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Information and Media Education across Disciplines: Where is Coherence of Info-documentary Knowledge?

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This paper draws on the first results of ongoing research in the context of French secondary education (colleges, high schools) of three academies (Paris, Nancy-Metz, Lille)¹. The objective was to study current changes in the field of Information and Media Education (IME) in today's digital world: the degree to which the info-documentary dimension has been progressively introduced into the curricula of traditional disciplines and whether this resulted in curricular recompositions; the scope and the contents of this education with the aim to understand whether or not it could build an info-documentary look that might provide an interpretative framework for understanding the world.

The French research context

Regarded as a necessity today, information and media education is an unified concept marked by a shift from a singular to a pluralist conception of information culture "in the new age".

As a field of practice, information-documentation has not been regarded as a discipline. But recent official documents introduced "interdisciplinary practical teachings", focusing on digital learning and linking information-communication and citizenship. A clear reference is made to information and communication sciences and to the sociology of culture and media. And the role of teacher-librarian is more prominent: he or she is described as the person in charge of supervising the acquisition by all students of "an information and media culture". However, without dedicated teaching, information-documentation is addressed only on a pragmatic and operative mode and the responsibility of the different actors remained unclear.

Far from opposing 'education' and 'teaching', these areas of uncertainty are studied: in particular, how the actors seize the institutional guidelines, and who does what?

Methodology

To answer these and other questions, a questionnaire survey of 17 open and closed questions was administered to all actors in information and media education (e.g., teachers, teacher-librarians, principal educational advisers, school leaders), via academic mailing lists. In this first phase, the questionnaires helped to identify trends concerning the integration of IME, including perceived importance, aims and issues, modalities of inclusion, supporting devices, collaborations and partnerships, contents such as knowledge and progression, barriers, and levers to its implementation.

¹ « L'éducation à l'information et aux médias (EIM), à l'heure du web 2.0 et des réseaux : Mise en cohérence des savoirs et recompositions curriculaires ». Y. Maury (dir.), Espé Lille Nord de France, 2015-2016.

The second phase is a more qualitative one. It aimed at deepening the understanding of the practices declared by the actors through interviews and observations, in a few selected schools.

First findings

Several elements emerged that highlighted a strong disciplinary mark that can be an obstacle to an open and pluralistic approach of EIM. Key among these results is evidence that information-documentation is rarely thought as an epistemological unit in its continuity and its coherence.

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