

Inclusion for French low cultural background students: programs and activities in CDIs

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Abstract

The CDI, Centre of Documentation and Information, must be a place open to all types of students, especially students with academic difficulties that is to say the ones who don't have access to cultural resources and a low attendance of the places of culture. This question must be included by a school library global policy with a focus on programs and activities in order to include these students in the school library space. This inclusive dimension is enshrined in most of the French educational acts, in particular the upper council of the programs within the French Ministry of Education. This paper, divided into three parts, aims to show how programs and activities, in the French CDIs, can include students with academic difficulties.

An overall policy to attract all students: it is about making the CDI an attractive place for students who are not willing to spend their free time in a school library. Not only the activities but also the resources proposed in the CDI will allow them to enjoy developing their general knowledge.

A systematic approach of pedagogical instruction: as resources and activities are not fulfilling enough to reach all students, a systematic approach of pedagogical instruction will be proposed, particularly in the information and documentation field. This proposal is supported by the APDEN (ex-FADBEN), the Federation of French Teacher-Librarians.

Towards a pedagogy of projects allowing inclusion for every students: systematic approaches must be carried by the teacher-librarian in collaboration with classroom teachers by co-teaching and using a pedagogy of projects. Working by projects in which every student has a role to play, can enhance the inclusion of students with academic difficulties.

Keywords: Teacher-librarian, inclusive school, academic difficulties, school libraries, media and information literacy

Introduction

The CDI, Centre of Documentation and Information, which is the name of the school library in the French educational system, must be a place open to all types of students, especially students with academic difficulties, that is to say the ones who don't have access to cultural resources and a low attendance of the places of culture. This question must be included by a school library global policy with a focus on programs and activities in order to include these students in the school library space. This inclusive dimension is enshrined in most of the French educational acts, in particular the Upper Council of Curricula within the French Ministry of Education. Thus, from the outset of the education reform, the Upper Council of Curricula specifies, in its charts, that « *the knowledge taught at school (...) must come under the inclusive nature of school and benefit to every student; this knowledge must not be defined in such a manner that its teaching would require permanently aides or compensations from outside the class, for one or other student.* »

This paper, divided into three parts, aims to show how programs and activities in the French CDIs, can include students with academic difficulties, according to three points: acquisition policy, systematic learning with the teacher-librarian, and finally the consideration of every student, individually, by working by projects.

An overall policy to attract all students

The question is how making the CDI an attractive place for students who don't want to spend their free time in a school library? Not only the activities but also the resources proposed in the CDI will allow them to enjoy developing their general knowledge. We can consider two approaches to this issue. The first one would consist in proposing a wide range of resources in order to make it possible for each student to be attracted according to his/her tastes. The second approach consists in buying resources adapted to students' difficulties and disabilities.

Concerning the first approach, on the premise that every student, depending on his/her familial environment, doesn't come naturally to the CDI, and doesn't frequent easily its resources, especially as there is no access to printed or digital resources in the familial customs. These are well-known sociological elements. However, at school, it may happen that any student has to enter the CDI. This is certainly when we have to enable him/her to find attractive elements which will make him/her want to settle down, to come back again, to go towards resources that are not familiar to him/her.

Concerning the second approach, the context of the school is particularly important, just as the school policy, that enables to have elements that are formalized from the context. Are there foreign-language speaking students? Traveling families? How to host refugees? Are there “gifted students”? Students with specific needs, with more or less severe disabilities, making it necessary to have special classes/units in the school? Which students have dys-type problems? All these questions concern very different needs, and each situation requires an important reflection on the acquisitions needed in the native language of the students who don't speak French, on the adaptability of access to resources for the traveling families, especially regarding access to digital resources. According to the chapter 4 of the School Library Guidelines: “*the school library needs to provide access to a wide range of physical*

and digital resources to meet the needs of the users and reflects their age, language, and demographics. [...]It must provide access to digital information resources that reflect the curriculum as well as the user's interests and culture."

If we already buy resources according to the various levels of reading in the different classes or grades, it is important to know students' difficulties and disabilities at school in order to adapt the acquisitions to an even wider range of students. In this inclusive school, the aim is, of course, that everyone find resources adapted to them, in order to approach the reading, self-learning, as well as to become familiar with the resources centre, and then develop and transfer an appetite for various resources, as and when, they attend the CDI.

According to the 2013 teachers' skills framework, the teacher-librarian has to *"organize and manage the resources center offering various resources and materials to students, and taking into consideration the specific situation of each school (middle high school, secondary high school, or vocational school)"*. This is in accordance with a thoughtful welcome policy and an acquisition policy that reflects the specific learning needs, whether in physical or digital formats.

According to the School Library Guidelines *"A school librarian works with school administrators and teachers in order to develop a collection management policy.[...]The manual should include guidance [...]that reflect the national, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and indigenous identities of members of the school community."*

Thus, in the first approach, it is advisable to develop an offer of access to video games, which will play on students' taste for computer, in order to lead them to discover on-line resources which enable them to learn¹. It can also be good to develop a consistent collection of mangas to encourage a kind of loyalty of the students to resources which can attract the ones who are not used to attend resources centers in their cultural environment. In both cases, we are clearly aiming to promote students' learning and reading, by settling them in a particular space with a variety of resources, aiming for a cultural openness which is one of the teacher-librarian's main missions. This can also be through attractive periodicals, that one sometimes refuses to buy, for example sport or women's magazines. This idea is in accordance with the School Library Guidelines: *"A balanced collection of current or relevant items is needed to ensure access to resources for users of different ages, abilities, learning styles, and backgrounds. The collection should support the curriculum through information resources, whether in physical or digital formats. In addition, a school library should acquire materials for leisure purposes such as popular or graphic novels, music, computer games, films, magazines, comics and posters. These resources should be selected in cooperation with students to ensure the materials reflect their interests and culture."*

A systematic approach of pedagogical instruction

As resources and activities are not enough to reach all students, a systematic approach of pedagogical instruction will be proposed, particularly in the information and documentation field. This proposal is supported by the APDEN (ex-FADBEN), the Federation of French Teacher-Librarians.

¹ THOT CURSUS. Jeux sérieux gratuits. In : *Thot Coursus - Formation et culture numérique - le plus important site de référence francophone dans le domaine de la formation à distance, formation en ligne, Mooc, apprentissage et enseignement*. Retrieved from : <http://cursus.edu/institutions-formations-ressources/formation/16184/jeux-serieux-gratuits/#.V02SpOSA7IU>

The CDI's attendance is one thing, which can support or encourage the attendance of other cultural places, through its presence within the school, like a laboratory accessible to all. Offering a variety of resources and satisfactory digital access, programming exhibitions or musical sequences, all these elements constitute a place of knowledge, a place of culture, according to projects and priorities of the teacher-librarian and the school. We find these elements in the school library definition given in the first chapter of the School Library Guidelines: *“A school library is a school's physical and digital learning space where reading, inquiry, research, thinking, imagination, and creativity are central to students' information-to-knowledge journey to their personal, social and cultural growth.”*

However, concepts, knowledge and skills, necessary to the appropriation of this place, to the self-access to information, to documentation, to cultural openness, are not innate. It requires learnings, that are to be ensured for all students. This is what the professional association advocates for years. Until 2015, in practice, the access was focused on first grades of middle high school and high school, even if lots of teacher-librarians tried also to see all students as much as possible. Focusing learnings on only one grade, without progression, is not enough at all. Indeed, the child greatly evolves, forgets to rebuild, needs to repeat several times on the one hand and to correct and go deeper, on the other hand, to build his knowledge. The implementation of systematic learnings is, thus, a prerequisite to enable students to develop a real culture of information, and to move progressively to more independent learning.

In France, thanks to the middle high school reform, information-documentation and media and information literacy, mistaken in many ways, are highlighted for all grades, with specific learning, recommended by the Ministry of Education, without confining oneself to informal guidance which can only involve some students, keen on learning and curious, which is not usual for teenagers, the autodidact ability increasing over age and skills. Those systematic learnings, listed in official curricula², must allow the transmission of information literacy skills to students, in fine, a deeper familiarization with the school resources center. This idea of systematic learning aligns with the School Library Guidelines which underlines that *“school librarians agree with the importance of having a systematic framework for teaching media and information skills, and they contribute to the enhancement of students' skills through collaborative work with teachers.”*

The teacher-librarian can then teach, according to the 6th grade curricula, explicitly, from the 5th to the 3rd grade, with other classroom teachers, for *“the implementation of media and information literacy learning and outcomes, in cooperation with other classroom teachers”* (Reference System attached to the teaching professions published in 2013). Teacher-librarians implement *“disciplinary or interdisciplinary works which call upon inquiry and information literacy skills”*. In other words, they are *“teachers and the persons in charge of the acquisition of a media and information culture by all students.[...]. As teachers they can interact directly with students in training and learning activities from their own initiative or according to the needs expressed by teachers in a discipline.”*

Media and Information Literacy, built on the works carried out in information-documentation by the GRCDI³ and the APDEN, in particular on the information-documentation curriculum,

² EDUSCOL. Education et Médias à l'Information. L'éducation aux médias et l'information dans les nouveaux programmes (cycle 4). In : *Eduscol*. Retrieved from : <http://eduscol.education.fr/cid98422/1-education-aux-medias-et-a-l-information-et-les-nouveaux-programmes-cycle-4.html>

³ GRCDI = Research Group on Information Culture and Didactics

can be a fulcrum to finally bring this necessary knowledge to students. However, if contents now exist, with necessary improvements in their presentation, the lack of time slot in the school timetable still remains to teach them to students. This is a major current problem for French teacher-librarians who still struggle to find their place in the educational system. In addition to knowledge, allowing students to understand the place which can be associated with it, information literacy learnings, when proposed within the CDI, are a way to reach regularly all students and therefore, to encourage them to attend the CDI, moreover, on their free time.

Towards a pedagogy of projects allowing inclusion for every students

By making available to students such a variety of resources, everyone is encouraged to discover and enjoy resources, and then, can go more easily towards others resources.

Besides, systematic learnings in information and documentation with all school's classes, in particular within the CDI, will permit to give to all the necessary knowledge for the development of a culture of information.

Another approach consists in taking into account individuals' skills in learnings, for example within a pedagogical project. Systematic approaches must be carried by the teacher-librarian in collaboration with classroom teachers by co-teaching and using a pedagogy of projects. Working by projects in which every student has a role to play, can enhance the inclusion of students with academic difficulties. This idea aligns with the School Library Guidelines recommendations as following: *“Like other learning programs at school, inquiry-based learning activities should be designed to promote progression and continuity to students' learning. This means that skills must be introduced progressively through stages and levels. A school librarian should take a leadership role in ensuring there is a systematic approach to teaching an inquiry process that is guided by a school-based continuum of media and information skills and strategies.”*

In France, several pedagogical devices allow to develop this approach within the learning framework in the CDI. In middle high school, the “tailored support” is a device allowing the students' difficulties to be tackled in the most appropriate way, with suitable projects.

“Interdisciplinary practical instruction”⁴ and in general all projects classes or circles within the school are ways to implement projects with teams taking into account each student individually. For example, in a webradio media class, each student can find his/her place according to his/her skills and/or tastes : one student will be responsible of the technical aspects, another one will be the chief editor, another one will be in charge of music or of the operator, others will appreciate to speak into the mike. After this first experience which is already enriching in itself, and permits to develop specific skills and the ability to work as part of a team, swapping the roles will permit to open and enrich each student's culture. Beyond that, this also means taking into account students' difficulties in order to help them find their place in a project. Besides, according to the chapter 5 of the School Library Guidelines, *“collaborating skills are developed when students work together in groups with diverse individuals and diverse resources and technology.”* In the same chapter, it is also written that *“process-based models support a view of inquiry-based learning as an opportunity for students to experience discovery and personal growth.”*

In the secondary high school, the teacher-librarian also takes part in the “tailored support”⁵. Besides, he/she provides learning in information seek and publication within the “tutored

⁴ In French it's named « Enseignements Pratiques Interdisciplinaires »

⁵ In French it's named « Accompagnement Personnalisé »

multidisciplinary personal works”⁶. Here again, working with teams of students, the teacher-librarian has to take into consideration each person and develop the skills of each one.

Conclusion

In secondary education in France, teacher-librarians have a major role to play in fostering students' cultural openness and to develop their culture of information. This role supposes an active involvement in the principle of inclusive school, taking into consideration diverse audiences: allophones, homeless families, students with learning difficulties and without cultural openness within the family etc. In the CDI, the consideration of each individuals, students' integration or inclusiveness, can go through by different approaches: thus first the consideration of students' personal practices, which can be found to some extent in the CDI (mangas, educational games, music...), then, the insurance of systematic learnings to lead to students' equal access to media and information knowledge, and finally, the consideration of individual features in the implementation of pedagogical projects.

Actually, the implementation of these different approaches is not self-evident. It faces resistance in the concept of the CDI itself, as a place, and of the teacher-librarian profession, too. Thus, there is some reluctance to resources' diversification, and we meet also difficulties, despite official documents' legitimacy, to implement learning sessions for all students to ensure the development of a culture of information and to encourage the transfer and the appetite for resources and resources center, required to attend the place.

⁶ In French it's named « Travaux Personnels Encadrés »

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