



Teachers' perspective on effective feedback for students' learning in Bhutanese secondary schools.

¹Dorji Tshering, ²Lekh Raj Ghalley

¹ Dorji Tshering- Principal at Logchina Middle Secondary School under Ministry of Education and Skill Development, ²Lekh Raj Ghalley, Teacher at Logchina Middle Secondary School under Ministry of Education and Skill Development.

Abstract : This study explores secondary school teachers' perceptions and practices of feedback in Bhutanese classrooms, with a focus on its effectiveness in enhancing student learning. Using a convergent mixed-method design, quantitative data were collected through survey questionnaires from 385 teachers selected via simple random sampling, while qualitative insights were obtained from three focus group discussions. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were employed to interpret the data. Results revealed that teachers hold highly positive perceptions of feedback ($M = 3.97$), viewing it as a vital formative tool that fosters motivation, reflection, and self-regulated learning. Majority of teachers preferred combination of written and oral feedback to improve the students learning, emphasizing timeliness, descriptiveness, and individualization in feedback delivery. However, contextual factors such as large class sizes, time constraints, workload, and limited resources were critical barriers to effective implementation. The results infer a significant gap between teachers' theoretical beliefs and consistent practice driven by systemic, structural factors. The study recommends that policymakers and school leaders address these contextual constraints to strengthen formative assessment and feedback systems in Bhutanese secondary education.

IndexTerms - Teachers' perception, feedback practices, and challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Feedback is recognized as a fundamental tool of teaching and learning to advance the students' learning. It provides learners with information about the gap between their current performance and to indicate next steps in their learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Effective feedback not only enhances learning but also builds learners' confidence, motivation, and empowers learners to become self-regulated learners (Heron et al., 2023). Conversely, poorly feedback mechanism demotivates students and hinders their learning progress (Tanis, 2020; William, 2024).

The feedback delivery to be effective, from the beginning the teacher has to have positive perception and the skill (Dessie & Sewagegn, 2019). However, there is misconception about feedback from the teacher's side and are related to the perception of teachers. Moss and Brokhart (2009) indicated that some teachers view returning graded work and detailed correction as effective feedback. Harnin et al. (2022) also added that teachers are giving feedback to students to justify their marks without any constructive feedback. Usually, teachers' feedback consists of right or wrong comments as "good," "good try," or "keep it up" to register approval and disapproval of students' performance (Shepard, 2000 as cited in Dessie & Sewagegn, 2019). Such judgmental feedback does not help to improve the learning of students. Hattie and Timperley (2007) revealed that the feedback focusing on praise or punishment has low impact on students' understanding.

Although teachers realize the importance of feedback and its impact on students' learning, there are several factors such as teachers' competence, commitment, students' receptivity (Iqbal et al., 2014), time management, and workload (Harnin et al., 2022; Spiller, 2014) affecting their practices. In addition, Guenette and Lyster (2013) demonstrated that teachers often struggle to balance constructive, timely, and specific feedback with workload demands, leading to inconsistencies between their beliefs and practices. These mismatches between what teachers believe to be effective and what they actually implement in classrooms remain a persistent issue across various contexts (Sakrak-Ekin & Balcikanli, 2019). Therefore, this study explores teachers' perceptions and practices of effective feedback in secondary schools in Bhutan.

Problem statement

In Bhutan, emerging studies have highlighted both the potential and the challenges of feedback practices. Nidup and Wangchuk (2022) found that secondary students perceive feedback as vital for learning and prefer detailed, descriptive feedback over evaluative feedback. Similarly, Lhamo and Boonteerarak (2024) found that Bhutanese teachers hold positive beliefs about written corrective feedback (WCF) but lack adequate training and consistent strategies to deliver it effectively. This finding infers the need for professional development to support teachers in implementing feedback practices that align with best pedagogical principles. Despite these insights, research on feedback in Bhutan remains limited and fragmented. Most existing studies focus on students' perceptions (Nidup & Wangchuk, 2022) or on specific areas such as corrective feedback in language classrooms (Lhamo & Boonteerarak, 2024) or oral corrective feedback (Wangchuk, 2023). Very little is known about how Bhutanese secondary school

teachers, across subjects, perceive feedback, how these perceptions shape their classroom practices, and what contextual challenges they face. This creates a gap in understanding the broader dynamics of feedback in Bhutanese schools, particularly in light of national educational reforms emphasizing formative assessment and holistic learning.

The purpose of this study is therefore to explore how secondary school teachers in Bhutan perceive and apply feedback in their teaching. By investigating teachers' perspectives and practices, the study aims to contribute to bridging the gap between theory and practice, while also informing policies and professional development programs that enhance the effectiveness of feedback as a tool for student learning.

Research objectives

The study aims to:

1. Explore secondary school teachers' perceptions of feedback and its impact on students' learning.
2. Examine the types of feedback practices commonly used by teachers in secondary schools.
3. Investigate the factors that influence teachers' feedback practices (e.g., class size, subject, student level).

Research questions

How do secondary school teachers in Bhutan perceive, practice, and explain the use of feedback to enhance student learning?

Sub-questions

1. What perception do teachers have regarding the power of feedback on students' learning?
2. What types of feedback practices do teachers commonly use in their classrooms?
3. What factors influence teachers' feedback practices (e.g., class size, subject, student level)?

Significance of the study

The findings of this study revealed the perceptions of school teachers on feedback and their classroom practices. Further, study also investigate the relationship between teachers' perception and their practices, and the challenges faced by teachers while giving feedback in the schools. Therefore, the findings benefit teachers, school leaders, policy makers and curriculum developers to design policies and training programs that strengthen formative assessment and feedback systems in the schools.

Literature review

Teaching-Learning, Assessment, and Feedback

The process of teaching and learning has long been explained through educational theories that the knowledge is constructed through active engagement. Constructivist theorists such as Piaget (1972) and Vygotsky (1978) believed that learning is an active process in which learners construct new knowledge based on prior experiences, with social interaction and scaffolding playing critical roles. In this framework, assessment serves as a measure to direct learning rather than mere achievement. Black and Wiliam (1998) highlighted that formative assessment improves students' comprehension and encourages self-regulated learning. Thus, feedback becomes a vital link between teaching, assessment, and student progress.

Building on these theoretical foundations, scholars have stressed the role of feedback in shaping the effectiveness of classroom practices. Hattie and Timperley (2007) described feedback as one of the most powerful influences on learning, particularly when it clarifies learning goals, reduces the gap between current performance and expected outcomes, and fosters motivation. Sadler (1989) also emphasized that feedback should not only diagnose performance but provide strategies for improvement, making assessment a formative process rather than a summative end. These perspectives suggest that feedback is a dialogic process, where both teacher input and student engagement determine its impact on learning outcomes.

At the classroom practice level, teachers' perceptions and implementation of feedback significantly affect its effectiveness. Carless (2006) noted that while teachers acknowledge the value of feedback, its practical delivery is often constrained by time, workload, and students' receptivity. Studies in Bhutan and similar contexts have revealed that teachers often prioritize written or summative comments over dialogic feedback, limiting student engagement with the process (Dorji & Wangmo, 2020). Furthermore, research shows that many students focus more on grades than on qualitative comments, reducing the developmental purpose of assessment (Spiller, 2014). This underscores the need for professional development that supports teachers in aligning their assessment practices with feedback principles that enhance learning.

Effective feedback

Using feedback to integrate teaching, learning, and assessment is recognized as one of the guiding principles for effective feedback (Lee, 2017). Feedback is fundamental to helping students improve their performance on future assessment tasks and is widely regarded as a key strategy in both teaching and learning (Poulos & Mahony, 2008). According to Lee (2008), good quality, comprehensive, and timely feedback is an essential factor in enhancing student learning. As to Moss and Brookhart (2009), effective feedback enhances students' cognitive processing, increases students' autonomy, fosters resiliency and persistence, and provides students with specific strategies for next steps in their learning. Lee (2017) also added that feedback should be specific, accurate, timely, and targeted. These features are consistently identified in the literature as the hallmarks of effective feedback, though research suggests there are additional dimensions. Therefore, providing feedback in varied forms, whether written, oral, or through demonstration is a vital aspect of assessment that enables students to actively learn from the tasks they complete

Teachers' perception on feedback and practices

There is limited evidence about the relationship between teacher's perception and their practice of feedback in teaching and learning process. Having positive perception to provide effective feedback to the learners is vital and will have a positive contribution to the students learning. But, there may be a factor such as teachers' lack of competence and negative belief (Gul et al., 2016) not to provide feedback (i.e., the practice) very well. For example, Lee (2008) indicated that teachers' feedback practices are influenced by teachers' beliefs and values. Another study by Montgomery and Baker (2007) showed that differences both in the actual feedback and in teachers' own conceptions about it were observed in teacher and student perceptions of teacher feedback and they argue that all students are not given the same amount of feedback.

The emerging empirical studies found gap between the perception of teachers and their practices in the classroom. Teachers commonly use error correction, margin comments, and checklists; some incorporate rubrics and peer assessment to scale feedback (Lee, 2017). However, large-scale surveys in online and blended contexts show that time constraints and workload often narrow teachers' feedback to surface-level corrections rather than developmental guidance (Rahimi & Weisi, 2018). Further, Dessie and Sewagegn (2019) found mismatch between teachers' perception and their practices. The survey data indicated that 98.4% have a highly positive perception of the value of teachers' feedback for improving student learning. However, a document review of student exercise books showed that teachers frequently gave general, evaluative comments like "good" or "very good" along with marks and checkmarks for correct answers. These practices demotivate learners and has less value in improving the learning of students (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

In Bhutan, Wangchuk (2024) conducted mixed-method study on Continuous Formative Assessment (CFA) among primary teachers in Trashigang found that teachers generally understand CFA and value feedback in theory but face barriers such as lack of clear national guidelines, limited time, and inadequate professional development that restrict consistent implementation. Lhamo and Boonteerak (2024) similarly showed that Bhutanese primary teachers hold positive attitudes toward written corrective feedback (WCF) but display variation in practice and confidence. From the student perspective, Nidup and Wangchuk (2022) documented that Bhutanese student sometimes feel intimidated by teacher feedback and prefer constructive, private, and scaffolding feedback rather than public criticism. These shows that there are many factors affecting effective feedback in the field, however, in the context of the study, there were limited research done in the past that hinders the generalization. Therefore, this cross-sectional study determines the perception hold by secondary teachers and their practices in the classroom.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The main purpose of the study was to assess teachers' perception and practice of feedback to improve students' learning in the schools. To address the research questions, convergent mixed method was used. The quantitative data was collected through survey questionnaires, mainly to explore the teachers' perception, and their feedback practices in the schools. The quantitative data was gathered using semi-structured focus group discussions (FGD) to explain the preliminary quantitative survey results. Semi-structured interview questions were conducted at the end to collect views from participants to help explain the initial quantitative survey data

Sampling technique and sample size

The population of this study consists of secondary school teachers from Middle Secondary Schools (MSS) and Higher Secondary Schools (HSS) in Bhutan. According to the Annual Education Statistic (2024), there are 5743 secondary teachers working in the 153 schools. To ensure representativeness, the sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane formula (Yamane, 1967, p. 886) with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. Based on the calculation, the required sample size is 385 teachers. A simple random sampling technique was employed to select teachers for the survey in order to give each teacher an equal chance of participation, thereby minimizing selection bias. The qualitative data was gathered using purposive sampling as this technique allows the researcher to gather in-depth insights from teachers who have relevant experiences and knowledge aligned with the study objectives. Three groups of FGD were conducted with the selected secondary school teachers across the country. Each group consists of 10 members each.

Data collection strategies

Quantitative data were collected through survey questionnaires from nationwide secondary teachers. Owing to the time constraint, researcher rolled out the online survey questionnaires via various social media platforms to reach maximum participants across the country. The survey questionnaire, adapted from Dessie and Sewagegn (2019), was designed to collect data on teachers' perceptions and practices of feedback. It consisted of four sections: (1) demographic information, (2) teachers' perceptions of feedback, (3) teachers' feedback practices, and (4) challenges influencing feedback practices.

Qualitative data were gathered through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), which consisted of five guiding questions. These questions were developed based on the survey findings to further explore and explain the observed results. The interviews were digitally recorded to ensure that all participant contributions were accurately captured and preserved.

Validity and reliability

The validity and reliability of research instruments are essential to ensure credible findings (Creswell, 2014). The survey questionnaire was adapted from Dessie and Sewagegn (2019) to enhance its reliability and validity. Furthermore, to ensure methodological reliability, the instrument was pilot-tested. The reliability of the questionnaire was then assessed using the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient test in Jamovi, yielding a value of 0.854, which falls within the acceptable range (Creswell, 2014). The key interview questions for the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were developed based on the initial quantitative findings. These questions were validated by two research experts to ensure content validity. Additionally, member checking was conducted to enhance the trustworthiness and confirmability of the qualitative data. Member checking involves sharing interview transcripts or data interpretations with participants for verification. Richards (2003) defined it as a validation process used to obtain participants' feedback on the accuracy of collected data, descriptions, or interpretations.

Data analysis

The quantitative data gathered using survey was analyzed using descriptive statistics (Standard deviation and mean) to give the perceptions of teachers and their practices in the classroom. Likewise, Spearman's rho correlation was conducted to see the relationship between teachers' perception and their practices. The purpose of mean and standard deviation is to interpret the level of perception and classroom practices using Brown's (2010)'s scale as 1.00-1.50 (lowest); 1.51-2.50 (Low); 2.50-3.50 (Moderate); 3.51-4.50 (High); and 4.50-5.00 (Highest).

The qualitative data was analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework for thematic analysis. It involves identifying themes through careful and repeated reading of transcribed data. This approach is theoretically flexible, allowing for

detailed identification, description, and interpretation of patterns (themes) within a data set. This step-by-step process allows researchers to rigorously analyze qualitative data and produce comprehensive findings.

Ethical clearances

This study sought approval from the Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD) to conduct the research. All research participants were informed of their right to refuse or withdraw from participation at any time before or during the study. Written informed consent was obtained from all student participants prior to data collection. To maintain anonymity, pseudonyms were used, and personal identifiers were not disclosed. Data were securely stored and were accessible only to authorized personnel. The study upheld relational ethics by treating participants with respect, valuing their views, and fostering trust throughout the research process

RESULTS

This study explored teachers' perception on the power of feedback and their practices in the classroom. The findings were discussed under four themes; 1) Teachers' Perception of the Power of Feedback, 2) Teachers' practices of feedback to improve students learning, 3) challenges that influences feedback practices, and 4) Correlation between teachers' perception and practice of feedback

Teachers' perceptions on student learning

There are 10 items used to determine teachers' perception on the power of feedback to improve students' learning.

Table 1. Teachers' Perception of the Power of Feedback

Items	N	Mean	SD	Remarks
1. I believe that feedback is essential for improving students' learning outcomes.	385	4.58	0.717	Highest
2. Feedback helps students understand their strengths and weaknesses.	385	4.47	0.753	High
3. I believe that providing comments is more useful for improving learning than marks and correct answers.	385	4.18	0.965	High
4. I view student mistakes as opportunities for their learning.	385	4.32	0.787	High
5. I believe that peer feedback is important for students' learning	385	4.19	0.778	High
6. Positive feedback helps low-achieving students to gain confidence in their ability to learn.	385	4.39	0.806	High
7. Our feedback practice rarely provides useful suggestion for future improvement	385	3.64	1.100	High
8. Error analysis in general is effective feedback to improve students' learning	385	3.95	0.845	High
9. Feedback to students is mainly used to guide behavior and manage the classroom, rather than to support learning	385	2.93	1.211	Moderate
10. Marks provide sufficient feedback to students about their progress in relation to the learning targets	385	3.09	1.041	Moderate
Average	385	3.974	0.900	

Scale: 1.00-1.50 (lowest); 1.51-2.50 (Low); 2.50-3.50 (Moderate); 3.51-4.50 (High); 4.50-5.00 (Highest). Adapted from Brown (2010)

All the participants positively perceived the value of feedback in improving students' learning, with an overall mean score of $M = 3.97$. The highest-rated item was "Feedback is essential for improving students' learning outcomes" ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 0.717$), showing strong agreement among teachers that feedback is crucial to learning. Similarly, teachers strongly agreed that feedback helps students understand strengths and weaknesses ($M = 4.47$), and that positive feedback builds confidence in low-achieving learners ($M = 4.39$). Teachers also recognized the importance of peer feedback ($M = 4.19$) and using mistakes as learning opportunities ($M = 4.32$). Interestingly, the perception that "feedback is mainly used to guide behavior and manage the classroom" scored moderately ($M = 2.93$), suggesting that teachers primarily value feedback as an instructional rather than a disciplinary tool. Furthermore, the use of grades alone was rated as moderate ($M = 3.09$), indicating that teachers prefer descriptive and qualitative feedback to grades. Overall, the findings demonstrated the importance of feedback in promoting student learning, highlighting its function in fostering introspection, self-assurance, and ongoing development.

In addition to the data collected through questionnaires, three focus groups with ten participants were interviewed, and the results were as follows. All three focus group participants agreed that feedback is a crucial learning tool. For example, T1 (FGD1) described

The feedback as an essential part of learning. It's not just about giving marks or grades. Feedback helps students understand their mistakes and learn the correct approach. Without it, students may feel that their education is lacking since they are unable to assess their own progress.

Another participant T3 (FGD2) added "feedback is motivational. For students who are performing poorly, positive feedback encourages them to keep trying. I always try to combine suggestions with encouragement". Majority of participants viewed feedback as a guide to student growth. T2 (FGD 1) expressed "... feedback is a tool to bridge the gap between teaching and learning". T4 (FGD 3) also added it is "...like a guide for students to see where they are and what they need to improve". Thus, participants viewed feedback as a reflective tool for teacher and an aid to motivation, highlighted its power "for building confidence, especially for weaker students" T2 (FGD 3).

Teachers' practices of feedback to improve students learning

Table 2 revealed that teachers generally engage in a wide range of effective feedback practices, with most items rated in the high category. The highest mean score was for "providing both written and oral feedback" (M = 4.33, SD = 0.731), indicating teachers' preference for a combination of feedback modes (written and oral). Similarly, timely feedback (M = 4.14), tailoring feedback to student needs (M = 4.12), and encouraging reflection and action on feedback (M = 4.05–4.08) were also rated highly. Teachers reported frequent use of assessment tools to support ongoing progress monitoring (M = 4.14) and the use of assessment criteria to guide feedback (M = 4.07). Lesson planning that integrates feedback as a component of instruction also received a high mean (M = 3.74). However, reliance on evaluative feedback (grades only) was rated at a moderate level (M = 2.96), suggesting that while grades are still used, teachers prioritize descriptive, actionable feedback. This result demonstrated strong commitment to timely, descriptive, and varied feedback practices that foster student engagement and reflection, while reducing over-dependence on grades.

Table 2. Teachers' practice of feedback to improve students' learning

Items	N	Mean	SD	Remarks
1. I use different assessment tools to continually provide feedback for students' progress.	385	4.14	0.709	High
2. I provide timely feedback soon after the task is completed.	385	4.14	0.666	High
3. I provide both written and oral feedback to support student learning.	385	4.33	0.731	High
4. I tailor feedback according to individual student needs and abilities.	385	4.12	0.665	High
5. I provide descriptive feedback to my students without marks.	385	3.86	0.799	High
6. I provide written feedback comments along with marks for any task.	385	3.97	0.844	High
7. I provide evaluative feedback (only grades or marks) to my students	385	2.96	1.079	Moderate
8. I plan lessons that include feedback as a fundamental component of the session.	385	3.74	0.940	High
9. I provide students with opportunities to reflect on their own progress.	385	4.05	0.673	High
10. I create opportunities for learners to act on feedback provided.	385	4.08	0.723	High
11. I use the assessment criteria to provide learner feedback on any assessment task	385	4.07	0.673	High
Average	385	3.95	0.773	

Scale: 1.00-1.50 (lowest); 1.51-2.50 (Low); 2.50-3.50 (Moderate); 3.51-4.50 (High); 4.50-5.00 (Highest). Adapted from Brown (2010)

The interview result showed that Bhutanese teachers prioritized descriptive, timely and specific feedback delivery to enhance students learning. Majority of teachers employed a combination of oral and written methods, few oral and written feedback alone. For instance, T2 (FGD1) said;

I use both oral and written feedback. Written feedback is helpful for assignments, tests, and essays, because students can go back to it later. Oral feedback works well in classroom discussions or practical lessons. I prefer combination because it covers both immediacy and documentation.

However, some teachers leaned toward a single method: T3 (FDG2) preferred written feedback because "...students forget oral instructions. Written notes give them a reference, and it also helps me track progress over time". Conversely T4 (FGD3) found oral

feedback is more beneficial because it is "...more personal. When students see me speaking directly to them about their work, they feel acknowledged and motivated". The choice of mode is heavily influenced by contextual factor (such as classroom size) as T4 (FGD 3) shared, "...for large classes, I focus on oral feedback. Individual written feedback can take too long. I sometimes use peer feedback as well to manage time". These results demonstrate that the preference for effective feedback delivery is a flexible strategy adapted to teachers' individual choices and practical classroom constraints.

Participants also indicated that they provide feedback following the submission of notebooks, class tests, and assignments, as well as during class activities. The timing of delivery was deemed crucial for effective student monitoring. For instance, T1 (FDG2) highlighted, "...after a lab work, I tell the students which part of their experiment was correct and which they could improve". All teachers expressed their preferences of descriptive feedback over evaluative feedback as method to improve students learning. T1 (FGD2) explained "Descriptive feedback guides students on what exactly to improve. Marks alone don't help. For example, a student with low marks in math benefited a lot when I explained step by step how to solve each type of problem". T3 (FGD1) added, "It allows students to take actionable steps. Instead of just seeing a low mark, they understand what needs to change and can focus on it. I have noticed that students respond more positively to descriptive feedback". A few participants from the FGD suggested that combining evaluative and descriptive feedback would be more beneficial, noting that their synergistic effect motivated students and supported effective learning. From this result, it is clear that teachers not only recognize the importance of timely feedback but also value the depth and clarity that descriptive feedback provides in promoting student learning. Their collective preference indicates a pedagogical shift from merely assessing performance through marks toward fostering learning through constructive guidance. This demonstrates that when feedback is descriptive, specific, and delivered promptly, it becomes a powerful tool for enhancing students' understanding, motivation, and overall academic progress.

Challenges Influencing Feedback Practices

Table 3 revealed several challenges influencing feedback practices. The most critical barrier identified was large class sizes ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 0.845$), which teachers rated as the highest challenge. Closely following this was time constraints ($M = 4.38$), suggesting that workload and curriculum demands limit opportunities for individualized feedback. Teachers also reported that students' lack of action on feedback ($M = 4.05$) and student attitudes or motivation ($M = 4.04$) reduce the effectiveness of feedback. Other significant challenges include balancing curriculum completion with feedback delivery ($M = 4.15$) and lack of resources ($M = 3.70$). Moderate challenges were identified in areas such as difficulty in giving constructive feedback without discouraging students ($M = 3.45$) and limited teacher confidence or knowledge of effective feedback strategies ($M = 2.74$). The result inferred that teachers' feedback practices are heavily influenced by structural and contextual factors such as class size, time pressure, and resource availability, as well as student-related factors such as motivation and responsiveness.

Table 3. Challenges Influencing Feedback Practices

Items	N	Mean	SD	Remarks
1. Large class sizes make it difficult to provide detailed feedback to every student.	385	4.52	0.845	Highest
2. Time constraints prevent me from giving feedback regularly.	385	4.38	0.864	High
3. Students do not always act on or use the feedback provided.	385	4.05	0.843	High
4. Lack of resources (e.g., technology, assessment tools) affects the quality of feedback	385	3.70	1.166	High
5. Students' attitudes or motivation affect how effective feedback is	385	4.04	0.770	High
6. Balancing curriculum completion and feedback delivery is challenging.	385	4.15	0.970	High
7. I face difficulty in providing constructive feedback without discouraging students.	385	3.45	1.089	Moderate
8. I feel less confident in giving feedback because I have limited knowledge about how to provide it effectively.	385	2.74	1.223	Moderate
Average	385	3.88	0.971	

Findings from the focus group discussions further substantiated the survey results presented in Table 3, confirming that teachers face multiple contextual and structural barriers in delivering effective feedback. Across all three FGDs, participants consistently highlighted large class sizes as the most significant challenge. As T1 (FGD1) explained, "Large classes make it difficult to give personalized feedback. I sometimes give group feedback, focusing on common mistakes, but individual issues may not get addressed." This sentiment was echoed by teachers from FGD2 and FGD3, who similarly emphasized that "large classes make individual feedback challenging," forcing them to rely on collective feedback. Time pressure was another dominant concern, with T2 (FGD1) noting, "When the syllabus is heavy, I have to prioritize key feedback points and can't always give detailed comments to every student," and T2 (FGD2) adding that "tight syllabus deadlines compromise the quality of detailed feedback." Teachers also pointed to student-related factors, particularly motivation and responsiveness, as major influences on feedback effectiveness. As T3 (FGD1) remarked, "If students are engaged and ask questions, feedback is effective. But unmotivated students often ignore

feedback, so it's harder to help them improve." Resource constraints were another recurring theme, with teachers from all groups expressing that "lack of markers, chart papers, or digital tools limits my ability to provide visual or detailed feedback" (T4, FGD1). In response, several teachers described adapting by using peer feedback and group discussions to overcome these challenges. Overall, the qualitative findings strongly align with the quantitative data, indicating that feedback practices in Bhutanese secondary schools are shaped by class size, workload, limited resources, and student motivation-factors that collectively determine both the quality and frequency of feedback provided.

Correlation between teachers' perception and practice of feedback

Table 4. Spearman's rho correlation between teachers' perception and practice of feedback

		Perception Tot
Teachers' practice	Spearman's rho	0.430
	Df	8
	p-value	0.218

The analysis revealed a moderate, positive correlation with a Spearman's rho (ρ) of 0.430. This positive value suggests that as the rank of teachers' practice increases (e.g., improves), the rank of the total perception also tends to increase. However, the correlation was statistically not significant with p-value 0.218 which is greater than 0.05.

DISCUSSION

Teachers' perceptions on student learning

Findings from both the survey and focus group discussions indicated that teachers held a highly positive perception of feedback as an integral tool for improving students' learning. The overall mean score ($M = 3.97$) suggests that teachers viewed feedback as a formative process rather than merely evaluative, aligning with the principles of assessment for learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Similarly, Hattie and Timperley (2007) asserted that feedback is one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement when it provides information about where learners are, where they need to go, and how to get there. This triadic structure supports the idea that feedback, when well-designed, encourages self-regulated learning (Zimmerman, 2002) by helping students take ownership of their progress. To support this, Lee (2008) pointed out that good feedback helps students comprehend where they stand right now and what they need to do to get better. Teachers' strong agreement emphasizes Bhutan's increasing focus on formative assessment procedures, where feedback is seen less as a grading system and more as a reflective and motivating process. These findings underscore a positive shift toward feedback as a key driver of student self-regulation and lifelong learning. The moderate ratings for items such as "marks provide sufficient feedback" ($M = 3.09$) and "feedback used mainly to guide behavior" ($M = 2.93$) indicate that teachers are aware of the limitations of behaviorist and summative feedback models. Instead, their perceptions reflect a shift toward constructivist and formative paradigms, where feedback functions as a dialogue that encourages reflection and goal-setting (Sadler, 1989). This suggests that educators are shifting from the conventional "tell and correct" approach to feedback as a dialogue about learning, which is a key concept in modern assessment for learning frameworks (Wiliam, 2011). According to Chinpakdee et al. (2025), using structured feedback dialogues in Thai EFL classes greatly improved students' feedback literacy, or their capacity to understand criticism, seek clarification, and use recommendations to make their work better. This finding supports the growing understanding that effective feedback is not a one-way transmission of information but a dialogic process that empowers learners to take ownership of their learning.

Teachers' Practices of Feedback to Improve Students' Learning

The findings revealed that Bhutanese teachers actively adopt diverse and effective feedback practices, with most rated highly—particularly the use of both written and oral feedback ($M = 4.33$), timely responses ($M = 4.14$), and feedback tailored to individual needs ($M = 4.12$). Teachers prioritized guidance and reflection over grades alone, favoring descriptive and dialogic feedback over purely evaluative approaches ($M = 2.96$). Focus group discussions further confirmed that oral feedback offers immediacy and connection, while written feedback ensures clarity and traceability. Despite contextual challenges such as large class sizes, teachers demonstrated a clear shift from summative grading to formative, student-centered feedback that promotes self-regulation, engagement, and ongoing improvement.

These findings are consistent with international research that demonstrates that prompt, targeted, and dialogic feedback improves learning more than evaluative remarks alone (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Wiliam, 2011). Descriptive feedback encourages deeper comprehension and metacognitive engagement by making learning objectives and success criteria clear (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Shute, 2008). Students' feedback literacy is improved by incorporating structured feedback dialogues, which enables them to effectively interpret, question, and respond to feedback (Chinpakdee et al., 25). These results indicate that Bhutanese teachers are becoming more in line with global best practices for formative evaluation, as evidenced by their inclination for descriptive and dialogic feedback reflects a constructivist orientation that positions learners as active participants in the feedback process. The implication for practice is clear: teacher training and policy should continue to emphasize feedback literacy, dialogic interaction, and contextual adaptability to sustain this positive shift. Investing in teacher capacity to deliver timely, descriptive, and student-responsive feedback can significantly enhance motivation, self-regulation, and academic achievement in Bhutanese classrooms.

Challenges Influencing Feedback Practices

The study revealed that Bhutanese teachers face several challenges that significantly influence their ability to provide effective feedback. Large class size emerged as the most critical barrier ($M = 4.52$), followed closely by time constraints ($M = 4.38$), indicating that heavy workloads and curriculum demands limit opportunities for individualized feedback. These findings mirror global trends, as recent studies have shown that class size and time pressure remain the most persistent obstacles to providing high-quality, formative feedback (Lee, 2024; To, 2025). Teachers also reported student-related factors, such as limited motivation and lack of action on feedback ($M = 4.05-4.04$), which reduce the impact of feedback and hinder continuous learning. Similar

observations were made by Winstone and Carless (2023), who emphasized that student engagement and feedback literacy are crucial for feedback effectiveness.

Overall, the findings suggest that despite teachers' positive perceptions Qualitative insights further reinforced these findings, with teachers across all FGDs emphasizing how large classes and time constraints force them to rely on group or collective feedback instead of individualized comments. Resource limitations, including inadequate access to teaching materials and digital tools ($M = 3.70$), were also reported, aligning with Skedsmo et al. (2024), who noted that contextual constraints often shape teachers' feedback practices more than their pedagogical intentions. Moreover, while most teachers demonstrated strong commitment to descriptive feedback, some expressed difficulty providing constructive comments without discouraging students ($M = 3.45$) and cited limited knowledge of effective strategies ($M = 2.74$). These challenges indicate a need for continuous professional development focused on feedback literacy and classroom management strategies to address feedback barriers effectively and practices, the sustainability of effective feedback in Bhutanese secondary schools depends on addressing systemic issues such as large class sizes, time constraints, and insufficient resources. Supporting teachers through smaller class ratios, improved resources, and professional learning in formative feedback could strengthen feedback implementation and promote a more dialogic, student-centered learning culture.

Conclusion

The study showed that Bhutanese secondary teachers hold highly positive perceptions of feedback as an essential tool for enhancing student learning. They demonstrated a strong dedication to prompt, dialogic, and descriptive feedback techniques that encourage introspection, self-control, and drive. However, structural and contextual issues like big class sizes, time constraints, workload pressure, and scarce resources limit the effectiveness of the feedback practices. Student-related factors, including low motivation and limited feedback literacy, further reduce the impact of feedback. Teachers demonstrated flexibility in the face of these barriers by sustaining engagement through a combination of written, oral, and peer feedback. Overall, the results show a pedagogical shift away from summative feedback to formative, which is consistent with international best practices that view feedback as a dialogic and learner-centered process.

Recommendations

To enhance feedback effectiveness in Bhutanese schools, it is recommended that education policymakers and school leaders reduce class sizes or implement collaborative peer-feedback models to manage workload. Professional development programs should focus on strengthening teachers' feedback literacy, emphasizing strategies for providing constructive, student-responsive comments. Integrating digital tools and formative assessment platforms can also support timely and individualized feedback. Additionally, fostering students' feedback literacy through explicit instruction can increase their capacity to interpret and act upon feedback meaningfully. Finally, embedding feedback as a core component of curriculum planning and teacher evaluation systems will help institutionalize a sustainable culture of formative, dialogic assessment that continuously improves teaching and learning quality.

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