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Feedback Loops on the Implementation of Inclusive Education in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined feedback loops on the implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria. Specifically, it sought to evaluate the influence of these loops on classroom practices, analyze existing feedback mechanisms, and identify the structural challenges affecting their utilization. The study utilised a descriptive research design to gather data from a sample size of 100 respondents drawn from students across selected special education centres in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. The questionnaire was the major instrument for data collection. Data collected were analyzed using simple percentages, frequency counts, and mean scores. The findings revealed that feedback loops play a crucial role in enhancing inclusive education implementation in Nigeria. While some feedback mechanisms exist, systemic challenges limit their effectiveness. Based on the findings, the paper recommends, among others, that the government should develop robust data management systems to support effective feedback; existing feedback mechanisms should be strengthened and properly coordinated; stakeholder participation should be enhanced through inclusive engagement platforms; and capacity-building programs should be organized for teachers and administrators.

Keywords: Accountability, Data Management System, Effective Communication, Feedback Loop, Inclusive Education.

Introduction

Nigeria has demonstrated commitment to inclusive education through various policies and legal frameworks. The National Policy on Inclusive Education seeks to provide equal educational opportunities for all learners irrespective of disability, gender, ethnicity, religion, or socioeconomic status. The policy emphasizes the removal of barriers to learning and participation while promoting educational environments that accommodate diverse learners. However, translating policy intentions into classroom realities remains a major challenge. In this regard, Ohida (2022) submitted that inclusive education has become a central pillar of global educational reform, emphasizing the need to provide equitable learning opportunities for all individuals regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, or linguistic differences. Rooted in international frameworks such as the Salamanca Statement (1994) and the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), inclusive education seeks to eliminate barriers to learning and participation while promoting diversity, equity, and social justice in educational systems. Despite these policy frameworks, the implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria has remained inconsistent and fraught with challenges. Issues such as inadequate teacher preparation, poor infrastructure, limited instructional materials, societal attitudes toward disability, and insufficient funding continue to hinder effective practice. While much attention has been given to these structural and resource-based challenges, less emphasis has been placed on the systemic processes that influence how policies are implemented and improved over time.

One such critical process is the concept of feedback loops. Feedback loops, grounded in systems theory, refer to the continuous flow of information from implementation back to decision-making points, enabling adjustment, learning, and improvement. In the context of inclusive education, feedback loops involve interactions among teachers, students, school administrators, policymakers, and communities, providing insights into what works, what does not, and why. Effective feedback mechanisms are essential for ensuring that inclusive education policies are not only implemented but also continuously refined to meet the diverse needs of learners. However, in many Nigerian educational settings, feedback systems remain weak, fragmented, or underutilized, thereby limiting the potential for adaptive and responsive implementation.

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Statement of the Problem

Nigeria has demonstrated considerable commitment to the promotion of inclusive education through policies and frameworks designed to ensure equal educational opportunities for all learners, including those with disabilities and other special needs. Despite these policy commitments, however, a noticeable gap still exists between the objectives of inclusive education and the realities of its implementation in many schools. Learners with diverse educational needs continue to experience inadequate support, while challenges relating to teacher preparedness, learning facilities, instructional materials, funding, and accessibility persist. Although these challenges have received considerable attention, insufficient emphasis has been placed on the processes through which information about implementation challenges is collected, communicated, analyzed, and used to improve inclusive education practices. A major concern is the weakness of feedback loops within the implementation process of inclusive education in Nigeria. Effective feedback loops should enable teachers, learners, parents, school administrators, communities, and policymakers to exchange relevant information concerning implementation outcomes, challenges, and emerging needs. However, where such information is not systematically collected and utilized, challenges experienced at the school level may fail to reach appropriate decision-making authorities, while policies and interventions may not adequately reflect the realities of learners and teachers. Even existing mechanisms, such as school-based monitoring, inspectorate services, stakeholder consultations, Educational Management Information Systems (EMIS), and monitoring and evaluation frameworks, may be poorly coordinated or insufficiently utilized. The persistence of inadequate data collection systems, limited stakeholder participation, weak monitoring capacity, communication gaps, and insufficient funding further undermines the effectiveness of feedback processes in inclusive education implementation. Consequently, there is a need to examine the extent to which feedback loops influence inclusive education implementation, identify the feedback mechanisms currently available within the Nigerian education system, and determine the major challenges affecting their effective utilization. It is against this background that this conference paper investigates feedback loops and the implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of the conference paper is to examine the influence of feedback loops on the implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives are to:

i. find out the influence of feedback loops in inclusive education implementation in Nigeria
ii. examine the existing feedback mechanisms in Nigeria's inclusive education system
iii. find out the challenges affecting feedback loops in inclusive education implementation in Nigeria

Literature Review

Conceptual Understanding of Feedback Loops

In educational contexts, feedback loops involve the collection, interpretation, and utilization of information from schools, teachers, learners, parents, and communities to improve educational policies and practices. According to Orlunga and Alikor (2023), a feedback loop is a fundamental concept in systems thinking, communication, and organizational management, and it has been defined in various ways by different scholars depending on disciplinary perspectives. From a systems theory perspective, Ludwig von Bertalanffy (2018) defines a feedback loop as a process through which a system self-regulates by using information about its output to modify its subsequent functioning. According to Bertalanffy, systems are composed of interrelated parts, and feedback serves as a mechanism that connects outputs back to inputs, thereby ensuring stability or enabling adaptation. In this sense, a feedback loop is essential for maintaining equilibrium within a system or for facilitating change when necessary. From an organizational and educational perspective, Hattie and Timperley (2017) define a feedback loop as information provided regarding aspects of performance or understanding that is used to reduce the gap between current performance and desired goals. In this context, feedback loops are particularly relevant in teaching and learning processes, where continuous assessment and response help learners improve their knowledge and skills. Their definition underscores the importance of feedback as a tool for continuous improvement and effective learning. However, while Bertalanffy focuses on system regulation, Wiener emphasizes communication and control, and Hattie and Timperley highlight performance improvement, all three definitions converge on the idea that a feedback loop is a cyclical process involving the generation, transmission, and utilization of information to enhance system effectiveness.

Categories of Feedback Loops

Feedback loops can be classified into two major categories, namely positive and negative feedback loops.

Positive Feedback Loops

Positive feedback loops refer to processes that reinforce and amplify change within a system. In a positive feedback loop, the output of a system feeds back into it in a way that strengthens or accelerates the original process. According to Meadows (2018), positive feedback loops “enhance or magnify changes; they drive systems toward growth or collapse depending on the direction of the change.” This means that when a particular strategy or

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intervention yields successful outcomes, the feedback generated encourages further adoption and expansion of that strategy. Similarly, Sterman (2020) explains that positive feedback loops create self-reinforcing dynamics where "an initial change is compounded, leading to exponential growth or decline." In the context of inclusive education in Nigeria, a positive feedback loop may occur when effective inclusive teaching practices such as differentiated instruction or the use of assistive technologies lead to improved student participation and achievement. From the above explanation, one can conclude that positive feedback loops reinforce successful practices and encourage their replication. For example, when schools implementing inclusive teaching strategies report improved learner participation and achievement, educational authorities may expand such practices to other schools (Meadows, 2018).

Negative Feedback Loops

In contrast, negative feedback loops function to stabilize a system by reducing deviations and correcting errors. Rather than amplifying change, negative feedback loops work to maintain equilibrium by counteracting variations from desired goals or standards. Carver and Scheier (2022) describe negative feedback loops as regulatory mechanisms in which "discrepancies between current conditions and desired states are detected and reduced through corrective action." In a similar vein, Hattie (2022) highlights that effective feedback in educational settings serves to "close the gap between where the learner is and where they are meant to be," thereby aligning performance with expected outcomes. Within inclusive education, negative feedback loops are evident when monitoring systems identify gaps such as lack of accessibility, insufficient learning materials, or poor teacher competency and trigger corrective interventions such as training programs, policy revisions, or resource allocation. Negative feedback loops are particularly important for ensuring accountability and consistency in policy implementation. For example, when school inspections reveal that learners with disabilities are not adequately supported, this feedback can prompt immediate corrective measures by education authorities (Meadows, 2018). From the above explanations, it is noted that negative feedback loops identify deficiencies and trigger corrective actions. For instance, reports indicating inadequate accessibility facilities in schools may prompt policymakers to allocate additional resources for infrastructure improvement. However, positive and negative feedback loops represent two complementary processes within any functional system. Positive feedback loops drive growth, innovation, and the expansion of successful practices, while negative feedback loops ensure stability, accountability, and continuous correction of errors. Both forms of feedback are essential for ensuring that inclusive education policies remain responsive to emerging needs and contextual realities.

Theoretical Foundation of Feedback Loops in Inclusive Education

The concept of feedback loops is rooted in systems theory, which views organizations and institutions as interconnected systems comprising multiple interacting components. According to systems theory, effective functioning depends on continuous information exchange among system components. This theoretical foundation of feedback loops in inclusive education can be most coherently understood through the lens of systems theory, which conceptualizes education as a dynamic, interconnected, and adaptive system. Systems theory, originally developed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy and revised by Bertalanffy (2018), posits that any organized structure, whether biological, social, or institutional, consists of interrelated components that function together as a whole. Within this framework, feedback loops serve as essential mechanisms through which information flows between components, enabling the system to regulate itself, adapt to changes, and achieve its goals. When applied to inclusive education, systems theory provides a robust conceptual basis for understanding how continuous feedback enhances policy implementation, teaching practices, and learner outcomes. Bertalanffy's systems theory emphasizes that systems are open rather than closed; they interact continuously with their environments. In the context of inclusive education, the school system interacts with multiple external and internal environments, including government policies, community expectations, cultural norms, teacher competencies, and learner diversity. Feedback loops function as channels through which information from these environments is collected and reintegrated into the system to inform decision-making. For example, feedback from teachers about classroom challenges, from students about learning experiences, and from parents about accessibility concerns all contribute to shaping inclusive practices (Meadows, 2018). Building on this foundation, Forrester (2021), a key supporter of system dynamics, further explains that feedback loops are responsible for the patterns of behavior observed in complex systems over time. He argues that systems are governed by circular causality rather than linear cause-and-effect relationships. This means that actions within the system produce outcomes, and those outcomes, in turn, influence future actions (Senge, 2016). In the context of inclusive education, schools, government agencies, teachers, parents, learners, and communities constitute interconnected subsystems. Feedback generated from one component influences decisions and actions in others. Continuous communication among stakeholders enables educational systems to adapt to changing circumstances and improve service delivery (Wiener, 2018).

Importance of Feedback Loops in Inclusive Education Implementation

The following are some of the importance of feedback loops in the implementation of inclusive education:

Monitoring Policy Implementation: Feedback loops enable educational authorities to monitor the extent to which inclusive education policies are being implemented across schools and regions. Through regular data

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collection and reporting, policymakers can assess compliance with policy guidelines and identify implementation gaps. Nigeria's National Policy on Inclusive Education specifically provides for monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, including quarterly reviews and the collection of disaggregated educational data.

Identifying Barriers to Inclusion: Continuous feedback helps stakeholders identify barriers that hinder effective inclusion. Such barriers may include inaccessible infrastructure, negative attitudes toward learners with disabilities, inadequate teaching materials, or insufficient teacher training. Early identification enables timely intervention.

Enhancing Teacher Effectiveness: Teachers play a central role in inclusive education. Feedback mechanisms such as classroom observations, professional evaluations, peer reviews, and learner assessments provide valuable information for improving teaching practices. Constructive feedback enables teachers to refine instructional strategies and better accommodate diverse learners.

Promoting Accountability: Feedback loops promote transparency and accountability by providing evidence regarding the use of resources and the effectiveness of interventions. Educational administrators and policymakers become more accountable when implementation outcomes are regularly monitored and reported.

Supporting Continuous Improvement: Inclusive education requires continuous adaptation to meet the diverse needs of learners. Feedback loops facilitate ongoing improvement by generating evidence that informs policy revisions, resource allocation, and professional development initiatives.

Existing Feedback Mechanisms in Nigeria's Inclusive Education System

Nigeria has established several mechanisms intended to support monitoring and evaluation of educational policies.

Educational Management Information System (EMIS): The Educational Management Information System serves as a major source of educational data used for planning, monitoring, and decision-making. EMIS provides information on enrolment, infrastructure, teacher deployment, and learner demographics.

School-Based Monitoring: School administrators conduct routine monitoring of teaching and learning activities and submit reports to education authorities. Such reports provide feedback regarding policy implementation and school performance.

Inspectorate Services: Federal and state inspectorate divisions conduct school inspections and evaluations to assess compliance with educational standards and policy requirements.

Community Participation Structures: School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs), Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), and community organizations provide avenues for stakeholder participation and feedback regarding school operations and learner welfare.

Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks: The National Policy on Inclusive Education mandates the establishment of monitoring and evaluation frameworks linked to existing educational monitoring systems to assess implementation progress and policy impact. Despite these structures, significant gaps remain in the effectiveness of feedback collection, dissemination, and utilization.

Challenges Affecting Feedback Loops in Inclusive Education Implementation

Inadequate Data Collection Systems: Reliable data are essential for effective feedback processes. However, many schools lack adequate capacity to collect, analyze, and report data related to learners with disabilities and other marginalized groups. Inadequate data undermine evidence-based decision-making.

Limited Stakeholder Participation: Effective feedback loops require active participation from teachers, parents, learners, and communities. In many instances, stakeholder engagement remains weak, reducing the diversity and quality of feedback available to policymakers.

Insufficient Monitoring Capacity: Educational agencies often face shortages of personnel, funding, and logistical support needed for regular monitoring and evaluation activities. These limitations reduce the effectiveness of feedback systems.

Communication Gaps: Information generated at school levels may not reach policymakers promptly, while policy decisions may not be effectively communicated back to schools. Such communication breakdowns weaken feedback cycles.

Resource Constraints: Many inclusive education initiatives suffer from inadequate funding, limiting the implementation of monitoring systems, professional development programs, and infrastructure improvements. Studies consistently identify funding shortages as a major obstacle to inclusive education implementation in Nigeria.

Corruption and Governance Issues: Weak accountability structures and resource mismanagement can distort feedback systems by preventing accurate reporting and reducing trust among stakeholders. Research highlights governance challenges as significant barriers to effective implementation.

Inadequate Teacher Training: Many teachers lack sufficient preparation for inclusive teaching and may be unable to provide meaningful feedback regarding learner needs and instructional challenges. Teacher capacity deficits continue to hinder inclusive education implementation.

Strategies for Strengthening Feedback Loops in Inclusive Education

To improve implementation outcomes, Nigeria must strengthen feedback mechanisms at all levels of the education system.

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i. Comprehensive data management systems should be developed to facilitate accurate collection and analysis of information on inclusive education indicators. Digital technologies can support real-time reporting and monitoring.
ii. Stakeholder participation should be enhanced through regular consultations, community forums, and participatory evaluation processes involving parents, learners, teachers, and disability advocacy groups.
iii. Government should invest in capacity building for teachers, school administrators, and monitoring officers to improve their ability to generate and utilize feedback effectively.
iv. Communication channels between schools and policymakers should be strengthened to ensure timely transmission of information and prompt policy responses.
v. Monitoring and evaluation frameworks should be fully operationalized with clearly defined indicators, reporting schedules, and accountability mechanisms.
vi. Adequate funding should be provided to support monitoring activities, infrastructure development, teacher training, and assistive technologies necessary for inclusive education.
vii. Collaboration among government agencies, non-governmental organizations, development partners, and local communities should be strengthened to create a comprehensive feedback ecosystem that supports continuous learning and improvement.

Methodology

The study used a descriptive design because data were collected at once, which is advantageous in terms of cost, time, data accuracy, and convenience. The population for the study is made up of the students in selected special education centres in FCT. The sample size is made up of one hundred (100) respondents. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from respondents. The instrument was validated by an expert in measurement and evaluation at FCT College of Education, Zuba. The data were analysed and interpreted using descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, simple percentages, and mean scores. A mean score of 2.5 and above was accepted, while mean scores below 2.5 were rejected.

Analysis and Interpretation of Findings

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of data collected from respondents on the influence of feedback loops on the implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria. The data were analysed using frequency counts, simple percentages, and mean scores. A mean score of 2.5 and above was accepted, while a mean score below 2.5 was rejected.

Table 1: Influence of Feedback Loops on Implementation of Inclusive Education

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1	Feedback loops improve inclusive teaching practices	40	35	15	10	3.05	Accepted
2	Feedback mechanisms enhance students' participation in inclusive classrooms	38	32	18	12	2.96	Accepted
3	Feedback helps policymakers improve inclusive education policies	42	30	16	12	3.02	Accepted
4	Continuous feedback leads to better learning outcomes	36	34	20	10	2.96	Accepted
	Grand Mean					**3.00**	Accepted

Source: *Field Survey (2026)*

Table 1 shows the influence of feedback loops on the implementation of inclusive education. With a grand mean of 3.00, respondents agreed that feedback loops significantly influence the implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria. Item 1 revealed that feedback loops improve inclusive teaching practices with a mean score of 3.05; item 2 indicated that feedback mechanisms enhance students' participation in inclusive classrooms with a mean score of 2.96; item 3 showed that feedback helps policymakers improve inclusive education policies with a mean score of 3.02; while item 4 revealed that continuous feedback leads to better learning outcomes with a mean score of 2.96. Therefore, feedback mechanisms enhance teaching practices, student participation, policy improvement, and learning outcomes. This implies that effective feedback loops are essential for improving inclusive education practices.

Table 2: Existing Feedback Mechanisms in Nigeria's Inclusive Education System

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1	Schools use monitoring systems to assess inclusive education implementation	35	30	20	15	2.85	Accepted
2	Inspectorate services provide feedback on school performance	33	32	18	17	2.81	Accepted
3	Parents and communities contribute feedback through PTAs and SBMCs	30	34	20	16	2.78	Accepted

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4	EMIS provides useful data for inclusive education planning	28	36	22	14	2.78	Accepted
	Grand Mean					**2.81**	Accepted

Source: *Field Survey (2026)*

The findings in Table 2 reveal the existing feedback mechanisms in Nigeria's inclusive education system. The grand mean of 2.81 shows that several feedback mechanisms exist within Nigeria's inclusive education system. Results from item 1 showed that schools use monitoring systems to assess inclusive education implementation with a mean score of 2.85; item 2 revealed that inspectorate services provide feedback on school performance with a mean score of 2.81; item 3 showed that parents and communities contribute to feedback through PTAs and SBMC, with a mean score of 2.78, while item 4 indicated that EMIS provides useful data for inclusive education planning, with a mean score of 2.78. The study therefore concludes that there is a feedback mechanism in Nigerian inclusive education. However, the relatively moderate mean scores suggest that these systems may not be fully effective or efficiently utilized.

Table 3: Challenges Affecting the Implementation of Feedback Loops in Inclusive Education

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1	Inadequate data collection systems affect feedback processes	45	30	15	10	3.10	Accepted
2	Limited stakeholder participation weakens feedback loops	42	33	15	10	3.07	Accepted
3	Insufficient monitoring capacity affects feedback effectiveness	40	34	16	10	3.04	Accepted
4	Communication gaps hinder effective feedback flow	43	32	15	10	3.08	Accepted
5	Lack of funding limits feedback system implementation	46	30	14	10	3.12	Accepted
	Grand Mean					**3.08**	Accepted

Source: *Field Survey (2026)*

Table 3 shows the challenges affecting the implementation of feedback loops in inclusive education. With a grand mean of 3.08, the table revealed that several challenges hinder effective feedback loops in inclusive education implementation. The findings from item 1 revealed that inadequate data collection systems affect feedback processes, with a mean score of 3.10. Item 2 indicates that limited stakeholder participation weakens feedback loops, with a mean score of 3.07. Item 3 shows that insufficient monitoring capacity affects feedback effectiveness, with a mean score of 3.04. Item 4 revealed that communication gaps hinder effective feedback flow, with a mean score of 3.08. Item 5 showed that lack of funding limits feedback system implementation, with a mean score of 3.12. The study therefore concludes that major challenges such as poor data systems, limited stakeholder involvement, weak monitoring capacity, communication gaps, and inadequate funding affect the implementation of feedback loops in inclusive education in Nigeria. These challenges significantly affect the ability of feedback loops to support effective policy implementation.

Discussion of Findings

The discussion of findings is presented based on the objectives of the study and in relation to existing literature on feedback loops and inclusive education.

The first objective examined the influence of feedback loops on the implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria. The findings revealed that feedback loops significantly enhance inclusive teaching practices, improve students' participation, and contribute to better learning outcomes. This result is consistent with the views of Hattie (2022), who emphasized that effective feedback plays a crucial role in improving teaching and learning by closing the gap between current performance and expected outcomes. Similarly, Hattie and Timperley (2017) argued that feedback is a powerful tool for improving learners' understanding and academic achievement. The second objective focused on examining the existing feedback mechanisms in Nigeria's inclusive education system. The findings indicated that mechanisms such as school-based monitoring, inspectorate services, community participation structures (PTAs and SBMCs), and the Educational Management Information System (EMIS) are present within the system. This supports the position of the Federal Ministry of Education (2022), which highlighted the existence of monitoring and evaluation frameworks designed to track the implementation of inclusive education policies in Nigeria. However, the moderate mean scores recorded suggest that these mechanisms are not fully effective or optimally utilized.

The third objective examined the challenges affecting feedback loops in the implementation of inclusive education. The findings revealed that inadequate data collection systems, limited stakeholder participation, insufficient monitoring capacity, communication gaps, and lack of funding are major challenges. These findings corroborate the work of Omachi (2025), who identified systemic challenges such as poor governance, weak accountability structures, and resource constraints as significant barriers to effective implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria. In addition, Orlunga and Alikor (2023) emphasized that inadequate data and weak feedback systems hinder evidence-based decision-making, thereby limiting the effectiveness of educational policies.

Conclusion

Feedback loops constitute a critical component of successful inclusive education implementation. They provide

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mechanisms through which stakeholders can assess progress, identify challenges, and develop solutions that improve educational outcomes for all learners. In Nigeria, despite the existence of policy frameworks supporting monitoring and evaluation, significant challenges continue to hinder effective feedback processes. Weak data systems, inadequate funding, limited stakeholder participation, communication gaps, and insufficient monitoring capacity undermine the effectiveness of inclusive education implementation. Strengthening feedback loops through improved data management, stakeholder engagement, capacity building, and accountability mechanisms can significantly enhance the realization of inclusive education goals in Nigeria. As the country strives to achieve equitable and quality education for all, effective feedback systems will remain indispensable tools for translating policy aspirations into meaningful educational experiences for every learner. The analysis reveals that feedback loops play a crucial role in enhancing inclusive education implementation in Nigeria. While some feedback mechanisms exist, their effectiveness is limited by systemic challenges. Addressing these challenges is essential for strengthening feedback processes and improving inclusive education outcomes.

Recommendations

The study recommends that:

1. The government should develop robust data management systems to support effective feedback.
2. Existing feedback mechanisms should be strengthened and properly coordinated.
3. Stakeholder participation should be enhanced through inclusive engagement platforms.
4. Capacity-building programs should be organized for teachers and administrators.
5. Communication channels between schools and policymakers should be improved.
6. Adequate funding should be provided for inclusive education and monitoring systems.
7. Accountability and transparency mechanisms should be strengthened.
8. Collaboration among stakeholders should be encouraged to build a functional feedback ecosystem.

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