

# Extensiveness of teachers in applying role modelling strategy to enhance retention of children under Complementary Basic Education in Tanzania in selected districts of Mara Region

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## Abstract

This study sought to investigate the Extensiveness of teachers in applying role modelling Strategy to enhance retention of children under Complementary Basic Education in Tanzania (COBET) in selected Districts in Mara Region. The study was guided by one research question. Convergent design under a mixed methods was used to examine the problem in question. The target population of 99 COBET centres, 99 head teachers, 133 teachers, and 898 children. A sample of 158 participants was selected, comprising 30 centres, 14 head teachers, 54 teachers, and 90 children, using probability and non-probability sampling. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. The validity of the instruments was assured by subject experts, and the questionnaire's reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha (0.802), while reliability for qualitative data was ensured through peer review and triangulation. The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including an independent t-test at 0.05 significance, and the qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. The study found that teachers to a large extent employed role modelling strategy to enhance retention of the children through exposure to success stories, extracurricular activities, and promoting positive character. There is no significant difference between the extent mean scores of more experienced and less experienced teachers in employing the role modelling strategy to enhance retention of the children under complementary basic education in the Selected Districts in Mara Region. The study concludes that Teachers employed role modelling as a retention strategy for the children under COBET with some potential areas for improvement in the practicality of the strategy. Since both sets of teachers, regardless of their level of experience, are equally using role modelling strategy are called to reflect on their deeds and words in front of the children in the COBET programme to enhance their retention. The local government through DEOs in Mara region should organize and fund the training for teachers on role modelling strategy at least once a year for the enhancement of retention of children under COBET.

**Key words:** *Role modelling, Retention, Professional, Para-professional, Extensiveness*

## 1. Introduction

The advancement of a nation is increasingly reliant on the education its citizens receive, as education involves the acquisition and development of new knowledge, wisdom, attitudes, values, and skills, making it a cornerstone of any country's development strategy (Sodirjonov, 2020). Education provides significant, well-documented benefits by creating a skilled human resource base essential for enhancing productivity, and plays a transformative role in individuals' lives (Thomas et al., 2021). Consequently, countries must ensure citizens receive quality education to achieve their premeditated developmental goals, including accommodating those who could not complete their schooling but desire a second opportunity to finish their studies. Education is recognized as a fundamental human right, as highlighted by numerous international

conventions, including the United Nations Declaration of 1948, the World Conference on Education for All in 1990, and the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 (Iglesias, 2023; Saini et al., 2023).

As a signatory to these conventions, Tanzania has integrated the principles of education as a basic right, with policies and reforms such as the Education for Self-Reliance in 1967, the national literacy campaign of 1970, and the Universal Primary Education (UPE) campaign of 1974 aimed at ensuring all citizens have access to education (Mbogoma, 2018; MoEST, 2023). However, the government's efforts have faced challenges, including over-dependence on donor support, a centralized planning system, and lack of motivation among teachers, leading to a slow pace in achieving the UPE and increasing levels of illiteracy among citizens (Mrisho, 2017). Kilimwiko (2021) asserts that the Tanzanian literacy level has been deteriorating, with a drop in the Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) in primary schools from 71.6% in 1983 to 59.6% in 2020 and an increase in the level of illiteracy from 9.6% in 1986 to 22.4% in 2021, leaving 5.5 million Tanzanian citizens unable to read or write (Oddy, 2022). In response, the Government of Tanzania developed educational programmes targeting adults, youth, and out-of-school children, including the Integrated Community-Based Adult Education (ICBAE) and the Complementary Basic Education in Tanzania (COBET), the latter of which caters to out-of-school children and youth (URT, 2023).

Complementary Basic Education for Tanzania (COBET), also known as “Mpango wa Elimu Kwa Walioikosa (MEMKWA)”, was established by the government in 1999 with the aim of providing education to primary school-aged children and youth who are out of school. The program aims to ensure that children who were unable to attend school due to various reasons can still access education. Some of the reasons for dropping out of school include a non-friendly learning environment, parental separation, peer pressure, livestock keeping, and lack of basic needs (URT, 2020). Other factors contributing to dropouts include fear of teachers, illness, pregnancy, lack of food, and forced labour (Mrisho, 2017). Mnubi (2019) likewise observed the circumstances such as poverty, living in remote areas, shyness and discomfort in mixed-age classes as factors leading to dropout. Thus, the COBET programme was introduced to address these challenges. COBET program is implemented in two versions targeting two age groups: Cohort I for children aged 11-13 years and Cohort II for children aged 14-18 years in both rural and urban areas (URT, 2021). It follows the primary school curriculum with adjustments to meet the needs of out-of-school children and includes subjects like communication skills, mathematics, vocational skills, and personality development.

The program lasts for three years, and after completion, children can either return to formal education or pursue other post-primary opportunities (URT, 2018). Attendance is flexible, and uniforms are not required. Cohort I learners progress to Standard 5 after passing the Standard 4 National Examination, while Cohort II learners can access distance learning, vocational training, and secondary education upon passing Primary School Leaving Examinations. In 2024, there were 57,843 learners enrolled in the COBET program, with 45,642 in Cohort I and 12,201 in Cohort II. The program is facilitated by 2,427 professional teachers who also teach in primary schools, as well as 833 volunteer para-professional teachers who received special training (URT, 2023). The para-professional teachers are post-secondary school leavers who volunteer to facilitate teaching in the COBET program. Both the professional and para-professional teachers receive specialized training on facilitation skills, which are essential for the successful implementation of the COBET program. This training is intended to equip the teachers, including those with prior training from teacher training colleges (TTC), with the necessary competencies for handling learners with diverse needs, particularly those who have dropped out of school (The Graça Machel Trust, 2023).

The program is implemented nationwide, with a particular emphasis on regions with high illiteracy and dropout rates, such as the Mara Region. In 2022, the Mara Region had the highest number of COBET centres in the country, totaling 179 centers. For this study, the researcher selected three districts in the Mara Region, namely Tarime, Musoma, and Rorya. These districts were chosen because they had a substantial number of children participating in the COBET program, as indicated by data obtained from the Regional Primary Education Office. In Mara Region, the coordination of the COBET program is handled by the Ministry of President's Office Regional Administration and Local Government, the Graça Machel Trust, and the Mara Alliance, which comprises various stakeholders such as faith-based organizations, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, businesswomen, and responsible individuals (Mbilu, 2019). Despite the combined efforts of governmental and non-governmental organizations, there

was still a concerning dropout rate among children enrolled in the program. Data obtained from the Regional Primary Education Office for COBET in Mara Region reveals that a significant number of children from both Cohort I and Cohort II have not been integrated into formal education in the years 2020, 2021, and 2022.

The data reveals that in 2020, a total of 686 (45.8%) children from cohort I and 430 (35%) children from cohort II in the Mara Region dropped out of their studies. Meanwhile, 813 (54.2%) children from cohort I and 796 (64.8%) children from cohort II were successfully mainstreamed into formal education. A similar trend was observed in 2021, with 601 (50.4%) children from cohort I and 421 (41.8%) children from cohort II dropping out, while 592 (49.6%) children from cohort I and 586 (58.2%) children from cohort II were mainstreamed. The pattern continued in 2022, with 908 (63.6%) children from cohort I and 349 (38.3%) children from cohort II discontinuing their studies, while 519 (36.4%) children from cohort I and 558 (61.7%) children from cohort II were successfully mainstreamed into formal education. The consistently high dropout rates over the three years raise concerns about the effective use of role modelling strategy by teachers to retain all children in the COBET program. Scholars have identified several facilitative strategies that can address the dropout issue and safeguard the COBET program. One among them is role modeling. Other strategies include shared decision-making, guidance and counseling, motivation, coping strategies, and setting individual goals. This study focused on the Extensiveness of teachers in applying role modelling Strategy to enhance retention of the children under COBET.

Furthermore, it was observed by Weldesilassie, et al. (2019) that role modelling strategy as one of the strategies that can be employed to retain students in their studies. Behaviours by teachers are associated not only with the probability of grade progression during primary school but also with students' completion of primary school. The use of inputs by teachers was also associated positively with progression in primary school and primary school completion. When there is a conflict or unfriendly behaviours by a teacher it discourages students hence dropping out. Such kinds of behaviours are common in schools. Students and teachers reported physical and emotional violence by teachers in schools including behavioural problems as affirmed by Scharpf et al. (2021). Children suffered a lot to the point of dropout a situation which brings a question on whether they see good and encouraging examples from their teachers or not. With this experience, it was not clear if Teachers in COBET centres employed role modelling strategy to enhance retention of children under complementary basic education. The Teachers of COBET are expected to make sure all children enrolled in their schools feel comfortable to study hard towards the accomplishment of their studies and not drop out again.

The primary objective of the COBET program was to integrate children into formal education according to their grade level. However, some of these children experience a second dropout, abandoning their studies for various reasons. This second dropout phenomenon occurs even after the children have been placed under the care of COBET teachers, including head teachers, professional teachers, and para-professional teachers. It is the responsibility of these teachers to establish a supportive and nurturing learning environment that encourages the enrolled children to remain committed to their education and avoid further dropout. The role modelling strategy is one approach that can potentially contribute to the retention of out-of-school children within the COBET program. However, it remains uncertain whether teachers effectively employ this strategy to ensure the sustained engagement of integrated students. The aim is for these children to complete their primary education successfully in an inclusive, non-discriminatory, and conducive learning environment (Ngware et al., 2018). Therefore, conducting a study to assess the extent to which teachers apply the role modelling strategy in enhancing retention rates in selected districts of the Mara Region was crucial to gain a better understanding of the situation and improve retention rates in COBET.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Retaining children in the Complementary Basic Education in Tanzania (COBET) program has been a problem that attracts attention. These children face environmental, social, and economic challenges that often lead them to dropping out of school (Mrisho, 2017). It was pointed out by Mnubi (2019) that bullying and a lack of sensitivity towards COBET children have been identified as factors that contribute to their drop outs. That non-Formal Education programs aimed at providing quality basic education to out-of-school children in Tanzania have proven ineffective in ensuring their successful transition to formal primary

schools. Even though the main goal of establishing the programs is to facilitate mainstreaming of their learners to formal primary schools, only a small number of the registered learners get mainstreamed. Most of the learners either repeat the same course for many years or end up dropping out of it before getting mainstreamed into formal primary schools. The Graça Machel Trust (2023) cautioned that if the challenges facing the COBET program are not resolved, children would miss the chance to enroll, attend school regularly, and finish their education.

Concerns from parents and the community about high dropout rates in COBET remain, as the government's goal of achieving 100% literacy also remains a nightmare without addressing this issue. Several studies such as Mnubi (2019), Kombo (2019), Scharpf et al. (2021), Samwel (2021) addressed the strategies to tackle these challenges, including redrawing the COBET map, alternative learning classes, and interventions to reduce violence by teachers. However, it is unclear on the practicality of role modelling strategy to enhance the retention of COBET children. Therefore, this study investigated the extensiveness of teachers in applying role modelling Strategy to enhance retention of children in the COBET program in the selected Districts in Mara Region.

### **3. Research Question and Hypothesis**

One research question and one hypothesis guided the study.

To what extent is role modelling strategy employed by Teachers to enhance retention of children under complementary basic education in Selected Districts in Mara Region?

H<sub>a</sub>: There is a significant difference between the extent mean scores of more experienced and less experienced teachers in employing role modelling strategy to enhance retention of the children under complementary basic education in the Selected Districts in Mara Region.

### **4. Theoretical Framework**

This study is grounded on the Path-Goal Theory which was developed by House in 1971. The theory was built by expanding upon the research from Ohio State Studies, as well as the expectancy theory of motivation (Robbins et al., 2016). The theory explains that the leader takes on the responsibility of creating the framework (the path) to be successful in achieving specific results (the goal) of the task. This contingency theory gives a way to motivate people with desired outcomes where leaders provided clarity to achieve specific results. The theory recognizes four types of behaviours: directive, supportive, participative, and achievement- oriented, and believes the success of each is dependent on the subordinate (Simplilearn, 2022).

The strengths of the theory are shown in its ability to explain the essential variables of the study which are the strategies employed by Teachers to enhance retention of children under complementary basic education. The strategies explained are directive, supportive, participative and achievement- oriented. Teachers through the use of these strategies children under the program feel supported and directed towards the realization of their goals. Moreover, through shared decision-making strategy employed by Teachers children are involved in decision-making to actively participate in their education to achieve their individual goals for the future.

The weakness of the theory is observed in its inability to explain other variables of the study which are necessary strategies that can be employed by Teachers to enhance retention of children under complementary basic education. The variables which is not addressed by the theory is coping up strategies. Through these strategies, Teachers are able to show the way which motivates children under COBET to continue with their education without dropping out again. The study used this theory despite its shortcoming to address essential variables explained by the theory. Through the use of role modelling, guidance and counselling, shared decision making and motivation strategies. Teachers are able to enhance retention of children under complementary basic education. Children under the program as they feel valued, cared for, listened to and made active participants in their learning they can continue with their education without dropping out.



## 5. Review of Empirical Studies

Role modelling strategy is the strategy which calls teachers to reflect on their deeds and words in school and outside the school. Employing the strategy is vital in enhancing retention of the children in complementary basic education.

The study conducted by Aningsih et al. (2022) examined the implementation of character education in Indonesian elementary schools. Through qualitative research using an ethnographic approach and interviews with various stakeholders, the study identified strategies such as exemplification, habituation, school climate conditioning, integration in learning, and integration through extracurricular activities. The study highlighted the importance of character education in learning and emphasized the role of teachers as role models in implementing character education. While the study focused on character formation, their findings on the importance of role modelling and character education have relevance in enhancing the retention of children in complementary basic education. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the extent to which the role modelling strategy is employed by teachers to improve the retention of children in selected districts of the Mara Region.

On the other hand, the study by Laletas and Khasin (2021) explored the experiences of primary school teachers working with children exposed to high parental conflict during and after divorce. The study utilized semi-structured interviews with five primary school teachers and employed an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis framework to analyse the data. The findings highlighted the importance of caring for and about students and the challenges faced by teachers in managing the emotional distress caused by high levels of parental conflict. The study suggested that teachers need support to prevent burnout in such situations. Although conducted in a family context, the study provided insights into the use of the role modelling strategy and emphasized the need for teachers to be aware of their responsibilities. It suggested the importance of conducting a study in the school context to gain a deeper understanding of how the role modelling strategy is employed by teachers in enhancing the retention of children in the complementary basic education program in selected districts of the Mara Region.

The study conducted by Weldesilassie, et al. (2019) focused on analysing students' perceptions of teachers' behaviours, teachers' management practices, and the use of inputs by teachers in primary education in Ethiopia. The study utilized quantitative analysis and cross-sectional data collected from over 4,000 primary school-aged students, parents, and schools. The findings indicated that students' perceptions of teachers' behaviours and the use of inputs by teachers were associated with grade progression and completion of primary school. The study emphasized the importance of addressing teachers' behaviour through reforms to improve learning outcomes in Ethiopian primary education.

The study by Weldesilassie, et al. (2019) provided insights into the role of teachers as role models and their impact on students' academic progress and completion of primary school. This information is relevant to the current study on the use of role modelling strategy in enhancing the retention of children in complementary basic education. However, it is important to note that the study employed a quantitative approach, limiting the exploration of respondents' views and feelings. Additionally, the study focused on formal primary schools in Ethiopia. Nonetheless, it contributes valuable information to the understanding of the role modelling strategy in the Tanzanian context, particularly in non-formal education settings. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the extent to which teachers employ the role modelling strategy to enhance the retention of children in complementary basic education in selected districts of the Mara Region.

Cohen-Azaria and Zamir (2021) conducted a study on the characteristics of exemplary teachers according to Israeli-Arab prospective teachers and the influence of those perceptions on their professional identity. The study utilized a qualitative paradigm and in-depth semi-structured interviews with 33 education students. The findings highlighted that the formation of professional educational identity among the students was influenced by exposure to exceptional teachers who deviated from traditional pedagogical models in Arab education. The study emphasized the role modelling strategy employed by teachers in shaping the professional identity and mind-set of prospective teachers as educators and agents of change.

The study by Cohen-Azaria and Zamir (2021) shed light on the importance of teachers as role models in enhancing the retention of children in complementary basic education. It emphasized that teachers' efforts in being role models are crucial in shaping the children under their care. However, it is important to note that the study employed a qualitative approach with a single research instrument, and the findings may not be generalizable. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the extent to which teachers employ the role

modelling strategy to enhance the retention of children in complementary basic education in selected districts of the Mara Region using a mixed methods approach for a more comprehensive understanding.

The study conducted by Muyaka et al. (2021) focused on boys' participation in education in Kenya, specifically in Busia and Kirinyaga counties. The study addressed the concern that boys have been marginalized in the education system, with limited research capturing their schooling experiences. Through data collected from 12 primary schools, including head teachers, teachers, pupils, education officials, and households, the study found evidence of boys' marginalization in terms of enrolment, school attendance, and participation in national examinations. The study emphasized the need for gender interventions targeting both boys and girls, as well as collaborative efforts from communities, county governments, and the national government to address the under participation of boys in education.

The study by Muyaka et al. (2021) provided valuable insights into the role modelling strategy, highlighting the importance of adequate role models for boys in the education system. It emphasized the need for teachers to be committed to their work without discrimination and to design inclusive approaches. However, there is limited literature on the employment of the role modelling strategy in the Tanzanian context, specifically in selected districts of the Mara Region for children under complementary basic education. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the extent to which the role modelling strategy is employed in enhancing the retention of children in complementary basic education in the selected districts of the Mara Region, addressing the literature gap.

Scharpf et al. (2021) conducted a study on reducing physical and emotional violence by teachers through the Intervention Interaction Competencies with Children - for Teachers (ICC-T). The study employed a multi-country cluster randomized controlled trial in Ghana, Tanzania, and Uganda. The research design involved baseline assessments, two follow-up assessments, and the random allocation of schools to the intervention and control conditions. Data were collected from students and teachers using structured clinical interviews, focusing on physical and emotional violence by teachers, as well as measures of emotional and behavioural problems, quality of life, cognitive functioning, academic performance, school attendance, and social competence.

The study by Scharpf et al. (2021) provided important information on the prevalence of physical and emotional violence by teachers in schools and its impact on students' well-being and academic outcomes. It underscored the potential negative effects of such violence on children's learning progress and highlighted the importance of positive role models among teachers. However, it is worth noting that the study relied on a single type of instrument for data collection and did not employ triangulation. In this study, a variety of research instruments were used to investigate the extent to which teachers employ the role modelling strategy to enhance the retention of children under complementary basic education in selected districts of the Mara Region, providing a more comprehensive understanding.

## **6. Demonstration of Knowledge Gap**

In summary, studies by Weldesilassie, et al. (2019), Laletas and Khasin (2021), Aningsih et al. (2022), Muyaka et al. (2021) and Verdugo-Castro et al. (2021) have highlighted the role of women as role models in studying science subjects. These studies have shown that teachers' behaviours are associated with students' academic progress and completion of primary school. Teachers themselves have acknowledged that their own formation as individuals is influenced by their experiences in school. On the other hand, studies have also revealed that boys are marginalized in terms of enrolment, school attendance, and participation in national examinations, and they lack sufficient role models. However, most research has focused on attracting girls to study science subjects in formal education settings.

Moreover, it has been recognized that character development occurs not only through classroom teaching but also through teachers' ability to lead by example. Additionally, some studies have primarily utilized quantitative methods, which may have limited the exploration of respondents' perspectives and potentially yielded different results if mixed methods were employed. While the aforementioned studies were conducted in formal primary schools and within the family context in Ethiopia, they still provide valuable insights that contribute to the current study's focus on non-formal education in the Tanzanian context, where literature is limited. Therefore, there was a need for a study that specifically examines the extent to which teachers employed the role modelling strategy to enhance the retention of children, regardless of their gender, in selected districts of the Mara Region within the school context. This study aimed to address the

literature gap and gain a deeper understanding of the role modelling strategy in non-formal education settings.

## **7. Research Methodology**

In this study, a mixed research approach was employed to gather both qualitative and quantitative data, aiming to address the research question or hypothesis and obtain a comprehensive understanding of the problem being investigated. The design used was a convergent design, which allowed for the integration of data collection and analysis of both types of data in a single phase. The target population consisted of 99 COBET centres, 99 head teachers, 133 teachers, and 898 children enrolled in the COBET program in selected districts of the Mara Region. The sample size of 158 participants was determined based on recommendations from (Creswell & Clark, 2018) and the Yamane formula. Various sampling techniques were employed, including critical case purposive sampling, simple random sampling, and stratified random sampling, to select the participants. Data collection involved the use of quantitative instruments (questionnaires) and qualitative instruments (interview guides and focus group discussion guides).

The validity of the instruments was ensured through the input of research experts, particularly in the field of Education Planning and Administration. The reliability of the instruments was assessed using the Cronbach Alpha technique, which yielded a reliability output of 0.802 for the rating scale questions in the teachers' questionnaire. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the quantitative data with the assistance of SPSS version 22, and the results were presented in tables displaying means, frequencies, and percentages. The hypothesis was tested using an Independent t-test at a significance level of .05. For the qualitative data, thematic analysis was employed to identify common themes, which facilitated the interpretation and discussion of the findings. The qualitative data was presented in narrative form, supported by direct quotations. Ethical considerations were strictly followed throughout the study, including obtaining permissions, ensuring informed consent, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity, and appropriately acknowledging cited works to prevent plagiarism.

## **8. Data Presentation and Discussion of the Findings**

The study sought to find out the extent to which role modelling strategy was employed by Teachers to enhance retention of children under COBET. The responses were collected from the head teachers, teachers, and COBET children. In establishing the extent to which the strategy was employed, teachers were required to indicate their responses on the Likert scale aspects of investigation on the strategy. The responses on the role modelling strategy were summarized into mean scores as it was interpreted by Hashim et al. (2022) that the mean Score of 4.30-5.00 means a very large extent and that of 3.50-4.29 is a large extent. The mean score of 2.70-3.49 was interpreted as a moderate extent while 1.90-2.69 was a low extent and 1.00-1.89 is very low extent. The responses on very large extent and large extent were treated together as large extent; likewise, the responses on very low extent and low extent were regarded as low extent. The responses are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Teachers' response on the extent to which role modelling strategy was employed by Teachers to enhance retention of COBET children

	Respondent	Very low extent		Low extent		Moderate		Large extent		Very large extent		Mean	Grand mean
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
i. I expose COBET children to different success stories to enhance their retention.	Para-professional	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	63	6	38	4.38	4.3
	Professional	0	0	1	3	1	3	1	53	1	40	4.30	
ii. I inspire COBET children to study with determination on what they aspire/want to be to enhance their retention.	Para-professional	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	69	5	31	4.31	4.4
	Professional	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	43	1	57	4.56	
iii. COBET Children recognize fellow learners as exemplary models to enhance their retention	Para-professional	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	75	4	25	4.25	4.3
	Professional	0	0	0	0	1	3	1	57	1	40	4.37	
iv. I expose COBET children to the outside environment to enhance their retention.	Para-professional	1	6	9	56	3	19	2	13	1	6	2.56	2.7
	Professional	4	13	1	40	4	13	6	20	4	13	2.80	
v. I integrate learning across all subjects to enhance retention of COBET children.	Para-professional	0	0	4	25	7	44	5	31	0	0	3.06	3.5
	Professional	0	0	4	13	6	20	1	37	9	30	3.83	
vi. I integrate COBET children through extracurricular activities to enhance their retention.	Para-professional	0	0	2	13	5	31	6	38	3	19	3.63	3.7
	Professional	0	0	5	17	3	10	1	50	7	23	3.80	
vii. I sensitively respond to COBET children's needs to enhance their retention.	Para-professional	0	0	3	19	1	6	1	63	2	13	3.69	3.5
	Professional	0	0	6	20	6	20	1	47	4	13	3.53	
viii. I encourage teachers' positive character/ behaviours to enhance retention of COBET children.	Para-professional	0	0	1	6	3	19	1	63	2	13	3.81	4.9
	Professional	0	0	2	7	1	3	2	67	7	23	4.07	
ix. I identify COBET children's character with relevant professions to enhance their retention	Para-professional	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	88	2	13	4.13	4.1
	Professional	0	0	2	7	0	0	2	67	8	27	4.13	
x. I formulate modern mindsets as educators and agents of change to enhance retention of COBET children	Para-professional	0	0	2	13	1	6	1	63	3	19	3.88	4.1
	Professional	0	0%	1	3%	1	3%	1	60%	1	33%	4.23	
Mean	Para-professional											3.77	3.85
	professional											3.96	

Source: Field data 2023

Key: f = Frequency, %=Percentages, n =Number of respondents: Professional teachers' n = 30, Para-professional teachers' n = 16



The data in Table 1 shows that all para-professional (100%) and 93% of professional teachers involved in the study in Selected Districts of Mara Region shared different success stories with the children in COBET to a large extent to enhance their retention. The mean score produced from teachers' responses to this item was 4.3, which implied that most teachers knew how to improve the retention of COBET children by telling them success stories. The response was confirmed from the discussion held by the children under COBET during the focus group discussion when they indicated:

Our teachers share stories about success to ensure we can see good examples to be followed and don't give up on our studies. We have one example of one woman named 'Y' who passed through many difficulties but succeeded through hard work. With this inspiration, we feel encouraged to continue with our studies (Group discussion 2, personal communication, 16<sup>th</sup> August, 2023).

The information from FGD 2 indicates that teachers encouraged the children in the programme by exposing them to success stories to enhance their retention. The findings correspond to that of Nyang'au et al. (2021) that school youth were significantly more exposed to success stories than those out of school. Hence, success stories can lead children under the COBET programme to have that determination - "if others have succeeded, I can as well succeed." Another group showed that they were motivated by concluding: "*Most of the time, we are encouraged by the good stories shared by our teachers about how other people succeeded and how they struggled to achieve their goals. This encouragement strengthens us to continue with our studies*" (Group discussion 7, personal communication, 28th August 2023)

The views of the children in FGD 7 suggest that children get the strength to continue their studies mostly from the stories they hear from their teachers about people who succeeded despite facing several difficulties. One member in another group with a zeal responded by saying:

I always enjoy hearing that other people succeed in several difficulties, especially those who have passed through the COBET programme. I usually gain confidence when I hear they are doing well in their studies and life (Group discussion 9, personal communication, 30<sup>th</sup> August 2023).

The response of the children of the programme in FGD 9 entails that the children gained confidence when they heard that even their fellow learners, after many difficulties, succeeded in their studies and their lives. The findings imply that the role modelling strategy was employed by teachers to the children in COBET for their retention through exposing them to success stories as one aspect of the role modelling strategy.

Data in Table 1 indicate that 82% and 93% of para-professional and professional teachers shared ideas and experiences with COBET children to a large extent to enhance their retention. Data from teachers' responses generated a mean score of 4.1, implying that most teachers knew how to inspire COBET children by sharing ideas and experiences with them for their retention. The positive response to teachers sharing ideas and experiences with the children under COBET could enhance their retention because the children become motivated. The findings were in line with that of Nyang'au et al. (2021), who indicated that at the community level, successful teachers could mentor the out-of-school youth and share ideas and experiences to motivate them.

The response was confirmed during a focus group discussion in one of the groups when they said:

Our teachers shared so many experiences that were of great help to us, and one of them told us that he was like us and passed through the same experience but now has succeeded. The ideas shared make us add up the effort towards our success, and we will succeed (Group discussion 4, personal communication, 21<sup>st</sup> August 2023).

This response by FGD4 emphasizes the valuable experiences shared by teachers towards success. This serves as a source of inspiration and motivation for the children to encourage them to increase their efforts and believe in their potential for success. The findings are supported by Cohen-Azaria and Zamir (2021), who state that their professional educational identity begins to form while students are still at school, especially with exposure to an exceptional teacher in their past.

The other group added: "*We mostly learn much from our teachers as they share their experience on how they started their life and how they got their education through many difficulties and finally how they succeeded*". (Group discussion 7, personal communication, 28<sup>th</sup> August, 2023)

This indicates that teachers shared their personal experiences, starting from the challenges they faced in their own lives to the hardships they encountered while pursuing their education. By sharing these stories, the teachers provided valuable lessons and demonstrated the possibility of overcoming obstacles to achieve success and retention. The findings indicated that most teachers employed the role modelling strategy to enhance their retention by sharing ideas and experience as one of the aspects of the strategy. The importance

of sharing ideas and experiences was shown by Kirk et al. (2019) by insisting that it is worthy of providing space for students and facilitators in an adult education programme to have a voice and share their experiences, stories, and opinions around education and success orientations.

From Table 1, the data indicate that 62% of para-professional and 53% of professional teachers who participated in the study exposed COBET children to the outside environment to a low extent to enhance their retention. On the other hand, only 19% of para-professional and 33% of professional teachers indicated that they exposed the children under COBET to the outside environment to a large extent to enhance their retention. The mean score of 2.7 generated from teachers' responses implied that only a few teachers could expose COBET children to the outside environment.

Exposing the children to an outside environment has a great impact on their retention because it is where they learn and they open up their minds since learning is a process as also dropping out is a process. The external factors outside the school environment affect much on the decision to drop out of school as explained by Vincent Tinto in the Institutional Departure theory of dropout dropping out of an educational institution can be seen as a process. During this period, external factors outside the school environment affect learners and their decision to continue studying.

The children in COBET substantiated the responses during the focus group discussion by saying: "*we would like to get out of here so that we learn from different environments, especially from different successful institutions, but we never get this chance*" (Group discussion 4, personal communication, 21<sup>st</sup> August, 2023). The response of FGD 4 indicates their desire to learn from other institutions for their exposure and the enhancement of their retention, but teachers haven't fulfilled their desires. The children realize that they need to integrate well with their behaviour and environment so that their retention is enhanced. The findings reflect the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) by Albert Bandura in 1986, who posits that learning occurs in a social context with a dynamic and reciprocal interaction of the person, environment, and behaviour that affect the likelihood of continuing or discontinuing the behaviour. When one of the head teachers was interviewed on this aspect had this to say:

Getting COBET children to the outside environment is very difficult because the school has no funds for this group. Though it is a good thing that can help them open their minds and encourage them to continue their studies, however, we have no means (Head Teacher 6, personal communication, 21<sup>st</sup> August, 2023).

The views of HT 6 indicate that schools had no funds to expose the children under COBET to the outside environment to enhance their retention. Another head teacher, in showing the importance of this aspect, added:

It would be helpful for these children to learn from outside environments because it's where they are inspired and where success is possible when it is worked upon. However, the problem is funds; since everything depends on limited funds, it is difficult to afford (Head Teacher 5, personal communication, 18<sup>th</sup> August, 2023).

The observation of HT5 suggests that exposing COBET children to external environments can be beneficial as it can inspire them to believe in the possibility of success through hard work. This implies that access to funds is crucial to afford such valuable learning experiences for COBET children. The findings suggest that teachers did not often employ this aspect of role modelling strategy to retain children under COBET due to lack of financial support.

From the data in Table 1, teachers' responses show that 31% of para-professional and 67% of professional teachers integrated learning across all subjects to enhance COBET children retention greatly. Conversely, 44% of para-professional and 20% of professional teachers indicated that they moderately integrate learning across all subjects to improve retention of COBET children. Teachers' responses on this item generated a mean score of 3.5, indicating that not all teachers knew how to integrate learning across all subjects. This suggests a need for further support and training to improve teachers' abilities in this area. One of the head teachers during the interview responded by saying:

It is a good idea for the children in COBET to get a good connection to all subjects, but this is not an easy task, especially for this group of children. .... because of its importance, we must update ourselves on this matter (Head Teacher 6, personal communication, 21<sup>st</sup> August 2023).

The response of HT 6 shows that integrating learning across all the subjects is a very important aspect for teachers to use in building the connection between what they are learning and enhancing children's retention. Another head teacher added, "*Teachers are trying their best to incorporate diverse subjects and make the*

*learning experience as meaningful as possible for the COBET students. But it may be an area worthy of further exploration and support"* (Head Teacher 12, personal communication, 29<sup>th</sup> August, 2023).

The views of HT 12 indicate the importance of updating the teachers on how integrating learning across all subjects can effectively enhance the children's retention. During the interview, another head teacher said, *"Teachers are working hard to integrate learning across all subjects so that COBET children see how useful education is in all subjects. This makes them love their studies when teachers do it correctly"* (Head Teacher 9, personal communication, 24<sup>th</sup> August, 2023). This statement highlights the efforts of teachers to incorporate interdisciplinary learning, where they connect and integrate concepts from different subjects. When teachers successfully implement this approach, it can foster a love for studies among the children, inspiring them to engage more deeply with their studies and appreciate the value of learning. The findings implied that teachers employed a role-modelling strategy to enhance the retention of COBET children, but there was a need to update them on this aspect of the strategy. The findings corresponded to Aningsih et al. (2022), who found that character education was very much needed in elementary schools, namely, integration in learning across all subjects and integration through extracurricular activities.

The data in Table 1 indicates that 57% of para-professional and 73% of professional teachers said that, to a large extent, they integrated children under COBET through extracurricular activities. Again, 31% of para-professional teachers showed a moderate extent to which they incorporate them, whereas 17% of professional teachers indicated that they integrate the children through extracurricular activities to a low extent. The responses from teachers' data generated a mean score of 3.7, which implies that most teachers integrated COBET children through extracurricular activities to enhance their retention. In contrast, children under COBET through focus group discussion showed that they were not always involved in extracurricular activities as they said; *"It is impossible always to be involved in extracurricular activities since our timetable is different from the normal timetable. Still, we would like all of us to learn various things through these activities"* (Group discussion 10, personal communication, 25<sup>th</sup> August 2023).

The information given by the members in FGD 10 signifies that the children wished to be integrated into extracurricular activities, but due to their timetable, this was not always fulfilled. Having a different timetable could have improved their learning, but combining them with extracurricular activities is very important to be considered. Another group added that *"we get involved in extracurricular activities through school gardens, sports and different games, but the time is limited since they had other activities at home which needed their attention such as grazing cattle and home activities"* (Group discussion 11, personal communication, 28<sup>th</sup> August, 2023). The response of FGD 11 shows that the children in the programme were happy that they were involved in extracurricular activities, which enhanced their retention. The findings also concurred with Aningsih et al. (2022), who found that character education was very much needed in learning, namely, integration in outside activities.

One of the head teachers during the interview had this to say:

It is a good idea that COBET children are integrated with several activities, but for them, we need to go beyond that; they should be involved in skilled activities like carpentry sewing and others so that when they come out of here, they can stand on their own (Head teacher 14, personal communication, 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023).

The views of HT 14 it was specified that extracurricular activities for enhancing the retention of the children under the programme should go beyond the existing ones by integrating them into the hard skills for their future sustenance. The findings showed that teachers employed the role modelling strategy by integrating COBET children into extracurricular activities. The findings corresponded to Thouin et al. (2022), who insisted that encouraging involvement in school-based extracurricular activities may be necessary for preventing high school dropout. Results showed that consistent participation in the past year was associated with lower odds of dropout.

Data from Table 1 showed that the majority of para-professional and professional teachers (76% and 60%) who participated in the study showed, to a large extent, that they sensitively responded to COBET children's needs to enhance their retention. On the other hand, 19% of para-professional and 20% of professional teachers showed that they were doing that to a low extent. Data from teachers' responses generated a mean score of 3.5 to show that other teachers still failed to respond sensitively to the needs of COBET children.

Children under COBET revealed this in their discussion: *"We have so many needs due to family problems which makes us lack some of the learning resources, and not all can be met by our teachers; at least we can learn with the few we have"*. (Group discussion 3, personal communication, 16<sup>th</sup> August, 2023). The

response by FGD 3 indicates that the children in the programme had insufficient learning resources, which could hinder their learning, even though they were trying to cope with the situation.

To triangulate the information, the researcher interviewed the head teachers and one of them on this item had this to say:

We try our best to respond to children's needs, but it has been difficult since we have no budget for this section. Children under COBET have no learning resources such as books, school bags, exercise books, pens, or pencils, to mention a few. In addition, their teachers are not paid by the government, so they depend on the limited budget of our school, which is nothing when we compare to their needs (Head teacher 7, personal communication, 22<sup>nd</sup> August, 2023).

The information from HT 7 indicates that responding to the needs of the children in the programme was not easy. This can discourage their attendance and make them drop out since the school has no budget for COBET. The findings corresponded to those of Ringson (2020), who revealed a failure to proportionately and holistically provide all the basic needs of the school-going children within the rural communities. Another head teacher on this item responded by saying:

We receive the children of COBET who do not have all the learning materials, but we try to provide the few we have from our belongings. Previously, we had support from non-governmental projects like Graca Machele. However, the project has ended, and our learners face many difficulties due to the learning resources (Head Teacher 13, personal communication, 30<sup>th</sup> August, 2023).

The reaction by HT 13 connotes that teachers need support from different stakeholders so that their efforts to respond to the needs of the children can be fruitful. The findings implied that although teachers employed the role modelling strategy for the enhancement of retention of COBET children by responding to their needs, they are faced with several difficulties arising from social-economic hardships which might be due to poor community participation. The findings also corresponded to Mnubi (2019), who indicated that the unsatisfactory quality of teaching and learning is a daily reality for many girls and boys who fail to learn due to poor community participation, families' socio-economic hardships and inadequate resources to support the programme.

Data from Table 1 indicate that 76% of para-professional and 90% of professional teachers who were involved in the study, to a large extent, encouraged teachers' positive character/behaviours to enhance retention of the children in COBET. The mean score of 3.9 was generated from the teachers' responses, which implied that most of the teachers put their effort into ensuring COBET children see good examples from them. It was confirmed by one of the head teachers during the interview that: *"teachers who had no special training on how to deal with children under COBET need to be reminded on how to deal with these children and be encouraged to foster positive character so that the children are not discouraged"* (Head teacher 1, personal communication, 14<sup>th</sup> August, 2023). The information from HT 1 indicates that the children under COBET need to be treated differently because they have faced different challenges which discouraged them. This is why the programme facilitators received the training before being entrusted to the care of these children. As they remain in this aspect, they could enhance their retention to realize their educational goals by being role models. Teachers should be equipped with skills and encouraged to support the children under COBET to institutionalize psychosocial support for the learners as a practice in the learning centres would be useful (The Graça Machel Trust, 2023).

Another head teacher added that *"these children should be treated differently by teachers because they have faced so many difficulties. With this background, we encourage teachers not to apply strokes to them so that they may not be discouraged and leave the school"* (Head Teacher 8, personal communication, 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 2023). The response by HT 8 indicates that teachers' positive character is encouraged so that the children can see a good example for enhancing their retention. Another head teacher added, *"We normally remind teachers to be good examples, especially in dealing with COBET children so that they feel comfortable with their studies and thus they do not drop out again"* (Head Teacher 14, personal communication, 31<sup>st</sup> August, 2023). The information from HT14 shows the importance of teachers being role models, mainly when working with COBET children. By setting a positive example, teachers can create a comfortable and supportive learning environment for these children. This, in turn, can help prevent them from dropping out of school again.

The findings aligned with the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) of Albert Bandura in 1986, which posits that learning occurs in a social context through the dynamic and reciprocal interaction of the person, environment, and behaviour. The theory stresses that through observational Learning, people can witness



and observe behaviour conducted by others and then reproduce the same actions. This is often exhibited through the "modelling" of behaviours. It was also pointed out by Weldesilassie, et al. (2019) that students perceived that some behaviours by teachers were associated not only with the probability of grade progression during primary school but also with whether students complete primary school.

In summary, it was found that teachers involved in the study in Selected Districts in Mara Region, to a large extent, exposed COBET children to different success stories and encouraged teachers' positive character/behaviours to enhance their retention. It was also found that teachers in Selected Districts in Mara Region largely integrated COBET children through extracurricular activities to improve their retention. The overall mean score was 3.85, which meant that the role modelling strategy was employed by teachers for the children under COBET to enhance their retention, but with some difficulties. However, it was found that teachers who participated in the study to a low extent exposed COBET children to the outside environment and integrated learning across all subjects to enhance their retention. Likewise, it was found that, to a low extent, teachers sensitively respond to COBET children's needs to enhance their retention. This implied that teachers did not fully employ the role modelling strategy to ensure the retention of children under COBET for different reasons, which require teachers to be updated on this aspect of the role modelling strategy.

### Hypothesis Testing

To triangulate the information from teachers, head teachers, and the children under COBET on the use of the role modelling strategy, the researcher tested the hypothesis. The hypothesis sought to establish if there was a significant difference between the extent mean scores of more experienced and less experienced teachers in employing the role modelling strategy to enhance the retention of the children under the COBET program in the selected Districts of Mara Region. The study used the extent mean scores of both independent groups to test the hypothesis, and the results are summarised in Table 2. This analysis allowed the researcher to determine if the level of teaching experience played a role in the implementation of the role modelling strategy to support COBET students' retention.

**Null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>):** There is no significant difference between the extent mean scores of more experienced and less experienced teachers in employing role modelling strategy to enhance retention of the children under complementary basic education in the Selected Districts in Mara Region.

Before testing the hypothesis, the researcher checked the normality test using Shapiro Wilk and found that the p-values (0.097 and 0.256) were greater than the significant level of .05. This meant that the data was normally distributed, and the researcher proceeded with hypothesis testing. Moreover, the researcher tested the homoscedasticity using Levene's Test for Equality of Variances and found that the p-value (0.899) was greater than the significant level of .05. This meant that equal variances were assumed. A decision rule determined the hypothesis testing.

**Decision rule:** Given the significant level of .05

1. If the p-value is less than or equal to .05 significant level, reject the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>).
2. If the p-value is greater than or equal to .05 significant level, fail to reject the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>).

Table 2 The difference between the extent mean scores of more experienced and less experienced teachers in employing role modelling strategy to enhance retention of the Children under COBET

Independent Samples Test									
Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
						Lower	Upper		

Role modelling	Equal variances assumed	.017	.899	.862	18	.400	-.19800	.22963	-.68043	.28443
	Equal variances not assumed			.862	17.149	.400	-.19800	.22963	-.68215	.28615

Source: Field data 2023

Table 4.7 shows that  $t(10) = 0.862$ ,  $p = 0.40$ . The data indicated that the p-value is greater than the significant level (0.05). Since the p-value is greater than the significant level, the null hypothesis was not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the extent mean scores of more experienced and less experienced teachers in employing the role modelling strategy to enhance retention of the children under complementary basic education in the Selected Districts in Mara Region. This means that the role modelling strategy is being utilized by both more experienced and less experienced teachers working with COBET learners. The extent or degree to which they are employing this strategy does not differ significantly between the two groups of teachers (experienced vs. less experienced). This suggests that both sets of teachers, regardless of their level of experience, are equally likely to use role modelling as a strategy to try and improve knowledge retention

## 2. 9. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that Teachers employed role modelling as a retention strategy for the children under COBET with some potential areas for improvement in the practicality of the strategy.

Since both sets of teachers, regardless of their level of experience, are equally using role modelling strategy are called to reflect on their deeds and words in front of the children in the COBET programme to enhance their retention.

The local government through DEOs in Mara region should organize and fund the training for teachers on facilitative strategies at least once a year for the enhancement of retention of children under COBET.

The school committee should establish income-generating activities for the sustenance of para-professional teachers to support their efforts in the use of facilitative strategies to enhance the retention of children under COBET.

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