Teachers' Work Environment and the Implementation of Classroom Assessment Practices in English Secondary Schools in Cameroon

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Abstract
The main purpose of this study is to investigate: the length of instructional time, what teachers think about the shift system of teaching and their views about online learning platforms.Data was collected through a focused group discussion for teachers from four regions of Cameroon, one focus group per region. The population of the study was selected from the different geography regional WhatsApp forums of the different regions. The population was selected purposively by show of interest by the respondent. ATLAS.ti v8.0 was used as qualitative software for the analysis.Teachers' work environment in Cameroon is faced with two major crises, the anglophone crisis and the most recent covid 19 Pandemic. Teachers are therefore faced with the challenge of adapting to new environments different from the usual. In the face of these challenges this research investigates the influence of teachers' work environment on the implementation of classroom assessment practices in English secondary schools in Cameroon. The results should assist the government, school owners/proprietors and all other stakeholders to manage teachers' work environment properly. The results of the analysis from focus group discussion found out that there is a significant correlation between teachers' work environment and the implementation of classroom assessment practices. Teachers' appeal may be appropriate, though controversial to get the attention of the different stakeholders. Stakeholders should, however, evaluate the nature of teachers' workspace to understand their plea (cry).
Keywords: Teachers' work environment, instructional time, online learning platform, school shift period, implementation of classroom assessment practices

1. Introduction
Teachers' work environment and the implementation of classroom assessment practices is an important issue in the educational system of Cameroon today. Teachers face a lot of threats from their work environment. The threats range from beatings, killings, working for long without salary, salary cuts for teachers who work in the crisis regions of the country, among others. Teacher welfare practices aim to provide fair wages. Good working conditions and realistic terms and conditions of employment. The working conditions that play a vital role in getting the efficiency from the employee and to retain them for a long period of time.

2. Methodology
Data was collected through a focused group discussion for teachers of the North, Center, North west and South west regions of Cameroon. A total of four focus group discussions (FGD) was held separately with teachers from the different regions with at least seven members per group. The population of the study was selected from the different geography regional WhatsApp forums of the different regions. The population was selected purposively by show of interest by the respondent. Therefore, the first people who showed interest within the dateline we gave were accepted as the population of the study,   the minimum number was accepted as seven. In each of the FGD, we had a briefing with the members and a note taker was assigned while the researcher played the role of the focal point. They were brief on the purpose of the study and assured on the unanimity of their responses. The focus groups were done through the zoom virtually platform. The focus group guide was used for the study. The data collected was divided into themes and sub-themes for easy analysis. ATLAS.ti v8.0 was used as qualitative software for the analysis. In this regard, thematic analysis was used with the density and groundedness of each code examined. Word density was presented to showcase a general picture of the core words used in the study via a cloud view. The code groups used were work environment in the North region, work environment in the centre region, North west region and word cloud in the South west regions. The major code themes were good work environment and uncomfortable work environment for the various regions. Coding was done via In Vivo coding, open coding, list coding, and quick coding and all the quotes were linked to their illustrated quotations.

3. Results

Coding was done via In Vivo coding, open coding, list coding, and quick coding and all the quotes were linked to their illustrated quotations, as shown on the word cloud below.

Word cloud of teachers work environment

Figure 1: Word cloud for the teachers work environment in the North and Centre regions

The word cloud provides a qualitative overview and showcases the focal words which the study is anchored on. The word cloud brings to light the fact that the study is focused in a school milieu with students and teachers being the major stakeholders of the research by virtue of their high groundedness and density texture. It suggests that the codes with higher density were frequently used in the study (students, teachers, administration, working hours, time constraints, workload and phones)

Qualitative indices of good and bad work environment in the Centre region

Figure 2: Qualitative Indices of good and bad work environment in the Centre Region

The major code group in this analysis (work environment in the centre region) is anchored on two major code themes (good school environment and uncomfortable school environment). The teachers in the centre region expressed a dual mindset as concerns their working environment. The schema showcases the fact that

33% of the codes indicated that teachers have a good work environment with very low groundedness and density (G=0, D=4). The teachers insinuated that the school environment is good because of the following reasons associated to the first code theme (G=0, D=4); availability of good toilets and water tanks (G=0, D=1), spacious staff room with chairs (G=0, D=2), cordial relationship with administration (G=0, D=2), cordial relationship with students (G=0, D=2). All the codes were non-recursive which is an indication of good associative properties with the quotation which in this case is considered as the theme-good school environment.

Also, on the other hand 67% of the codes were associated with the fact that the work environment in schools in the centre region leaves much to be desired evinced through the high density of the second code theme (G=0, D=9). The teachers opined that amongst the reasons why the school environment is uncomfortable includes but not limited to; The clashing of time tables (G=0, D=1), low salary (G=0, D=2), Students being truants (G=0, D=2) which is associated to the quest for free marks (G=0, D=2), dirty classrooms (G=0, D=2), lack of offices (G=0, D=2), absence of school library (G=0, D=1), and the fact that the staff room is small with insufficient chairs and tables (G=0, D=3). The codes were non-recursive which is an indication of good associative properties with the quotation which in this case is considered as the theme-uncomfortable school environment.

Qualitative indices of good and bad work environment in the North region
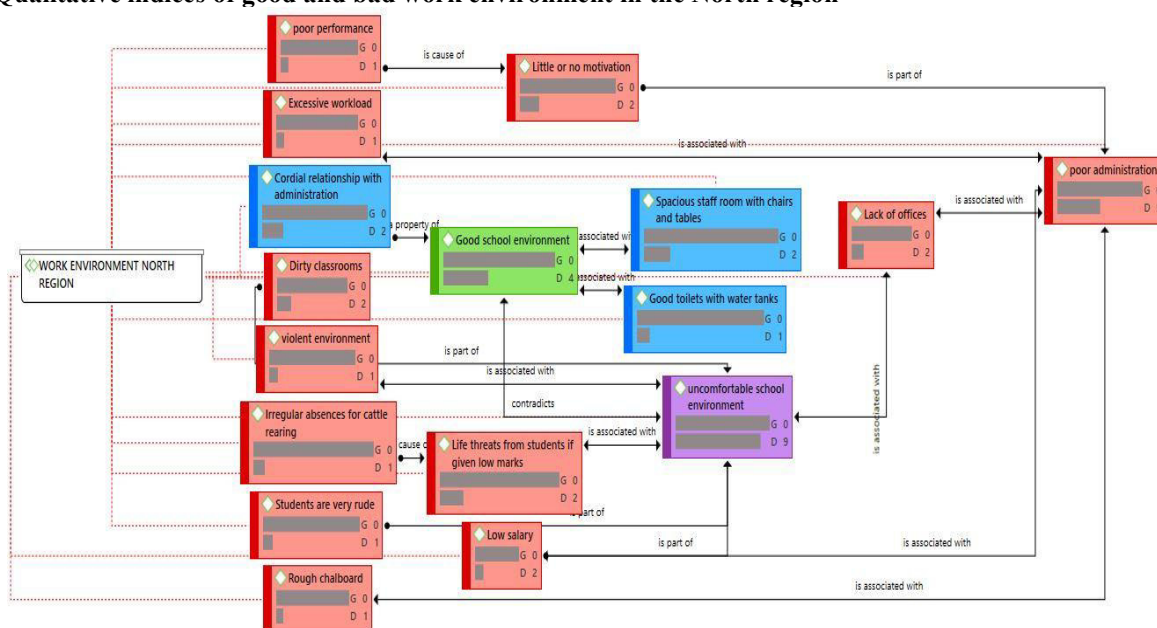

Figure 3: Qualitative indices of good and bad work environment in the North region

Work environment in the North region is the major code group in this analysis which is anchored on two key code themes (good school environment and uncomfortable school environment). Teachers in the North region expressed a dual mindset as concerns their work environment. The schema indicates that 20% of the codes indicate that teachers have a good work environment with a low groundedness and density (G=0, D=4). The teachers insinuated that the school environment is good because of the following reasons associated to the first code theme (G=0, D=4); availability of good toilets and water tanks (G=0, D=1), spacious staff room with chairs (G=0, D=2) and cordial relationship with administration (G=0, D=2). All the codes were non-recursive which is an indication of good associative properties with the quotation which in this case is considered as the theme-good school environment.

Moreover, 80% of the codes were associated with the fact that the work environment in schools in the North region is uncomfortable, demonstrated by the high density of the second code theme (G=0, D=9). The teachers opined that amongst the reasons why the school environment is uncomfortable includes but not limited to; poor performance (G=0, D=1) which little or no motivation could be a causative factor (G=0, D=2) and is highly linked to poor administration (G=0, D=5) which is considered a cause of lack of offices in school (G=0, D=2), low salary (G=0, D=2), Irregular absences for cattle rearing (G=0, D=1) which is associated with life threats from students if given low marks in examination (G=0, D=2), dirty classrooms (G=0, D=2), rough chalkboard (G=0, D=1), violent environment (G=0, D=1), rude students (G=0, D=1), excessive workload (G=0, D=1). The codes were non-recursive which is an indication of good associative properties with the quotation which in this case is considered as the theme-uncomfortable school environment. The recursive paths had direct links with the causative codes.

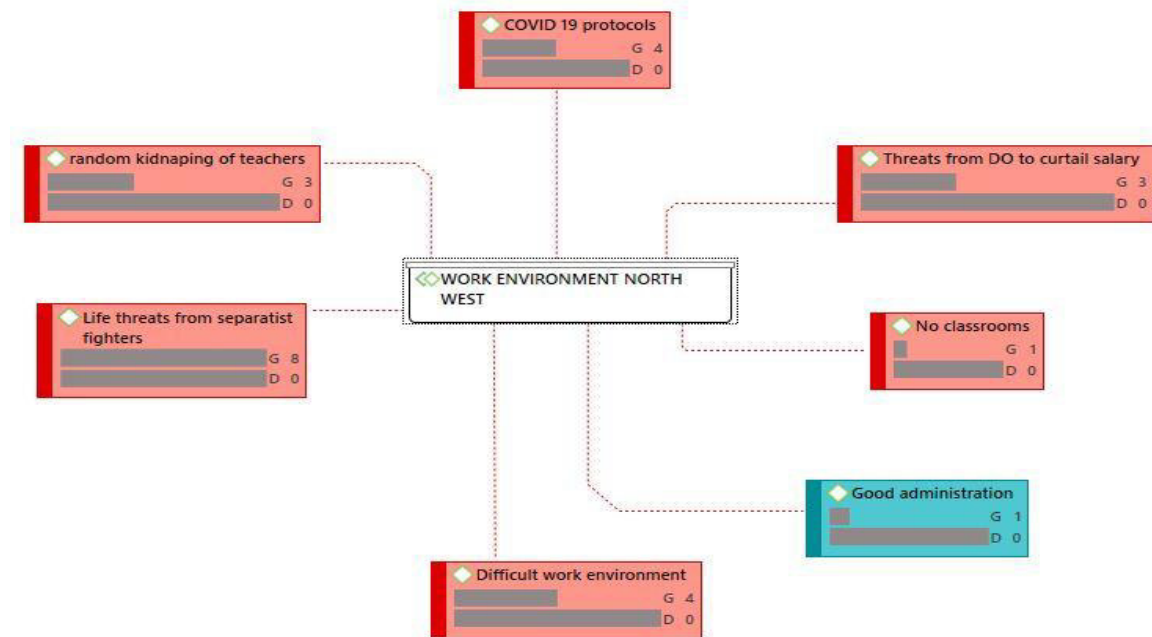**Qualitative indices of good and bad work environment in the North West region**

Figure 4: Qualitative indices of good and bad work environment in the North West region

The code group in this analysis (work environment in the North West region) is based on two code themes (good work environment and uncomfortable environment). The teachers in the North west region expressed a dual mindset as concerns their working environment. The schema showcases the fact that 14.29% of the codes indicated that teachers have a good work environment with very low groundedness and density (G=1, D=0). The teachers insinuated that the school environment is good because they have a cordial working relationship with the school administration. The links between the codes and the quotation were non recursive which is an indication of good associative properties with very low groundedness.

On the other hand, 85.71% of the codes were associated with the fact that the work environment in schools in the North West region leaves much to be desired evinced through the high density of the second code theme (bad working environment). The teachers opined that amongst the reasons why the school environment is uncomfortable includes but not limited to; Life threats from separatists' fighters (G=8, D=0), Kidnapping of teachers and demanding for ransom (G=3, D=0), COVID 19 protocols (G=4, D=0) which limits the rate of interaction and group activities in the classroom and due to the fact that classes always starts late because students need to sure up for sanitization of their hands and shoes before entering the classroom. At times the masks cause breathing difficulties to some students as well as nausea. Threats from the DO to curtail salaries (G=3, D=0). In the face of lockdowns and ghost towns, teachers are still expected by the civil authorities to put their lives on the line by going to school. Teachers have lost their lives in the process, and the death toll keeps rising while threats of salary cuts keep gaining momentum as many teachers have already lost their salaries. No classroom (G=1, D=0). Most schools have been burnt down so students have relocated to areas termed as safe which has no structure of a classroom, no didactic materials, dilapidated benches and no staff room for teachers making the work environment very difficult. All the codes were non-recursive which is an indication of good associative properties with the quotations which in this case is considered as the theme-uncomfortable school environment.

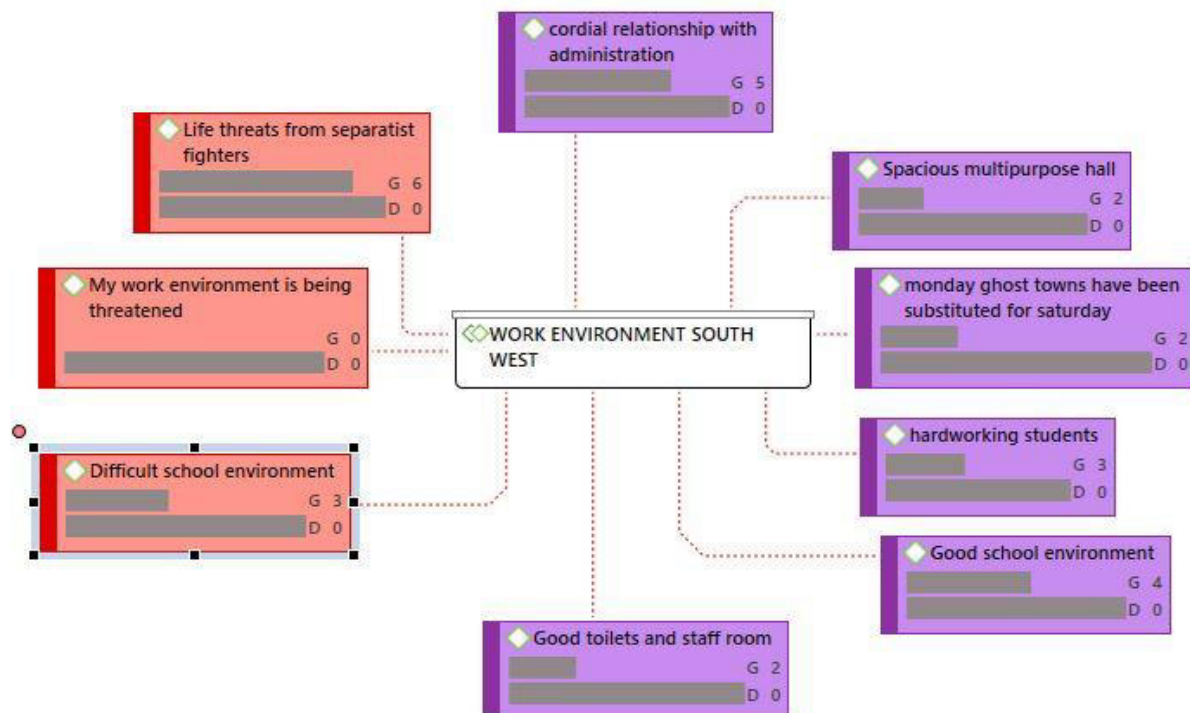**Qualitative indices of good and bad work environment in the South West region**

Figure 5: Qualitative indices of good and bad work environment in the South West region

The work environment in the South West region is the code group in this analysis which is based on two key code themes (good school environment and bad school environment). Teachers in the South West region expressed a dual mindset as concerns their work environment. The schema indicates that the work environment in the SW region is comparatively better than that of the NW. The information gotten from the field indicates that 70% of the codes point to the fact that the work environment is conducive in most schools. The teachers insinuated that the school environment is conducive because of the following reasons; availability of good toilets and staff room (G=2, D=0), they explained that as a result of the crisis NGO have stepped in to better the face of the education sector. cordial relationship with administration (G=5, D=0). Most of the teachers, accepted to have established a very good working environment with their administration. The school has spacious and multipurpose hall for large classroom size and for events (G=2, D=0), The teachers said Monday ghost towns have been substituted with Saturday classes which has greatly helped in catching up with lost periods (G=2, D=0). Most of the students on their part are showing commitment to hard work making interaction with them very easy (G=3, D=0). All the codes were non-recursive which is an indication of good associative properties with the quotation which in this case is considered as the theme-good school environment.

Moreover, 30% of the codes were associated with the fact that the work environment in schools in the South West region is uncomfortable. Teachers asserted that they receive life threats from separatist fighters (G=6, D=0), the crisis generally makes the school environment to be very threatening (G=3, D=0) as such instilling so much fear in the teachers though they still brave the odds to teach their students. The codes were non-recursive which is an indication of good associative properties with the quotation which in this case is considered as the theme-uncomfortable school environment.

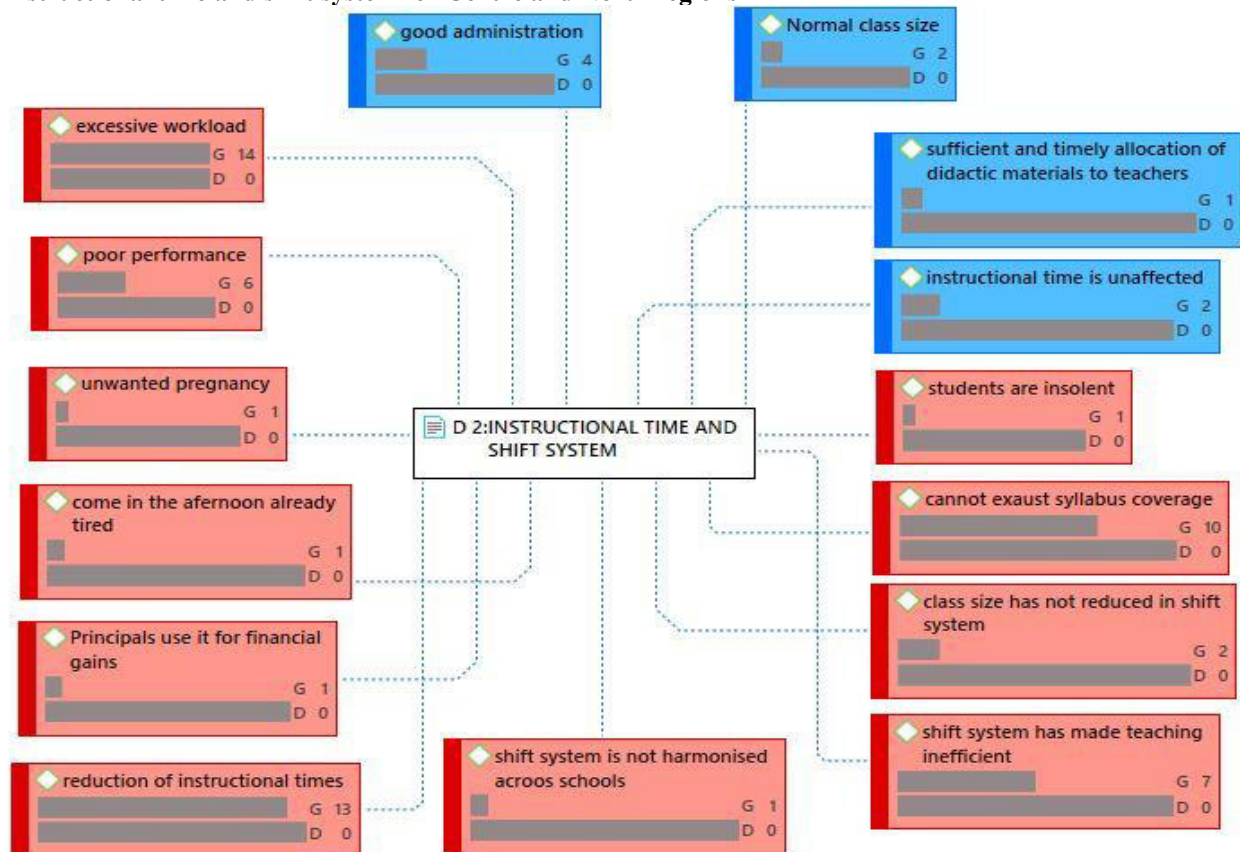**Instructional time and shift system for Centre and North regions**

Figure 6: Qualitative indices of instructional time and shift system

The co-occurrence codes in this schema emanated from D2 in the analysis canvas with their groundedness and density clearly evident via the frequency bars in the analysis. The groundedness illustrates the number of codes linked to a quotation while the parameter indicates the frequency of responses for the unique code

The analysis brings to light the fact that 73.3% of the codes indicate that the shift system is not a good one with numerous hitches clearly indicated with the red codes. The responses were thus indicated; the shift system has brought about the reduction of instructional time (G=13, D=0), which has led to excessive workload (G=14, D=0) and non-exhaustion of syllabus coverage (G=10, D=0). The effects are felt on students' poor performance (G=6, D=0). Some students and teachers alike are tired during afternoon sessions as such cannot maximise their functioning (G=1, D=0). Unwanted pregnancy has heightened as students sit idle at home all day long and during evening shifts some return home late from their boyfriends' homes (G=1, D=0). In some schools, the shift system has not witnessed a reduction in class size (G=2, D=0) due to the fact that the principals are using the system for financial gains (G=1, D=0). Some teachers have reported heightened levels of insolence as a result of the shift system (G=1, D=0) which is not harmonised across schools (G=1, D=0) hence making the teaching learning process ineffective and inefficient (G=7, D=0).

However, 26.7% of the teachers insinuated that the shift system is good due to the fact that they have good administrators who have structured the program so well (G=4, D=0) and have helped teachers to maximise instructional time (G=2, D=0). Some of them said their class sizes are good (G=2, D=0) with sufficient and timely allocation of didactic materials to facilitate the teaching and learning process (G=1, D=0).
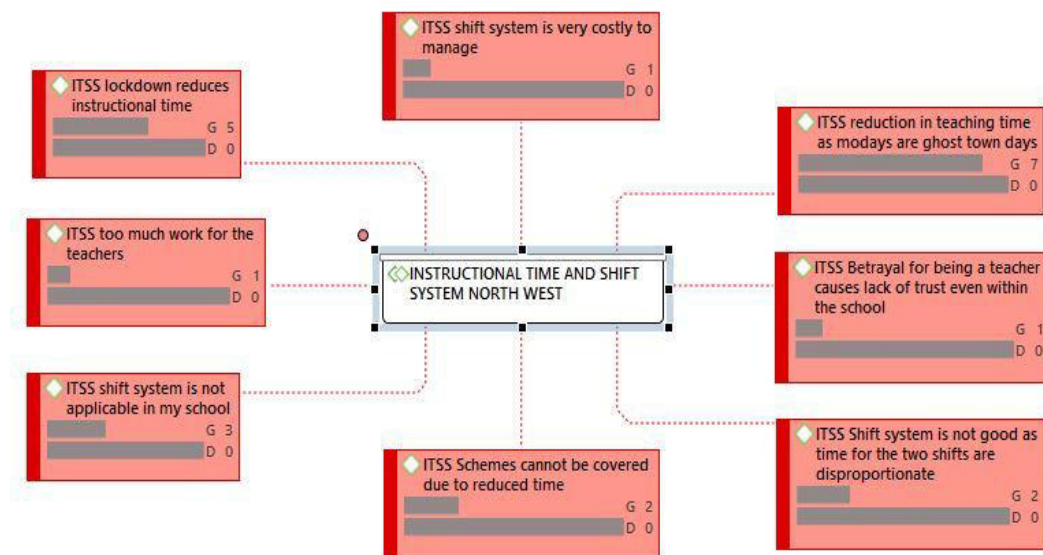
Figure 7: Instructional time and shift system of the North West region

The co-occurrence codes in this schema were from D3 quotations in the analysis canvas. The groundedness and density are represented with frequency bars in the analysis. The groundedness illustrates the number of codes linked to a quotation while the parameter indicates the frequency of responses for the unique code

The analysis from responses of the North West region shows that 100% of the codes are geared towards the fact that the shift system is not good with numerous hitches clearly indicated by the groundedness in the analysis. The responses were thus indicated; the shift system has brought about the reduction of instructional time dues to lockdowns and ghost towns (G=5, G=7, D=0), which has led to excessive workload for the teachers and rendering teaching ineffective (G=1, D=0) and non-exhaustion of syllabus coverage (G=2, D=0). The time for the two shifts is disproportionate, giving the second group a disadvantageous status (G=2, D=0). The evening shifts puts the teachers' lives in danger due to the crisis because they are often betrayed and are tagged as black legs (G=1, D=0). Some of the codes indicate that the shift system is not applicable in some schools in the North West region (G=1, D=0). Some teachers have reported that the shift system is very difficult to manage (G=1, D=0). In a nutshell, all the teachers who were involved in the FGD saw nothing very valuable in a shift system but one which is full of disadvantages because of the uniqueness of the region in terms of the sociopolitical crisis.

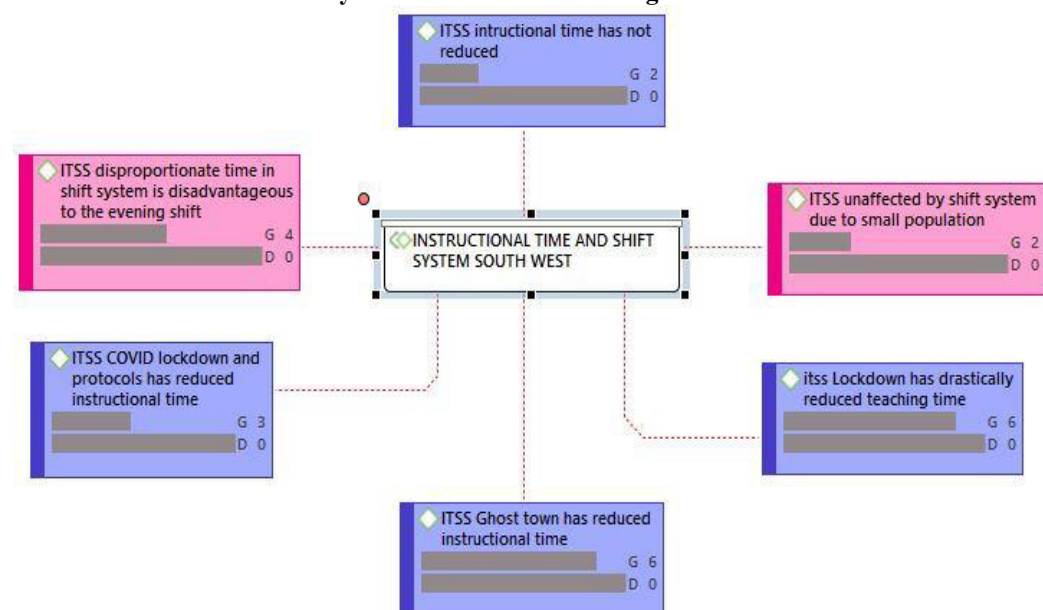**Instructional time and shift system of the South West region**

Figure 8: Instructional time and shift system of the South West region

The co-occurrence codes in this schema came from D3 in the analysis canvas with groundedness and density clearly seen via the frequency bars in the analysis. The groundedness illustrates the number of codes linked to a quotation while the parameter indicates the frequency of responses for the unique code

The analysis indicates that 83.33% of the codes were geared towards the fact that the shift system is not a good one with numerous hitches clearly indicated by the groundedness. The responses were thus indicated; the shift system has brought about the reduction of instructional time due to the following reasons; lockdown and covid protocols (G=3, D=0), ghost town (G=6, D=0), lockdowns (G=6, D=0), which has led to non-exhaustion of syllabus coverage. The shift system is disadvantageous in the sense that the time for the morning and evening shifts are disproportionate (G=4, D=0). However, 16.67% of the teachers insinuated that instructional time is unaffected by the shift system due to the fact that they have a small population (G=2, D=0).

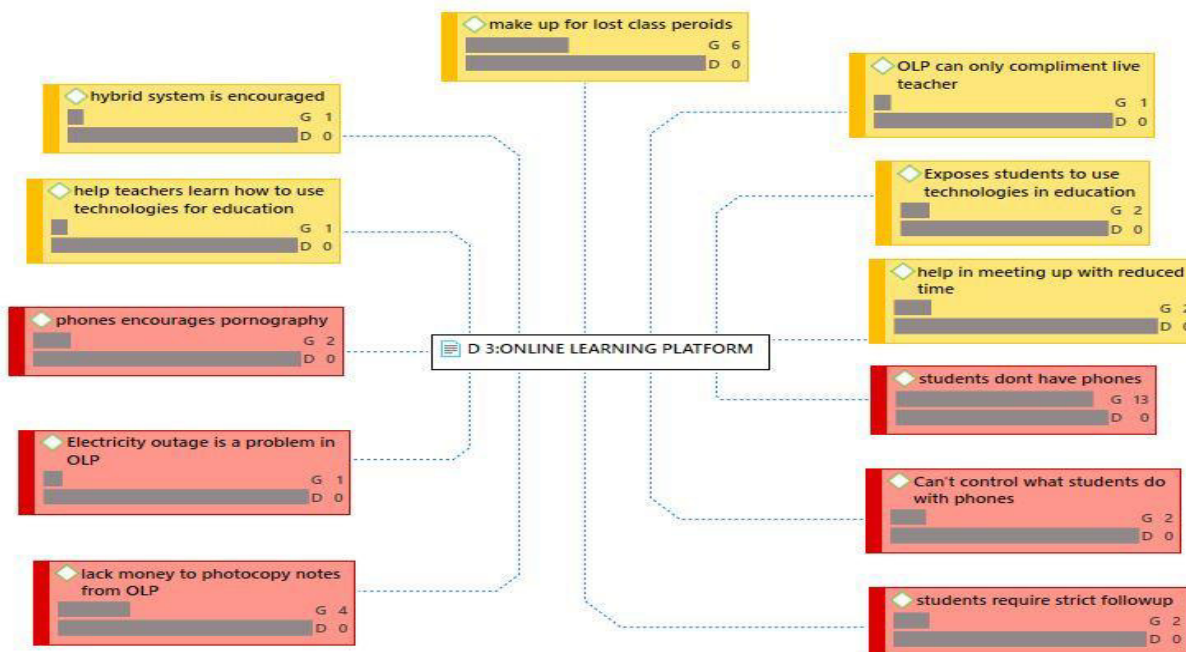**Online learning platform for Center and North Regions**

Figure 9: Qualitative indices of online learning platform

The codes in this schema came from D3 in the analysis canvas with their groundedness and density apparent via the frequency bars in the analysis loops. The groundedness illustrates the number of codes linked to a quotation while the values indicate the frequency of responses for the unique code

The analysis indicates that 50% of the teachers were of the opinion that online learning is not good because it posts a number of challenges which as at the moment have not been looked into and are directly affecting the learner's ability to follow on with lessons. Some of such factors captured in this study includes; the use of mobile phones or other electronic gadgets encourages pornography amongst young students (G=2, D=0). Frequent power outage is a major issue because electrical gadgets functions with electrical charges and most often does not store for long hours (G=1, D=0), students complain that they do not have mobile phones or electronic gadgets to study online (G=13, D=0) and some who cannot afford electronic gadgets complain of not being financially viable to photocopy notes from the online learning platforms (G=4, D=0). Some of the teachers insinuated that they cannot control what students do with phones or electronic study gadgets (G=2, D=0), as such there is need for strict follow-up because some have indulged in scamming through such means (G=2, D=0).

Moreover, 50% of the teachers suggested that online learning is a pretty good means of passing instructional content to learners in the phase of challenges. Some of the factors that foster online learning as insinuated by teachers includes; the ability to make up for lost class periods and reduced hours that the shit system introduced (G=6, D=0), help teachers to learn how to use technological gadgets for educational purposes (G=1, D=0) and also exposes students to use electronic devices in the teaching and learning process (G=2, D=0). Online learning helps to complement live teaching (G=1, D=0).

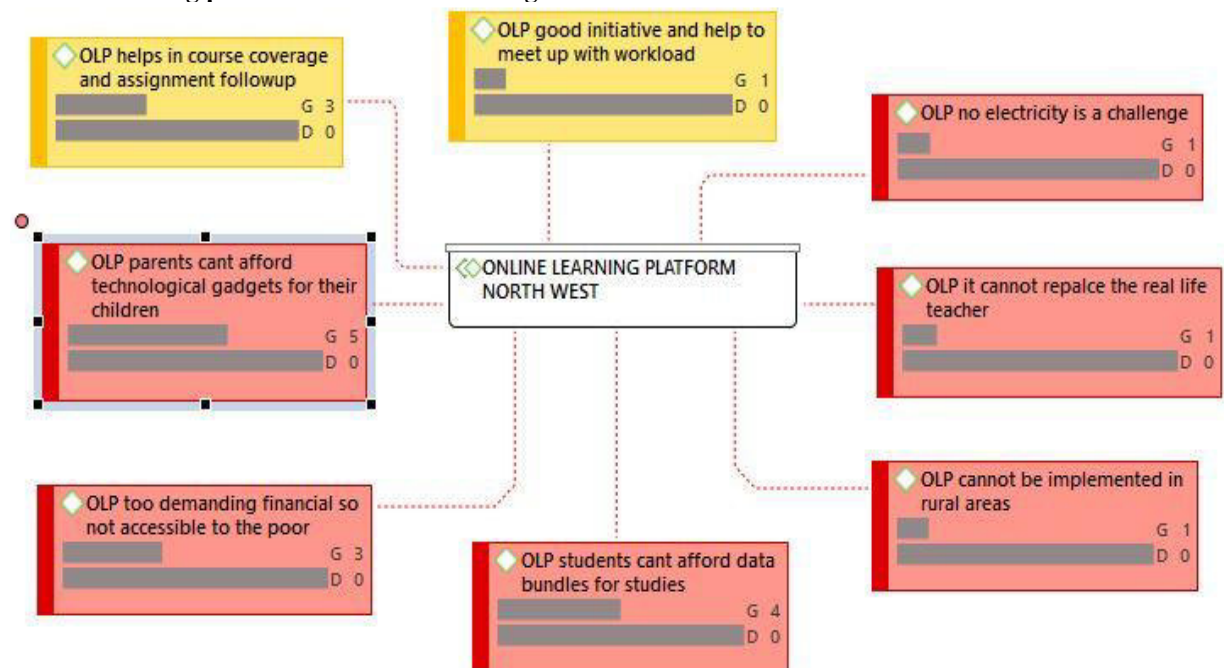**Online Learning platform for North West Region**

Figure 10: Online Learning platform for North West Region

The codes in this schema emanated from D3 in the analysis canvas with the groundedness and density portrayed via the frequency bars in the analysis loops. The groundedness illustrates the number of codes linked to a quotation while the values indicate the frequency of responses for the unique code

The analysis indicates that 75% of the teachers in the North West region were of the opinion that online learning is not good because it posts a number of challenges which as at the moment have not been looked into and are directly affecting the learner's ability to follow on with lessons. Some of such challenges are captured in this study; frequent power outage is a major issue because electrical gadgets functions with electrical charges and most often does not store for long hours (G=1, D=0), students complain that their parents and not financially viable to purchase electronic gadgets for them to study online (G=5, D=0) and some who cannot afford electronic gadgets complain of not being financially viable to photocopy notes from the online learning platforms as such this mode of learning is too demanding financially and not meant for the poor (G=3, D=0). The students lack the financial resources to purchase data bundles (G=1, D=0), they asserted that this type of learning cannot be implemented in rural areas (G=1, D=0) and learning through electronic means cannot replace the life teacher (G=1, D=0).

Moreover, 25% of the teachers suggested that online learning is a pretty good means of passing instructional content to learners in the phase of challenges. Some of the factors that foster online learning as insinuated by teachers includes; the ability to make up for lost class periods and reduced hours that the shit system introduced (G=1, D=0), help teachers to easily cover course content with little stress of travelling long distances to school (G=3, D=0)
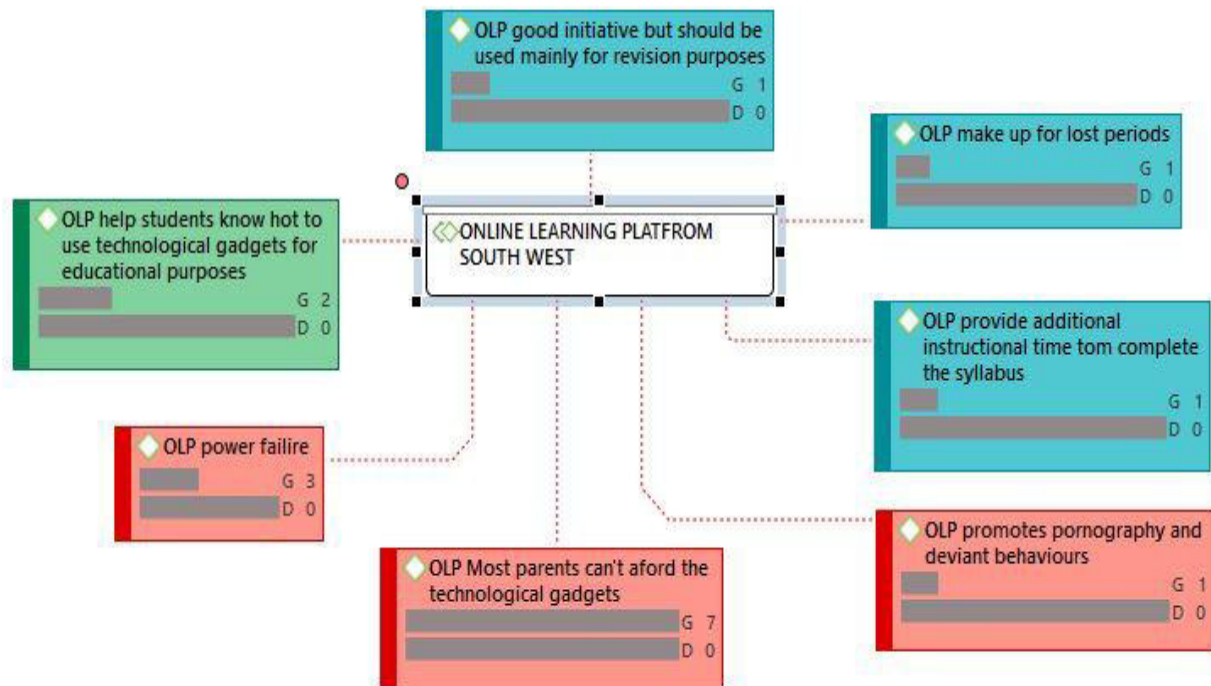
Online Learning platform for South West Region

Figure 11: Online Learning platform for South West Region

The co-occurrence codes in this schema emanated from D4 in the analysis canvas with the groundedness and density portrayed via the frequency bars in the analysis loops. The groundedness illustrates the number of codes linked to a quotation while the values indicate the frequency of responses for the unique code

The analysis brings to light the fact that 42.86% of the teachers in the South West region were of the opinion that online learning is not good because it posts a number of challenges which as at the moment have not been looked into and are directly affecting the learner's ability to follow on with lessons. Some of such challenges are captured in this study; frequent power failure is a major issue because electrical gadgets functions with electrical charges and most often does not store for long hours (G=3, D=0), students complain that their parents and not financially able to purchase electronic gadgets for them to study online (G=7, D=0). The use of electric gadgets amongst students promotes pornography and deviant behaviors (G=1, D=0).

However, 57.14% of the teachers suggested that online learning is a very good means of passing instructional content to learners in the phase of challenges. Some of the factors that foster online learning as stated by teachers includes; the ability to make up for lost class periods and reduced hours that the shit system introduced (G=1, D=0), help teachers to easily cover course content with little stress and complete their syllabuses on time (G=1, D=0), online teaching and learning is a very welcomed initiative but should mainly be used for revision purposes because the learners are not yet very conversant with this means of instructional delivery (G=1, D=0). Finally, it helps students to learn how to use electronic gadgets for educational purposes to search for materials and to attend lectures (2=1, D=0).
D=0

4.   Discussion

The focus group discussions show that the work environment of secondary school teachers in Cameroon is up to 75.75% uncomfortable; as teachers opined that amongst the reasons why the school environment is uncomfortable includes but not limited to; Life threats from separatists' fighters, Kidnapping of teachers and demanding for ransom, COVID 19 protocols which limits the rate of interaction and group activities in the classroom and due to the fact that classes always starts late because students need to show up for sanitization of their hands and shoes before entering the classroom. In the face of lockdowns and ghost towns, teachers are still expected by the civil authorities to put their lives on the line by going to school. Teachers have lost their lives in the process, and the death toll keeps rising while threats of salary cuts keep gaining momentum as many teachers have already lost their salaries.

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Appendix A: Focus Group Guide for Teachers on Work Environment

1. How would you describe your work environment?

2. Do you use the staffroom for departmental meetings?

3. Are you allowed to receive parents in the staff rooms?

4. Do you people face any threats?

5. What is your appreciation of the shift system?

6. How has coronavirus affected your teaching

7. Apart from the coronavirus, is there any other crisis affecting education in this region?