



PACE - Pan African Conservation Education – sharing ideas between communities.

Melanie has been involved with UNAFAS for more than a year. She has done Conservation Values fieldwork in rural areas¹ during the vacations, made use of our library and her own initiative to expand her teaching repertoire, bringing new ideas and activities to the pupils and staff in her current school. In the article below Melanie reports on her recycling work, inspired by a PACE film about schools in South Africa. The PACE project – www.paceproject.net - has made and distributed a beautiful book, films, activity sheets and an educators booklet full of information, ideas and inspiring projects from around Africa. Melanie demonstrates how the PACE goal of simply sharing ideas and successes has had positive results in Yaoundé.

I am Tamnjong Melanie Sheshe, a teacher in Parents' National Educational Union (PNEU) nursery and primary school, Yaoundé, Cameroon (right). I have used paper mach before in school, mostly for decoration. PACE inspired me more, to make things to use in different subjects. The school has a population of about 1000 pupils who are of both Anglophone and francophone background. It has a working staff of more than 50 people.



As well as normal classroom learning with the study of subjects like Mathematics, English, French and Geography, there are extra curricular activities such as club which help pupils to learn in a more relaxed way and here mostly practical things are carried out. One of such clubs is the environment club which has as aim sustainable development through processes like recycling. I used paper mach with the environment club. Objects produced are first for school use then for other uses as need be, taking home for storage, decoration and so on.

The process is as follows -

- Gathering of waste papers and selection
- Steeping papers in water for 3 - 4 days
- Draining water and pounding papers
- Spreading mash on objects of different shapes for mash to take required shape
- Sun mash for days till dry
- Paint mash using colour of your choice
- Use your mash (object)

¹ <http://www.unafas.org.uk/files/bechati%20perceptions%20of%20wildlife.pdf>



The production process is long and time consuming and may take a week or more depending on the amount of sunshine, but children liked it. We found that much care must be taken both in the production process and after because objects produced easily break if not handled with care. But we had a lot of success. We found that objects produced actually look like natural eg. sweets and cakes. These attract children and may become a danger if they are not well informed.

Paper mash work helps in keeping the school environment clean as all papers are quickly gathered and kept for the process. Our streams are safer without these papers and air pollution is reduced since most papers are no longer burnt. Objects produced are used as teaching aids. Different objects are used for different subjects – We make shapes circles, rectangles, squares and triangles (below right), and counters (below left), for teaching mathematics.



We made maps, a Cameroon map and an Africa map (below) for geography, also decorations for arts and crafts. Objects produced can also be used as decoration on walls, tables and ceilings. We make containers for storing of objects like chalk and erasers, and are experimenting with pots for flowers. Paper mash is also used in writing directions on doors – ‘toilet’, ‘class 1’, etc.

The paper mash work opens children’s minds and makes them search for other ways of practicing sustainable development. Hard work is also developed through processes like these. It is also a way of keeping children busy and constructive. Paper mash work can also be a future career for some people if taken seriously. Objects produced could be sold to schools to be used as teaching aids or to individuals to be used as decoration at home. Of recent the government has been trying to re-enforce Arts and Craft into school curricular and paper mash work is ideal for this. Most of the materials used (paper and water) are not bought so it is something to be encouraged because it does not involve a lot of expenditure. It is also environmentally sustainable and can fetch a good income. Even children can carry out the process without fear of poisoning (thinking that waste is dirty), which could be a fear, but is easily dispelled.



Using household ‘rubbish’ in school

We saw PACE films and read the books too, about people making good use of rubbish. CVP people started collecting rubbish, and we discussed different things we could do with it: with cartons, jars, bottles, paper material, boxes, tissue rolls. Rubbish collected from school and elsewhere is now also recycled or re-used. Containers (below) are used in school for storing materials like crayons, erasers and pencils. Others are used for the production of teaching aids like the clock from a pizza box, and toys, like the yellow and orange trucks. It is true that most people don't have this kind of ‘rubbish’ – but when we do it can be used and teaches important lessons to children.

