



## **Situation of school libraries in the public schools of Lebanon**

● **Before 1990:** Before 1990 the school library of today did not exist. In the majority of our public schools, books were placed in closed cupboards, and only the librarian had the keys. The sole function of the librarian was loaning books to students and having them returned, after a time set by the teacher, with the homework (summary of the book) completed. For students, reading was a required task that was graded by the teacher. It was an assignment that most times pushed students to hate books and reading. The work was hard and monotonous, like a punishment, which took away the pleasure of reading. Students were locked in their textbooks, without imagination, creativity, or autonomy. Because a good writer must be a good reader in the first place, most students of those days grew up to become weak writers.

### ● **1990-1993: Project “pilot school”**

This project, done by a partnership between France and the Lebanese Ministry of Education, resulted in the creation of 15 school libraries with training of 15 librarians in 15 pilot schools. These schools received many books from France; a total of 10.000FF per school.

☒With this project, the school library “BCD” in public schools took a new dimension: it became a place of activity, a lively place in the heart of the school, open to everyone, where students and teachers come to discover the world of books with delight; the pleasure of discovery and knowledge without constraints, without the fear of grades or failure . Now, students come to the “BCD” to read for pleasure, for fun, and to learn what they like in a way different than the classic classroom manner. In the “BCD” they are more comfortable, and have the freedom of choosing the book they want to read. They can pick a book, go in the “reading for pleasure section” to read (and they have the right not to read), or just simply look at the pictures, listen to stories told by the librarian, play educational games, research, discover the audiovisual world in the multimedia section, and more... All this in a calm, fresh and attractive setting.

*Here, students learn with pleasure.*

●1997 : ☒*Educational reform and development of new curricula in Lebanon*

In the new programs, official texts devote space to the school library in public schools, highlighting the role of the “BCD” in the development, creativity and autonomy of the student. This led to a radical change of the librarian’s profile. Starting from the year 2000, and with the implementation of new programs, the

“CP.DOPS” team of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) began a series of training for librarians using this new profile.

● **2004-2010**: *The school project*

☒ It is a 3 year roadmap developed through consultation between all staff members in a school, assisted by a pedagogical consular (CP.DOPS); after a thorough analysis of the situation in the school, everyone works, as a team, on priorities chosen to strengthen the weak points, in the objective of improving the quality and level of education in the school. ☒ Since 2004, the “CP.DOPS” team works in collaboration with France in this project. Each year 15 new public schools adhere to the project. So far we have 100 schools in the project, with 100 school libraries and 100 librarians. Training of the “CP.DOPS” team, inspectors, school directors, and coordinators for this project takes place in Lebanon and France, and is subsidized by the French government.

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● **2011-2012**: The “CP.DOPS” team is made up of 17 pedagogical consulars, for which I am in charge. We are preparing a series of trainings for school libraries in public schools, targeting a new generation of librarians who will be able to:

- 1- Organize a school library “BCD” according to the Dewey organization.
- 2- Manage a "reading for pleasure section” in the school library.
- 3- Make animations around books.
- 4- Guide students in scientific research.

This series of trainings runs starting from the month of March 2011 at all the ‘Mohafazats’ (districts) of Lebanon.

These future librarians will be trained, and then monitored in their school libraries by the members of the “CP.DOPS” team.



To conclude, I have to say that the work is heavy. We have more than 1300 public schools, and the “CP.DOPS” team is small. Despite our modest resources, we greatly hope to make the desired changes, knowing we are not alone in this battle, with the support of the Friends of Lebanon; France, Germany, Switzerland, and other countries, and many NGOs (Assabil, World vision, US aid...).

*Thank you for your attention.*

*François HAKIM “CP.DOPS” Lebanon.*