



Information and Media Education in the French School Context Today: A Challenge for School Leaders?

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Introduction

- Ongoing research project : French secondary school education in 3 regional *académies* - Paris, Nancy-Metz, Lille;
- Objective : study changes in Information and Media Education (IME) in today's digital world as related to curricular redesigns;
- Understand if/how, in a changing and uncertain context, secondary schools seek to implement a coherent approach to IME;
- Particular attention to role of different actors

Our paper:

- Explore leadership role of school principals;
- Significance of leadership/managerial role in developing information literacy and building efficient teams: “A critical role for leaders and managers is to support the development process with new ideas, themes and projects” (Virkus, Mandre 2015)

1. Context of our study
2. Methodology
3. School leaders and EIM?
4. How teachers see the role of school leaders?
5. Conclusion

Information and Media Education in France

- How to make IME pertinent in today's world? "media convergence"; changing relations to media;
- Need for a more sophisticated, pluralistic approach;
- Emphasis on the development of EIM (2015: terrorist attack)
- Unified vision of IME (2013, 2015, 2017 ministerial texts): interdisciplinary vision, importance given to "digital competencies" ("digital strategy ")
 - actors? Across school disciplines; role of teacher librarian;
 - module "information communication civic awareness;"
 - a media in each school
- But few clear directives on implementing IME, roles and responsibilities

School leaders in France

- Role of school leaders: administrative role → more involvement in teaching, managerial role (Dutercq, 2015)

budget and scheduling; information; discipline and security;

but also → drive teaching policy and its implementation in the everyday life of the school; coordinate drafting of the school project

"regulation of pedagogical activity" (Hassani, Meuret 2010)

- Challenges for today's school leaders: coordinate/supervise/support and enhance initiatives/ promote interdisciplinarity

- School leaders and EIM? Motivational role

Questionnaire (2016):

- 17 open/closed questions:
 - All actors in the school: principals/teaching team;
 - Questions : importance of IME; goals and objectives of IME; actions; value/use of curricula and special programs/modules; collaborations; content of IME; obstacles and levers for action
- 2 part questions → qualitative dimension
- Identifying tendencies
- Use for subsequent ethnographic phase

- Focus on four questions in this paper :
 - Importance of EIM
 - EIM actions
 - Interdisciplinary teaching modules and pathways
 - Obstacles and levers for action
- 49 school leaders (out of 390 total respondents)
 - 36 principals / 13 VP
 - 178 teacher librarians / 117 teachers / 46 counselors
- Closed questions : counting items
- Open questions : clusters of meaning = keywords, and beyond; recurrence/order of certain terms, themes
- Methodological caution: discourse and not practice

School leaders and EIM?

Identifying tendencies

largely convinced of the importance of EIM :

	Yes	Yes, more or less	Relatively unimportant	No
Principal	30	6	-	-
Vice-principal	10	3	-	-

frequency of actions:

	Very frequent	Frequent	Infrequent	Occasional	Rare
Principal	1	11	11	7	6
Vice-principal		4	4	2	3

Direct teaching action vs team management

I. Coordinating EMI through school project and efficient teams

P/L/N: *"in the context of rewriting the **school project** and objectives, the construction of a media education module is in the works ";
lever for action: "making EIM a priority for the **school project**, precise goals, team work"*

P/C/N: *"My action is that of supporting pedagogical projects. The time frame is the implementation of the **school project**, constructing programs and presenting them to the school board "*

D/C/L: creating key moments *" It's difficult to say because I encourage the teaching team and they take over. Dates have been set in the calendar to **create key moments** in the school on civic awareness. An exposition space is used to show students' work on this theme and other themes"*

Projecting management role:

VP/L/N: facilitating condition: *"implementing IME policy within school project"* **D/C/L:** *"no direct action but inviting teachers"*

2. Direct pedagogical action = most answers

Representing the school, relations with the media, and local actors // administrative role:

P/HS/Par: *"My action as principal concerns the school's daily life and continuity. Regular visits by the local health-communication prevention officer to explain Internet rules, rights, obligations."*

D/C/N: *"linking current events and school curricula – relations with the local and regional press, promoting of school actions"*

P!/Par: *"press and media week, grave or important current events in France or in the world"*

P/C/N: *"Projects: with regional delegation for digital education about Internet use, art history"*

P/C/N: *"when there are major news events or historic events"*

VP/C/L: *"journalist's presentation to junior high school students"*

2. Direct pedagogical action, continued

Actions aimed at students and parents // administrative role :

D/C/L: *"Occasional discussions with certain students about issues raised by EIM. Information to parents at the beginning of the school year. More personalized information to parents if needed or if a problem is identified."*

P/C/N: *"On a regular basis, when a problem arises between students over wrongful/reprehensible practices (social networks), once or twice per trimestre."*

2. Direct pedagogical action, continued

-- during projects, at key moments:

P/C/N: *"Every year at the beginning of the school year or just after educational projects (newspapers, festive event, etc.)"*

VP/L/N: *"When/if there are important current events, often through teachers"*

P/L/N: *"As part of actions and projects or during specific events "*

-- cross-disciplinary modules, devices and bodies:

VP/C/N: *"As part of the health and civic awareness committee, a lot of social network education"*

VP/C/N: *"Work on the 'future' pathway, action on the digital work platform"*

D/L/N: *"Not within 'pathways' but in terms of the school institutions such as the students 'school life' council, or the hygiene and security commission"*

VP/C/N: *"Practical interdisciplinary teaching and personalized support... should give EIM more place, less fragmented than with hours in the library"*

3. Reservations (-not my problem?)

Most leaders do not (all except 4) project themselves into a role of EIM management "distributed management"? Or 'laisser-faire' attitude?

Explaining frequency of action:

P/C/N: *"I never deal with it"*

P/L/L: *"School head"*

P/C/N: *"Rare as school head "*

P!/Par: *"As school head, the opportunities for action with students are rare"*

VP/C/N: *"Frequent, on teenager's digital culture, but otherwise this falls outside of the domain of school direction personnel"*

P/C/N: *"I know... that this requires a lot of involvement and to make this project viable and efficient, it's necessary to have a very motivated leader (pilot), which is not the case in our school. "*

3. Reservations, cont'd

On interdisciplinary pathways for EMI: lack of leadership; "catch-all"

Explaining reservations:

VP/L/ Par: *"These pathways are hard to monitor and are rarely implemented. The health and civic awareness committee might help develop a global policy"*

VP/C/N: *"These pathways will make it compulsory for teachers to implement media education, but the risk is that since there is no designated supervisor, this education will depend on the motivation of teaching teams"*

VP/C/N: *"Yes, but one must avoid putting too much into these pathways which are complicated enough to monitor/supervise"*

P/C/N: *"No, these pathways externalize the issue as if such programs, outside of the "noble work of teaching" (real knowledge), were the only available way of addressing such an important issue. "*

School leaders and EIM?

On obstacles and levers for action

Obstacles	(18 no answer)
Teachers not trained, not sensitized to studying medias	8
Reluctance to become involved in a collective, interdisciplinary or cross disciplinary project	7
Lack of time, tight schedules	6
Material means	7
Financial means	4
Problems related to information (beliefs, disinterest, concern for neutrality)	4
Multiplicity of changes and reforms	2
Parents, out of school practices	2
Too small of a role given to teacher librarian	1
Sharing content	1

School leaders and EIM?

On obstacles and levers for action

Levers	(= no answer)
Students' attraction to the digital world; teenager's curiosity, using communication tools	9
Easy access to digital equipment (connexion, material)	5
Human means : collective awareness of the importance of EIM; adults' involvement; collaboration; role for teacher librarian	6
Current events, important recurring moments/actions (Press Week), big events	4
Modules and interdisciplinary projects	4
Training for teachers	4
Priority in the school project	2
Financial means	2
Families' awareness	1
Professionals presentations (journalists..)	1
Time	1

3. Reservations, cont'd

Obstacles and levers for action for EIM:

VP/L/Par: *"Teachers not sensitized enough about this topic"*

P/C/N: *"Too many changes asked of teachers (recent educational reforms at the 'collège' level...)"*

VP/C/N: *"too little place given to teacher librarian" lever: "practical interdisciplinary teaching and personalized support: these new devices should give greater role to teacher librarians"*

P/C/N: *"This should be interdisciplinary and not reserved for French teachers"*

VP/C/L: *"everyone is racing against time and school programs are changing with the new reforms, this will put EIM on hold for a while since it's not a priority in my opinion"*

VP/L/N: (lever) *« Creating EIM policy within the school project »;*

P/L/N: (lever) *« Making EIM a priority in the school project »*

4) Delegating to other intermediaries

On frequency of actions :

P/L/Par: *“With the teacher librarian, an intermediary who is full of initiatives”*

D/L/N: *“Our teacher librarian, with the help of French literature teachers, has students participate in Press Week. «*

P/?/?: *“Encouraging use of the press, within teaching programs, and in an interdisciplinary approach, to understand, analyze, use the press”*

P/C/N: *“ Teaching in school subjects, civic and moral education, history, arts, press week, workshop with the teacher librarian”*

VP/L/N: *“ often through teachers”*

P/L/Par: *“In civic and moral education and in many classes, the topic is mentioned. ”*

D/C/L: *“It’s hard to quantify because I promote EIM with the teaching team who takes over”*

P/L/L and D/C/L: *“according to the projects launched by teachers”*

Teachers and school leaders?

What teacher librarians (178) expect of principal-administrative team / EIM leadership (levers for action)

- School project : (7)
- Principals: (6) // direction: (3)
- Time scheduling: (8)
- Inspectors: (2)
- Collaboration as lever for action : (5)

C/L: "*motivation of pupils and colleagues and principal's involvement. Media project written into the school project* "

C/Par: "*Political commitment, on the part of the Education Ministry and on the part of the School Direction. And political commitment should translate into concrete means.*"

L/N: "*A transversal document, like documentation policy, which would frame this teaching in a school, while proposing a collaborative progression* "

C/N: "*EIM must be included in the time schedule*"

Teachers and school leaders?

What other teachers (117) expect of school principals and EIM leadership (levers for action)

Team work, administration, hierarchy, projects, means : concrete issues:

- work based on projects : (2)
- direction: (1) ; administration: (2); hierarchy: (1)
- scheduling: (6)
- help from the teacher librarian: (1)
- team work: (6)

History-Geo/Paris: " *stable team. Motivating leadership/direction.
Hours for project leaders "*

Lit-History/Paris: " *involvement of the entire administrative and pedagogical team. Sufficient materials and a number of hours dedicated to EIM "*

Lit-history/Lille: " *A listening ear, coherent and effective materials, training, and the help of the school librarian "*

Earth-Life sciences/Nancy: « *Local global action on projects. Encouragement and interest from the administration. Truly collaborative spaces on the digital working platforms set up by academies "*

Conclusion

- Few school principals project role in coordinating, promoting, encouraging, driving EIM, at a time when all still remains to be done, locally, to create EIM which is efficient, coordinated, with specific aims;
- School project: an important tool for organizing EIM on the local level: hours for EIM;
- Reservations with regard to interdisciplinary/transversal approach encouraged in the new programs;
- EIM requires continuity and progression rather than episodic action, yet principals often refer to occasional, episodic action;
- Recognizing need for coordination yet principals remain " exterior " except rare cases: counting on others to carry out and encourage EIM?
- Teacher librarians: more administrative/organisational approach to EIM than other teachers, due to their marginalized place in reforms

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