

2012 A.P.D.E.N. (ex FADBEN) Manifesto

Teaching information-documentation and information culture

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Our connections to knowledge, to others and to the world have been disrupted by digital information technologies in a way that cannot be reversed or predicted. This new informational paradigm stretches over numerous fields - economic, scientific, political or educational - of our societies. Thus, it deeply affects our cultural landmarks and practices. UNESCO considers the informational skill as essential for the 21st century human being. Since France subscribes to these international issues, the French government would definitely benefit from including this skill in the educational system in an explicit and formal way.

Today, the ability to access and use information is essential to play a role in this knowledge-based society. However, this ability cannot be reduced to a mere procedure. It must be inserted into genuine knowledge about the situation and function of documents, information and communication, which would lead to an informative acculturation favouring the social, cultural and professional integration of individuals. The present adaptive approach to the development of living information ability must be continued by a more rational and better-organized approach which would focus on reflexive and operational knowledge based on in-depth study and review. The objectives of students information culture are numerous : building knowledge to enable students to understand information occurrences ; developing an enlightened understanding of the stakes and mechanisms of the information and communication industries ; and enabling students to develop a critical approach to the endless technological innovations and the "documentarisation" [1] of human beings when personal data are being used. Eventually, ethical and responsible attitudes regarding the use of information should be developed.

Henceforth, how can we be satisfied with what our educational system is offering ? Concerning institutional documents, prescriptions about knowledge and abilities in library and information science can be found in the secondary school and its basic program, and in a lesser way, in the syllabuses of various subjects. Is it indeed possible to talk here about transmitting information culture ? In practice, it is rather fragmented training, led in a sporadic and random way. Thus, cultural disparities are increasing, instead of being reduced. The working conditions of the French Librarian school teachers are getting less and less favourable to the training of the students, although the CAPES [2] has legitimized their teaching and educational mission since 1989.

A.P.D.E.N.(ex FADBEN), the National Federation of French Librarian school teachers, thus exposes the lack of a genuine institutional frame to structure this field of teaching, and the lack of recognition of the didactic framework necessary to address real school knowledge concerning the subject of information and documentation. A.P.D.E.N.(ex FADBEN) also complains that Librarian school teachers do not get the recognition they fully deserve regarding their educational expertise.

A.P.D.E.N.(ex FADBEN) consequently calls for the recognition and the formalization of the educational contents specific to Librarian school teachers that is to say the information and documentation subject ; contents they have to teach using the Information and Documentation Centres (CDI) which are didactic resource places they have to manage, as well as the online information resources that can be used to enable students to build an information culture.

A.P.D.E.N.(ex FADBEN) also calls for the complete recognition of Librarian school teachers by the institution and the inscription in official texts of didactic and educational liability, in accordance with their status as qualified teachers.

A.P.D.E.N.(ex FADBEN) wants Librarian school teachers to remain qualified teachers in the future as they are now, along with the continuation of the recruitment process by CAPES, claiming the establishment of a regional and general board of inspectors specialized in the information and documentation field.

A.P.D.E.N.(ex FADBEN) asks for the update of the 1986 circular letter in order to clarify the primacy of the integration of informational culture for the students.

A.P.D.E.N.(ex FADBEN) consequently asks for institutional means to guarantee the quality of the teaching of information and documentation and the added-value of the educational resources system.

To this end, A.P.D.E.N.(ex FADBEN) suggests the setting up of a ministerial working group which would develop an information and documentation curriculum to be registered in the official guidelines. This curriculum would aim at creating a consistent module of information culture teaching for first-to-final-year students and even for higher education. Librarian school teachers would be entrusted with the teaching of this module. It would be based on the progress and the assessment of learning. This general education text should plan the necessary epistemological and structural links with the closely related media and digital cultures, and with other school subjects. In order to do so, the ministerial working group should include the question of the initial and further training of Librarian school teachers.

From today onwards, clear and strong measures have to be taken to enable Librarian school teachers to fulfil their mission and for students to claim ownership of their information culture. A.P.D.E.N.(ex FADBEN) is prepared to meet and explain its suggestions to anyone who thinks that the teaching of the information culture is a part of equal opportunity and citizenship for all.

Notes

[1] “documentarisation” of human being of Olivier Ertzscheid, Jean-Michel Salaün, Roger T. Pedauque and Manuel Zackland’s works

[2] The CAPES is the certificate necessary to teach in French secondary schools