



# Creating an inspiring learning environment for all

Data-driven granular network usage enables PACE Education to transform school experience

In a country where annual school fees can run to \$30,000, PACE Education pitches affordability. By investing in a new, digital layer, PACE is enabling its schools to explore new teaching methods and find new operational efficiencies. Its new, campus-wide networks are built on the HPE Aruba Networking Edge Services Platform.

## Building an education brand in a booming economy

The UAE economy is expected to grow 3% through 2023, after a 7.9% rise in 2022. It is the kind of growth that leaves more established economies envious and reflects longer-term confidence in the Gulf state.

The country continues to attract workers from all over the world. The UAE's population has tripled in the last 20 years and is expected to grow by a further 10% in the next decade. Economic success is the main driver, but it is not the only factor in this boom. Migrants come for the quality of life, healthcare, and, particularly for families, the quality of education.

This is the sector in which PACE Education operates. The business currently runs nine schools in the country, plus six in India. It teaches 25,000 students, representing over 55 nationalities.

In a crowded market that has witnessed the emergence of numerous international schools with annual fees exceeding \$30,000, the PACE proposition is affordability. PACE pitches itself at the mid-market, with tuition fees ranging from \$2500 to \$6000.



**Industry:** Education

**Country:** Dubai, UAE

### Vision

Provide affordable, relevant, industry-oriented and world-class professional education for all

### Strategy

Establish a modern learning environment across all campuses, where new digital teaching methods can be trialed, assessed, and adopted through seamless connectivity.

### Outcomes

- Supports a digital learning experience for 11,000 students at five schools
- Ensures robust security through granular network access policies
- Allows network management from a single pane of glass

“Our education group is dedicated to promoting an effective learning environment that encourages excellence and diversity in thoughts and endeavors,” says Salman Ibrahim, director of PACE Education. “Though we deliver high standards of education, we have nominal fee structures which benefit the medium and lower income group.”

The challenge for PACE is to deliver a quality education while managing costs. It does not want its schools to be left behind in terms of education features, but it cannot throw a limitless budget at upgrades. Its solution is to invest in a new, digital layer to the PACE experience.

“This is not a technology issue,” says Noorish Moosa, digital transformation lead, PACE Education. “It is a change management issue. Many of the technologies have existed for years; we just want to accelerate the way new ideas are adopted across the organization, be that by students, faculty, or operations.”

## Creating a dynamic and engaging learning environment

PACE has created a mobile-first learning experience throughout five of its UAE schools. Students and teachers can connect to the network, wherever they are on campus, extending the classroom and ensuring access to the right applications throughout the school day.

It establishes a home-from-home experience for students well-used to consuming digital content and working from tablets and laptops. The impetus, Moosa explains, was seeing how quickly schools adapted to the COVID shutdowns: “We knew students were working from home on their own devices. When COVID forced our schools to close, we had a Google™ teaching platform for 25,000 students up and running in 30 days.”

PACE schools now work from Office 365. There are shared folders for classes, instant messaging feedback from teachers to students, and video calling when needed. This transforms the learning experience from static to

dynamic and engaging. Students benefit from a modern learning environment, fee-paying parents see a progressive school, and forward-looking teachers find an environment that supports the latest teaching methods.

“What we’re most interested in is not the tools,” says Moosa, “but how the tools are being used. Having a unified network across all our schools means we’re now able to benchmark activity. More importantly, we can then plot activity against educational achievement.”

For this, a standardized infrastructure and toolset play a crucial role. Teachers and visitors can move between schools, with seamless access to the same suite of applications. The reporting on connectivity patterns in math classes is the same across all five schools. Popular content is more quickly assessed and shared.

“We’re much quicker to identify positive behaviors,” says Moosa. “This encourages students and teachers to explore new ideas. We’ve always been receptive to new ideas, but we’re now better able to make the case, in education terms.”



Access to HPE Aruba Networking Central as a cloud-native management platform, means we don’t need IT managers in each school. We can manage everything from one pane of glass.”

– **Noorish Moosa**, Digital Transformation Lead, PACE Education



## Managing network access for 11,000 students

The modern PACE Education is powered by HPE Aruba Networking Wi-Fi 6 wireless access points across the five schools, with HPE Aruba Networking ClearPass managing and automating secure access control for more than 11,000 students. HPE Networking Central and AIOps provide intelligent single-pane management, reporting on network health, proactive troubleshooting, and actionable insight.

“Access to HPE Aruba Networking Central as a cloud-native management platform means we don’t need IT managers in each school. We can manage everything from one pane of glass,” Moosa explains. “We have just two people on our network team.”

The network team has therefore been able to identify network blackspots or high-traffic areas, correcting issues by dialing up bandwidth or rapidly adding new access points with optimized placement. “If there is an issue, our time-to-resolve is far quicker than before,” Moosa adds.

Thanks to the use of HPE Aruba Networking ClearPass for managing network access control, the team knows exactly who or what is connected to the network. Managing guest connectivity and providing the appropriate level of access is much simpler and more secure, tailored for a manageable set of user profiles. Outside of those, no one or thing can get through.

“ClearPass gives us real-time insight into network use,” Moosa explains.

“This has helped create a culture where all parties understand the network is being monitored. It means students act responsibly.”



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## Solution

### Hardware

- HPE Aruba Networking 5406R switches
- HPE Aruba Networking 2930F switches
- HPE Aruba Networking Wi-Fi 6 campus access points

### Software

- HPE Aruba Networking Central
- HPE Aruba Networking ClearPass



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