

PART THREE

**What Teachers, Students and Head Teachers think
about the PACE Project Methods and Approaches**

THE PROS AND CONS REGARDING TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES:

1. Experiential Learning

TEACHERS SAY

- Students reach the conclusions rather than being told.
- Students are getting better results using this method than they were getting before.
- *Experiential learning can take more time than traditional methods.*

STUDENTS SAY

- Practical work is a more interesting way of learning.
- A better understanding was achieved through this method of learning.
- “You can learn better by seeing and doing”.
- We like the combination of theory and practical.

2. Participation/Collaboration

TEACHERS SAY

- Students enjoy being asked what they think and what they want to do. “They say no other teacher does this”.
- My views were sometimes altered, or my knowledge extended, as a result of student presentations / research.
- Debate pushed students to think critically, to use knowledge in the cut and thrust of argument.
- ***It's sometimes difficult to get students working productively in groups.***
- ***Students find it difficult to switch to PACE learning techniques if they are in a school system that reinforces passive learning. They don't necessarily understand why the PACE teacher is using new techniques.***

STUDENTS SAY

.....in general

- It's more interesting collaborating with the teacher in preference to dictation and teacher centred lessons. It makes us feel part of a team, as protagonists in the learning process.
- They became more confident about expressing their ideas; did not have to reflect set opinions; there was space for their questions.

.....regarding Group Work

- They helped each other, and formed better relationships.
- Shy people were brought out and everyone became aware that they have something to offer.
- They were supported by each other's strengths. They learned from each other (eg power point skills) and achieved more than they could have done individually. This equipped them for independent individual work.
- Group work led them to think more critically because of constant challenges by other students. They felt they were influenced to be more objective, that their critical thinking skills were sharpened and that overall they were pushed to think more deeply.

3. Fostering Independence

TEACHERS SAY

- In spite of the difficulty of the subject material, understanding was aided by individual work.
- The pilot has convinced me of the value of independent work in spite of initial scepticism.
- The students decide what they will do in group work - who will undertake specific tasks - and therefore develop individual responsibility.
- Research work has stimulated exchange of views and has promoted learning at all levels in the class, above all in the most able students, without excluding the others.
- ***There is little time for students to do independent learning.***
- ***Some students are not used to doing follow-up work independently on their own initiative***
- ***This way of teaching is challenging for students. Some students don't want to be independent, responsible or emancipated because being controlled is more secure.***

STUDENTS SAY

- They learned how to deal with a range of resources of varying degrees of usefulness; how to select useful material; how to distinguish between fact and opinion.
- They learned how to synthesise material gleaned from their own research (as distinct from retrieving relevant information from a set chapter or text book).
- Using more than one-text book enables students to see the relative merits of each and gives more than one perspective.
- They were encouraged to use resources in a critical way and felt encouraged to think rather than regurgitate. They got beyond facts and figures.
- They were required to do more than memorise facts. Had to filter information rather than absorb it.
- They felt more motivated and are learning to work for themselves not just for marks.
- Research for essays and presentations gives scope for the development of personal views.
- They feel more responsible and study for and by themselves.

4. Real Life Applications

TEACHERS SAY

- Students enjoy discussion with links to real life - "Students need that".
- Local real life examples of theory were thought provoking, raised awareness of local issues and pushed students to think deeply, entailing a grasp of complexity and of serious issues. From local issues it is possible to move to examples from the wider world.
- Human rights can be discussed in relation to local issues. Delicate issues can be discussed at an academic level rather than at the street level.

STUDENTS SAY

- Learning was very related to the outside world. "For the next two years it's going to be completely different how I see things, how I perceive things - that's opened up doors for me."
- They enjoyed having to look at economic issues from the perspective of regions other than their own.
- They see the interconnectedness of the world and see patterns emerging.
- The knowledge and understanding attained helped them understand the modern world. They can now understand newspaper articles [on economic issues]!

5. Diverse Methods

A TEACHER SAYS

- The teacher is a catalyst who “triggers” the educational process and facilitates the students’ exploration of the topic using a variety of approaches. Of course, the teacher is also a resource and an authority, but the teacher doesn’t dictate a received body of knowledge and interpretation.

STUDENTS SAY

- Diverse methods enable each person to find something that suits him.
- Lessons were different from other lessons in the school.
- Diversity of approaches was new and “less stressful” than the routine of input, learn and test.
- Exploring different perspectives led to changing preconceived ideas. For example, “The whole way I see duty has changed”. They felt they had become more open-minded.

The Effect of the PACE Methods on Relationships between Teachers Students and on the Personal Development of the Student _____

TEACHERS SAY

- Student talents and different kinds of intelligence found expression in diverse ways through PACE strategies.
- Teachers know students much better than before. The strategies have enabled teachers to see how students think and become aware of their different talents, skills and personal histories.
- These insights increase respect for the students and also enable teachers to prepare lessons in the light of the students' interests.
- Students are challenged to think about what they are doing as opposed to the routine of learning and testing some are used to. Inherent in such approaches is a different relationship between the teacher and the students.

STUDENTS SAY

- They had more attention from, and a better (interactive) relationship with, the teacher; the teacher helped them; they are treated as individuals, as adults; they feel they matter to the teacher.
- Both the students and the teacher behaved differently (in a positive sense).
- They see the teacher as open minded and welcoming of student ideas. "Teachers help students fulfil their ideas". Ideas can be discussed with the teacher and teachers can be "corrected".
- The relationship with the teacher was one of mutual respect and support.

PACE Methods and the Professional Development of Teachers _____

TEACHERS SAY

- This kind of project wakes teachers up and reminds them to change what they are doing in the classroom. It gives an opportunity for enthusiasm to be renewed.
- Teachers' abilities and competencies have grown through PACE methods that have stimulated reflection on new ideas circulating in recent years.
- "By teaching in this way you always try to improve as a teacher. With traditional methods and curriculum structures....you cannot improve much....you get stuck" in the cycle and "repetition leads to boredom and frustration".
- Choosing topics gives teachers freedom and time to "do it their own way", using imagination. "If it's interesting for teachers, it must be interesting for students!"
- The pilot has facilitated collaboration with other school colleagues.

Views on the Schemes of Work

- Students liked the idea of studying one topic over some weeks (not too long, however!) in preference to a quick succession of different topics.
- *In some school systems there is pressure to cover extensive content in limited time, for example, 50 topics in 70 lessons in a year (This was a recurrent theme). This makes it difficult to experiment with new teaching and learning strategies.*
- *Many classes had only two 45 minute lessons per week, making it difficult to develop topics over several lessons.*

Work Load

- once the exemplar has been prepared, there is less work for the teacher.
- *Using the PACE approaches is more work for teachers. Preparation takes longer.*

Negative Perspectives

1. LACK OF MONEY

- *Can preclude work outside the classroom*

2. TEACHER RESISTANCE

- *If PACE teachers continue to use the PACE strategies it is not certain that colleagues will be won over. Some are resistant to new ideas.*
- *Teaching the pilot in a national programme is possible but requires teacher initiative. Using traditional methods is often easier for the students, especially in content-based subjects. In some schools the highly prescriptive curriculum, text books stipulated by the government and test dates set in advance by the authorities, present great challenges for the PACE teacher.*

BUT

An Individual Student from Vukovar Comments...

"I liked this way of work. It holds something unique and special that connects a student with a teacher. It was great because we worked in groups; everyone expressed their own opinion without any criticism and quarrel. We worked a lot, but the teacher was excellent, she turned all that work into fun, which we all enjoyed. It was interesting: we drew, painted, cut and also learned a lot. This way of work helped bringing the teacher and students together. The teacher can find out student's attitudes, wishes and possibilities and because of that he or she can teach them what is the most important in life. During the preparation of role plays for courtroom, the teacher helped us choose the costumes and characters and, what is the most important, she taught us that most of people don't respect human rights. She also explained that too many women suffer today because of physical and psychological mistreatment. She told us what to do in that situation. I am completely satisfied with this way of work. I like it. The discussion put us into position of adults. We always judge them and now we can understand them better and easier. We learned that we must think before we judge somebody. I think that we should frequently work in this way because we express ourselves easier and we have less stage fright of talking in public. We put ourselves in position of something we could work and we realize our possibilities.

If all teachers changed their way of work like our teacher....., many students would be interested in their subject. " Svetlana

Another Student from Vukovar says

"The PACE project is a great idea, maybe even utopian, if you ask me. I participated in a workshop called "Duty" and I liked it very much. Duties among friends, family members, teachers and students are of great importance for people my age. Personally, I don't think it's so important and that's why I always say I can do everything without any help or support. On the other hand, that's not always true – the only reason I say things like that is my stubbornness.

But when I see different projects (in this case PACE), hope appears. Somewhere deep in my heart I hope that a thing like that will become a fact, and not remain just another project.

It's not easy to achieve something like that in this region where we live. I, for example, never had great teacher-student relation. It seems that's just not something teachers do here. In primary school it's normal to love your teachers. They are kind and gentle, but that's just because they have to be. High school is a completely different story. There are new people – in fact, everything's new! You get the feeling that no one cares much about you. You have to fight to get what you want. But sometimes people like me just lose their will for "fighting", especially when something unpleasant happens and you need any help you can get.

I don't think I'm among those people who believe everything is pink and beautiful, **but projects like PACE can make things better. Its ideas are great and we got a nice place to start. Now we can only hope that such ideas can make a difference".** Gorana

A Student from Italy comments

"Moreover, by encountering real-life situations, as we did during our research, we could challenge and augment our theoretical understanding of Economics. It is very necessary and important to distinguish between articles written in textbooks, where a number of variables are assumed to be "ceteris paribus" (meaning constant), and real life events.

In addition, the discussions, which arose after the presentations, were very fruitful, for we were able to show some critical thinking and, as a result, we managed to settle on a model, which according to us outlines the conditions and circumstances under which corruption might thrive.

In a nutshell, this topic revealed new horizons (in terms of new ways of learning) to us. It was particularly interesting for me because I had to present the corruption in Nigeria in front of a Nigerian student. Given the tremendous diversity in our College. I may say that discussions here are extremely important. Nevertheless, it is certain that students' opinion is valuable everywhere. Thus, this new way of teaching, wherein teachers and students interact with each other, rather than teachers stuffing us with dry theory, should be promoted and spread. "PACE" is working in exactly this direction". Atanas

From Bosnia Herzegovina a teacher writes, after discussion with students...

"After completing the piloting we made a short reflection on materials and students' response to the whole process of learning. Most of the students agreed that this approach made them understand better and think about physical concepts in every-day situations. Most of them welcomed idea of seeing things rather than just hearing theoretical facts, especially proving theory through experiment. I will quote one student: "What are you doing to me? all my views on the world are seriously questioned!" This is a good example of evaluation of critical thinking, and I think that even a choice of topic has drawn some complex questions to the surface. Everybody agreed that the discussion and opportunity to express their opinion was the best part of the pilot because they felt learning as a conversation with proper arguments. I also felt that this topic made them more concerned and actually worried about environment and energy resources of the future". Valentina

What Head Teachers think

- Many Heads wish for educational reform and see the PACE pilot as a step in the right direction.
- Many Heads are looking for continuity as opposed to projects that come and go. Such Heads would be happy if the PACE project became "an engine of radical modification of the professional practices of teachers".

CONCLUSION

“The experience of seeing the reactions of teachers and students to the PACE pilot in a variety of schools strengthened our sense of the need for this kind of educational reform and made it clear that such reform is possible, if not always easy to accomplish, within existing curricula.”

The Monitors of the PACE Pilot

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