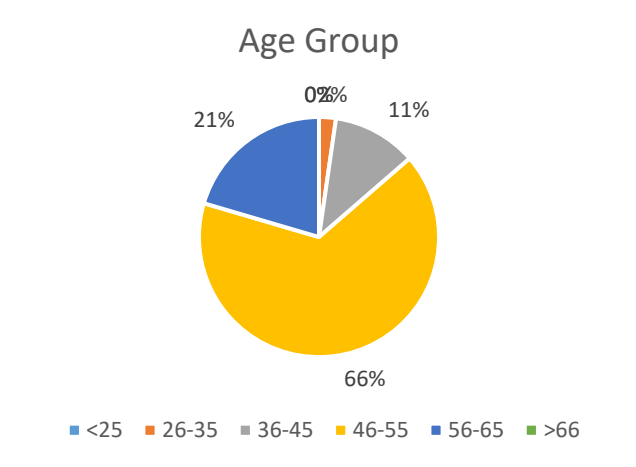

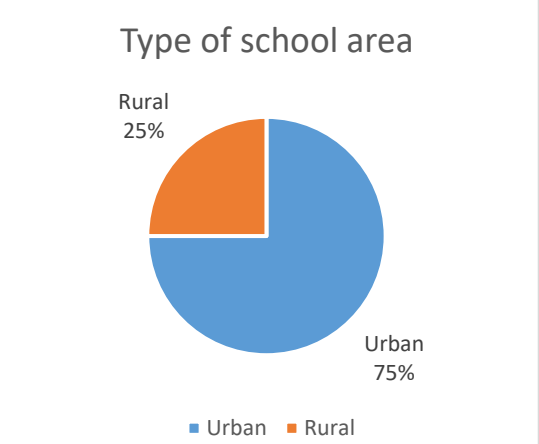

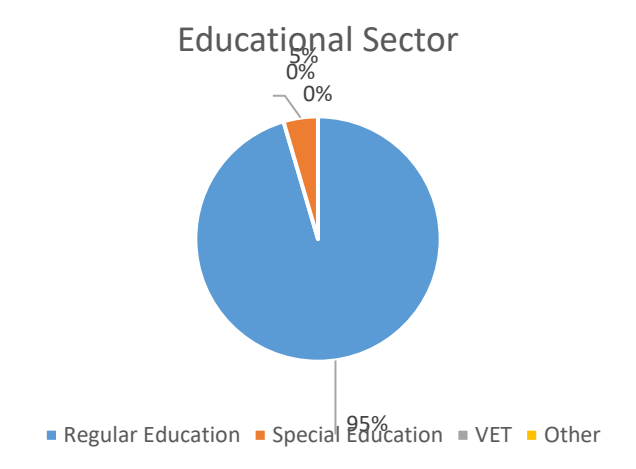

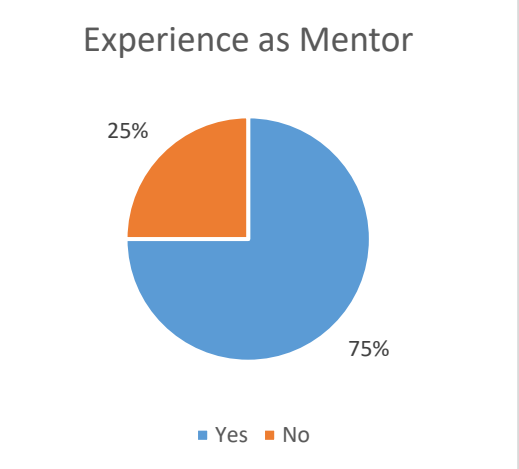

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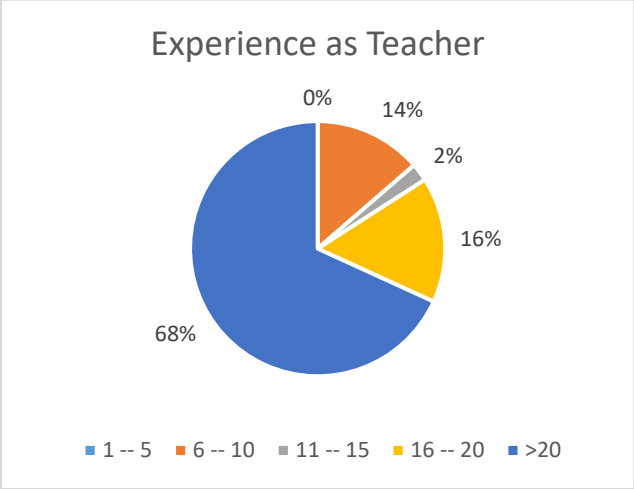

Figure 1: Profile of the participants (control group of experienced teachers)

The sample of the experimental group (experienced teachers)

Figure 2 encapsulates the demographic and professional makeup of the experimental group participating in the Mentor Capacitation Programme's field trials, totalling 67 teachers. This subset demonstrates a similar gender distribution to the control group, with an overwhelming majority of 85% (57) being female and 15% (10) male, which is reflective of the broader trend in the Italian teaching workforce.

The age distribution of this cluster skews towards more experienced professionals, with the largest segment being 64% (43) in the 46-55 age group, followed by 22% (15) in the 56-65 age bracket. A smaller portion, 13% (9), is in the 36-45 age group. There were no participants in either the youngest (<25) or the oldest (>66) age categories.

In terms of teaching experience, a substantial 60% (40) of the teachers have been in the profession for more than 20 years. Those with 16-20 years of experience make up 15% (10), while 12% (8) have 11-15 years, and another 13% (9) have 6-10 years of experience. Notably, there were no teachers with less than 5 years of experience.

The distribution across educational levels where these teachers are currently teaching is fairly balanced: 36% (24) at the primary level, 40% (27) at lower secondary, and 24% (16) at upper secondary schools.

Geographically, the majority of the teachers, 73% (49), work in urban areas, while 27% (18) are based in rural locations, indicating a strong urban presence within the experimental group. We have enrolled for this group a total of 116 unique Italian schools predominantly from Veneto, Sicily and Emilia Romagna.

Regarding the sectors of education, the overwhelming majority, 94% (63), are from regular education, with a minor 6% (4) involved in special education. There were no participants teaching in vocational education and training (VET) or other unspecified sectors.

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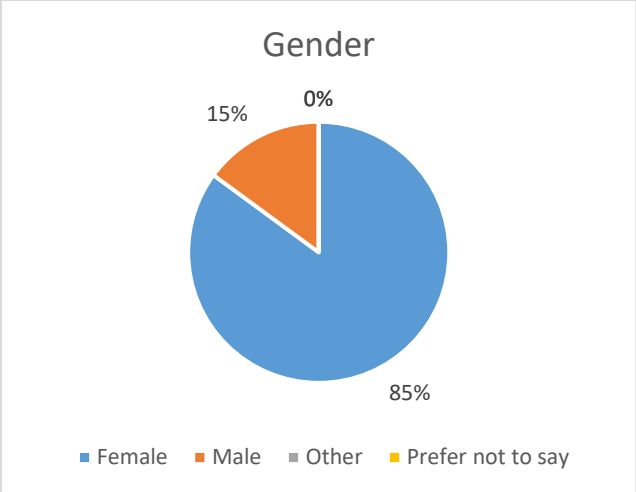
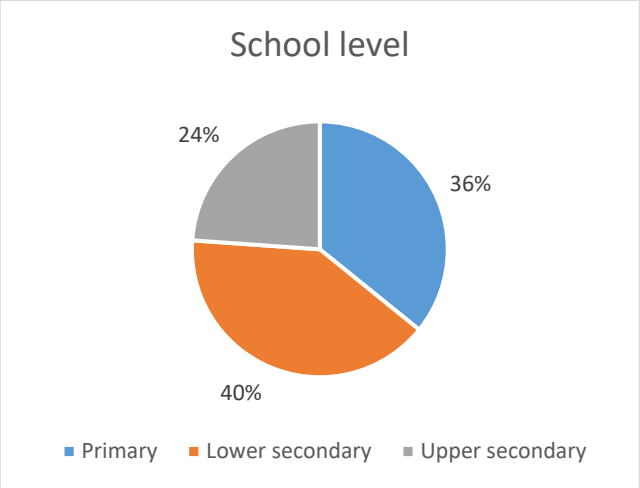
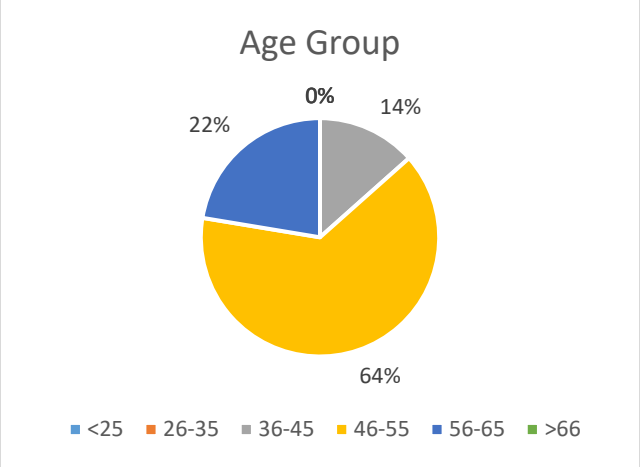
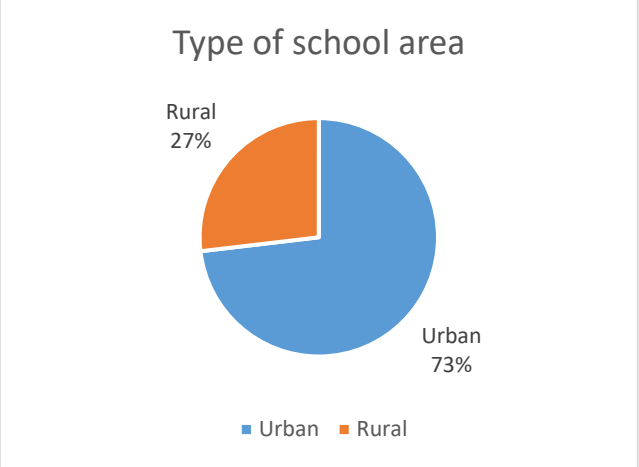
With respect to mentoring experience, a significant majority of 76% (51) of the participants have previously been mentors to new teachers. This suggests a group well-versed in providing guidance and support to newcomers in the teaching profession. The remaining 24% (16) have not had mentoring experience. Those who have been mentors report an average duration of 5 years in such roles, pointing to substantial experience in mentorship among this group.

This profile indicates a group of predominantly female, highly experienced teachers, mostly situated in urban regular schools, with a considerable inclination towards taking on mentorship roles, which enriches their capacity to contribute to the field trials within the LOOP program.









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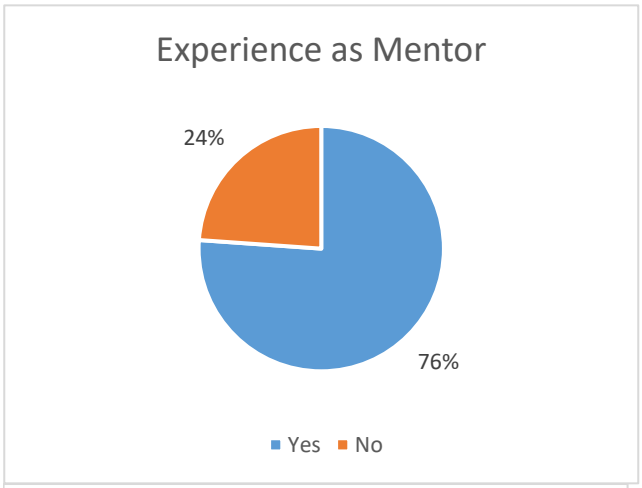

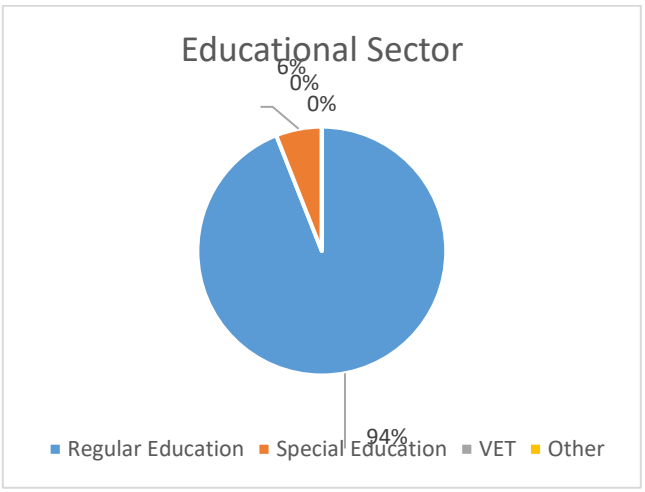

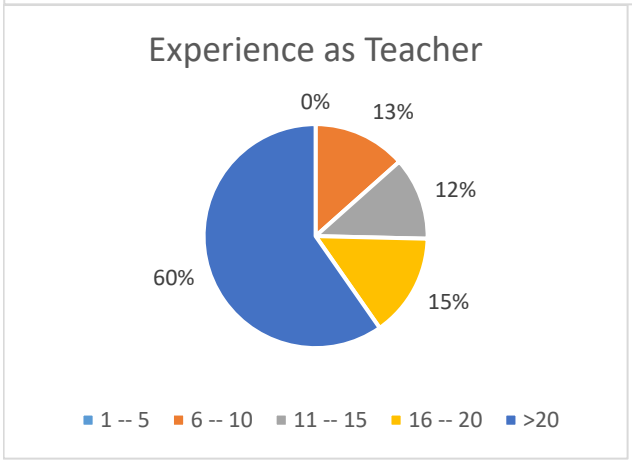

Figure 2: Profile of the participants (experimental group of experienced teachers)

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Section 2A: The procedure of the field trials

The primary aim of this analysis is to generate evidence of innovative induction programs based on mentoring that promote continuous personal, professional, and social growth of teachers, and to evaluate their impact. Thus, the design, testing and validation of continuing professional development programs is aimed at two categories of teachers: experienced teachers (already in the school system) and aspiring teachers (to be initiated into the school system through an induction program). However, although the design of the course implementation can be considered suitable for the Italian context, several external critical issues were encountered that made the deployment of the activities challenging in Italy.

The first difficulty relates to the legal framework of introduction to the teaching career since Italian educational progression career is based on a formal induction program. In fact, according to Ministerial Decree No. 226 of August 16, 2022, in compliance with the provisions of the teacher recruitment reform, the school recruitment system provides for all teachers of all levels who have passed the public competition and are therefore eligible to obtain a permanent contract in the school, a trial period (based on mentoring) that consists of at least 50 hours of training activities structured in:

- 6 hours of preparatory meetings and final return;
- 12 hours of training workshops;
- 12 hours of peer-to-peer activities with mentor and classroom observation;
- 20 hours of online training to be conducted on the INDIRE platform.

At the end of the probationary year, teachers who have taken at least 50 hours of training must pass a final exam. Failure to pass makes it mandatory to undertake all the steps required by the norm for the following year. Moreover, the Italian legislative framework provides for the figure of the tutor/mentor (according to the Ministerial Decree n. 850/2015), who, however, is identified based on previous experience or specific curricular requirements and not on the basis of actual training. In addition, all designated tutors/mentors receive financial compensation as required by law.

Thus, based on these assumptions, it is evident that the induction program for new teachers structured by LOOP project partners is similar and not complementary to the legal framework. So, only a few teachers agreed to join the field trials phase of the project, given that they would have to endure an extra 25 to 35 hours of training in addition to the 50 hours required by the above-mentioned legislative decree. In addition, this situation also turns out to be complex on the side of management by the school director. Indeed, based on several meetings with different school directors from all over Italy and especially from Puglia region, they have expressed incompatibility with such a field trial phase since all teachers are always busy with other extracurricular activities and cannot allocate additional resources for this specific target.

The second constraint encountered during the field trials planning and implementation phases relates to the Italian government change that occurred during the last week of September. In fact, to facilitate and have governmental support for the implementation of LOOP project activities, the LUM University team proposed a partnership with the Italian Ministry of Education declined under the relevant regional authority, Ufficio Scolastico

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Regionale Puglia (USR Puglia). During the meeting on September 6, 2022, the General Director expressed his positive opinion about the Mentors Program (MCP) and communicated perplexity about the induction program (NTIP). Moreover, he highlighted the problem regarding the possible change of government given the late September elections. Indeed, the victory of the opposite party and, thus, the modification of ministers disrupted the negotiations. We could not even contact the new minister since he took office at the end of October. Therefore, due to technical timing, it would have been impossible to get any supportive action before the actual implementation of the courses in the schools.

In response to the challenges encountered, we planned various corrective measures with the aid of the Education and University section of the Puglia Region. Our strategy involved reaching out to all 632 school directors in Puglia, followed by approximately 20 online meetings with interested directors. Despite these efforts, the enrolment was modest, with only 13 teachers expressed their interest for joining the Mentoring program and none for the Induction program, highlighting systemic challenges in implementing new teacher induction programs.

Expanding our efforts to a national scale, we collaborated with INDIRE, resulting in several meetings from July to

Figure 3: MCP on Italian Ministerial Platform S.O.F.I.A.

September 2023, which led to their support in promoting our mentor training opportunity. This collaboration, along with the assistance of some USRs (Ufficio Scolatisco Regionale – Ministry of Education in each region), culminated in an online presentation event on 28 September 2023, attracting more than 800 teachers.

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The course began on the S.O.F.I.A. platform on 5 November 2023, offering a fully online, asynchronous, self-study format, supplemented by continuous support from the LUM team via email and phone. The course consisted of 28 mandatory tasks, transforming theoretical learning into practical online exercises, with successful completion leading to a certificate provided by S.O.F.I.A. platform. Enrolment began on 27th October, targeting 149 teachers. However, over half of these candidates, communicating constraints in completing the course within the designated timeframe, were allocated to the control group. This group received access solely to the instructional materials, without the full training regimen. By 5 December 2023, after granting an additional 10-day extension, 67 participants had successfully completed the course.

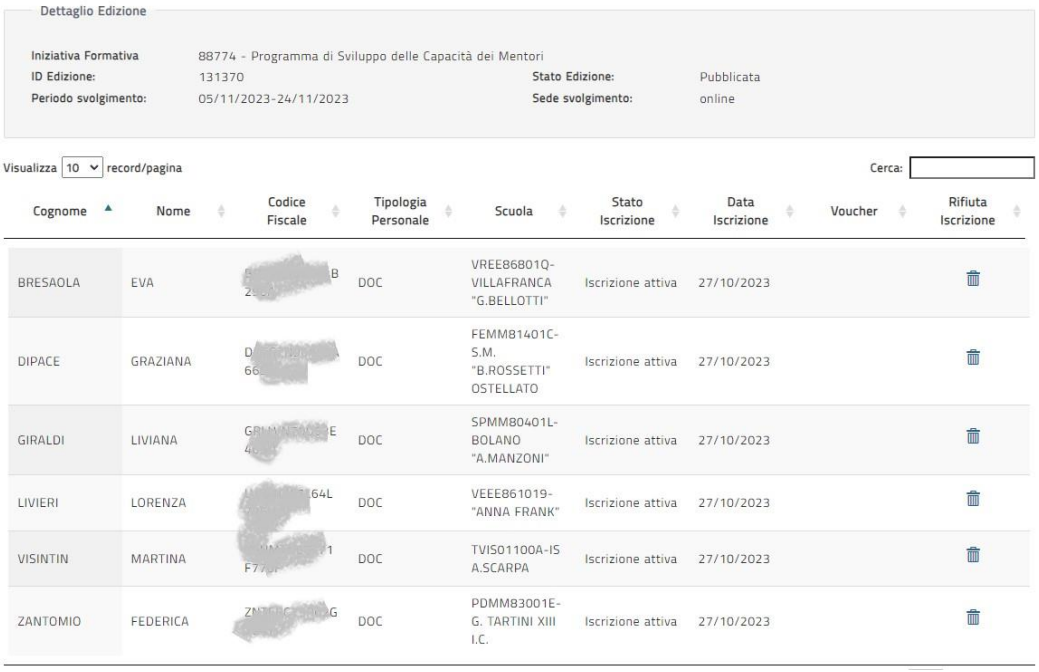

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Figure 4: Participants Enrolment on S.O.F.I.A

Therefore, to evaluate the effectiveness of the program, the hypotheses were tested via field trials, separating participants into a control group and an experimental group, as detailed in Section 1A. The experimental group engaged in a 15-hour training under the Mentor's Capacity Program (MCP). In contrast, the control group was provided only with an overview of the MCP and the New Teachers Induction Program (NTIP), along with the MCP handbook. Furthermore, the experimental group benefited from systematic support throughout the trials, encompassing regular email communication and direct interactions with the LUM coordination team, ensuring a comprehensive understanding and application of the program's principles.

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Section 3A: Results of the quantitative part of the field trials' evaluation

This section presents the results from the analysis of the collected data during the ex-ante and post intervention surveys. The scheme of analysis per stated hypothesis is shown in Table 1. In the following paragraphs, each hypothesis is presented separately.

Hypothesis	Ex ante questionnaire (exp. teachers)	Post intervention questionnaire (exp. teachers)
1	Part C	Part C
2	Part B	Part B
3	Part E	Part E
4	NOT Applicable	NOT Applicable
5 (interest)	Part C	Part C
5 (success)	Part D	Part D
6	Part C	Part C
7	Part F (second question)	Part F (second question)

Table 2: Correspondence of the various parts and questions of the ex-ante and post-intervention questionnaires with each one of the hypotheses to be tested.

Hypothesis 1: Mentor formal training programmes for experienced teachers and school leaders facilitates the deployment of effective, formal teacher induction programmes.

The analysis of the control group's attitudes towards formal mentoring programs, undertaken before and after a targeted intervention, sheds light on the evolving perceptions of mentorship within the educational sector. Initially, a sizeable majority (62%) favoured the idea of mandatory mentoring programs, with strong agreement from 39% of participants. Following the intervention, this positive response surged to 89%, and notably, the rate of strong agreement increased to 53%. **This trend underscores an enhanced valuation of mandatory mentorship as a critical component of teacher professional development.**

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In terms of adapting mentorship to suit the unique environments of schools, a high level of agreement was maintained, with a slight decrease from 84% to 83% post-intervention. This consistent agreement reflects a general consensus on the importance of tailoring mentorship programs to meet the specific needs of each educational setting.

Views on the national standardization of mentoring programs were initially split, but post-intervention responses indicated a more nuanced perspective: equal levels of agreement and strong agreement at 19%, and an uptick in disagreement. **This suggests a growing awareness of the complexities of applying a standardized approach to mentorship across diverse educational landscapes.**

Prior to the intervention, there was a preference within the control group for a structured approach to mentor training. However, post-intervention, a 72% majority expressed a preference for more informal methods, **signifying a shift towards valuing flexibility and adaptability in mentor training.**

The endorsement for formal induction programs, complete with tools and support, remained strong throughout, with an initial agreement of 86% persisting after the intervention. Notably, the fraction of strong agreement rose to 47%, **indicating a deeper appreciation for the benefits of structured support in mentorship programs.**

Collectively, these findings indicate that the intervention not only solidified the perceived importance of mandatory mentorship and the customization of programs to the school context but also catalysed a re-evaluation in favour of less formal training methods. The unwavering support for formal induction programs highlights a shared commitment to providing comprehensive support for mentors. This analysis demonstrates the significant impact that interventions can have on shaping the attitudes and beliefs of experienced teachers in the domain of mentorship.

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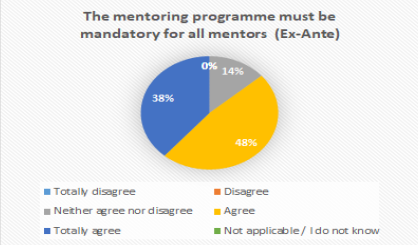
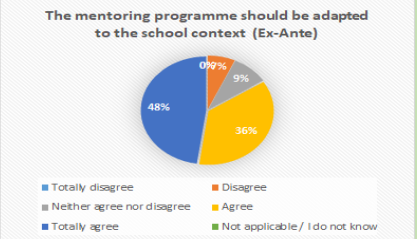
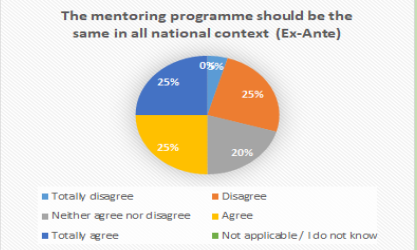
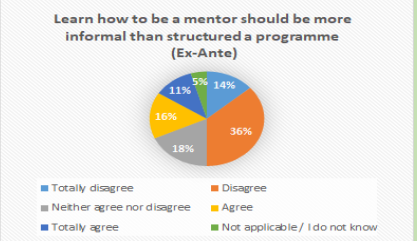
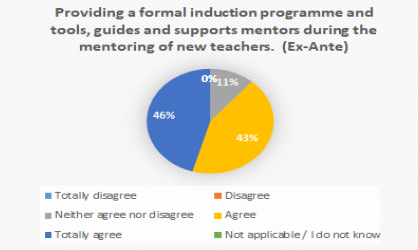
Exp.Teachers (Ex-Ante)











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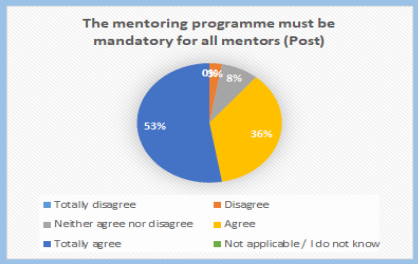

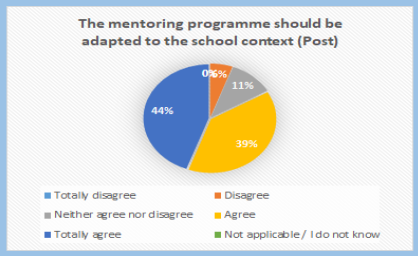

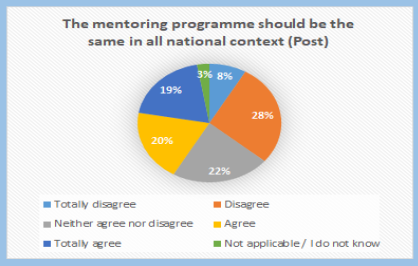

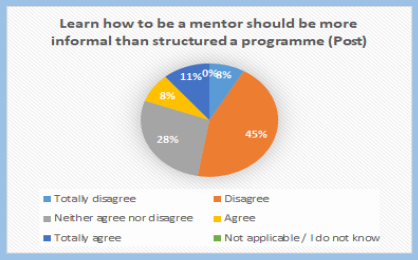

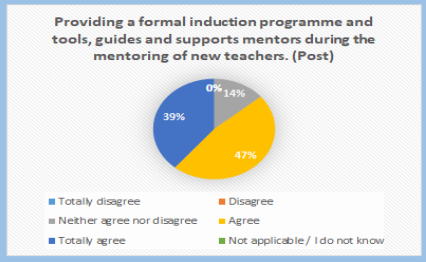

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Figure 5: Results of Part C of the Questionnaire (control group – experienced teachers)

In the context of the experimental group of experienced teachers, an evaluation of their attitudes towards formal mentoring programs pre- and post-intervention provides a distinct perspective on the influence of the program.

Before the intervention, responses suggested a balanced view towards the mandatory nature of mentoring programs, with 42% in agreement and 45% in strong agreement. This perspective significantly shifted after the intervention, with the agreement rising to 64% and strong agreement to 28%. The collective positive response post-intervention amounted to 92%, a notable increase from the pre-intervention total of 87%.

The adaptation of mentoring programs to the school context was initially favoured by 83% of the respondents (37% agree, 46% strongly agree). The intervention seems to have consolidated this view, with a post-intervention approval of 89% (64% agree, 25% strongly agree), indicating a reinforced belief in the importance of context-specific mentoring approaches.

Regarding the uniformity of mentoring programs across the national context, the pre-intervention data showed a divided opinion, with 22% agreeing and 27% strongly agreeing. Post-intervention, there was a slight change, with a total positive response of 45% (21% agree, 24% strongly agree), suggesting a moderate shift towards favouring a more standardized approach.

The stance on the structure of mentor training programs saw a significant transformation. Initially, 51% of participants preferred a more structured approach (39% agree, 12% strongly agree). Post-intervention, the preference for informality rose sharply, with 62% of teachers disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the necessity of a formal program.

Finally, the support for formal induction programs was robust at both points in time. Pre-intervention, 87% agreed (42% agree, 45% strongly agree) on the importance of such programs. This support remained virtually unchanged post-intervention, with an agreement of 88% (48% agree, 40% strongly agree), indicating a consistent valuation of structured induction resources.**These findings from the experimental group suggest that the intervention reinforced the importance of adaptable, context-specific mentorship programs while also shifting opinions towards the benefits of a more standardized approach. Moreover, the marked preference shift towards informal training methods post-intervention indicates an evolving view that may favour more personalized and**

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less formalized post-intervention indicates an evolving view that may favour more personalized and less formalized mentorship experiences, despite a continuous endorsement of formal induction programs.

***Overall Conclusion**:*

The findings support Hypothesis 1, as they show a clear trend towards valuing mandatory mentorship and formal induction programs. There is a significant increase in support for mandatory mentoring programs after the intervention in both control and experimental groups, indicating that mentor formal training programs are perceived as instrumental in facilitating effective teacher induction programs. Additionally, despite a preference shift towards more informal mentor training methods, the consistent and strong endorsement for structured induction programs throughout the study underscores the importance of formalized support in mentorship. This alignment with Hypothesis 1 suggests that formal training for mentors is a crucial component in the successful deployment of effective teacher induction programs.

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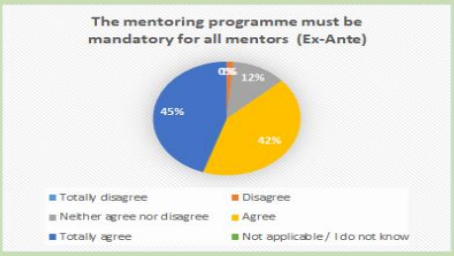
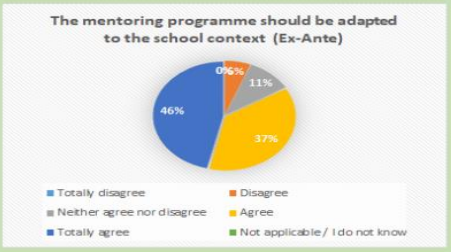
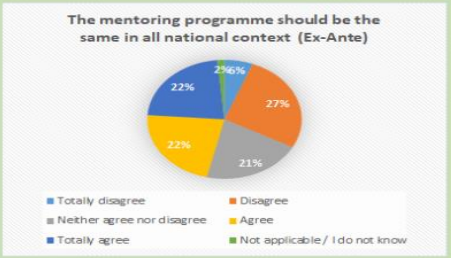
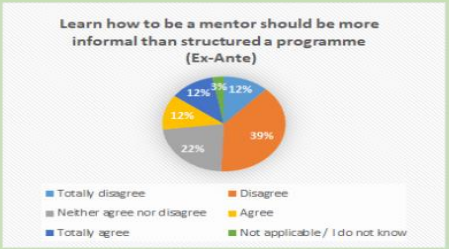
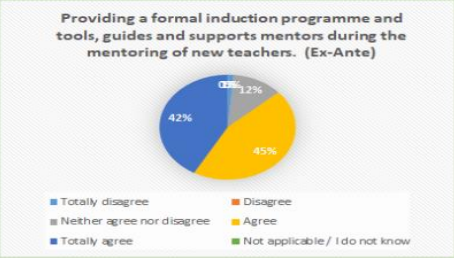
Exp.Teachers (Ex-Ante)











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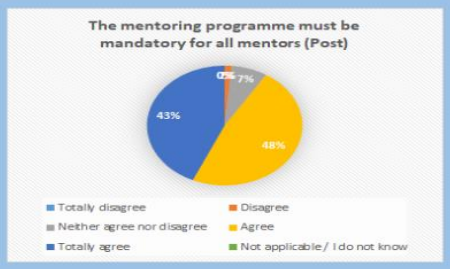

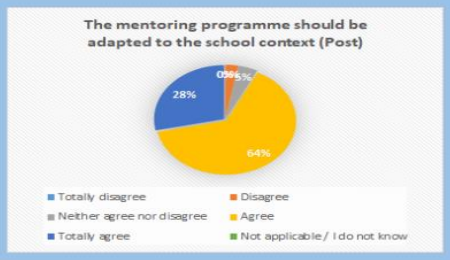

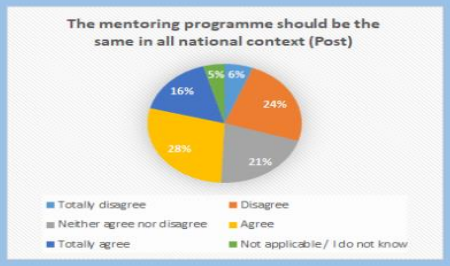

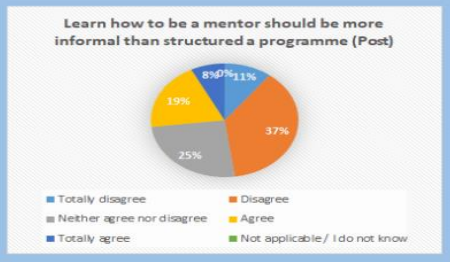

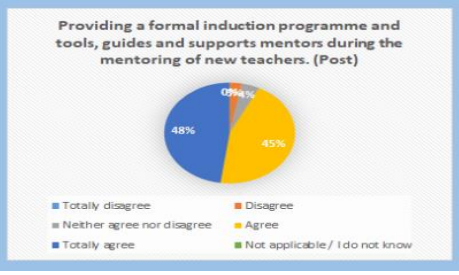

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Figure 6: Results of Part C of the Questionnaire (experimental group – experienced teachers)

Hypothesis 2: The opportunity for experienced teachers and school leaders to diversify their career options and act as mentors of their peers contributes to their motivation and maintenance on the system.

Evaluating Hypothesis 2, which suggests that the opportunity for experienced teachers and school leaders to diversify their career options and act as mentors contributes to their motivation and retention within the system, we turn to the data from the control group, both before and after the intervention.

Before the intervention, the vast majority (89%) of experienced teachers liked their job, with a significant 70% finding their work challenging, indicating a high level of initial job satisfaction and engagement. Despite this, a notable 41% occasionally considered leaving the profession due to its difficulties, yet 59% looked forward to remaining teachers throughout their careers. A substantial 43% would recommend the teaching profession to others, and an impressive 68% were open to becoming mentors, viewing mentorship as a viable career path (45%) and an opportunity to play a diverse role within the educational system (55%).

Following the intervention, job satisfaction remained high, though there was a slight decrease, with 83% still liking their job and 67% feeling challenged by their work. The consideration to leave the profession due to its difficulties saw a slight increase, with 47% of the respondents contemplating this option. However, the majority (53%) remained happy with the prospect of a lifelong teaching career, and 47% would still recommend teaching to young people. The interest in mentorship opportunities remained strong, with 69% wishing to become mentors. Moreover, a larger majority now saw mentorship as a different career option (58%) and as a chance to have a varied role within the educational system (47%).

The data suggests that while the intervention may have had some impact on the participants' perspectives on the challenges of teaching, the overall effect on job satisfaction and the desire to mentor was not negatively affected. The sustained high percentages of teachers willing to recommend the profession and serve as mentors, alongside the increased acknowledgment of mentorship as a career diversification path, support the hypothesis. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is confirmed for the control group, indicating that providing opportunities for mentorship can contribute positively to teacher motivation and their continued participation in the educational system.

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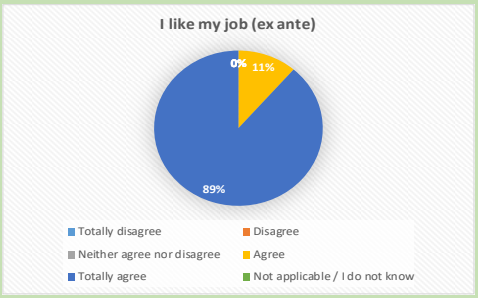
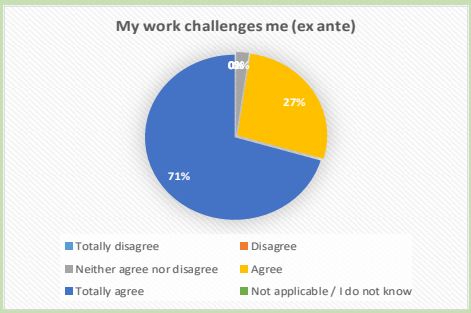
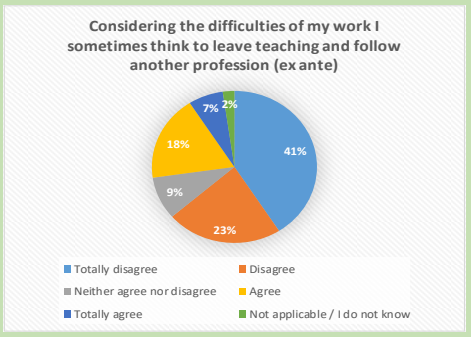
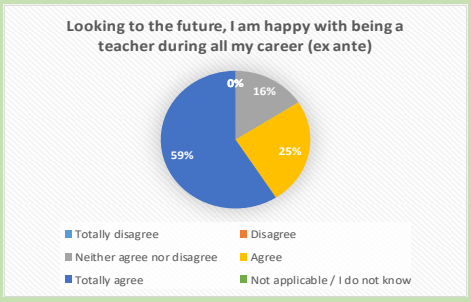
Exp.Teachers (Ex-Ante)









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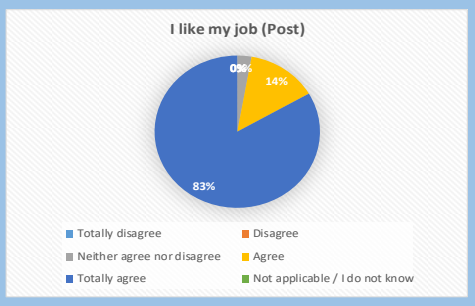

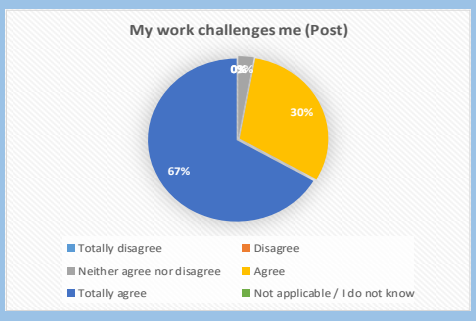

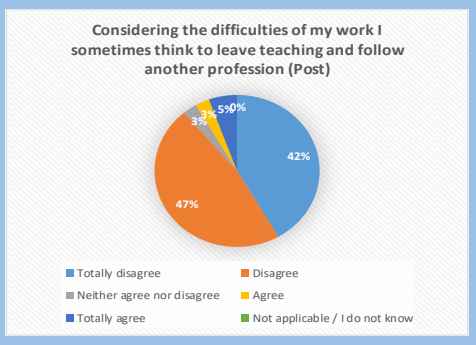

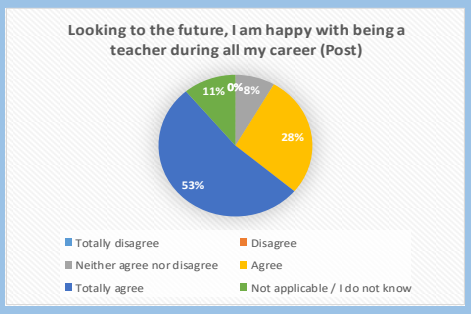

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Figure 7: Results of Part B of the Questionnaire (control group – experienced teachers) - PartA

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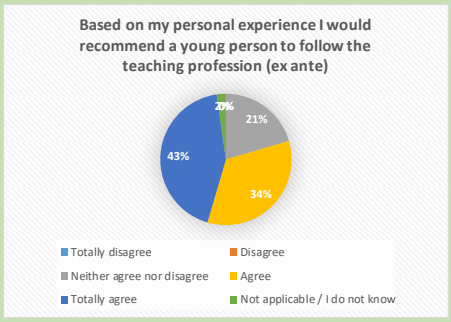

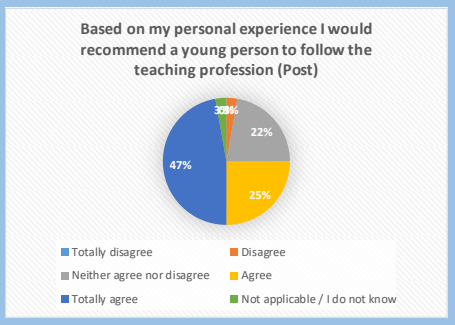

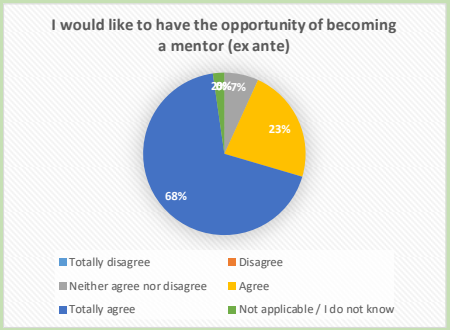

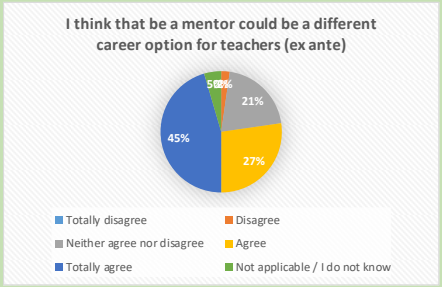

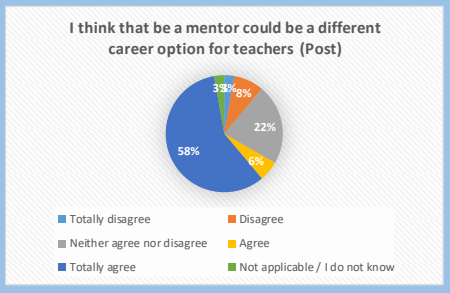

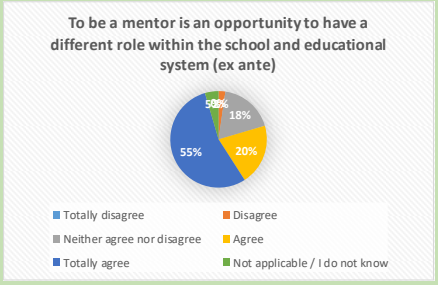

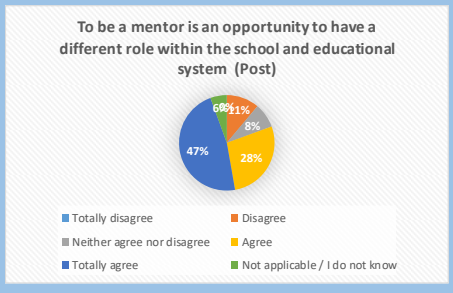

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Figure 8: Results of Part B of the Questionnaire (control group – experienced teachers) - PartB

The examination of the experimental group's responses provides further insight into Hypothesis 2, which posits that the prospect of experienced teachers and school leaders diversifying their roles to act as mentors can enhance their motivation and commitment to the educational system.

Pre-intervention, the experimental group showed a high level of job satisfaction, with 87% liking their job and 69% finding their work challenging. Despite the challenges, only 40% sometimes considered leaving the profession for another, indicating a strong initial commitment to teaching. Looking ahead, 57% were happy with the prospect of a long-term teaching career, and 45% would recommend the teaching profession to the younger generation. The interest in mentorship was high, with 69% open to becoming mentors, 51% seeing mentorship as a different career option, and 55% viewing it as an opportunity for a distinct role within the educational system.

Post-intervention, job satisfaction saw a decrease, with 69% liking their job and 64% feeling challenged by their work. **The consideration to leave teaching rose**, with 40% contemplating this path. Yet, a majority, 55%, remained content with the idea of teaching as a lifelong career. There was a slight decrease in the proportion of teachers who would recommend teaching to others, now at 31%. However, interest in mentorship opportunities continued to be strong, with 69% still willing to become mentors. **Notably, the perception of mentorship as a different career option increased significantly** to 58%, and the view of it as an opportunity for a different role within the educational system remained steady at 47%.

These findings suggest that while there may have been a dip in job satisfaction and an increase in the contemplation of career change post-intervention, the desire to engage in mentorship roles did not waver. The consistent interest in mentorship and the increased recognition of it as a career alternative support Hypothesis 2. The opportunity to act as mentors seems to provide a motivational factor for teachers, contributing to their willingness to stay within the system. Therefore, for the experimental group, Hypothesis 2 is also confirmed, reinforcing the notion that diversifying career options through mentorship roles can play a significant role in sustaining teacher motivation and retention.

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Figure 9: Results of Part B of the Questionnaire (experimental group – experienced teachers) - PartA

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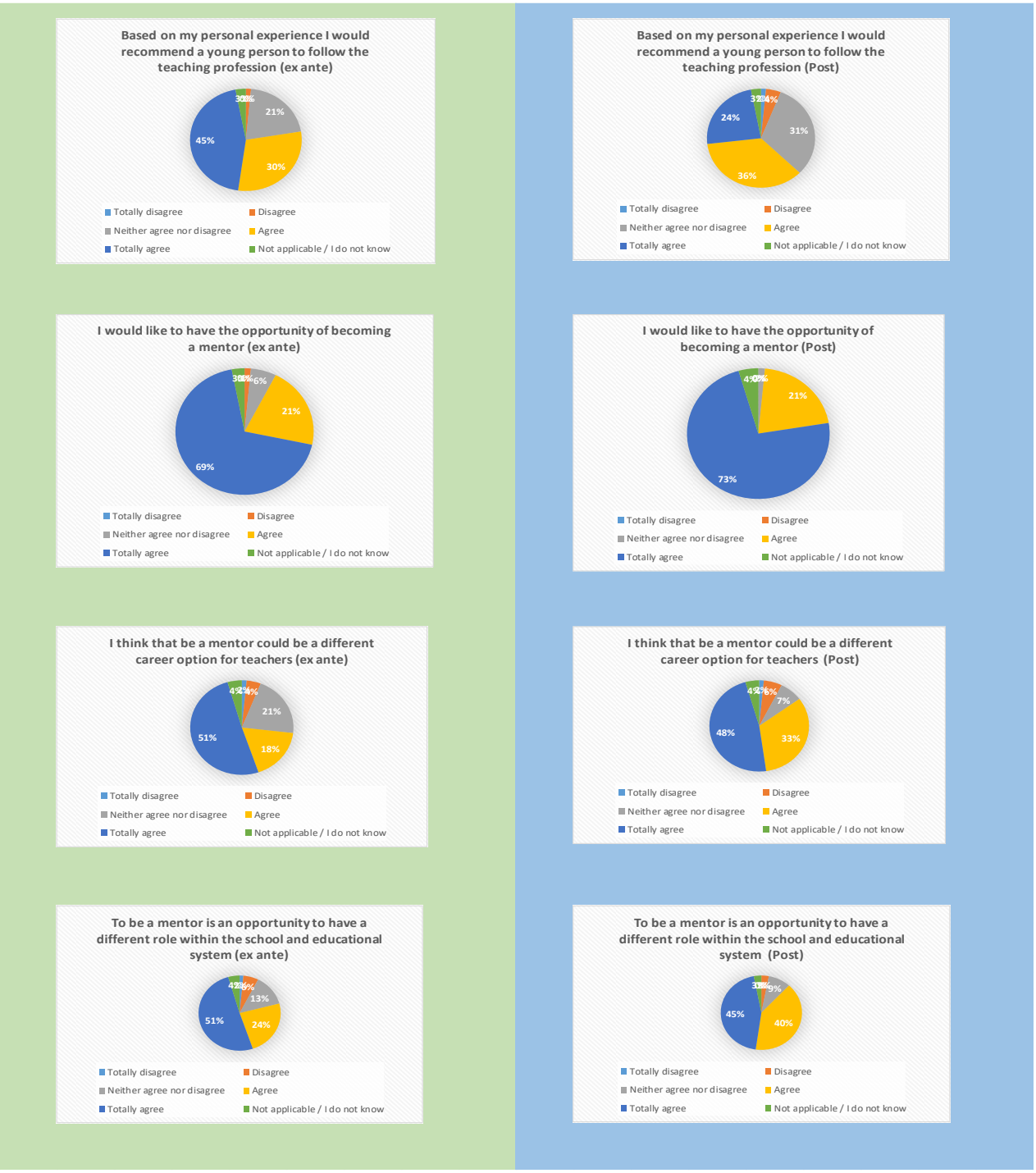

Figure 10: Results of Part B of the Questionnaire (experimental group – experienced teachers) - PartB

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***Overall Conclusion**: The desire to engage in mentorship roles did not waver. The consistent interest in mentorship and the increased recognition of it as a career alternative support Hypothesis 2. The opportunity to act as mentors seems to provide a motivational factor for teachers, contributing to their willingness to stay within the system. Therefore, for the experimental group and control group, Hypothesis 2 is confirmed.*

Hypothesis 3: Peer-developed teachers' induction programmes based on mentoring activities support the professional development of teachers initiating their careers and their maintenance on the system.

For the control group, examining the impact of peer-developed teachers' induction programs reveals significant insights into mentoring's role in the early stages of a teaching career.

Initially, a majority (59%) agreed that such programs empower new teachers for the profession, emphasizing the importance of these programs in enhancing the capabilities of novice educators. After the intervention, the belief in empowerment through mentoring strengthened, with total agreement increasing to 100%—56% agreeing and 44% strongly agreeing—signifying a collective endorsement of mentoring as a critical enabler of professional growth.

In terms of fostering a sense of belonging, 96% pre-intervention saw mentoring as a key factor in helping new teachers assimilate into the school culture. This sentiment was echoed post-intervention, with 97% upholding the belief in the importance of mentoring in nurturing a sense of community, highlighting its perceived value in creating an inclusive environment.

The role of mentoring in enhancing collaborative skills among teachers was also highly valued, with 98% agreeing pre-intervention. Post-intervention, the unanimous agreement highlighted mentoring as essential for encouraging productive interactions and cooperation among teaching staff.

As for motivation, there was an initial strong consensus (96%) on mentoring's influence in increasing new teachers' enthusiasm for the profession. Post-intervention, the agreement remained high at 89%, although there was a slight shift with a greater percentage strongly agreeing, indicating a persistent view of mentoring as a motivator for professional commitment.

These findings from the control group lend robust support to the hypothesis, indicating that mentoring not only aids in the professional development of novice teachers but also plays a vital role in their sense of belonging, collaboration, and motivation, thereby contributing to their retention within the educational system.

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Figure 11: Results of Part E of the Questionnaire control group – experienced teachers)

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For the experimental group, the evaluation of pre- and post-intervention responses underscores a strong conviction in the role of mentoring for the professional development of new teachers. Before the intervention, a near-total agreement existed on mentoring's power to enhance new teachers' skills, with 48% agreeing and 52% strongly agreeing. Post-intervention, this belief was unanimously held, showcasing mentoring as a critical enabler of professional growth.

The perception of mentoring as instrumental in cultivating a sense of belonging among new teachers to the school culture was also notably high initially, with 95% affirming its importance. This figure remained high at 92% after the intervention, reflecting a consistent recognition of mentoring's impact on fostering an inclusive school environment.

The contribution of mentoring to fostering collaboration among teachers was almost unanimously agreed upon initially and remained so after the intervention. This indicates a solid consensus on mentoring's effectiveness in promoting a cooperative and interactive teaching community.

Regarding the motivation for the profession, there was a strong belief in the positive influence of mentoring activities, with 93% in agreement before the intervention. While there was a slight dip post-intervention, 88% still recognized the importance of mentoring in maintaining enthusiasm and commitment to the teaching career.

In conclusion, the data from the experimental group solidly supports the hypothesis that mentoring plays a crucial role in supporting the professional development of teachers at the onset of their careers and encourages their retention in the educational system. This affirmation is evidenced by the high levels of agreement on the benefits of mentoring in multiple aspects of professional development, both before and after the intervention.

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Figure 12: Results of Part E of the Questionnaire experimental group – experienced teachers)

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***Overall Conclusion**: These findings from the control group and experimental group lend robust support to the hypothesis 3, indicating that mentoring not only aids in the professional development of novice teachers but also plays a vital role in their sense of belonging, collaboration, and motivation, thereby contributing to their retention within the educational system.*

Hypothesis 5. Structured mentoring programmes adapted to the context increases the interest and success of its participants.

To test Hypothesis 5, which posits that structured mentoring programs tailored to the context increase the interest and success of participants, we analyze the control group's responses regarding their perceptions of mentoring before and after an intervention. This hypothesis is directly related to some of the results of the graphics presented within hypothesis 1 for the validation of "interest" elements.

Interest in Structured Mentoring Programs (Control Group)

Initially, the control group showed a strong conviction in the necessity of mentoring programs being mandatory, with 62% in agreement. This view was even more pronounced post-intervention, with a unanimous 100% agreeing, demonstrating an increased interest in such programs. This shift suggests that the contextually adapted mentoring programs may have successfully heightened the teachers' engagement and commitment to the mentoring process.

As for the program's adaptation to the school context, there was an initial agreement of 84% that mentoring programs should be context-specific. After the intervention, this belief strengthened, with the total agreement rising to 92%. This high level of agreement post-intervention points to a growing interest in contextually adapted mentoring, which is perceived as critical to the success of mentoring relationships.

In terms of the program's uniformity across the national context, the responses pre-intervention were evenly split. However, post-intervention, there was a slight shift towards agreement, with 47% of participants in favour of a standardized approach. This change indicates that while there is some interest in national consistency, the recognition of the need for contextual adaptation remains paramount.

The preference for informality in mentor training shifted notably after the intervention. While there was a balanced view on the formality of mentoring pre-intervention, post-intervention results showed that 89% of participants leaned towards a more informal approach. This suggests that a less structured, more adaptable format could potentially pique interest and lead to greater success in mentoring programs.

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Finally, the support for providing formal induction programs was overwhelmingly high both before (86%) and after (86%) the intervention, with a notable increase in strong agreement post-intervention. The consistency of these figures highlights a sustained interest in structured support within mentoring programs, believed to contribute to the success of novice teachers.

The data from the control group suggests that interest in mentoring programs has been positively influenced by the intervention, particularly when these programs are adapted to the specific context of the school. The increased agreement on the necessity of mentoring, the desire for contextual adaptability, and the shift towards favouring informality all point to an enhanced interest in such programs, which is indicative of potential success. Thus, Hypothesis 5 is supported by the control group's responses, affirming the value of contextually adapted, structured mentoring programs.

Success in Structured Mentoring Programs (Control Group)

Following the validation of Hypothesis 5, which asserts that structured mentoring programs adapted to the context increase the interest and success of its participants, we look at various dimensions of success as indicated by the control group's responses before and after the intervention.

Before the intervention, the control group demonstrated a strong belief in mentoring's positive impact on classroom management, with 100% showing agreement, split between 45% agreeing and 55% strongly agreeing. Following the intervention, this consensus remained, slightly shifting towards stronger conviction with 97% in agreement, including 47% strongly agreeing.

In the realm of improving teaching techniques, the pre-intervention agreement stood at 98%, with 57% agreeing and 41% strongly agreeing. Post-intervention, the strong agreement marginally increased to 47%, maintaining a high total agreement of 100%, which reflects an unwavering belief in mentoring's role in enhancing pedagogical skills.

The use of supporting materials in teaching was initially endorsed by 96%, with 48% agreeing and another 48% strongly agreeing. **After the intervention, the strong agreement climbed to 58%, indicating a rise in the perceived effectiveness of mentoring in this area.**

For the incorporation of ICT tools into the classroom, pre-intervention responses showed a total agreement of 89%, split between 43% agreeing and 46% strongly agreeing. **Post-intervention, the strong agreement rate increased to 53%, suggesting an elevated perception of success following the mentoring program.**

Addressing the needs of diverse students was met with strong agreement by 52% of the participants initially, while post-intervention, this figure remained steady, showcasing a consistent acknowledgment of mentoring's effectiveness in preparing teachers for inclusive education.

Evaluating and giving feedback to students also saw a shift towards greater success post-intervention, with strong agreement rising from 43% to 53%. This change suggests an enhanced appreciation of mentoring's impact on teachers' assessment skills.

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The success of mentoring in fostering engagement with parents and guardians was initially strongly agreed upon by 48% of the participants, a figure that increased to 53% post-intervention, reflecting a greater recognition of its benefits.

Working with other stakeholders saw a similar upward trend in strong agreement, increasing from 48% to 53% post-intervention, highlighting the mentoring program's success in strengthening teachers' community and stakeholder engagement skills.

Overall, the percentages reflect a strong and sometimes growing agreement on the success of mentoring programs across multiple dimensions of teaching ((classroom management, teaching techniques, use of supporting materials, incorporation of ICT tools, addressing diverse student needs, evaluating and giving feedback to students, engagement with parents and guardians, and working with other stakeholders), reinforcing the hypothesis that structured, context-sensitive mentoring programs enhance the success and interest of their participants.

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Figure 13: Results of Part D of the Questionnaire (control group – experienced teachers) - PartA

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Figure 14: Results of Part D of the Questionnaire (control group – experienced teachers) - PartB

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Interest in Structured Mentoring Programs (Experimental Group)

Interest in the mentoring programs, as indicated by the group's responses, suggests a growing enthusiasm. Initially, there was a strong inclination towards mandating mentoring for all mentors, with 87% in favour (42% agree, 45% strongly agree). Post-intervention, the overall agreement rose to 100% (64% agree, 36% strongly agree), pointing to a heightened interest in the structured approach to mentoring.

The conviction that mentoring should be adapted to the school context was also solid, with 83% agreement before the intervention (37% agree, 46% strongly agree). After the intervention, this belief was maintained, with a total agreement of 89% (28% agree, 61% strongly agree). This indicates a sustained and possibly growing interest in customized mentoring programs that consider the unique needs of each school setting.

Before the intervention, there was a divided opinion on whether the mentoring program should be uniform across the national context, with a total agreement of 47% (22% agree, 25% strongly agree). However, post-intervention, there was a notable shift towards a more standardized approach, with a total agreement of 49% (21% agree, 28% strongly agree). This suggests a nuanced view of interest, where teachers recognize the benefits of some level of standardization in mentoring programs.

In terms of formality, the initial data indicated that 51% preferred a more informal approach to learning how to be a mentor (12% agree, 39% strongly agree). The intervention seemed to solidify this preference, as the post-intervention agreement on informality rose to 63% (37% agree, 26% strongly agree). This shift could reflect a growing interest in flexible and less structured mentoring programs, which may be perceived as more successful in meeting mentors' and mentees' needs.

The support for formal induction programs providing tools, guides, and support was overwhelmingly positive both before and after the intervention, with 87% and 93% total agreement, respectively. The strong agreement increased from 45% to 53% post-intervention, reinforcing the view that well-structured support within mentoring programs is of keen interest and considered a key factor in their success.

The experimental group's responses before and after the intervention indicate a robust and increasing interest in aspects of mentoring that are perceived to contribute to the success of new teachers. This evidence supports Hypothesis 5, showing that structured, contextually adapted mentoring programs are valued for their potential to enhance the professional journey of educators.

Success in Structured Mentoring Programs (Experimental Group)

Reviewing the data for the experimental group regarding Hypothesis 5, which suggests that structured mentoring programs tailored to the context enhance the success of its participants, we analyze the shifts in attitudes pre- and post-intervention.

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The experimental group's perception of success in various aspects of their teaching roles shows a positive trend from the intervention. For classroom management, pre-intervention responses showed 46% agreement, with 54% strongly agreeing. Post-intervention, the total agreement rose to 97%, maintaining a robust belief in the efficacy of mentoring in this key area of teaching practice.

Improving teaching techniques was also seen as successful, with pre-intervention responses totalling 98% in agreement. Post-intervention, this belief was sustained, with 100% of teachers either agreeing or strongly agreeing that mentoring had a positive impact on their pedagogical skills.

The use of supporting materials in teaching saw a pre-intervention approval of 95%, which slightly increased post-intervention to 97%. This slight increase indicates a continued and growing belief in the success of mentoring to aid in the development and use of educational resources.

Incorporation of ICT tools into the classroom was endorsed by 89% of participants before the intervention, which then rose to a full consensus of 93% post-intervention, reflecting an improvement in teachers' confidence and success in applying technology in their teaching.

Dealing with students from diverse needs and backgrounds was initially considered successful by 95% of the experimental group. Post-intervention, the strong agreement increased to 97%, underscoring the consistent value placed on mentoring for fostering inclusive educational practices.

The area of providing feedback to students saw a positive shift, with strong agreement increasing from 53% to 61% post-intervention. This indicates an enhancement in the perceived success of mentoring in developing evaluative and communicative competencies.

Engagement with parents and guardians saw a slight increase in strong agreement from 49% to 53% post-intervention, suggesting an improved recognition of mentoring's role in this domain.

Working with other stakeholders, such as local authorities and NGOs, was initially met with a 45% strong agreement, which increased post-intervention to 52%. This rise reflects a perceived increase in success in fostering collaborative relationships outside the immediate school setting.

Overall, the data from the experimental group supports Hypothesis 5, indicating that the success of participants in structured mentoring programs is perceived to have improved in various dimensions of teaching after the intervention. The area that showed the most notable improvement was the incorporation of ICT tools into the classroom, with agreement rising from 89% pre-intervention to a full consensus of 93% post-intervention. This significant increase highlights the effectiveness of contextually adapted, structured mentoring programs in enhancing teachers' confidence and skills in integrating technology into their teaching, confirming the hypothesis.

In addition to the incorporation of ICT tools into the classroom, other dimensions of teaching that showed marked improvements in the experimental group, supporting Hypothesis 5, include:

- **Classroom Management**: There was a positive trend in beliefs about the efficacy of mentoring in classroom management, with total agreement rising to 97% post-intervention.

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- **Improving Teaching Techniques**: The belief in mentoring's positive impact on pedagogical skills was sustained, with 100% agreement post-intervention.
- **Use of Supporting Materials in Teaching**: Approval for mentoring in the development and use of educational resources slightly increased to 97% post-intervention.
- **Dealing with Diverse Student Needs**: The strong agreement in mentoring's effectiveness for fostering inclusive educational practices rose to 97% post-intervention.
- **Providing Feedback to Students**: There was an enhancement in the perceived success of mentoring in developing evaluative and communicative competencies, with strong agreement increasing to 61%.
- **Engagement with Parents and Guardians**: A slight increase in strong agreement, from 49% to 53%, post-intervention suggested improved skills in this domain.
- **Working with Other Stakeholders**: The rise in strong agreement from 45% to 52% post-intervention indicates increased success in fostering collaborative relationships.

These improvements across multiple dimensions of teaching demonstrate the effectiveness of structured, context-sensitive mentoring programs, thereby affirming Hypothesis 5.

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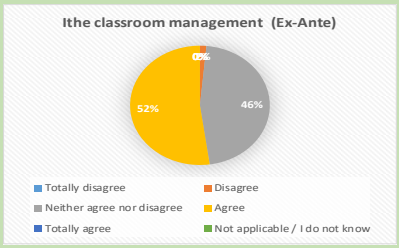
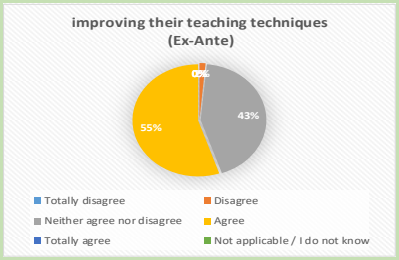
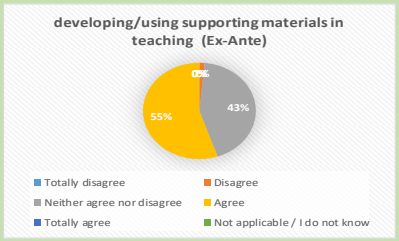
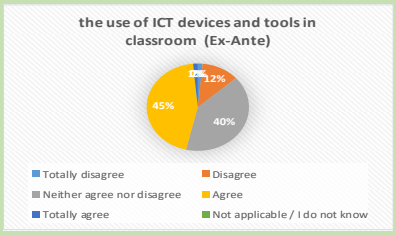
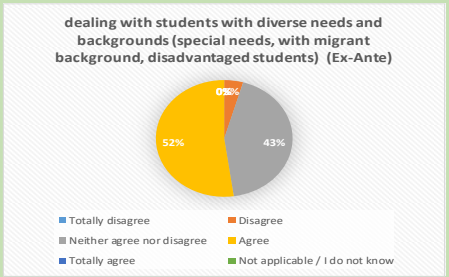
Exp.Teachers (Ex-Ante)











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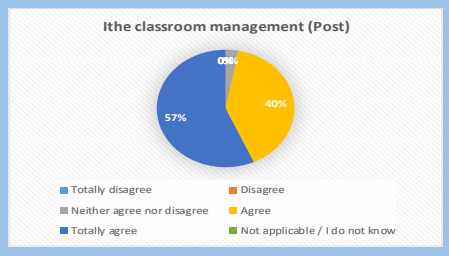

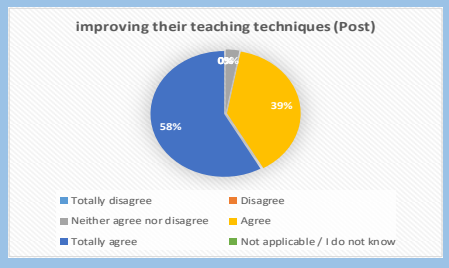

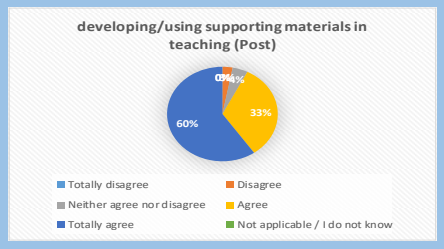

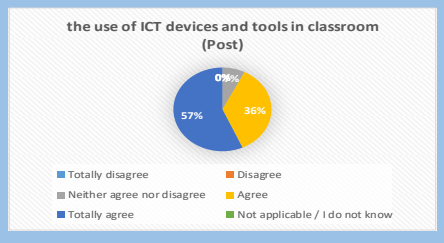

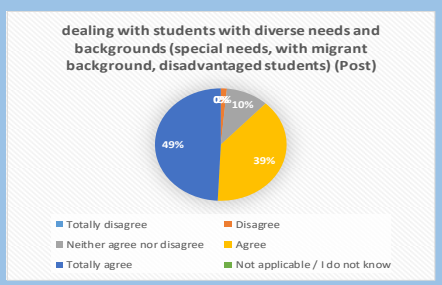

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Figure 15: Results of Part D of the Questionnaire (experimental group – experienced teachers) – PartA

Figure 16: Results of Part D of the Questionnaire (experimental group – experienced teachers) - PartB

***Overall Conclusion**: The data from both the control and experimental groups provide compelling evidence in support of Hypothesis 5, which posits that structured mentoring programs, when carefully adapted to their context, not only heighten the interest among participants but also contribute to their perceived success in various aspects of their professional roles.*

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Hypothesis 6. The training of mentors facilitates the implementation of teacher induction programmes.

To assess Hypothesis 6, which asserts that the training of mentors facilitates the implementation of teacher induction programs, we draw upon the collective insights from the responses to Part C of the questionnaire completed by experienced teachers, coupled with the observations from both the control and experimental groups after the intervention.

The foundational tenet of this hypothesis rests on the premise that well-prepared mentors, along with extensive experience and requirement (for Italian legal framework), are pivotal in the execution and effectiveness of induction programs for new teachers. Initial responses indicated a solid agreement on the necessity of mentoring programs, with the data reflecting a robust belief in their importance. This sentiment not only persisted but was amplified following the interventions, with a notable increase in the number of participants who strongly endorsed the mandatory nature of these programs.

The heightened endorsement of structured and contextually adapted mentoring programs post-intervention suggests that when mentors are adequately trained and equipped with comprehensive resources, the groundwork for successful teacher induction programs is strengthened. The transition from agreement to strong agreement post-intervention underscores a recognition of the enhanced capacity of trained mentors to deliver effective support to novices.

Moreover, the experimental group's unanimous post-intervention approval of the adapted mentoring programs points to a successful outcome of the mentor training component. This outcome aligns with the hypothesis, suggesting that the more the mentors are prepared, the more confidently and effectively they can facilitate induction programs.

In summary, the increased levels of agreement on the necessity of structured mentoring, the preference for context-sensitive adaptation, and the heightened positivity towards formal induction programs collectively affirm the hypothesis. Trained mentors are instrumental in actualizing robust induction programs, thereby fostering an environment conducive to the professional development and retention of new teachers.

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***Overall Conclusion**: The increased levels of agreement on the necessity of structured mentoring, the preference for context-sensitive adaptation, and the heightened positivity towards formal induction programs collectively confirm the hypothesis 6. Trained mentors are instrumental in actualizing robust induction programs, thereby fostering an environment conducive to the professional development and retention of new teachers.*

Hypothesis 7: Lack of resources and guidance are the reasons for not implementing induction programs in schools.

Hypothesis 7 proposes that the absence of resources and guidance are key hindrances in implementing induction programs in schools. To assess this, responses from the control group were analyzed before and after a specific intervention.

Initially, the control group's perception of the time required for new teachers to engage in the induction program was mixed, with 64% identifying it as a barrier (39% agree, 25% strongly agree). After the intervention, there was an increase in this perception, with 81% acknowledging time as a significant barrier (42% agree, 39% strongly agree). This change implies a heightened awareness of time constraints following the intervention.

The availability of adequate office or meeting space initially saw 70% of respondents viewing it as a barrier. Post-intervention, this recognition rose to 83%, with strong agreement increasing from 30% to 34%. This suggests that the intervention helped in raising awareness about the importance of physical space resources.

Support from school leadership was originally perceived as a moderate barrier, with an equal distribution among agreement, neutrality, and disagreement. However, post-intervention, the perception of this as a barrier

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increased, with total agreement reaching 84% (31% agree, 53% strongly agree). This indicates that the intervention heightened awareness of the need for leadership support in induction programs.

Regarding financial incentives for mentors, initially, 49% agreed this was a barrier (27% agree, 22% strongly agree). Post-intervention, agreement increased modestly to 55%, indicating a slightly heightened recognition of financial constraints.

The time required for new teachers to participate in the induction program also saw an increased perception as a barrier post-intervention, with strong agreement rising from 25% to 42%. This suggests the intervention raised awareness about time-related challenges in the induction process.

The sufficiency of activities and supporting materials for mentoring was initially seen as a barrier by 78% (39% agree, 39% strongly agree). After the intervention, the agreement remained high at 80%, with strong agreement at 42%, showing a sustained awareness of the importance of these resources.

In summary, while there were initial concerns about the adequacy of time, space, support, financial resources, and materials for induction programs, the post-intervention feedback from the control group indicates an increased awareness of these factors as barriers. The rise in agreement across most factors post-intervention confirms Hypothesis 7, demonstrating that the lack of resources and guidance are indeed significant barriers to

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the implementation of teacher induction programs. This increased awareness is a crucial step towards addressing and overcoming these challenges.

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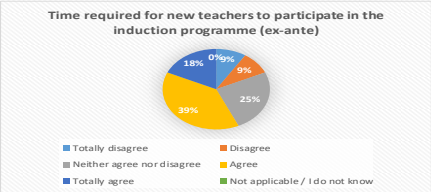
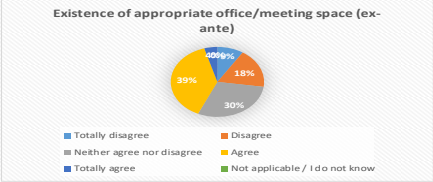
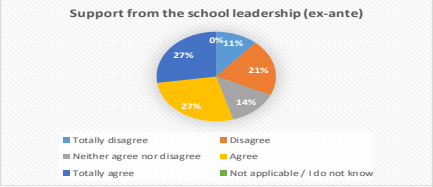
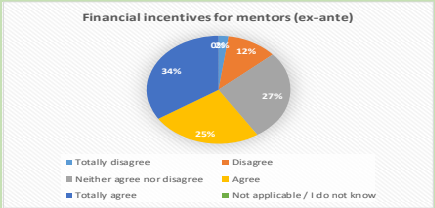
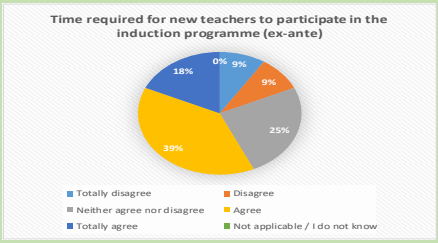
Exp.Teachers (Ex-Ante)

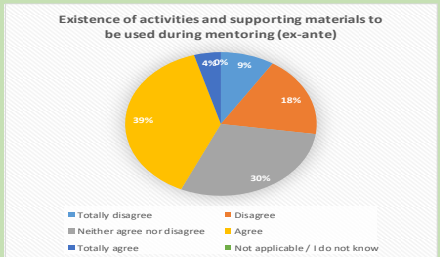












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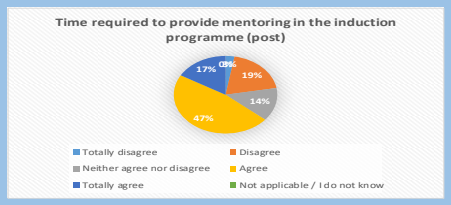

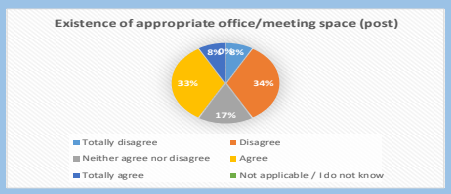

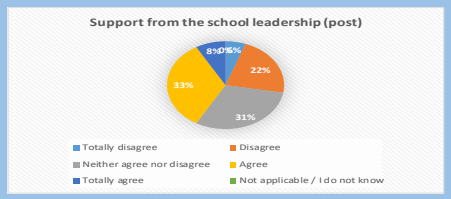

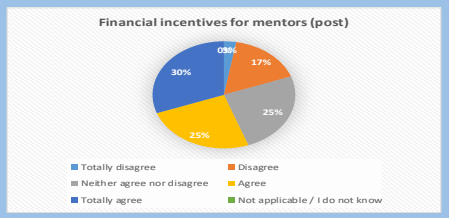

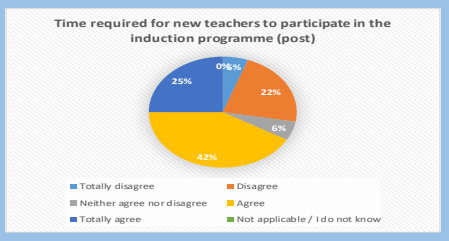

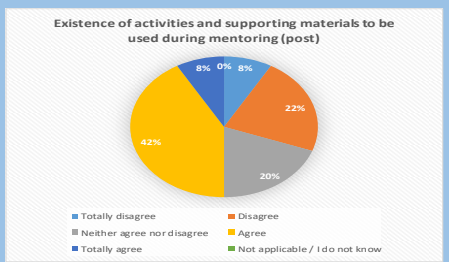

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Figure 17: Results of Part F of the Questionnaire (control group – experienced teachers)

To assess Hypothesis 7, which posits that the absence of resources and guidance are key barriers to implementing induction programs in schools, we examined feedback from the experimental group before and after an intervention.

Initially, 56% of the experimental group recognized time as a barrier for new teachers to participate in induction programs (40% agree, 16% strongly agree). Post-intervention, this acknowledgment of time as a barrier increased to 74% (52% agree, 22% strongly agree), indicating a heightened awareness of the time investment needed for effective induction.

Regarding the adequacy of office or meeting space, 61% initially saw this as a barrier (36% agree, 25% strongly agree). After the intervention, there was a slight decrease in this perception to 57% (33% agree, 24% strongly agree). This shift could suggest a growing awareness of the need to reevaluate the appropriateness of available spaces for the evolving requirements of induction programs.

Support from school leadership was initially viewed as a moderate barrier by 40% of the group (21% agree, 19% strongly agree). This perception increased post-intervention to 64% (40% agree, 24% strongly agree), reflecting an enhanced awareness of the importance of leadership support in the success of induction programs.

The issue of financial incentives for mentors was originally recognized as a barrier by 56% (31% agree, 25% strongly agree). Post-intervention, the agreement slightly decreased to 55% (40% agree, 15% strongly agree). This continued division suggests a growing awareness of the complexities surrounding the effectiveness of financial incentives in mentoring.

The availability and adequacy of activities and supporting materials for mentoring were initially seen as barriers by 75% of participants (36% agree, 39% strongly agree). Post-intervention, this perception increased to 83% (52% agree, 31% strongly agree), indicating a heightened recognition of the significance of these resources in the induction process.Based on these findings, Hypothesis 7 appears to be partially validated within the experimental group. The data suggest that while there are improvements in recognizing the importance of time, space, and leadership support, these resources are not entirely absent. However, the slight decrease in agreement on the appropriateness of meeting spaces and the stagnant perception of financial incentives imply that there are still challenges to be addressed. The increase in agreement on the existence and adequacy of supporting materials post-intervention indicates a positive direction in resource provision. Therefore, while resources and guidance are not the sole reasons for the non-implementation of induction programs, they are critical factors that require attention for the successful execution of these initiatives.

The outcomes from the experimental group offer partial confirmation for Hypothesis 7. Post-intervention responses reveal a more pronounced awareness of the roles that time, space, and leadership support play as obstacles in the implementation of induction programs. This enhanced awareness does not denote these as the only barriers but highlights them as significant ones. The slight dip in agreement about the suitability of meeting spaces and the unchanged views on financial incentives underscore persisting issues that need to be addressed. On the other hand, the increased acknowledgment of the value of support materials post-intervention points to advancements in resource availability. Thus, while the absence of resources and guidance is not the sole hindrance

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to the deployment of induction programs, these elements are crucial and require attention for successful implementation.

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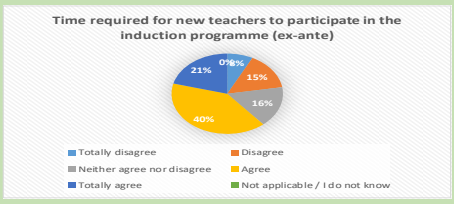
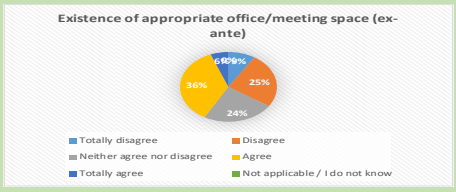
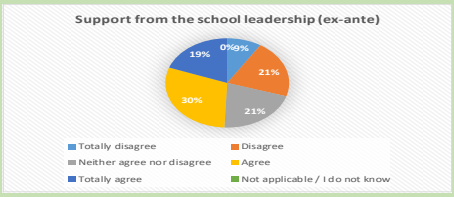
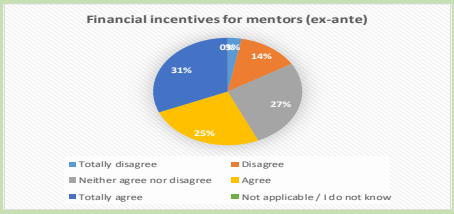
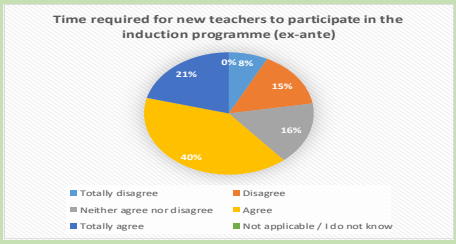
Exp.Teachers (Ex-Ante)

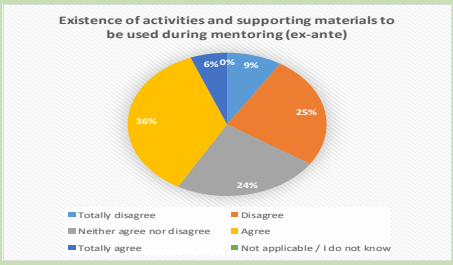












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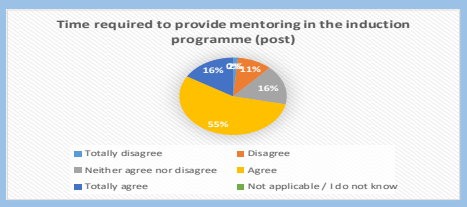

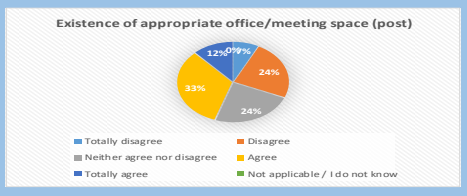

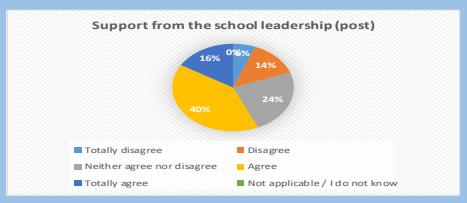

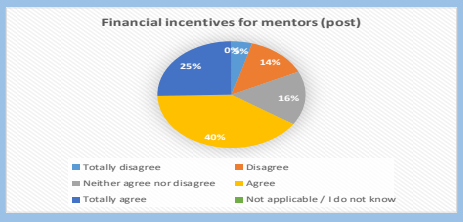

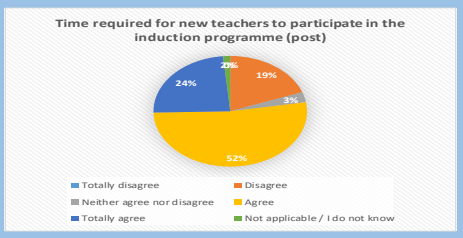

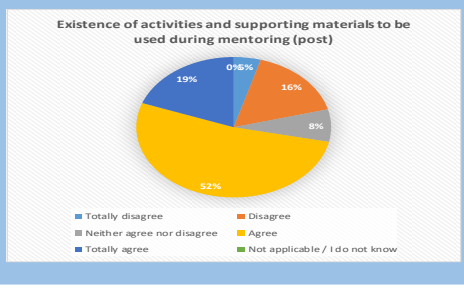

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Figure 18: Results of Part F of the Questionnaire (experimental group – experienced teachers)

***Overall Conclusion**:*

The findings from both the control and experimental groups regarding Hypothesis 7 reveal an increased awareness post-intervention of key barriers, such as time, space, and leadership support, in implementing induction programs. While this heightened awareness indicates these factors are significant obstacles, they are not the sole impediments. The persistent issues around financial incentives and meeting space appropriateness, alongside improved recognition of the importance of support materials, underscore the need for continued attention to these areas for effective program implementation.

Part B: Qualitative evaluation of the field trials

Section 1B: The samples of the qualitative evaluation of the field trials

The qualitative analysis is based on four interviews and a focus group. However, due to the particular situation, the qualitative analysis of the field trials conducted in Italy will only be based on a focus group. The focus group held on November 30, 2023, included eight educators from primary and secondary education sectors, with teaching experiences ranging from 15 to over 35 years. Many participants also had significant roles in mentorship and tutoring, with experiences spanning from recent to more than 15 years. This mix of educators, with varied backgrounds and teaching levels, provided comprehensive insights into different educational practices and challenges. The online session lasted for 1 hour and 24 minutes, featuring structured discussions and questions focused on their teaching methods, challenges in education, and the impact of their mentorship and tutoring on new educators. The following table describes the sample for this Focus Group:

Subject	School level	Gender	Area of the school	Age Group	Years of experience	Mentor (tutor) and other roles
Exp. Teacher 1	**Primary**	**F**	**Urban**	**56-65**	**+20**	**YES**
Exp. Teacher 2	**Upper Secondary**	**F**	**Urban**	**46-55**	**16-20**	**YES,** Admin for new teachers

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Exp. Teacher 3	**Lower Secondary**	**F**	**Urban**	**46-55**	**16-20**	**YES**
Exp. Teacher 4	**Lower Secondary**	**F**	**Urban**	**46-55**	**16-20**	**YES**
Exp. Teacher 5	**Lower Secondary**	**F**	**Urban**	**+66**	**20**	**YES**
Exp. Teacher 6	**Upper Secondary**	**F**	**Urban**	**36-45**	**11-15**	**YES** Admin for mentors
Exp. Teacher 7	**Upper Secondary**	**F**	**Urban**	**36-45**	**11-15**	**NO**
Exp. Teacher 8	**Upper Secondary**	**F**	**Urban**	**36-45**	**+20**	**YES** Admin for mentors

Table 3: Demographics of the participants in the Focus Group Session

Section 2B: Results of the qualitative part of the field trials' evaluation

The focus group held on November 30, 2023, captures a comprehensive discussion among educators about mentoring and induction programs for new teachers. The participants expressed views on several hypotheses related to the benefits of expert teachers and principals acting as mentors, the effectiveness of formal mentor training programs, and the role of induction programs in supporting new teachers' professional development and retention. They also discussed the impact of these programs on social and cultural development, the challenges of resource constraints and lack of guidance in implementing induction programs in schools, and the potential for structured and context-adapted mentoring programs to increase participants' interest and success. The educators shared personal experiences, challenges faced during mentorship, and suggestions for improving the structure and implementation of mentorship programs to better support new teachers. In this sub-section are presented the results from the analysis of the feedback provided by teachers who participated in the focus group promoted in Italy. The results from this activity were analysed and a summing up of them is presented in the upcoming pages, linking with the hypothesis defined in the proposal.

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Hypothesis 1: Formal training of mentors' programmes to train experienced teachers and school leaders facilitates the deployment of effective and formal teacher's induction programmes.

In the recent focus group discussion on the topic of mentoring and induction programs in education, a thorough analysis was conducted to understand the impact of formal mentor training programs on the effectiveness of teacher induction programs. The participants, comprised of experienced educators and mentors, engaged in a dynamic exchange, drawing from their extensive experience and the recent pilot implementations of mentor training.

The discussion highlighted the significance of mentor training in clarifying the roles and responsibilities of mentors. It was emphasized that such training is pivotal in enabling experienced teachers to provide a secure and supportive environment for new teachers, helping them manage the various emotional and professional challenges they face at the start of their careers.

The content of the mentor training program was seen as a unifying force, essential for the successful integration of new teachers into the educational system. The comprehensive nature of the program was praised, as it appeared to cover all conceivable areas necessary for effective mentoring, suggesting a well-rounded approach to the curriculum of the training program.

The necessity of adapting mentor training to the specific needs and characteristics of each school was a recurrent theme. While acknowledging the importance of formal training, there was a consensus that such programs should be flexible enough to accommodate the unique challenges and environments present in different schools.

The recognition of mentors, both in professional and economic terms, was raised as a critical issue. Mentors contribute significantly to the educational system, and their work should be acknowledged as such. Participants called for a systemic recognition that extends beyond mere acknowledgment, advocating for tangible rewards and incentives.

Direct statements from the participants further enriched the discussion, with one mentor sharing her extensive experience in the field, underscoring the complexity of the skills required, particularly in listening and responding effectively to the needs of mentees.

The discussion also delved into the challenges of mentorship, including the need for mentors to engage in reflective practice to develop a deeper awareness of their mentoring style and approach. The training was suggested to offer new tools and insights, encouraging mentors to engage in a more conscious and informed manner with their mentees.

Practical applications of the training were highly valued, with the group activities and in-person sessions providing a platform for real-world applications and experiential learning, which were seen as critical components of effective mentor training.

The group highlighted the necessity of investing in the mentor role, indicating that mentors should be better defined, protected, and valued within the educational system. Such investment includes providing adequate training, resources, and recognition for mentors, ensuring they are supported in their roles and can perform to the best of their abilities.

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Lastly, the diverse learning preferences of mentors were acknowledged, with suggestions for incorporating various digital tools, like video, to cater to different learning styles and enhance the retention of training content.

Hypothesis 2: The opportunity for experienced teachers and school leaders to diversify their career options and act as mentors of their peers contributes to their motivation and maintenance on the system.

The focus group discussion shed light on the opportunities for experienced teachers and school leaders to diversify their career options by acting as mentors. It was evident from the discourse that the provision of such opportunities is perceived as a considerable benefit that could potentially contribute to the motivation and retention of these seasoned professionals within the educational system.

First of all, participants state that the lack of career diversification in Italy is a critical issue. The discussion revealed a consensus on the need for economic incentives or at least a professional characterization that would benefit teachers who are willing to embark on the mentoring journey.

There was an agreement on the importance of differentiated career paths, especially for those who have spent many years in teaching, whether on a precarious or transitional basis. By doing so, the participants suggest, there could be a move towards policy experimentation based on political advice and specific normative actions that align with the data collected.

In sum, the discussion from the focus group highlighted the necessity of career differentiation for experienced educators as a means of maintaining their interest and presence in the system. This is seen as not only a method for enhancing personal professional development but also as a strategy for improving the overall quality of the educational landscape by leveraging the skills and experiences of veteran teachers.

Hypothesis 3: Peer-developed teachers induction programs based on mentoring activities support the professional development of teachers initiating their careers and their maintenance on the system.

The focus group discussion examined the effectiveness of peer-developed induction programs based on mentoring activities in supporting the professional development of new teachers and their retention in the educational system. In general, the collective insights suggested a need for continuous improvement in the mentor training programs to address the evolving challenges and enhance the effectiveness of the mentor-mentee interaction.

Participants reflected on whether a mentoring-based induction program supports the professional development of beginning teachers and their continued presence in the educational system. The Italian regulatory framework, which includes a probationary year for new recruits, was scrutinized to determine its effectiveness in inducting

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new professionals into teaching careers. The consensus was that such structured mentorship can indeed bolster the professional growth of novice educators and their commitment to the field.

The group discussed the critical role of mentoring in addressing the challenges faced during the implementation of induction programs for new teachers. They explored actions that could be taken to improve the training program for mentors, which in turn would enhance the quality of interactions and support provided to new recruits.

One of the challenges identified was the pre-existing attitudes and behaviors of teachers who may already have several years of teaching experience before being formally inducted. This scenario necessitates a mentorship activity that is both formal and informal, as veteran teachers often seek advice from younger colleagues. Mentorship becomes more challenging when individuals are not open to self-reflection and improvement.

The experiences shared by the participants indicated that mentorship begins informally, often starting in primary schools and continuing in higher education settings, across various disciplines. The course on mentorship was highlighted as particularly beneficial, especially for those who find it challenging to connect with certain mentees. It was regarded as a support that could enhance mentoring experiences.

Group activities and in-person sessions were emphasized as very beneficial components of the course, facilitating better communication and practical skills that are essential in a classroom setting. Such activities were seen as advantageous not only for the professional development of the mentors themselves but also for the mentees who receive more effective guidance.

The content of the mentor training program was described as a 'glue' for the induction of new teachers, encompassing a wide range of fields and necessitating thoughtful reflection. The structure of the program was presented in such a way that it required mentors to consider all aspects of their roles deeply.

Finally, the group discussed the significance of the probationary year for newly recruited teachers, recognizing that while it is impactful, it should not be the sole element of induction. A strong support system within the school, characterized by additional training and guidance, was suggested to complement the regulatory framework.

Hypothesis 4: Formal induction programmes applied at the school level contribute to the social and cultural inclusion and development of new teachers.

The group was posed with a question regarding the effectiveness of mentoring-based induction programs in supporting professional development and retention in the educational system. The Italian regulatory framework, which mandates a probationary year for new hires, was considered a potentially effective practice for professional insertion.

One participant emphasized that a probationary year as an initial phase of school integration could be impactful if it involved strong support within the school. To enhance this, some schools have implemented additional meetings and training sessions guided by seasoned teachers and school leaders to provide further developmental elements to new teachers.

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The discussion also touched upon the nuances of such induction programs, suggesting that sometimes the probationary work could be more beneficial if carried out in a different or unknown school context. This could encourage a multidisciplinary approach and potentially avoid unpleasant dynamics that may arise in a familiar school setting.

Furthermore, the conversation included the perspective that sensitive data management and subject-specific mentoring might require multiple figures, not just a single figure, reflecting on the complexity and multifaceted nature of a teacher's role in a school setting.

In other words, the focus group participants recognized the value of formal induction programs in fostering the social and cultural development of new teachers. They noted that while the regulatory framework provides a foundation, the real impact comes from the active support and multidimensional engagement within the school, which aids new teachers in becoming integrated into the school's social and cultural milieu. This integration, supported by mentoring and a diverse set of school-based activities, contributes to the overall professional growth and well-being of new educators.

Hypothesis 5: Structured mentoring programs adapted to the context increases the interest and success of its participants.

In the focus group discussion, the insights related to structured mentoring programs and their adaptation to context were concentrated around the importance of training that is both timely and targeted. Alessandra I. emphasized that training should be designed with adequate time and be directed towards individuals who are potential mentors, underlining the significance of listening skills and the ability to give empathetic feedback. The ability to communicate effectively and to intervene appropriately was also seen as crucial. These skills are not only applicable during mentorship but also in class observations, suggesting that such structured programs can improve the interactional abilities of mentors.

The discussion further delved into the practical application of these mentoring programs. Although a thorough field trial of the specified activities was not possible, the sentiment was that these structured programs could be highly beneficial as support for those who are mentors or wish to become mentors. Eva B. pointed out the value of following a well-planned and scheduled program for mentoring, which implies that a structured approach could lead to more successful outcomes for mentors.

The discussion highlighted the need for such programs to be tested and implemented in a way that is tailored to each school, suggesting that a more nuanced and detailed approach to program structure could be underway.

Hypothesis 6: The training of mentors facilitates the implementation of teachers' induction programmes.

During the focus group discussion, it was acknowledged that the training of mentors plays a crucial role in the successful implementation of teacher induction programs. The participants reviewed the development of

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mentors' capabilities and the impact of the LOOP mentoring training program on personal and professional development, including areas that needed improvement.

The content of the mentor training program was described as a binding agent for the integration of newly hired teachers. It encompassed all conceivable fields necessary for effective mentoring, indicating a comprehensive approach to the structure of the program.

Furthermore, the focus was placed on the importance of feedback within the mentor training, which had been specifically developed based on primary themes considered essential for effective mentoring. This training was not just theoretical but also required to be implemented practically, taking into account the specific needs of the school and the teaching profession that need to be supported on the ground.

In conclusion, the training of mentors is seen as an essential component that facilitates the implementation of teachers' induction programs by providing mentors with the skills and knowledge necessary to guide new teachers effectively. The structured approach to mentor training, including feedback and practical application, is crucial for integrating new teachers into the educational system and supporting their professional development.

Hypothesis 7: Lack of resources and guidance are the reasons for not implementing induction programmes in schools.

During the focus group, the issue of the lack of resources and guidance as barriers to the implementation of induction programs in schools was discussed. A participant highlighted the challenges arising from a lack of available mentors, which can lead to an overload on top of the other commitments that educators already have. She emphasized the need for a better-defined role for mentors, suggesting that this role should be considered and protected. According to her, investment in training, resources, and financial incentives is critical, and this area is where she sees a significant gap. She shared her personal struggle with the fluctuating responsibilities that come with being a mentor—being sought after when convenient and otherwise being treated as just another teacher without voice or recognition.

This insight suggests that the absence of a structured, recognized, and adequately resourced mentorship system can be a significant impediment to the effective implementation of induction programs. Without proper support and clear guidelines, it becomes challenging for schools to maintain a sustainable mentoring environment that can support new teachers' transition into the educational system.

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Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

This chapter presents the conclusions and policy recommendations derived from the Italian National Report on the LOOP program. The LOOP program, an initiative aimed at enhancing the professional development and retention of both new and experienced teachers through mentorship and teacher induction programs, has been subject to comprehensive evaluation in the Italian educational context. The findings discussed herein are based on a detailed analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data collected from a diverse group of educators who participated in the LOOP Mentor's Capacitation field trials.

The chapter begins with a synthesis of the key conclusions drawn from the analysis of the seven hypotheses that underpinned the LOOP program (specifically, MCP for Italy). These hypotheses cover a range of topics, from the effectiveness of formal mentor training to the impact of structured mentoring programs on the career development and retention of teachers. The last chapter outlines a series of policy recommendations. These recommendations are aimed at policymakers, educational leaders, and other stakeholders involved in the implementation and continuous improvement of the LOOP program and similar initiatives. The recommendations address various aspects of the program, including mentor training, career diversification, resource allocation, and the overall support system for mentors and mentees. They are designed to enhance the impact of the LOOP program on the Italian educational system, ensuring that it effectively meets the needs of both new and experienced teachers and contributes to the broader goal of fostering excellence in education. The insights and recommendations presented in this chapter are intended to guide future efforts in the implementation and optimization of teacher induction and mentorship programs in Italy, with the aim of enriching the teaching profession and enhancing educational outcomes.

In general, the Italian National Report for the LOOP program demonstrates that the Italian formal induction program *(Anno di prova per il Neoassunto*), based on peer-mentoring, plays a pivotal role in the Italian educational system. It significantly contributes to empowering and motivating new teachers, enhancing their ability to interact and cooperate with others, and fostering a sense of belonging to the school's culture. However, there is still area that need critical improvement. Indeed, the Mentor Capacitation Program fits perfectly in one of the gap identified in the Italian educational progress career. Hence, the LOOP Mentor Capacitation Program facilitates self-reflection, mutual learning between experienced and new teachers, and boosts self-awareness and self-efficacy in the teaching profession. The importance of the mentor's role and profile is underscored, emphasizing the need for capacity training and a system that values their contributions. The program aligns with experienced teachers' needs and school expectations, and teachers express interest in mentorship roles.

Based on these findings, we can state that Hypotheses 1,2,3, 4, 5, and 6 were confirmed, while Hypotheses 7 was partially validated. Specifically:

1. **Formal Training of Mentors (Hypothesis 1):** The significance of formal mentor training in defining roles and responsibilities was underlined. This training is pivotal for enabling experienced teachers to effectively support new teachers. The content of the mentor training program was a unifying force for integrating new teachers and needs to be adaptable to each school's specific context. Recognition of mentors, both professionally and economically, was highlighted as crucial.

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2. **Diversification of Career Options (Hypothesis 2):** Opportunities for experienced teachers and school leaders to act as mentors contribute significantly to their motivation and retention. The need for career diversification, economic incentives, and professional characterization for mentors was stressed.

3. **Peer-developed Teachers Induction Programs (Hypothesis 3):** These programs support the professional development and retention of new teachers. Continuous improvement in mentor training is essential to address evolving challenges and enhance the effectiveness of mentor-mentee interaction.

4. **Formal Induction Programs (Hypothesis 4):** Formal induction programs play a crucial role in the social and cultural development of new teachers, with active support and additional training within the school being essential for their effective integration. However, in cases where the teacher has already accrued more than seven years of experience in unstructured teaching roles (in other words, a teacher with yearly contracts), the effectiveness of such induction programs can be limited.

5. **Structured Mentoring Programs (Hypothesis 5):** Timely and targeted training, essential for the interest and success of mentoring programs, needs to be tested and implemented in a tailored manner for each school.

6. **Training of Mentors for Induction Programs (Hypothesis 6):** The training of mentors is essential for the successful implementation of teacher induction programs. This training should include practical applications and be adapted to the specific needs of the school and teaching profession.

7. **Lack of Resources and Guidance (Hypothesis 7):** The findings from both the control and experimental groups regarding Hypothesis 7 reveal an increased awareness post-intervention of key barriers, such as time, space, and leadership support, in implementing induction programs. While this heightened awareness indicates these factors are significant obstacles, they are not the sole impediments. The persistent issues around financial incentives and meeting space appropriateness, alongside improved recognition of the importance of support materials, underscore the need for continued attention to these areas for effective program implementation.

Therefore, on the basis of our findings, to enhance the impact of the LOOP programs, several policy recommendations at different levels are proposed:

1. **At the Policy Level:**

    - Recognize mentoring as a fundamental aspect of the teaching profession for experienced teachers.
    - Invest in preparing experienced teachers for mentor roles in formal induction programs.
    - Tailor the duration of the induction program to individual teacher needs, extending beyond a single school year.
    - Implement a monitoring plan to foster the exchange of experiences, best practices, and solutions.

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- Definition of personalized professional development path for experienced teachers.

2. **At the School Level:**
    - Emphasize the importance of training mentors.
    - Ensure mentors are willing and able to assume their roles effectively, without evaluation responsibilities.
    - Match mentor characteristics with new teachers' needs and expertise.
    - Facilitate interactions with external organizations and professionals. School as a company.
    - Establish collaborative conditions among teachers involved in the induction program.
3. **At the Teachers' Level:**
    - Define processes, moments, and communication channels collaboratively, continually aligning with new teachers' needs.
    - Showcase best practices related to mentoring.
    - Recommend collaborative planning and practice exchange among experienced teachers during the program implementation.
    - Implement more practical activities with the mentee along with theoretical materials on how to build a fruitful relation with mentees/mentor.

These conclusions and policy recommendations aim to further enhance the effectiveness of the LOOP program in Italy, contributing to the professional development of both new and experienced teachers and strengthening the overall educational system.

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