

NON-TEACHING PERSONNEL

December 2000 - Dossier of Education International Magazine



Education: A Team Activity

CONTENTS

USA: AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	12-13
FRANCE: THEY ARE MEMBERS OF THE EDUCATION TEAM	14
LACK OF PROPER RECOGNITION IN AUSTRALIA	15
UGANDA: ARE FACTORS OF PRODUCTION APPLICABLE TO EDUCATION?	16
THE FAST GROWING SEGMENT OF AFT	17
BRAZIL: ORGANISATION, CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES	18-19
TEWU, THE VOICE OF THE NON-TEACHING STAFF IN GHANA	20
QUÉBEC: IN THE THICK OF IT, DAY IN DAY OUT	21
A DAY IN THE LIFE OF ... A SCHOOL DOCTOR	22

We forget all too often that, alongside the teachers in our schools and colleges, there are other workers, often wrongly referred to as support staff, who carry out duties in connection with maintenance, security, catering, administration, management, pupils' psychological and medical monitoring, social activities and libraries.

We also forget that these people are often members of the same trade union as teachers, although they sometimes have their own organisations. But they are all in Education International, whose Constitution states that one of its aims is '*to further the cause of organisations of teachers and education employees*'.

Teachers and education employees work in the same education institutions; with different responsibilities, it is true, but they all make their own contribution to the work of education as part of a team that can only be described as educational. Of course, teachers and education employees have different problems, but they also have some in common. The problems of teachers are well known: the problems are regularly analysed and are the subject of precise demands. The problems of non-teaching personnel, on the other hand, are a little less well known to the general public and to the education family: maybe because they are less visible, but in any event they are not less important.

Education employees are often the first victims of budget restrictions, with the abolition of a post of educational psychologist or school doctor being less politically sensitive than that of a teacher. Yet the intervention of a psychologist can sometimes be critical to a pupil's academic success. Teachers and education employees share a desire to promote a quality public education service and to create a climate of democratic life in educational institutions and an education-friendly environment.

This dossier seeks to open up debate within our international organisation: it contains statements and accounts of experiences. These colleagues must be better recognised as forming part of the education team and of an institution's education project, within the framework of a concept of education that is open both to the realities of our societies and to the whole world. ♦



Élie Jouen
Deputy General Secretary

Education Support Personnel Are an Integral Part of the Learning



Education Support Personnel provide the first and last contact children have with the school, most often, the bus driver, caregiver or security officer. Their interaction with students can enhance or detract from a student's learning experience.

© NEA

With an increasing demand for public education, the United States relies more than ever on non-teaching employees to develop and operate a public school system that meets the needs of its population.

The United States has one of the largest public school systems in the world with over 14,000 school districts setting policy, 89,500 schools and over 53 million students. In such a vast and complex system, it is logistically impossible to provide quality education for all students without the support that non-teaching employees provide.

In 1980, the National Education Association (NEA), which had been primarily a teacher's organization, amended its constitution and bylaws to allow non-teaching employees to hold NEA office and to attend the Representative Assembly as full voting delegates.

This change in policy acknowledged the incremental role of non-teaching support employees in the public education workforce.

Presently, NEA defines non-teaching employees as Education Support Personnel (ESP). NEA's ESP membership is now over 300,000 members. It is the fastest growing membership category in the organization with a growth rate of 19.5% annually. The potential for NEA ESP membership in the U.S. is almost 3 million. ESP account for approximately 44% of all school employees and 13% of NEA's membership. NEA also has about 12,000 ESP members in higher learning institutions.

From transportation to teaching aides and school nurses, the significance that ESP have in public education is well reflected in the variety of occupations they represent. ESP provide the first and last contact children have with the school (most often, the bus driver, caregiver or security officer.) Their interaction with students can enhance or detract from a student's learning experience. Their ability to keep schools safe and well maintained also affects the readiness and disposition to teach and learn. ESP are indeed, an integral part of the school and the overall learning environment.

Renewed efforts by U.S. public schools to involve parents and the community in the education and welfare of children must include ESP. Demographically, ESP are more likely than teachers to live in the community where the students live. Up to 71% of some job groups have lived in their communities 20 or more years – very significant in a highly mobile society like the United States. Three quarters of all NEA ESP members volunteer their personal time to at least one community program or organization. This makes ESPs valuable facilitators in community outreach activities, conflict mediation and community-based political action.

Education Support Personnel bring a unique set of job-related, organizational issues and challenges within the NEA:

- ESP positively challenge the organization to redefine the image of the public school. That is, the school as a community based learning environment where all school employees have a role in the quality education and welfare of the student.
- The vast diversity of occupations and job titles requires the organization to broaden the scope of professional development concepts and advocacy

Environment

guidelines. These must be inclusive of the skills needed to perform well in education support positions. Essential components of the whole learning environment include school health and safety, nutrition, sanitation and maintenance, technical skills and other.

- NEA must work to promote mutual understanding, respect, recognition and collaboration among teaching and education support staff. The NEA, as a federation of 51 state organizations has three states that do not recognize ESP as active members. ESP members from these states can not run for office within their own state organization. However, they can be delegates and run for office at the NEA Representative Assembly.

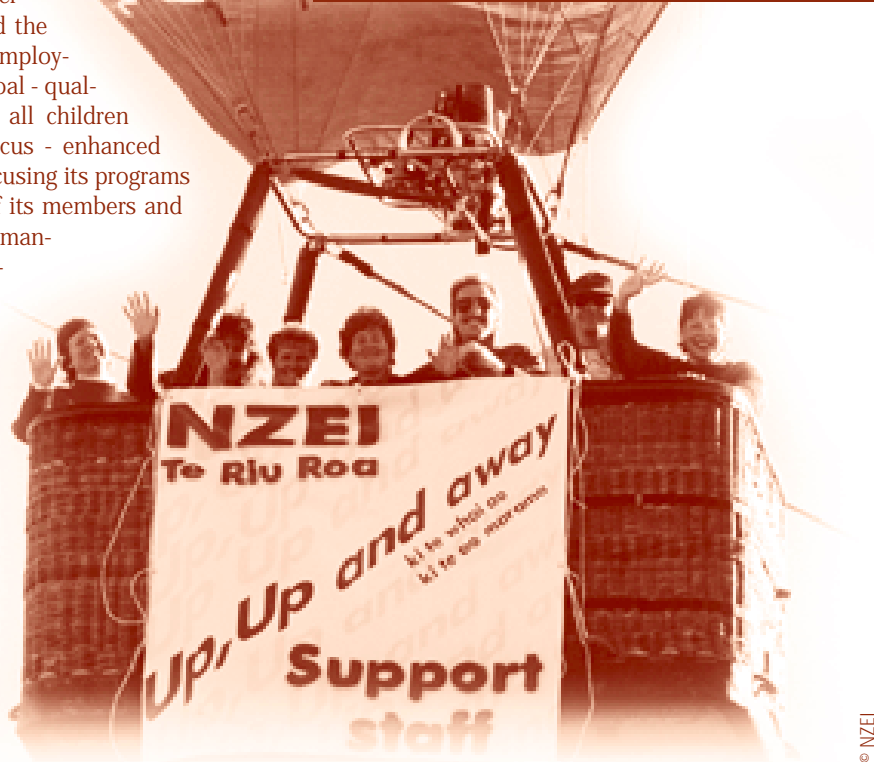
So where is the balance of interest between ESP and teachers in the NEA? NEA leadership has actively pursued the integration of all school employees towards a common goal - quality public education for all children and one key strategic focus - enhanced student achievement. Focusing its programs and policies on behalf of its members and public education in this manner, the National Education Association is being effective in advocating for the betterment of working conditions for all school employees and the education and well being of all public school children. ♦

NEA groups Education Support Personnel into 9 job categories and 60 subcategories. Ranked by size, the nine general job categories include:

- paraeducators (teaching aides),
- secretarial, clerical, administrative,
- building and grounds maintenance/repairs,
- food services,
- transportation, delivery and vehicle maintenance,
- trades, crafts, machine operators,
- technical services,
- health and student services, and
- security services.

A more detailed breakdown is available at NEA's web site (www.nea.org/esp/jobs/index.html).

The potential for Education Support Personnel (ESP) membership in the U.S. is almost 3 million. ESP account for approximately 44% of all school employees and 13% of NEA's membership.



© NZEI

New Zealand school support staff go up, up and away to publicise their conference. There are about 10,000 school support staff, 6000 of whom belong to the union, NZEI Te Riu Roa. Though their work is highly valued by teachers and parents, support staff are often poorly paid in New Zealand schools. The majority are women part-time workers. In addition to a biennial conference, NZEI organises a support staff week each year to raise awareness of the many duties support staff perform, from running the school office to assisting disabled children in the classroom. Many support staff are working towards improving their qualifications, and NZEI is campaigning to have support staff skills and qualifications recognised in their pay. There is a growing awareness in the education sector of the vital role support staff play in well managed New Zealand schools.



Rafael Rivera
National Education Association

FRANCE

Non-Teaching Staff Are Members of the Education Team

by Jean Paul Roux
FEN General Secretary

"Administrative, technical, blue-collar, social, health and support staff are members of the educational community. They participate directly in the activities of the public education service and help to ensure that the institutions and services of the National Education System function smoothly. They contribute to the quality of the education and the quality of life and provide security, catering, health and social protection services and, in boarding establishments, pupils' board and lodging".

Law relating to education of 10 July 1989, Title II, Article 15



Jean Paul Roux
General Secretary, FEN
Member of the EI Executive Board



© Lebrun/Photonews

There are approximately 294,000 non-teaching staff employed by the French National Education System, compared with 827,000 teachers (1 January 1999 figures). They include engineers, technicians, administrative staff, blue-collar workers, social workers, psychologists, health workers and librarians. They are educators who work alongside teachers on the difficult, yet enthralling, task of educating young people and preparing them for their lives as grown-up men and women, as citizens and as workers.

For the most part, they do their jobs in secondary and higher education in the various services to be found in educational institutions, mainly in libraries, documentation units, laboratories, university canteens, health and social services, and administrative departments. Their role is particularly important in higher education where only three employees out of every five are teachers. They play a vital part in ensuring that the system and the institutions themselves run smoothly. In particular, they do so through the contact they have with pupils, students and even parents: this contact is different from the pedagogical rela-

tionship that students have with teachers.

Educational institutions and universities are places where non-teaching staff live and work, but above all they are places where young people live and receive an education. When doing their jobs, all staff must therefore be involved in this educational work.

Studies carried out by the French national teachers' union FEN, for example its analysis of the problem of violence, have clearly stressed the importance of collective action by all groups of staff: in other words, action by the education team for which the institution's project must be the common language of delivering education.

Educational institutions are places for socialisation. Adults who work there cannot do so without a common, clearly identified aim. What we need to do is identify everyone's role so that they can all be involved in the delivery of education through their respective jobs.

The education team marries the skills of each of its members, and the base that is common to all of them – the act of delivering education – is founded on their professionalism and on the diversity of their jobs.

That is also why, in order to develop these ideas of team work and a common language, it is important for trade unions representing non-teaching staff to sit down with teachers' organisations in federations where they can discuss the delivery of education in teams and on the basis of common values. ♦

THE EXAMPLE OF NURSES IN THE FRENCH EDUCATION SYSTEM

They have to deal with children for any reason, including issues relating to relationships and psychological matters, as long as it impacts on health. They have responsibility for health monitoring and general well-being in educational institutions. They initiate and coordinate individual and/or collective activities linked to health and safety education, maintain regular contact with other members of the education community and sit on the various committees that exist in institutions such as staff councils, class councils, disciplinary committees and health and safety committees.

AUSTRALIA

Lack of Proper Recognition for
Non-Teaching Staff

© AEU



The AEU's current coverage and membership of non-teaching staff in government schools is essentially limited to South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania, although as a result of a decision by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) the AEU is negotiating with the two other unions that cover these employees to expand its coverage.

The Australian Education Union (AEU) has covered all categories of non-teaching staff (other than cleaners and ground-staff) in South Australia since the mid-1970s. This essentially includes teacher aides, administrative staff, and library and laboratory technicians. These employees are grouped under one integrated classification structure and are known as School Services Officers. The AEU shares coverage of these employees with the Public Sector union (the Community and Public Sector Union, or CPSU), but the AEU has more members and is generally more active in representing non-teaching staff in South Australia. The AEU also has exclusive coverage of Aboriginal Education Workers who assist Aboriginal students alongside teachers.

The major industrial concerns for non-teaching staff vary from place to place, but there are some common themes. Salary levels generally do not recognise the complex skills and responsibilities exercised by non-teaching staff, particularly those for teacher aides assisting students with disabilities.

The classification structures in a number of places do not offer real opportunity for advancement for most non-teaching staff unless they are able (and wish) to secure the most senior position in the administrative structure, which usually entails responsibility for finances and human resources management. This means that those non-teaching staff who wish to maintain an involvement with the classroom are often stuck on the lowest levels of the classification structure. The AEU is taking steps to address this problem.

Another common problem for non-teaching staff around Australia is the lack of permanency and access

to full-time work. Non-teaching staff are often employed on a casual, or short fixed-term basis. This allows the schools to avoid paying them during school holidays. Some employees are only employed during school hours, and, in the case of teacher aides, only for periods when they are engaging in classroom activities. Salaries which are already low are consequently reduced further and many hours of unpaid overtime are inevitably required. One of the causes of

this lack of permanency is the devolution of responsibility for budgets to the school level which has occurred to some degree in most States and Territories. Schools with fixed (and often inadequate) budgets are forced to find savings to make ends meet, and the flexible deployment of non-teaching staff provides fertile ground. The high incidence of casual, short-term employment also makes union recruitment much more difficult.

The trend to devolve responsibilities and functions to the school level has resulted in markedly increased workloads for non-teaching staff, particularly in the financial, administrative and staff management areas.

Another issue that is causing concerns in more than one State is the increased first-aid and medical responsibilities that are being placed on non-teaching staff. In Victoria, for example, non-teaching staff are being required to apply catheters to students, often without adequate training.

In the case in the Australian Industrial Relations Commission over coverage rights a few years ago, the AEU argued that many of the difficulties faced by non-teaching staff were partly attributable to outdated union demarcation lines which prevented the AEU from representing them. The AEU submitted that non-teaching staff would be better represented by a union solely devoted to servicing education institutions, rather than unions with membership across a diverse range of occupations, workplaces and industries. This argument was partially accepted by the AIRC, and the AEU continues to be strong in its desire to extend its representation of non-teaching staff in government schools. There is a large pool of non-union members across Australia that the AEU is particularly keen to target. ♦

The major industrial concerns for non-teaching staff vary from place to place, but there are some common themes. Salary levels generally do not recognise the complex skills and responsibilities exercised by non-teaching staff.



Matt O'Connor
Federal Legal/Industrial Officer
Australian Education Union

UGANDA

Are Factors of Production Applicable to Education? The Ignored Labour Factor!



© Jenny Matthews/Oxfam

If quality education is to be realised, all the factors of production must be well organised and catered for. Land, capital, entrepreneurship, raw materials and labour must be present for the organisation, preparation (or, better still, re-organisation) of institutions providing education, so as to attain quality education which is the vital element for development. "Education for all" or rather "Universal education" has been at the top of the agenda in so many national and international forums worldwide. However, without quality education, educators seem to be wasting not only material and human resources but time as well.

Students are raw materials which are brought/taken to schools built on land. They are fed and cared for by other means using funds or, rather, capital. They are managed and taught by the administrative support staff (non-teaching staff) and teachers respectively. These are the labourers of the institutions dealing/investing in education. The students then go out of school as quality (or not quality) citizens (products). The entrepreneurs are the governments.

In Uganda today, just as before, the labour sector, especially the education system, has been marginalised. This sector is composed of three categories: teaching, administrative and support staff. However, it is only the teaching staff who are recognised by the entrepreneurs of the education system. The administrative staff and the support staff are not catered for by the method of providing the social amenities like medical care, housing, transport, pension, retirement benefits, training, etc. This group only survives on the "chicken feed" wages they are paid and nothing more.

What is interesting or rather sad for the non-teaching staff is that they are the ones managing not only finan-

cial but also other material resources within the educational institutions. Bursars manage finance, secretaries manage stationery, librarians keep all the institutions' books, caterers manage food resources, estates officers manage equipment and other facilities. A hungry dog (unless it is disciplined) cannot effectively guard meat for its master. This situation of lack of the social amenities of life may lead to tremendous corruption and this, there is no doubt, can prevent quality education.

In Uganda, the non-teaching staff are employed and really operate at the mercy of the heads of institutions and in most cases not on merit. The Government pays the staff despite the fact that it does not recruit them. The heads of institutions recruit, but they are not the salary payers. At the end of the day, none of the above accept that they are the rightful employer. Government's education policies do not provide for non-teaching staff and individual institutions do not have clear or written terms and conditions of services, let alone providing appointment letters.

No quality school can provide quality without quality citizens. But no quality non-teaching staff can be developed when the social amenities of life are denied to them.

It is only when the entrepreneurs of educational institutions realise the need for quality non-teaching staff and provide the necessary social benefits to the said staff (sufficient wages, medical care, housing, pension etc.) that quality education will be realised, not only in Uganda but worldwide as well. Let the governments (entrepreneurs of educational institutions) work out a policy scheme for non-teaching staff so that the paths to development are paved. ♦



Education is a commodity; a product which comes out of raw materials after being subjected to processing. This implies, therefore, that the factors affecting production are applicable to education as well.

Ssentongo B. Mathias
Buganda Regional Co-ordinator
National Union of Educational
Institutions of Uganda
and Estates Manager of the
St. Henry's College Kitovu

The Fast Growing Segment of AFT

by Lorretta Johnson,
AFT Vice President

The AFT Paraprofessional and School Related Personnel (PSRP) division is one of five constituency group divisions within the AFT governance structure. The division includes support staff members in K-12 school districts, colleges and universities. Their job titles include paraprofessionals, bus drivers, cooks, secretaries, painters, janitors, technicians, clerical, cleaners, mechanics and thousands of other titles.

The PSRP division is 18% of the total American Federation of Teachers (AFT) membership¹. We represent 200,000 PSRPs under state collective bargaining laws. Nearly 40% of our affiliates, 950 out of 2,500, count school support staff as members. A large number of them (450) include both school support staff and teachers or college faculty. This helps to reinforce the idea that teachers and support staff must work side by side to provide a high-quality education to students.

AFT categorizes PSRP membership into a number of broad job categories:

- Instructional Paraprofessionals (teacher aides, education assistants) - they are about half of our total PSRP membership
- Office Employees (secretaries, clerical, accountants, etc.) - they represent about 25% of our PSRP membership
- Food Service - 6%
- Transportation - 7%
- Custodial - 5%
- Maintenance - 5%
- Security Personnel - 2%

We also categorize our PSRP membership into 3 major work settings:

- Nearly all of our members in this division (91%) work in K-12 school systems.
- About 6% of our total PSRP membership work in 2 and 4 year institutions (primarily public colleges but also a number of private colleges). While most of those are in clerical and technical positions, we have a growing number of community colleges where we represent all support staff.
- About 3% of our PSRP membership work in early childhood/child care facilities.

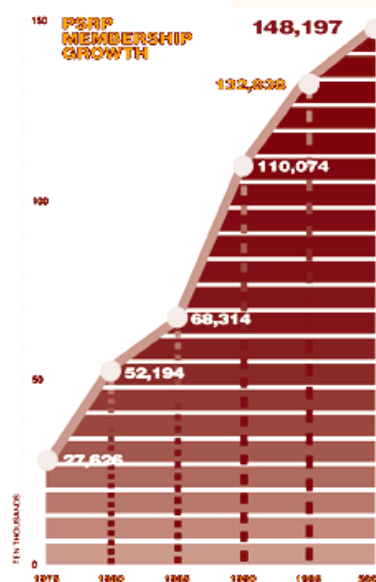
The AFT has had school support staff as members almost since the first days of our union in 1916. One of the earliest locals in the AFT was made up of school secretaries in the Chicago public schools. This local merged with a number of other locals in Chicago to become the Chicago Teachers Union, AFT Local #1. We began organizing in great numbers in the late 1960's after passage of the Elementary and Secondary Edu-

cation Act brought large numbers of instructional paraprofessionals into the public schools. In the early 1980's our organizing began to expand more deeply into other school support staff positions.

This group of workers, like all others, are faced with typical problems like unsafe workplaces, low pay and inadequate benefits. In addition, their jobs are often threatened by efforts to privatize their services (allow a private company to provide a public service).

As workers though, we are constantly seeking to overcome the low level of acknowledgment and respect for the important work we perform for schools and students. One way we have been successfully changing that perception is through the pursuit of training and professional development that will upgrade our skills and make us a more valuable resource to students and schools. A recent survey of AFT PSRP members showed that 86% would take advantage of professional development if it was offered by their employer. We also are educating the public about our commitment to schools and students. This workforce is particularly dedicated to the work they do in schools. The same survey shows that 69% of school employees expect to be working for the same employer in five years and 61% expect to be working in the same job.

Through its annual convention and our national Program and Policy Council, the AFT sets policies and directs programs that assist our PSRP members and affiliates in improving our work and family lives. Some recent AFT policy positions for workers in this division include: support for state certification/licensure of instructional paraprofessionals; condemnation of the abuse and misuse of non-permanent part-time and temporary workers; support for a living wage; opposition to the sale of competitive foods in schools; and support for a greater role for school support staff in preventing school violence and maintaining safe and orderly schools. ♦



Lorretta Johnson
AFT Chair of the union's PSRP Program and Policy Council and President of the Paraprofessional chapter of the Baltimore (MD) Teachers Union.

¹ <http://www.aft.org/psrp/>

The Paraprofessional and School Related Personnel (PSRP) Division of the AFT will organise the 24th AFT PSRP Annual Conference on March 22-25, 2001 in Las Vegas.

Administrative Staff in Schools:

Organisation, Challenges and Perspectives

by Carlos Augusto Abicalil
President, CNTE, Brazil

The right to trade union membership in the Brazilian public education service was only recognised in the 1988 Federal Constitution. At its creation in 1990, the CNTE proposed unified representation for the various categories of people working in the education sector.

Public networks of basic education in Brazil today account for more than 2.5 million people who work in the education sector in over 100,000 municipal and state (provincial) schools, and every day look after over 52 million pupils. No other national service attains such dimensions. The personnel who run these school establishments include a little over a million non-teaching public employees.

Although support personnel are indispensable for the operation of schools, and they make up a large proportion of the total of education employees, they have long been separated from organisational processes and from trade union representation. The right to trade union membership in the public education service was only recognised in the 1988 Federal Constitution following the demise of the 30-year-long military dictatorship. The period of the dictatorship coincided with a massive expansion in public education, which accompanied the process of urbanisation and industrialisation during the second half of the 20th century.

The expansion of schooling to growing sections of the population was founded on two pillars: compression of total payroll costs and deterioration in working conditions (e.g. school buildings, equipment and recruitment). This situation, which was supported by the military dictatorship, found its counterpart in recruiting practices based on clientelism that ignored competitive criteria for entry into the different careers available in the education sector. However, even during the military dictatorship, teachers began to exert strong pressure so as to obtain initial training, the organisation of competitive entry and career paths.

The ability of non-teaching staff to present demands is a much more recent development. Already, during the 1980s, associations representing teachers adopted essentially trade union practices, ignoring legal obstacles. Then, in the late 1980s, various teachers' associations initiated discussion on the representation of administrative staff in education. At national level, there was growing support for the establishment of a national confederation to represent everybody working in education. In three units of the federation (Paraná, São Paulo and the Federal District), associations of education administrative staff separate from the teachers' associations were

already becoming stronger. Elsewhere in the country, education administrative workers had no form of trade union organisation, or the government grouped them with people employed in general administration.

When the CNTE was founded in 1990, it proposed unified representation for the various categories of people working in the education sector. This arrangement encouraged state-based unions that had developed out of the teachers' association to constitute themselves as unified unions, as at the national level. For historical reasons, there are still two separate unions in the state of São Paulo and the Federal District: one for teachers, and another for administrative staff. In the other states, the unions have opened their representation to all categories and have won ten years of significant advances, notwithstanding remaining strong institutional and cultural restrictions.

Governments insist on maintaining the link between administrative staff and the general administration, thereby fragmenting trade union representation and weakening our unions' capacity for advocacy. There have even been cases of governments calling on local judicial systems in order to exclude unified union representation.

The period of formal union unification also initiated fruitful debates on the professional identity of employees who had hitherto been divided into categories such as non-teaching staff, auxiliaries, administrative support and general assistants. They formed a group largely composed of people with low levels of schooling (with certain exceptions in the administrative monitoring of school documentation) and victims of political clientelism. The combination of these factors had produced a cohort of employees without professional identity or qualifications, easily manipulated and with little inclination to join a trade union. However, democratic advances, and the growing structural importance of the various functions of the sector, allied to strong trade union action, have enabled this situation to be largely overturned during the last few years.

At state level, two unions have 70% membership among non-teaching staff; in other units of the federation, membership ranges between 5% and 30%. The

BRAZIL

highest concentrations are to be found among maintenance, cleaning and catering workers, then among documentation staff, and lastly in multimedia education services.

State adjustment programmes have sought to cut the administrative support function by fixing a proportional link between the number of administrative workers and the number of pupils, and exerting pressure to reduce the number of administrative personnel, affecting notably the least skilled. There has also been encouragement sub-contracting of services and the use of volunteers, so as to reduce staffing costs.

A body specially for administrative staff

The CNTE has created, among its operational units, the DEFE (Department of Education Administrative Staff). It consists of a coordinating committee linked to the Union Policies Secretariat, and is made up of 27 representatives (one for each affiliated state union) who must be administrative workers. Since 1993, this organisational body within the CNTE has initiated studies and significant actions with regard to the Federal Government and the state and municipal governments (i.e. the employers).

Thus, the establishment of a collective identity for education staff has led to the definition of four technical occupations, each based on a profile of the skills and aptitudes required for functions undertaken daily in the school setting, while remaining keenly aware of the need for openness to future plans. The four technical occupations match defined vocational functions, each requiring a minimum standard of education (middle school), compulsory initial technical training, access to new administrative functions by competition, a career path linked to training/qualifications, to length of service, and to an assessment of tasks performed, and a salary scale.

This new scheme, born of trade union action and collective study, has already been put into practice in the municipal and state networks of Cuiabá, the capital of the state of Mato Grosso, and the Federal District. Implementation of the process of initial training and the fixing of career paths as formulated above are being examined in three other states: Rio



Grande do Sul, Acre and Mato Grosso do Sul. Programs developed in the states follow the national definitions, with four technical courses in vocational training: school catering technician (food), school multimedia technician (e.g. laboratories, libraries, and audio and video services), school administration technician (school secretariat and documentation), and maintenance technician (repairs, maintenance and general upkeep). As so often happens, a low standard of education is a major obstacle to participation in these technical training programmes. Accordingly, there are policies designed to raise educational standards and to provide the vocational training at the same time. Where we have been able to make headway, the training programs are the responsibility of government education authorities.

Two years ago, the CNTE put forward a National Vocational Training Programme with a view to obtaining federal finance from the Workers' Assistance Fund, such money to be spent on vocational qualifications under tripartite management. We signed an implementation agreement with the Uniraballo Foundation – Labour University, and managed to obtain funds through the national trade union centre, the CUT. We then found ourselves facing a new obstacle to add to the shortage of resources: priority was given to unemployed workers seeking re-training in order to re-enter the labour market.

The CNTE has no doubt that today's education, like tomorrow's, must employ qualified technical staff. We also believe that the quality of public education is closely linked to the continuing training of its employees. That is why not only the right to work, but also the right to quality employment, are fundamental objectives of trade union action. ♦



Carlos Augusto Abicalil
President, CNTE, Brazil
Member of the EI Executive Board

GHANA

TEWU, the Voice of the Non-teaching Staff in Ghana

The non-teaching personnel, who constitute 90% of TEWU's membership, form an essential part of the education system, as they contribute immensely to the administration of education.

The Teachers and Educational Workers' Union (TEWU) is the only staff organisation in the nation's education sector which holds Collective Bargaining Certificates (issued under the Industrial Relations Act) to cover unionised professional teachers and non-teaching personnel in both public and private educational and cultural institutions.

The non-teaching personnel comprise categories from the cleaners to the most senior staff in the administrative, accounting, audit, technical and other non-academic classes. Some of them are highly qualified in their respective professions and their contributions to the efficient running of the education system are indispensable.

Over the years, TEWU has achieved improved conditions of service in the Collective Agreements concluded with the various managements. Some of the conditions enjoyed by the members include paid annual leave, paid maternity leave, study leave with pay, free medical care for the employee, the spouse and children, a cash sum in the event of the death of an employee or member of family or parent; overtime pay and termination benefits.

Pay levels are very low. A public sector wage policy introduced by government in 1999 has worsened the situation in that job evaluation, which formed the basis of the new policy, was not properly done, thereby creating distortions and disparities to the disadvantage of the employees.



© UNFPA/REA

During the past five years, TEWU has been advocating, in vain, the urgent need for managements in the pre-tertiary level to institute in-service training schemes for the non-teaching staff, in view of the on-going reforms in education which make it imperative for techniques in school education administration to be modernised.

Currently, the volume of work that non-teaching personnel perform is more than they can cope with, because more schools and offices have been established under the education reforms. However, the new trend has not been augmented by modern office equipment like computers, electric typewriters, photocopiers, fax machines, etc. It is necessary, therefore, for both the managements and union to collaborate and secure some of the equipment, at least on a selective basis, for the deprived institutions and offices. ♦

The Teachers and Educational Workers' Union (TEWU) is one of the 17 national unions affiliated to the Ghana Trades Union Congress. TEWU has a membership of 33,000. Non-teaching (ancillary) staff in educational and cultural institutions in both private and public sectors form 90% of TEWU membership; the rest are teachers. TEWU's coverage spans the three main levels of the education system namely, basic, secondary and tertiary.

The union came into being on 20th July 1958 when three registered trade unions – the Ghana Union of Teachers, the Federation of Ghana Teachers' Associations and the University of Ghana Workers' Union – all in the public sector – merged to form the Union of Teachers and Education Institutions Workers (UTEIW) under the Trades Union Congress (TUC). In 1960, the union was renamed the Union of Teachers and Cultural Services (UTCS) and employees in such quasi educational institutions as the West African Examination Council and Ghana Library Board

were enrolled into its fold.

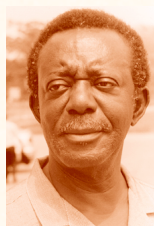
In 1962, the professional teachers withdrew their membership from the UTCS to form a professional association now known as the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT). The non-teaching personnel resolved to remain within the TUC under a new name, Educational Institutions Workers' Union (EIWU). In 1965, the name was again changed, to TEWU, Teachers and Educational Workers' Union, to reflect the fact that some professional teachers, from both public and private sectors, had decided to remain with this union.

The National Delegates Conference is the highest decision-making body of TEWU. It is held quadrennially and is attended by 200 delegates from the nation's 10 administrative regions. Each of the 110 administrative districts of the nation has a TEWU District Council and TEWU also has employees in its 940 local unions.



The handle of the torch of the logo of the Teachers and Educational Workers' Union is embossed with a scroll carrying the Union's motto: "We stand for Truth, Enlightenment, Wisdom and Unity", forming the acronym TEWU.

At the base of the torch are two basic working implements, a spade and a hoe. A spade because, being opinion leaders and advocates, unionists must call a spade a spade, and the hoe symbolizing farming – man's first occupation.



Daniel Ayim Antwi
General Secretary
TEWU

In the Thick of It, Day in Day out

Last June, the Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec became the Centrale des syndicats du Québec. This new name sums up a unique approach to trade unionism that the union has been practising for almost 30 years.

by Daniel Lachance*
Vice-President,
Centrale des syndicats du Québec



Unlike what has happened in most other countries, Quebecois teachers decided in the early 1970s to join forces with support and professional staff working at all levels of the education system from pre-school to universities. The Centrale has continued to develop since that time, and now embraces workers from a wide range of sectors including health, social services and nurseries.

This unity of action is not only demonstrated at the provincial level through the existence of various federations covering different categories of staff, but also at local level with several multi-category unions representing both teaching and non-teaching staff.

Teachers form a fairly homogenous group, but the same cannot be said for education support staff: they include hundreds of different jobs such as secretaries and porters, of course, but also technicians, educators, monitors and craftworkers.

It is not going too far to say that support staff are at the very heart of the education process. Some workers, such as laboratory assistants and specialist IT technicians, provide teachers with direct support; others like secretaries and wages clerks give administrative back-up. And then there are those who deal directly with pupils: this group includes workers like assistants for people with disabilities, monitors and school daycare educators. Their numbers have increased dramatically over the last few years.

The key role being played by support staff is being increasingly recognised, not only by teachers, professionals and parents, but also by the senior managers of educational institutions. Sadly it has taken many years of budget cuts for them to admit it. In fact, it didn't happen until they saw with their own eyes that support staff affected the quality of education: on the one hand, teachers found themselves with too much to do; on the other, essential services were no longer being made available.

Support staff received concrete support at the last education reform. One of the main elements of this reform was the establishment of Governing Boards: these joint Boards, on which school staff and parents have an equal number of representatives, have enor-



mous control over life in education establishments, and this enables support staff to make their voices heard and influence what happens in institutions.

Being a member of the same Centrale or multi-category union makes it possible to prepare better for staff interventions at Governing Board meetings, and to coordinate them more effectively. Moreover, this kind of trade union solidarity produces more effective action whether countering employers' strategies or proposing improvements in public education.

It follows that if all categories of education staff belong to the same trade union organisation, it fosters a clearer acknowledgement of one another's work, and more solidarity between the various kinds of staff combined with respect for each person's independence. It is something we are proud of. These are the kinds of organisation that enable us to be THE trade union force in education in Québec. ♦



Daniel Lachance
 Vice-President
 Centrale des syndicats du Québec

* Daniel Lachance originates from education support personnel