

Teachers' Feedback Provision Practices: A Case of Geography Subject Continuous Assessment Activities in Tanzanian Secondary Schools

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Abstract

This study examined secondary school teachers' feedback provision practices in Geography continuous assessment activities in Tanzania. It used a concurrent mixed methods approach to collect data through interviews, focus group discussions, questionnaires, and documentary reviews. The study comprised 418 respondents, including heads of schools, Form Three geography teachers, and Form Three students who were purposely and randomly chosen. The descriptive data demonstrate that teachers do not deliver effective feedback because their feedback lacks clarity, descriptiveness, specificity, and continuity. The study concludes that the feedback provided by geography teachers is ineffective. The findings highlight the imperative for the continuing professional development programmes to enhance teacher's knowledge and skills essential for delivering effective feedback in schools.

Keywords: *Feedback, effective feedback, geography learning, geography assessment, continuous assessment*

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Introduction

Education stands as an indispensable catalyst for the social, political, and economic development of any country. Recognising its value, numerous nations, including Tanzania, have exerted substantial efforts to enhance educational quality, ensuring that learners acquire essential knowledge and skills necessary for success in a competitive global economy (Chinapah, Cars, & Grinberg, 2013). These efforts encompass improving infrastructure, education and training for qualified instructors, providing ample teaching and learning materials, and implementing competency-based curricula along with innovative assessment methods in secondary schools (Kousainov, 2016).

Despite these strides, effective feedback on students' assessment remains a crucial component for fostering learning and ensuring the acquisition of quality education. According to Obilor (2019), feedback is defined as constructive information that allows learners to identify gaps and receive suggestions for improving their learning.

The concept of feedback in education can be traced back to the mid-twentieth century (Boud & Molloy, 2013). Originating from its use in engineering for regulating engines by monitoring and feeding back information into the system to ensure quality, quantity, and safety (Stanford, 2019) feedback transitioned through two significant phases upon its integration into education. In its early phase, it was confined to the behavioural approach, focusing primarily on the supplier of feedback, typically instructors, while neglecting students' internal processes, such as analysing and making sense of teachers' feedback (Black & Wiliam, 1998). This phase assumed that student's behaviour could be changed without their conscious consent (Thurlings Vermeulen, Bastiaens, & Stijnen, 2013). The feedback process was linear, with teachers providing feedback and students receiving it, lacking & two-way exchange concerning comments on students' assessment activities (Thurlings et al., 2013). Despite the assumption that all types of teacher-provided feedback were beneficial, studies later revealed that not all positively contribute to students' learning. For example, general feedback was found to hinder, rather enhance, student learning (Kivuti, 2015).

In the second phase, educational theorists conceptualise the feedback concept differently. They view feedback as two-way exchange, acknowledging that students actively filter the message from teacher feedback rather than merely responding to stimuli (Brookhart, 2008). According to this perspective, that the impact of teachers' feedback on student learning is not automatic, students must interpret and make sense of the feedback, turning it into internal input and taking subsequent learning action. By analysing and deriving meaning from teacher feedback, students can identify learning gaps and address observable shortcomings (Thurlings et al., 2013). The combination of external and internal feedback, as per this viewpoint, enhances motivation and self-regulation, allowing students to set future learning goals and devise various strategies to achieve them (Butler & Winne, 1995).

However, depending on the type of feedback, teachers' feedback can either propel or stymie learning progress. According to Tanti, Maison, Syefrinando, and Daryanto (2020), providing appropriate feedback boosts students' self-motivation and involvement in their learning. To make students self-motivated to learn, teacher's feedback must be timely, specific, descriptive, task-focused, ongoing, and clear (Al-Bashir, Kabir, & Rahman, 2016; Naylor, Baik, Asmar, & Watty, 2014). A teacher should provide feedback to students as soon as possible after the assessment activity is completed so that they can make sense of it and remedy problems noticed in their learning activities (Naylor et al., 2014; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). In terms of specificity, the teacher should point out any errors discovered during the evaluation

activity and provide a clear direction for improving the learning activities (Naylor et al., 2014).

Teachers' feedback also is most effective when it is descriptive, providing clarity on the strengths and weaknesses of students' assessment activities. Pridemore and Klein (1995) argue that feedback that offers guidance on improving an answer is more beneficial for fostering learning than feedback that merely indicates correctness or incorrectness. Additionally, feedback should focus on the specific task rather than commenting on the student's personality. Task-focused feedback enhances students' understanding of topic content more effectively than feedback that generalises about the student's overall personality (Lara et al., 2016). Task-focused feedback also encourages students to apply the provided feedback to address identified errors, thereby enhancing their learning. Moreover, comments should be clear and explicit to support students' learning. Clear feedback enables students to make progress in their learning by understanding why they are incorrect and how to rectify the identified errors (Norcini et al., 2011). Consistently providing feedback for each assessment task is crucial for students' awareness of the strengths and weaknesses in their work, resulting in improved learning (Tomlinson, Moon, & Imbeau, 2015). These principles are universally applicable to teaching and learning across various subjects, including Geography, the subject of this study.

Geography holds a prominent position as a core subject in lower secondary schools across many nations, including Tanzania. It is considered essential for imparting knowledge about natural resources and the environment, fostering positive attitudes, and developing practical skills to preserve its beauty and harness it for economic development. (Eze, 2021). Existing research from various regions of the world, however, shows that very few students acquire such knowledge, attitude, and skills. This is demonstrated by students' poor performance in national Geography examinations in several countries. For example, Singh et al. (2016) report a declining trend in national geography examinations in Malaysia, but Viehrig (2014) observes a dropping trend in geography student performance in Germany. Similarly, Anlimachie (2019) points out that Ghanaian students consistently perform poorly in Geography examinations. Multiple explanations have been advanced as to why students perform poorly in Geography national examinations as compared to other arts disciplines. Inappropriate teaching techniques, a lack of teaching and learning resources, a shortage of teachers, and a lack of effective feedback are among the reasons (Henderson, 2017; Maffea, 2020; Oche, 2012; Reniko et al., 2017).

Tanzanian students' performance in Geography national examinations has been persistently low from 2016 to 2020, with nearly half (47%) failing (President's Office Regional Administration and Local Government [PORALG], 2021). The high failure

rates in geography in Tanzania have created concerns among education stakeholders regarding the quality of secondary school students' learning, notably in the subject of geography (Moshia, 2018). Similarly, academics and the general public are increasingly concerned about the importance of assessment activities, particularly teacher feedback provided during teaching and learning (Amani, Kitta, Kapinga, & Mbilinyi, 2021). Despite the apparent frightening concerns regarding teacher feedback, there has been a paucity of research in Tanzania, specifically on effective feedback strategies to enhance Geography learning among secondary school students in Tanzania. Most existing Tanzanian research has mainly focused on students' opinions of formative assessment and feedback (Kyaruzi, Strijbos, Ufer & Brown, 2018) and teachers' use of feedback in teaching and learning (Lema & Maro, 2018; Simbeye, 2012). To fill this void, this study looked into the feedback practices of secondary school geography teachers in Tanzania, specifically feedback that fits the prerequisites for successful feedback on continuous geography assessment tasks.

Research Question

- i. To what extent do Geography teachers provide effective feedback on students' continuous assessment activities?

Literature Review

Feedback that possesses characteristics such as being task-focused, clear, timely, descriptive, continuous, and specific is considered valuable in supporting students' learning (Elliott et al., 2020; Naylor et al., 2014). Various researchers have delved into effective feedback strategies employed by teachers to enhance student learning. Vardi (2013), for instance, found that specific feedback given by teachers in Australian schools contributed to increased learning and subsequent improvement in students' performance. This was attributed to the fact that specific feedback enabled students to identify and address areas for improvement in their assessment exercises. Similarly, Selvaraj and Azman (2020) reported that precise feedback from teachers in Malaysia positively impacted student learning by aiding in error identification and correction.

Fatima and Akbar's (2020) study on the impact of continuous feedback on students' English writing skills at the matriculation level revealed that ongoing feedback on students' assessment tasks assisted them in recognizing their strengths and areas for improvement in each assessment activity. In Uganda, Mwebaza (2010) found that teachers providing specific and timely feedback allowed students sufficient time to acknowledge and work on identified deficiencies in their assessment tasks, enabling them to address them promptly. The reviewed studies underscore the importance of feedback aligning with key characteristics—explicitness, clarity, continuity, descriptiveness, timeliness, and task-focus—in improving students' learning and academic achievements. Consequently, teachers play a vital role in furnishing feedback

that incorporates these elements to enhance the learning experiences of their students.

Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by self-determination theory (SDT), developed in 1985 by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (Cherry, 2022). According to the theory, “people become self-determined when their needs for competence, connection, and autonomy are fulfilled” (Mani & Mishra, 2017, 88). Autonomy refers to people’s desire to have control over their actions and goals. This notion of being able to take direct action that results in genuine change contributes significantly to people feeling self-determined. As a result, competence relates to people’s urge to master tasks and develop new abilities. When people believe they have the necessary talents for success, they are more likely to take actions that will help them reach their objectives. Relatedness comprises a sense of closeness to others, being cared for by others, and belonging to others (Deci & Ryan, 2002). People always require autonomy, competence, and relatedness in this regard, as they are the main drivers of motivated behaviour. Satisfaction of these three basic needs fosters optimal motivational qualities and states of autonomous motivation and intrinsic desires, allowing for effective participation in a variety of activities, including learning. Thus, when the needs above are not met, an individual’s psychological well-being and growth suffer (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

This theory is primarily concerned with motivation, and appropriate feedback is regarded as a vital aspect in motivating students to participate in learning. In this study, teachers’ feedback can either stimulate or discourage students from learning, affecting their long-term performance. Effective feedback increases students’ drive to put forth more tremendous effort in their studies and vice versa. In this regard, the theoretical framework describes the effects of effective and ineffective teacher feedback on their learning. For example, in terms of feedback supply, as conceptualised in this study, it may be claimed that when the aforementioned basic needs are met, students are more motivated to fix the shortcomings seen in their assessment activities (Katz et al., 2010). In student learning research, autonomy refers to choice, competence to feeling efficacious, and relatedness to feeling linked to the teacher and class. Satisfying these demands is essential for students’ feedback-based learning (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Concerning competence in the context of SDT, it suggests that providing students with feedback that identifies their strengths and deficiencies makes them feel intrinsically motivated about their learning and knowledge of the subject topic (Cate, 2012). Receiving feedback is a social interaction between the teacher and the students in terms of relatedness. Teachers’ feedback words represent how they want their students to know about their strengths and flaws, as revealed by the assessment activities. Furthermore, the SDT maintains that a satisfactory condition for the relatedness of the components that comprise the behaviour of different social groupings must be of high quality. Furthermore, the SDT maintains that a satisfactory condition for the related-

ness of the components that comprise the behaviour of different social groupings must be of high quality. In the framework of this study, research on the provision of effective feedback involving Geography subjects must specifically clarify what happens to the aforementioned actual conditions of effective feedback. Since most previous studies, particularly in Tanzania (Francis, Millington, & Cederl, 2019; Eze, 2021), have not focused entirely and explicitly on the conditions of effective feedback in enhancing students' learning of Geography, there is an urgent need to illuminate feedback insights for facilitating students' learning of Geography in Tanzanian secondary schools in relation to SDT tenets.

Methodology

The study used a concurrent mixed methods research design to collect quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell, 2014). The study had 418 participants, including nine heads of schools, nine Form Three Geography teachers, and 400 Form Three students. The respondents were drawn from nine government secondary schools in Moshi (Kilimanjaro region), Sumbawanga (Rukwa region), and Nachingwea (Lindi region). The three regions were chosen based on the criterion of degree of achievement in the Certificate of Secondary Education Examination (CSEE) over the previous five years, from 2016 to 2020. Kilimanjaro region was chosen because it ranked highest, Rukwa ranked average, and Lindi ranked lowest over five years (2016-2020) (PORALG, 2021). The three districts, namely Moshi District Council, Sumbawanga Municipal Council, and Nachingwea District Council, were also chosen on purpose from the three regions (Kilimanjaro, Rukwa, and Lindi) based on the criterion of CSEE performance over the previous five years (2016 to 2020). Thus, Moshi District was chosen because it had the highest ranking, Sumbawanga Municipality had an average ranking, and Nachingwea District had the lowest ranking (NECTA, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021). The purposeful selection of secondary schools from the three selected districts was based on the same three levels of performance in CSEE district-wise (high, average, and low performance) during five years (2016-2020). Three distinct types of schools were chosen in each of the districts chosen for this study.

Heads of schools and Geography teachers were purposefully chosen because the heads of schools are in charge of all school activities, including teacher feedback. The Form Three Geography teachers were chosen since they were in charge of providing feedback on students' continuous assessment tasks, which were delivered alongside Geography teaching and learning. The Form Three students were chosen using one of three sampling techniques: purposive, stratified, and random. 400 Form Three students were chosen using stratified and random selection approaches to complete a questionnaire. Students were categorised by stream and gender before being chosen using a basic sampling technique (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). Each school had 44 students on average. The purposeful sampling strategy was utilised to select 54 students for the focus group discussion (FGD), with six students chosen from each

school. Students for FGD were chosen based on their performance in the previous terminal examination and their participation in the questionnaire; one male and one female student who ranked highest, average, and lowest were chosen.

In comparison to Form One and Form Two students, Form Three students have more experience and knowledge of teachers' feedback practices. Form Four students were not there because they were preparing for the CSEE. As a result, participation in the study could prove inconvenient for them. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, and documentary analysis. The questionnaire was created by the researcher and consisted of four Likert scale items ranging from strongly disagree = 1 to agree = 4 strongly. The questionnaire contained six effective feedback characteristics represented by 24 items: timeliness, clarity, specificity, feedback focus, continuity, and descriptiveness. The questionnaire gathered data on how well Geography teachers deliver helpful feedback on students' assessment activities.

The interview guides, which each contained five items, were used to collect data from the heads of schools and Form Three Geography teachers. A five-item FGD was utilised to collect data from Form Three students, while documentary analysis was employed to collect data from Form Three students' assignments and assessments. Guides for interviews, focus groups, and documentary analysis also gathered information on the extent to which Geography teachers provide useful feedback on students' ongoing assessment activities. Each interview session lasted 40 to 60 minutes, while each focus group session lasted 60 to 90 minutes. Voice recorders and note-taking were used to record interviews and focus groups.

To ensure the rigour of this study's research findings, the researcher reviewed the data collection instruments by reviewing numerous drafts of the instruments with peers. The discussion's remarks were used to change the instruments. The researchers also tested the data-gathering equipment at a government secondary school in the Dar es Salaam region. This school was not one of the schools included in the main study. The pilot study results allowed the researcher to improve the items, delete some of the items, and add some items, making the instruments thorough before embarking on the major study. The data obtained through questionnaires was used to find Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The scale had a satisfactory reliability alpha coefficient of 0.7. This signifies that the items' internal reliability coefficients were sufficient and thus accepted. The researcher also used a variety of data collection techniques (documentary analysis, questionnaire, interview, and focus group) as well as respondents (Heads of schools, Form Three instructors, and Form Three students). This assisted in reducing biases that could have resulted from the use of a single instrument or a single category of respondents. Finally, the researcher presented respondents' voices to reassure readers that the findings came directly from the respondents.

Data Analysis

This data were analysed using two techniques: descriptive statistics (quantitative data) and thematic analysis (qualitative data). The quantitative data were coded before being input and analysed with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics, with mean and standard deviations obtained to evaluate the extent to which teachers provide helpful feedback. In the case of qualitative data, thematic analysis was utilised to analyse it. Thematic analysis was a suitable technique to apply in this study since it allowed the researcher to generate codes and themes from field data. In this study, the thematic analysis included several procedures, including data familiarisation (reading the transcription several times and noting down the initial themes), coding (creating and assigning labels to pieces of data in order to categorise data extracts), and theme development (combining several similar codes into a single theme). It also included reviewing themes (comparing the developed themes and data set to ensure that the themes are accurate representations of the data in question), naming themes (coming up with easily understandable names for each theme (evaluative feedback, unclear feedback, general feedback, and irregular feedback), and report writing (Braun, Clarke, & Weate, 2016). The responses from the interviews and focus groups were presented under the pseudonyms “A” to “I” and Arabic numbers 1 to 9 to represent the respondents.

Findings and Discussion

The research question sought to evaluate the extent to which Geography teachers provide useful feedback about students’ continuous assessment activities. The findings, which focused on the six characteristics of good feedback, namely timeliness, clarity, specificity, feedback focus, descriptiveness, and continuity, are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1
Characteristics of Effective Feedback (N=400)

Characteristics of Effective Feedback	M	SD
Timeliness	2.7	0.8
Feedback focus	2.6	0.7
Clarity	1.9	0.7
Descriptiveness	2.1	0.5
Specificity	2.0	0.5
Continuity	2.1	0.8
Overall Mean	2.2	0.3

Note: M= Mean, SD=Standard Deviation

Table 1 shows that teachers perform poorly in most aspects of effective feedback, including clarity (M=1.9, SD=0.7), descriptiveness (M=2.1, SD=0.5), specificity

($M=2.0$, $SD=0.5$), and continuity ($M=2.1$, $SD=0.8$). This is because their mean scores were lower than the overall mean score ($M=2.2$, $SD=0.3$). This means that teachers' input was consistently poor in enhancing students' learning. However, it is worth noting that the individual mean scores for clarity, descriptiveness, specificity, and continuity were all relatively close to the overall mean score. This implies that the inadequacy in achieving the requirements of the majority of characteristics was nearly identical among Geography teachers. This demonstrates a significant degree of teacher inadequacies in delivering meaningful feedback on students' continuous assessment activities to promote their learning of Geography.

Similarly, documentary analysis revealed that teachers' feedback on students' ongoing evaluation tasks was inefficient. For example, 89.6% of the observed students' assessment tasks had no clear feedback, 91.9% had no specific feedback, 92.3% had no descriptive feedback, and 5.7% had no teacher's feedback, indicating that the feedback was not ongoing. It was also discovered that teachers primarily provided feedback by marking correct answers with a tick and incorrect ones with a cross. The crossed-out answers were not accompanied by explanations of the errors discovered in the students' assessment tasks and how to remedy them. Such feedback, according to some, cannot help students understand what they need to do to better their understanding of geography, hence impeding students' learning. The findings from interviews and focus group discussions with heads of schools (HoS), teachers, and students highlighted four topics involving Geography teachers delivering feedback on students' continuous assessment tasks. Evaluative feedback, irregular feedback, unclear feedback, and general feedback were among them.

Evaluative feedback

Participants' findings demonstrated that Geography teachers usually utilise symbols (ticks on correct answers and crosses on erroneous responses) and words to provide feedback to students on their continuous assessment tasks. Teachers noted that they never use ticks and crosses with specific remarks about the problems and suggestions to help students remedy the identified mistakes in the continuous assessment tasks. Furthermore, more than 70% of students who took part in the focus groups said that Geography teachers generally use ticks on correct answers and crosses on wrong responses. They also stated that teachers typically use phrases like "good", "well done", "poor drawing", and "poor work" as comments.

To back up this claim, one of the teachers stated:

I usually use ticks for correct answers and crosses for incorrect responses without providing any additional information. When marking, ticks and crosses provide a pupil with a feeling of my evaluation or judgment of whether something is correct or incorrect. Where do I obtain the time or energy to do or satisfy a more demanding marking requirement of providing

thorough information about their answers? I can't go into more detail regarding the incorrect answers since, as I previously stated, I have a significant number of students to whom I teach this Geography, which means I have to read and mark many answers in a short amount of time. As a result, providing descriptive feedback on students' replies in all of their assessment activities is challenging (Teacher 1: School A).

One student expressed the following point of view:

The teacher typically provides feedback by ticking where you are correct and crossing where you are incorrect. The teacher does not provide reasons why the response is incorrect nor explanations to assist us in understanding the mistake and how to remedy the mistakes we have made in previous assessment activities (Student D: School C).

According to the excerpts, teachers use symbols and evaluative words as the primary means of delivering feedback on the quality of answers in the assessment activities that the students completed. The excerpts also imply that having a large number of students meant that teachers had many assessment activities to attend to, which prevented them from delivering thorough feedback and allowing students' learning to progress. As a result of the enormous number of students in courses, teachers did not have the time or energy to write extensive comments on each of the students' continuous assessment activities. The provision of evaluative feedback also denies students the right to obtain sufficient and relevant information from their teachers' input, thereby impeding progress in topic learning. These findings are consistent with those of Ruiz-Primo and Li (2013), who found that 61% of instructor feedback on students' notebooks was evaluative. The study discovered that teachers provided feedback in the form of grades, figures, and symbols (ticks and crosses). Cetinkaya (2015) showed that 67.1% of feedback offered by teachers was evaluative, with statements like "this is not good enough" and "it is not how it should be" used as feedback. This means that teachers did not advise students on how to fix their mistakes, which hampered their learning.

Irregular feedback

The findings showed that teachers did not provide feedback on every assessment activity that students completed. It was also claimed that due to the excessive teaching load allotted to them, teachers did not provide feedback on some of the assessment exercises. Teachers noted that they typically offered feedback on midterm tests, terminal examinations, and annual examinations because the assessment, as mentioned above, included activities utilised for grading and reporting students' progress and accomplishments to parents. To back this up, one of the teachers stated:

I do not provide feedback on all students' assessment exercises. I only do that to some of the assessment activities. This is due to an insufficient time I have and, of course, when it is required to do so, particularly exams or assessments

for reporting on their [students'] achievement. Because I teach Form One, Form Two, Form Three, and advanced-level classes, I must provide feedback in every class I teach. Each class has three streams at the usual level. As a result, providing feedback is problematic because topics will not be covered (Teacher 1: School A).

Similarly, one of the students stated:

Some of the evaluation exercises we undertake do not receive feedback from the teacher. This is because the teacher may assign us multiple assessment activities but never provide feedback on all of the assessment activities, we have completed during a given period. In most situations, teachers provide feedback on midterm, final, and annual exams, which we do. The teacher rarely provides comments on the other types of evaluation tasks that we participate in (Student B: School B).

The excerpts above imply that, in addition to colossal class numbers, there is another primary reason why teachers do not provide feedback on every student's assessment activities but only on tests and examinations. This is because the school administration and quality assurance staff closely monitored and checked the results of the exams and examinations. As a result of pressure from educational authorities, teachers were required to provide feedback exclusively for accountability purposes rather than to aid students' understanding of the subject of geography. These findings are consistent with those of Blair et al. (2013), who indicated that nearly half of students (42.2%) did not receive feedback on their assessments. Similarly, Kivuti (2015) discovered that teachers did not provide continuous feedback ($M=4.53$, $SD=0.78$) because they primarily provided feedback on chosen assessment activities. This is to suggest that the students may have missed information about their true strengths and limitations, as well as how to rectify the flaws on a regular basis. As a result of all the evaluation activities they completed, their learning growth was hampered.

Unclear feedback

The findings from FDG with students indicated that teachers' feedback was always ambiguous as to what was meant and the subsequent steps for students to take to learn the topic, they got wrong in the assessment tasks. The majority of students said that teachers did not clearly describe what was done well, did not identify what could be improved, and did not provide concrete recommendations to help students improve their assessment activities. This means that the feedback supplied may have prevented students from addressing the identified errors, hence impeding progress in learning the Geography material. One of the students claimed:

The feedback we get from the teacher about the assessment activities we do is never straightforward. The teacher does not point out the errors in each question, nor does she offer actions or procedures that we might do to fix the

errors discovered in our assessment exercises. As a result, we are unable to improve our assessment activities because the feedback supplied is ambiguous (Student E: School G).

The excerpt implies that students do not grasp the feedback teachers provide and do not receive any relevant information regarding the mistakes made and how to remedy them, causing them to fail to progress with studying the geography topic covered in class. These findings align with Komba's (2015) study, which showed that teachers in Tanzanian primary schools often provided feedback comments using ambiguous language and failed to offer verbal explanations for the comments written in students' work. The study noted that teachers frequently issued generic recommendations like "repeat the exercise" without specifying which aspects needed repetition. Similarly, a study by Seden and Svaricek (2018) found that teachers commonly marked correct answers with ticks and crossed out incorrect responses without providing accompanying written comments. Such feedback practices leave students uncertain about the steps they need to take to address identified errors in their assessment activities. Consequently, clear and specific feedback from teachers is essential to guide students effectively in improving their learning.

General feedback

The findings revealed that the feedback supplied was never relevant for students to better their learning. Approximately 77.8 per cent of HoS said that teachers used words like "perfect", "good", "excellent", "repeat", and "poor work" as feedback. This type of feedback does not teach students what they did well or incorrectly or how to rectify their errors. As a result, students failed to understand what was correct and needed to be addressed immediately or in future learning. To back this up, one of the heads of schools stated:

Feedback provided by teachers regarding learning activities is usually general since they frequently utilise general terms as comments, such as "good", "very good", "excellent", "repeat", and "poor work." This type of feedback causes us to be unsure of what is wrong, correct, or what should be repeated. Is it the entire work or just a piece of it? As a result, this type of criticism leaves students stuck, unsure of what to keep and what to fix, which is detrimental to boosting students' learning (HoS 5: School E).

One student agreed and added:

The teacher usually provides feedback in the form of a tick for questions answered correctly and a cross for questions answered incorrectly. The teacher never adds precise comments on the paper, pointing out the errors made and how to fix each specific error identified (Student F: School C).

The excerpts imply that the general phrases and symbols used by teachers as feedback do not help students enhance their learning because they do not specify what is incorrect or correct. For feedback to increase student learning, it must be detailed, allowing students to understand precisely what is wrong and how to rectify it. These findings are consistent with those of Ruiz-Primo and Li (2013), who discovered that 85% of teacher feedback was generic since teachers offered feedback in the form of grades, numeric scores, and symbols. Sedan and Svaricek (2018) found that teachers used complimenting phrases such as “well done”, “good”, “good job”, “excellent”, “work hard”, and “great as feedback” in their general comments. Students cannot improve their learning with this form of feedback.

These findings conform to the principles of self-determination theory, namely autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which state that when people believe they are capable of taking direct action that will result in real change, they feel self-determined. In contrast, when they believe they have the skills required for success, they are more likely to take action to achieve their goals. When kids believe they are cared for by others, they develop a sense of belonging with other people, especially teachers. According to this study, when these three criteria are not met, students get demotivated, resulting in inadequate participation in the learning process. Learning will not occur among students when there is ineffective participation in learning. This means that if teachers do not provide adequate feedback (timely, clear, specific, task-focused, continuous, and descriptive), students become depressed, less competent, and neglected, and thus fail to improve their learning.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study examined Geography teachers’ practices for providing feedback on students’ continuous assessment tasks. According to the findings of the study, teachers do not provide effective feedback on students’ ongoing assessment activities. This means that teachers’ feedback does not assist students in improving their learning, which contributes to their failure in national Geography exams. Apart from the heavy teaching load and large class numbers, the insufficiency of the assessment module in teacher training in both pre-service and in-service programs in the country can also be related to a lack of adequate feedback regarding students’ ongoing assessment activities. It is recommended that there should be enough Geography teachers in regular secondary schools to provide appropriate feedback and aid students’ learning. There should be in-service seminars for teachers on how to give appropriate feedback in the current situation, which includes large classes. The measurement and evaluation course in teacher education should include a module on providing effective feedback. Finally, further research should be conducted to include both public and private secondary schools on acceptable feedback in Geography.

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