

"NON-TEACHING FORCE: THE BACKBONE OF SCHOOL OPERATIONS"

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In every school across the country, we often associate success with the brilliance of our teachers and the achievements of our students. We highlight learning achievement, recognize honor roll students, and value the hard work of educators. But behind every clean classroom, every smoothly-run office transaction, every safe and orderly school ground, lies the unspoken effort of people who rarely make it to the spotlight, our non-teaching personnel.

These are the administrative aides who process student records, the security guards who keep the gates safe, the janitors who maintain cleanliness, the guidance staff who lend a listening ear, the utility workers who respond to leaks and repairs, and the ICT staff who ensure that technology runs without a glitch. Though they do not write lesson plans or stand before a classroom, their contribution is no less vital to the learning process.

The truth is, the effectiveness of a school as a learning environment depends not just on curriculum but on functionality and support. Imagine a school without working lights, with dirty hallways, with lost documents, or unmanaged safety concerns. Learning would be compromised. Educational support services play a pivotal role in ensuring that schools remain conducive to learning, providing the necessary environment for teachers to teach and students to thrive.

Non-teaching personnel are, in many ways, the school's operational heart. They handle logistics, enforce discipline, and sometimes even provide emotional support to

students and colleagues alike. Their knowledge of the school system and their quiet resilience allow for continuity and order. More than just background figures, they are integral members of the school community.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, their relevance became even more apparent. Many were tasked to distribute modules, sanitize school facilities, assist in contact tracing, and provide logistical support. In a time when teaching shifted online, it was the non-teaching staff who remained on the ground, ensuring that learning could still continue. Their silent service speaks volumes of their dedication, often unnoticed but deeply felt.

Unfortunately, their importance is not always matched by recognition. Many non-teaching staff continue to experience low compensation, limited opportunities for professional development, and minimal involvement in policy discussions. Inclusive school management practices must be strengthened to give non-teaching personnel a stronger voice and better career support.

It is time to go beyond the chalkboard and expand our definition of who an education hero is. Every form signed, every floor cleaned, every light fixed, every record filed, and every student guided through hardship is a testament to their indispensable presence.

A school's success is never the work of just one person. It is a collaborative effort and with that collaboration, non-teaching personnel deserve their rightful place in the narrative. Recognizing their role is not only just; it is necessary. After all, no school truly functions without its invisible backbone.

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