

The role of the French *professeur documentaliste* in teaching media and information: FADBEN's perspectives

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Abstract:

For 40 years, the FADBEN, the national association of French professeurs documentalistes (teacher-librarians), has contributed to the thought on information and documentary knowledge and on teaching methods. In the context of the "knowledge society" supported by UNESCO, informational acculturation should promote social, cultural and professional enculturation of individuals, Media and information literacy responds to stake arise by digital developments.

Professeurs documenalistes in the French school system have to play an active role, as recognized and included in the School Reorganization Act (July 2013). They aim to make pupils, as future citizens, independent and responsible in informational, media and digital environments.

The objective of informational and documentary knowledge construction is to understand what underlie these phenomena. The aim is to promote informed critical issues and mechanisms of information and communication industries, as well as to ensure the distancing to observe the endless race to technological innovation and the "documentarization" of human being when personal data are being used. It is also to develop ethical and responsible attitudes when using or publishing information.

The FADBEN, in its Manifesto of 2012, calls for the formalization of a curriculum of information and documentation that defines the content to be transmitted and determines its implementation in a progression of learning and evaluation. The FADBEN sees a double convergence: (1) epistemological in performing synthesis of information, media and digital education; and (2) operational in orchestrating the application of this teaching, in order to contribute to the success of all pupils. This may be the foundation of common inter-associative thinking about information, media and digital culture which is essential learning for the construction of the public-spirited pupil.

Keywords: FADBEN, *professeur documentaliste*, librarian teacher, teaching, informational culture, curriculum in information and documentation

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Introduction

The existence of the French *professeur documentaliste* as a profession is a special feature of the French school system. These *professeurs documentalistes* (in English, librarian teachers) practise in middle schools with pupils from 11 to 15, as well as in general and technological, professional or agricultural high schools where pupils are on average 15 to 18 years old. The *professeurs documentalistes* work mainly in CDIs (documentation and information centres) created in 1974 to mitigate the methodological deficit of the pupils regarding information and documentation and the lack of training of the teachers in resource centre use and in work with documents. This is the foundation of a strong educational demand that the FADBEN will never stop defending.

The mission and status of these teachers are defined in their Circular letter of missions promulgated in 1986 and by the CAPES of Documentation (the certificate necessary to teach in French middle and high schools) created in 1989, both of which make these persons entirely teachers in their mission and status. The CAPES is the competitive exam to become a secondary school teacher in France. The candidates must have a master's degree, called *MEEF* in French (Master of the Education, the Teaching and the Formation Professions). For *professeurs documentalistes*, this master's degree is based upon Information and Communication Sciences. Once the candidates pass the exam, generally prepared in a Graduate school of the Education and the Teaching Professions (in French, *ESPE: École Supérieure du Professorat et de l'Éducation*), they are considered trainees for a year before they get a definitive post in a secondary school CDI.

The articulation of the axes of mission with the CAPES of Documentation gives legitimacy to the mission devolved to the *professeurs documentalistes* as qualified teachers. Their functions are shared between the activities of a teacher, an administrator and a librarian. The cohesion of these functions is insured by the educational dimension.

The creation of the FADBEN in 1972 by the persons who worked in CDIs was based on a commitment to their educational responsibility. The FADBEN supported and continues to support this movement. The professional association exercises a role of proposal and representation with the national and international organizations. At the same time, it contributes to the thought on information and documentary knowledge and on teaching methods to ensure the link between the advances of the research and the work of the *professeurs documentalistes* in their schools.

The FADBEN has been a member of the IFLA since 1989. From the beginning, the FADBEN adopted the first educational recommendations developed by professional associations of libraries. When the ALA (American Library Association) proposed the foundations of a pedagogy of Information Literacy in education system, the FADBEN took back the information models created in the 1990s that combined cognitive knowledge and procedural knowledge. The FADBEN drew inspiration from information problem solving models and took a third path: thought on school informational and documentary knowledge, building didactic contents and teaching methods. Today, the FADBEN is committed to an elaboration of new didactics. These objects of studies anticipate society of information: its tools, its practises, its processes, its products and all the problems these objects generate.

In France, what amazes most (and is the biggest challenge) is the difference between institutional and political declarations concerning the importance of possessing new information and media skills and the difficulty of promoting these learnings in schools.

In Lyon, within the framework of the 80th IFLA congress, the FADBEN wishes to take the opportunity to lay the foundations for a common inter-associative thinking about information, media and digital culture, as essential learning for the construction of the public-spirited pupil.

Teaching and learning approaches

The FADBEN has contributed for 40 years to the thought on school knowledge in information and documentation, on the development of educational content and on their teaching methods. In the context of the "knowledge society," supported by UNESCO, informational acculturation should promote the social, cultural and professional enculturation of individuals. Media and information education provides an initial response to the essential issues posed by digital developments. *Professeurs documentalistes* aim to educate pupils as future citizens, independent and responsible in informational, media and digital environments. They work for the appropriation of cultures in acquiring knowledge and using appropriate socio-technical systems.

As a result, the CDI is more than a 'traditional' school library: it is a didactic resource place in which to teach and promote pupil learning. Usually, training sessions in information retrieval are particularly provided to pupils in Year 11 at middle school entrance, and in Year 15 when pupils enter high school. The objective of the training is to familiarize pupils with the CDI and especially to initiate the search for documents and information, in printed materials or on the web.

The rise of Internet usage has driven a redefinition of the theoretical field in which the *professeurs documentalistes* base their practice. The CAPES of Documentation has the explicit mention of Information and Communication Science as a scientific reference field. These evolutions took in particular shape in the emergence of didactics of information and documentation, and the FADBEN participates on the definition of these notions.

A long-term project has been carried out, based on *Reference table of information literacy skills* (FADBEN, 1997) to define a corpus of school knowledge in information and documentation. Completed in 2007, the FADBEN publication, *Mediadoc*, contains 64 notions organized around seven main notions (Information; Document; Indexation, Source; Informational space; Information research; Information usage), which help the *professeurs documentalistes* to formalize their teaching. Taking that into account, this corpus is completed by activities to make pupils able to build knowledge in educational sessions.

This objective is now reflected in a new impetus from the FADBEN: *Info-Doc Wikinotions*, which is a collaborative platform where academics and school teachers are invited to contribute. This project aims to update the *Mediadoc* corpus of knowledge, to gather educational activities, as well as to provide an exhaustive list of scientific and professional references on the subject.

The continuation of this gathering work, open to professionals, is now possible because the *professeurs documentalistes* use digital tools to develop their own practice and to create educational activities for their teaching. A recent survey initiated by the FADBEN, with the

objective to evaluate the professional practices of *professeurs documentalistes*, was very informative on the dynamism shown by the profession. It was clear from this survey that *professeurs documentalistes* provide, on average, seven hours of educational sessions per week, alone or with other teachers for interdisciplinary topics. It appears that *professeurs documentalistes* are involved in the majority of educational sessions in Middle school (e.g., History of Arts; Professional Discovery) and in High School (e.g., Personal informative in-class presentations; Civil, legal and social Education; Personal training).

This survey showed that *professeurs documentalistes* are integrating new "objects", particularly digital ones, in their teaching. New media, digital identity and the informational surveillance currently are the subject of teaching lessons to make the pupils build knowledge.

The term "to build" here is to be emphasized, as it characterizes the teaching culture of *professeur documentaliste*; this is an important aspect of the profession. The documentary pedagogy and now the didactics of information and documentation continue to be elaborated. The origin has to be found in a constructivist approach of the learning and the teaching. In this context, the relation between *professeurs documentalistes* and teaching exists on the fringes of traditional pedagogy, in the movement of the "New Education." That's why the *professeurs documentalistes*' teaching practice, while it does not exclude lectures, is more learner-centered and activities-centered.

In this regard, two problems can be spotted. First, *professeurs documentalistes* do not have sufficient time allocated for these teaching of information and documentation to all pupils and, second, strictly speaking they don't have a program, as other teachers have, to help them to teach their subjects. *Professeurs documentalistes* have to negotiate with the management of the school or with other teachers to get time to work with pupils. This situation is uncomfortable because of all imponderables that complicate these teachers' work. Hence, the significance of the work committed by the FADBEN in order to define school knowledge in information and documentation involved in the construction of the public-spirited pupil, understanding the current and future stakes.

Perspectives

The construction of school knowledge in information and documentation also includes the understanding of what underlie these phenomena. It also involves the question of how to develop ethical and responsible attitudes when one uses information or is in situation of publication of information.

To meet these current and future stakes, the FADBEN defends the implementation of teaching that develops the pupils' informational culture. In a context marked by the expansion of digital environments that tend to become more complex, informational culture aims to give pupils the media, information and digital knowledge and skills that they need. The recent School Reorganization Act (July 2013)¹, which endorsed the creation of EMI (Media and Information Education), is an important act with regard to issues of citizenship as a part of pupils' education.

¹. France. Loi n°2013-595 du 8 juillet 2013 d'orientation et de programmation pour la refondation de l'école de la République. Journal officiel n°0157 du 9 juillet 2013
<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?jsessionid=cidTexte=JORFTEXT000027677984&dateTexte=&oldAction=rechJO&categorieLien=id>

The role of *professeurs documentalistes* in EMI is recognized and enshrined in the law. It is the same for the Reference table of professional skills in teaching and educational professions (July 2013)² in which, thanks to the FADBEN and others, the *professeurs documentalistes*' expertise has been recognized: "*they provide the necessary assistance to pupils and teachers especially for learning and teaching take into account Media and information Education [and] work directly with pupils in training and educational activities on their own initiative or on the needs expressed by other teachers.*"

However, even if the long-term work done by the FADBEN in connection with university researchers, is an important contribution to the debate on the contents of the EMI, the implementation of this presupposes a comprehensive reflection of importance about when it will be taught to all pupils. To this end, the *Reference table of professional skills* evokes what are the *professeurs documentalistes*' theoretical fields, their subjects of learning and teaching: "*elements of theories of information and communication [...] regulations on the usage of tools and digital resources; Information Law and principles and procedures for the protection of personal data and privacy [...] main concepts and analyzes in the sociology of media and culture.*"

These are initial proposals which need to be articulated within a plan that clearly indicates the objectives and contents of Media and Information Education. That is why the FADBEN was honored to be contacted, for a hearing by the CSP (Board Programs). One of the areas of its work is to express opinions and proposals on "*the overall design of the education provided to pupils in primary, middle and high schools, and the introduction of digital technology in teaching methods and the construction of knowledge.*" If the conclusions of this council have not yet been made about the EMI, the FADBEN is pleased to make its contribution.

In its *Manifesto 2012*³, the FADBEN calls for the implementation of an information and documentation curriculum that defines the contents to be transmitted and determines their implementation through a progression of learning and evaluation. The professional association is convinced of the necessity of this progressive learning, in a logic of discovery, initiation and deepening, for a genuine acquisition of knowledge and skills by the pupils. This is an essential development that goes against current limits of initiation confined to input levels in Year 7 (age 11-12) and Year 11 (age 15-16). In order to ensure the education of all pupils nationwide, this type of plan can make the connection between the acquisition of school knowledge and the inclusion of non-formal practices of pupils particularly in the digital environment. Formalizing an information and documentation curriculum also helps to promote the acquisition of a professional culture because this plan addresses pedagogical approaches, as well as activities and didactic reference objects or the different forms of assessment knowledge. It may also be the occasion of an important time of sharing practices, reflection to advance the teaching models and methods of each.

The FADBEN sees in the implementation of this curriculum the achievement of a triple convergence: epistemological on one hand, with the synthesis of information, media and digital educations; professional, secondly, in contributing to the training and self-training of *professeur documentaliste*, and finally operational, programming the implementation of this teaching in order to contribute to the success of all pupils, the citizens of tomorrow.

² France. Référentiel de compétences professionnelles des métiers du professorat et de l'éducation. *Bulletin officiel* n°30 du 25 juillet 2013:

http://www.education.gouv.fr/pid25535/bulletin_officiel.html?cid_bo=73066

³. FADBEN. Manifesto 2012: <http://fadben.asso.fr/2012-FADBEN-Manifesto.html>

Conclusion

For 40 years, the FADBEN has defended the teaching role of *professeurs documentalistes*, a particularity of the French school system, in the variety of their mission. The expertise of these teachers, without pretending to be a model, is a benefit to meet the challenges of digital technologies.

The objective of the FADBEN is to specify under what conditions it is possible to guarantee all pupils an informational culture that makes them autonomous and responsible, especially in complex digital environments.

To do so, the FADBEN aspires to the formalization of a curriculum in information and documentation that gives *professeurs documentalistes* the capability to implement their teaching and enables pupils to acquire information, media and digital knowledge and skills.

To address this problem, the inter-association cooperation, well initiated by IFLA in its work and guidance, can help to achieve the convergence for the development of the culture of information.