

## **THE CREATION OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN FRANCE: THE CHALLENGES OF A POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE**

### **LA CREAZIONE DELL'EDUCAZIONE FISICA IN FRANCIA: LE SFIDE DI UNA LOTTA POLITICA E IDEOLOGICA**

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#### **Abstract**

Physical et Sport Education (PSE) develops access to a rich field of practices, with a strong cultural and social involvement, important in the development of the individual's personal and collective life. Throughout schooling, physical education (phys. ed.) aims to train a lucid, autonomous, physically and socially educated citizen, with a view to living together. It encourages children and teenagers to seek well-being and care for their health. It ensures the inclusion, in the classroom, of pupils with special educational needs or with disabilities. The PSE is an introduction to the pleasure of sports. But in France, PSE is also the result of a long and complex History of political and ideological struggles that this article is willing to report.

#### **Keywords**

Physical and sports education, educational policies, history of physical education, didactics, ideological struggle, France.

## Introduction

France is one of the European countries that devotes the most time to sports activities: 14% of school time on average, double that of other European countries (Cour des comptes, 2019). In France, PSE is compulsory for all study programmes from the first grade (*Cours préparatoire* in French) to the senior year of high school (*Terminale* in French). According to official instructions (MEN, 2010 ; MEN, 2015), the purpose of PSE is to form, through the practice of physical, sports and artistic activities in schools, a cultured, lucid, autonomous, physically and socially educated future citizen. More specifically, PSE must enable each student, to first, develop and mobilize his or her resources to enrich his or her motor skills, make them effective and foster success; second, to know how to manage his or her physical and social life; and third, to access the heritage of physical culture and sport.

Nowdays, for PSE teachers, the challenge is to get students into a series of learning situations that lead them to enjoy, progress and be motivated because they feel that the knowledge they have learned allows them to act and to have a “control” of the physical and social environment that accepts the student as he is, but encourages him to evaluate. In return, the student must create and rebuild his or her knowledge with the group. Through this reconstruction of knowledge, the student is also educated, working in groups, confirming his or her interpersonal skills and personality. This global education through PSE will follow him his entire future life. Using the different learning situations, the student will have to develop the skills (act, interact and adopt). Through this paper, we want to show how the conception of physical education in schools has evolved over time. Indeed, politicians, educators and trade unionists have led important struggles on French territory over the past two centuries to bring about the discipline as we know it today. The analysis of regulatory texts and political debates concerning PSE has enabled us to draw up a history of it in France since the French Revolution. First, we will come back to the didactics of PSE. Then, in a second step, we will try to rewrite the History of the discipline by showing the major turning points and future challenges.

## I- Didactics, teacher training programs

### I-1. How to teach?

The PSE teacher works to build teaching contents and to propose tasks (the “training content”) that enable the student to transform himself and learn. Thus, the didactics of the discipline carries out a reflection on three aspects of teaching. First, the knowledge required to build competencies, which are themselves linked to the specific skills to be acquired: how to select the knowledge deemed most relevant and in response to which educational needs? This is why we question how to select skills related to previous competencies (and that allow them to be operationalized in action) and in response to specific needs. In a second step, it is necessary to take into account the conditions of appropriation and development of the content of PSE teaching. Thirdly, didactics examines the desire for transformation among teachers, a central issue in action researches.

Many conceptions of physical education exist. For example, the one based on a “pedagogy of motor behaviour” by Pierre Parlebas (1981) or on a “conative pedagogy” (Mikulovic, Vanlerberghe & Bui-Xuân, 2010) offer as benchmarks the steps of a conative curriculum<sup>1</sup>. Still others (Gendrier, 2004) offer utilitarian and professional physical education (ergomotricity) aimed at controlling gestures and movements in everyday life. Jacques Gleyse (1999) proposes that students should have access to the cultural (physical) heritage of humanity and not only

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1 Conation is an effort, a tendency, a desire, an impulse directed towards a moving into action.

to modern sports through physical education, thus returning to the model of literary culture or artistic or musical education in education. Over time, these concepts have found a strong echo in the profession of French PSE teachers (Bui-Xuân, 1993). But Physical Education as a discipline is a complex institution, a field in the Bourdieusian sense of the term, and therefore cannot, in this sense, be assimilated to a person. The anthropologisms used by many authors about this institutional field personalize this discipline while it is not homogeneous, but is, like all disciplines, the object of conflicts, debates of actors, oppositions and, chronologically, more or less radical transformations (Sarreméjane, 2004). Concepts and pressure groups clash in this field. Some authors have spoken of “war of methods” (Legrand, 1995), others of “crisis of bodily pedagogies” (During, 1981), others, finally, of “battle of didactics” (Gleyse, 2010). This struggle begins with the programmes and the organization of lessons.

## **I-2. The organization of teaching**

### **I-2.1. In primary school**

In primary school, learning is organized through different modules. The achievement of maximum measurable performance on an established time frame is achieved through athleticism activities and swimming. Adaptation to different varied and uncertain environments is organised around, for example, orienteering, climbing, rolling and sliding, horse riding and water sports. Then, individual or collective confrontation activities can take the form of wrestling games, rackets or collective games (traditional or sports). Finally, activities with an artistic, aesthetic or expressive aim take shape in artistic or rhythmic gymnastics, circus arts or synchronized swimming. About 108 hours per year are devoted to physical and sporting activities, with an average of 3 hours per week. Any school can decide, as part of its project, to increase this weekly schedule by one hour. It is schoolteachers or qualified external teachers who teach PES in primary schools.

### **I.2.2. In middle school and high school**

It is the PSE teachers (CAPEPS<sup>2</sup>) who teach the subject at the secondary level (middle and high school). In 2018-2019, they constituted a corps of more than 27,367 teachers, 57.1% of whom were male (MENJ, 2019).

In the middle school, the programmes (MEN, 2015) are based on four main objectives. The first one is about achieving a maximum of measurable motor performance within a given time frame. Then, students must adapt to varied and uncertain environments such as choosing a route in a natural environment, engaging in safety and respect for the environment. Then, the PSE advocates the realization of an artistic or acrobatic performance (imagining, producing and mastering a creation in front of an audience). Finally, the conduct and control of an individual or collective confrontation (making decisions with respect for opponents, partners, referee) is the final objective of the program. These objectives are based on physical and sporting activities, classified into eight groups: athleticism, swimming, outdoor activities, gymnastics, artistic activities, team sports, racket and combat sports. Depending on the grade level, the mandatory weekly PSE hourly volume varies: from 4 hours in the sixth grade to 3 hours for the other grades (Year 8, Year 9 and Year 10).

Sports activities are still as varied in high school as in middle school. In the general secondary school and vocational school programmes, the specific competence n°5 targets the teaching of PES on the development and maintenance of oneself, through physical sports and artistic ac-

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2 To teach physical education and sport in a public school or college, it is mandatory to obtain the CAPEPS exam, a certificate of aptitude for teaching physical education and sport.

tivities such as weight training, long swimming or stepping (MEN, 2010). High school students only have 2 hours of PSE classes per week. Once in the first year of the Baccalaureate (French *Bacalauréat*), students have the opportunity to create their own menus, in groups of 3 sports disciplines already set up in advance. For example, a menu can consist of 3 activities such as swimming, football and dancing. Throughout the year, students practice and are evaluated on their subjects with the aim that in *Terminale* (last year of high school), the average of the 3 marks obtained in each sport constitutes the score of the PSE test at the baccalaureate level (high school diploma). The mark has a coefficient of 2. Before continuing, it seems necessary to briefly review teacher training.

### **I-3. Teacher training**

The decree of February 3, 1869 created the 1st diploma that allows to teach physical education: the certificate of teaching ability in gymnastics (CAEG). For 15 years, only 2876 CAEGs will be awarded and men only. Indeed, the army slows down the arrival of women and also allows its managers to experience the teaching of gymnastics by limiting the number of CAEGs. Secondary and higher education PSE teachers must pass the Certificate of Fitness for Teaching Physical Education and Sport (CAPEPS), named since 1943 and held in Vichy every year. This competition is therefore not a secondary-school teaching diploma (CAPES), which is why, unlike other CAPES, it requires a specific Master 2 “Science and Technology of Physical and Sports Activities (STAPS)”.

The PSE also has an external aggregation competition since 1982 (first aggregation competition in 1983) which now requires a Master 2. There is also an internal aggregation competition that has been promoting certified teachers since 1989.

In 2002, an PSE department was created within the *École normale supérieure de Cachan*. In 2008, the head of the department decided, after consultation, to change the name of the department in Sport Sciences and Physical Education (2SEP) to better reflect the diversity of the courses offered there. Over the years, the training time has increased. After a Master’s degree, students prepare a national competition to become teachers. Since September 2019, at the university, the INSPÉ (ex-IUFM and example-ESPÉ) has been in charge of training PSE teachers.

## **II- A piece of History of physical education**

Physical Education is a compulsory school discipline in secondary schools, under the name of “gymnastics”, since the decree of February 3th 1869 signed by Victor Duruy. As this decree was not very widely applied, Jules Ferry recalled, by the George Act of January 27<sup>th</sup>, 1880, that gymnastics was compulsory in all public boy schools. In the same year, by the circular of May 20th (Camille Sée), the obligation was extended to all types of education, primary and secondary, for boys and girls. Physical education has often changed ministries, proof that it has been debated since at least the end of the 19th century: Instruction publique, des Beaux-Arts et des Cultes (1880), Instruction publique et des Beaux-Arts (1905), Guerre (1910), *ministère de l’hygiène et de la prévoyance sociale* (1920), *ministère de l’Instruction Publique* (1922), *ministère de l’Instruction Publique* (1927), Santé publique (1932), Santé (1936), Éducation Nationale (1937), Commissariat Général à l’Éducation Générale et Sportive (1940), *Éducation Nationale* (1958), *Jeunesse et Sports* (1963), *Qualité de la vie* (1974), *Jeunesse et Sports* (1978) and *Éducation nationale* since the decree of May 28th 1981 (Vigot, 2004, p. 44-317). It is therefore essential to review the history of physical education in France in order to assess its evolution in relation to both social and political factors.

### **II-1. The Third Republic and Gymnastics (1870-1940)**

According to Pierre Arnaud (1985), the beginning of the Third Republic favours the emer-

gence of a gymnastics system that would become more and more school based as school becomes compulsory (1881). The objectives are multiple but are concentrated around 4 poles. First of all, it is a question of training soldiers: the gymnastic military exercises from the end of the 20th century until the First World War has the ambition to train patriotic individuals, strong in the sense of belonging to a nation with the determination to defend it. At the same time, the objective is to train individuals who are able to work. In other words, to them a good physical condition. In this same perspective, gymnastics aims to achieve good health with the leitmotif of acting on mental health in order to fight against diseases, overwork and degeneration of the race. The concept of degeneration is part of the more general framework of the decadence of France, the race (French population) and the family. Theory makes it possible to interpret, explain and unify the fight against social scourges (Pinell and Lecourt, 2004, pp. 312-313). Body education is justified by the degeneration of the individual to reduce mortality. Man is then assimilated to the animal. The church, which has a great importance in education at that time, refuses physical education to straighten the bodies of children who are victims of deformities, by developing their strength, for instance (Vigarello, 1988). Finally, the political goal to train citizens in the emerging republic, by building a new social order through the establishment of a new mental order. This educational project is based on the values of secularism, tolerance and relativism. At the end of the 19th century, the birth of physiology supplanted anatomy. It uses the thermodynamic model of the steam engine. G. Demeny (1900) advocates a physical education function that develops the body's vital functions (breathing, circulation). In 1882 the first sports club (Racing club of France) is created. Other unions will follow, such as the *Union des Sociétés Françaises de Sport Athlétique* (USFSA), which organizes school championships.

Jacques Gleyse (2004) identifies this transition to an ideology of exercise for the greatest number and the weakest ones as a key moment, that will soon become Physical Education. Paschal Grousset (1844-1909), the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Paris Commune, is at the origin of this ideology of exercise for the weakest ones, what some would call "a mystic of the left (*une mystique de gauche*)" (Onfray, 1999). He wishes to value the weakest and most disadvantaged as well as the largest number of practitioners, unlike the sports model which values the champion and the smallest number. He is one of the main architects of the introduction of football in France (Grousset, 1892). This minister wants to elevate physical health education on the same level as intellectual education, in accordance with his position as a communalard, for all children. He advocates for compulsory schooling that would contain the three aspects of physical, intellectual and moral education for the greatest number of people. We are going to talk about free, secular and compulsory education. At least that is what he tries to promote during the few weeks that the insurrectional *Commune of Paris* will last, in the spring of 1871<sup>3</sup>. He promotes this vision against sporting ideology, which he sees as a game of bullies, without morals but exacerbating narcissism (Grousset, 1888). His book also proposes the creation of Olympic Games very different from those those Pierre de Coubertin will defend a few years later where the essential will be to win the competition. The games promoted by Paschal Grousset, whose social perspective is obvious, aim to bring out the best ones in the perspective to educate the weakest ones and not with the purpose to gain glory for oneself. Sport at school was all the more legitimate in 1891 with the publication of a "Manual of gymnastic exercises and school games (*Manuel des exercices gymniques et de jeux scolaires*)" (MIP, 1891). In fact, according to Gilles Bui-Xuân and Jacques Gleyse (2001), the emergence of physical education is possible thanks to two men: Georges Demeny (1850-1917) and Georges Hébert (1875-1957) just as the fatherhood of modern sport, beyond the first French clubs (in 1871 the *Havre Athlétic Club* was

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3 The Paris Commune is an insurrectional period in the history of Paris that lasted about two months, from March 18, 1871 to the "Bloody Week" from May 21 to 28, 1871. This insurrection against the government, which emerged from the National Assembly, which had just been elected by universal male suffrage, will lead to an organization close to self-management or a communist system.

created), can be attributed to Georges de Saint Clair and Baron Pierre de Coubertin. Unlike physical health education for all, the ideology that Jacques Gleyse characterizes as “a mystic of the right (*mystique de droite*)” will taking shape of a practice being antagonistic for a long time in terms of values: sports. It is only after the birth of the Fifth Republic and the election of Charles de Gaulle in 1958 that sports merge with Physical Education. As well as the integration of Physical Education teachers into the *Haut-commissariat à la Jeunesse et aux Sports* (High Commission for Youth and Sport), then headed by Maurice Herzog.

Finally, there is three main reasons to the success of the requirement of the 1880 law that makes physical education compulsory for boys aged from 6 to 13: First, the sanitary question is present to fight tuberculosis through better health of individuals. The second one is an economic reason with the increase of workers’ productivity through physical education (and thus useful to the nation’s economy). We can note that the law of March 28<sup>th</sup>, 1882 made school compulsory from 6 to 13 years old, which protects children from overexploitation at an early age. Finally, the last reason is military: it’s necessary to be prepared for revenge (war) and ensure the transition between school and the army. General Chanzy announces: “Grow men for us, we will make them soldiers” in 1882. Thus, school battalions are formed in every schools where the Ministry of Public Instruction allows the Ministry of War to distribute guns (Instruction publique, des Beaux-Arts et des Cultes, 1881). The constitution of those battalions is developed in a context of a rising nationalism with a vengeful character (take over Alsace-Lorraine). At that time, girls are not yet involved in physical education, as they are relegated to a reproductive function. In France, the expression “Éducation physique” thus appears for the first time in the title of an official text in the *Manuel d’Éducation Physique* published on January 21<sup>st</sup>, 1910 by the Joinville school. However, this expression can already be found in many texts, well before the French Revolution (Ballexserd, 1780).

## **II-2. Between the two World Wars: a historic turning point**

At the end of the First World War, sports is still symbolically attached to the preparation of the military condition. But France is socially divided between those who support the maintenance of physical education for the military and those who seek to detach themselves from it. For several reasons, the advocates of a sporting approach of physical education have difficulties to impose their vision. It is the National Assembly, composed mainly of WWI French soldiers, that decides on military physical education. However, public opinion believes that physical education should no longer belong to the army. There is no teaching method, so implementing it in schools is difficult. In addition to that, there is a significant critical movement converging against sports. Specialization, overwork, the dangers of sport for women are denounced.

The 1920s mark a turning point with the arrival of a new generation of politicians creating a cultural rupture. Politicians are becoming aware that sports can become a window display for the country. Gaston Vidal, Director of the Physical Education Department, states, for example, that “Sport has become a matter of State” (Wahl, 2004) in the sense that the athlete becomes an ambassador of the Nations. Public opinion seems to be in favor of modernity and the sports press is becoming the most important in France (creation of the *Lotto* newspaper). The 1924 Olympic Games awarded to Paris as a reward for the war tilt the balance in sportsmen and women’s favor. During this period, all military exercises are removed from schools. The official instructions give a new conception of the student: more attention and judgment are required. Girls now participate in physical education, but separated from boys, because all the so called “dangerous” activities for reproductive functions are prohibited.

At the secondary education, we are witnessing the same reforms led by congressmen Léon Berard and Édouard Herriot. The decree of January 19<sup>th</sup>, 1925 defines the organisation of physical education in secondary schools. The government imposes a half-day outdoor activity (for boys and girls) once a week, to get out of school:

“[Athletes] contribute to defending the prestige and authority of our country abroad (...). They represent, if we can use this modern term, a kind of “outdoor diplomacy” (statement by E. Herriot, 1929, cited by Callède, 2000).

Students are asking for games and sports. The teachers offer gymnastics during the two hours of physical education. Official instructions are interpreted as intended, resulting in different physical educations. The three pressure groups (doctors, soldiers, teachers) are in conflict when it comes to write a synthesis that resulted in the general regulation of physical education in 1925. It is finally the Joinville’s school that benefits from the writing of the report (it will take 7 years to write it), but there is a gap between this version and the expectations of teachers and students. This situation creates a conflict that occupies the entire inter-war period. Physical education is in crisis and in search of its identity.

The late 1920s and early 1930s are characterised by the end of the military’s monopoly on physical education in favour of doctors, as the context is more favourable to them at the end of the war. Physical education fights scourges (diseases) by preventing and treating them. After the War, France has one pub for every 83 residents. The speech is more or less: “Instead of going to the pub, go to the stadium”. Doctors are sensitizing the Ministry of Education and convincing it of the benefits of physical education to “put the race upright”. In 1927, doctors even obtain the right to train physical education teachers. Schools are created to train them, such as the Regional Institute of Physical Education (IREP) where medical and scientific physical education are taught. The first IREP is created in Bordeaux in 1927, ~~then in~~ Paris, Lille, Nancy and Lyon, all attached to the faculty of medicine. For the first time it becomes a university degree.

The IREPs has at its head the most influential doctors at that time: Philippe Tissié (Bordeaux), André Latarjet (Lyon) and Paul-André Chailley-Bert (Paris). IREPs are created from the different faculties of medicine in France, so the teachers are increasingly competent. They’re taking seats for the students of the Joinville Military Gymnastics School. Doctors play an increasingly important role through the IREPs, they have an influence on the diplomas and they make the CAEG of 1869 to evolve. In 1931, the CAEG becomes a “Certificate of Aptitude for Teaching Physical Education” (*Certificat d’Aptitude à l’Enseignement de l’Enseignement physique*) (CAEP). In 1933, the higher CAEP becomes the “Certificate of Aptitude for Physical Education Professorship” (*Certificat d’Aptitude au professorat d’éducation physique*) (CAPEP). Physical education is being transformed into a field of experimentation for doctors.

### **II-3. From the Popular Front to the Fourth Republic (1936-1959)**

In 1936, politicians became aware of the backwardness of physical education. The Popular Front tries to rehabilitate physical education in schools. Spectacle sport is rejected for its “perverse” effects (money, professionalism). The Popular Front promotes another model: sports for everyone. They create two undersecretaries of state: P. Dezarnaulds (doctor) and Léo Lagrange who are attached to the Ministry of Public Health. School has such an importance that on 9 September 1936, the government decides to extend obligatory schooling until the age of 14 (MEN, 1936). The goal of this operation is to allow people to learn a trade, to manage their rest time and to reduce the unemployment rate. It is a child protection policy. The State then takes over responsibility for teachers (MEN, 1937): they are therefore covered in the exercise of their duties. The Popular Front represents a key period in the integration of physical education in schools. This political party is notably distinguished by the creation of the Brevet Sportif Populaire (1937), by the increase in the timetable (from 2 to 5 hours) and by the imposition of physical education as a test in a school exam (1938). The policies pursued by the government during this period have an impact outside the school. French men and women discover the benefits of physical education (youth hostels, travel, etc.). Under the Popular Front, school sport is being organized such as the Office for School and University Sport (OSSU) for instance. Nev-

ertheless, politics at this time make a mixed review. In concrete terms, there is still a long way to go according to Jean Zay. The latter explains the reasons for of the “failures” by the global financial crisis affecting France at this time and the lack of time to carry out reforms.

#### **II-4. 1940: The second break-up**

Within the framework of the National Revolution, Physical Education undergoes a real expansion, especially structural, during the German occupation of France. It even becomes an affair of the State, whose hold on it will not slacken any more. On 7 August 1940, the *Commissariat d'Éducation Générale et Sportive* (CEGS) is created, headed by Jean Borotra. Its mission is to rebuild French youth. The sports charter of 20 December 1940 provokes the beginning of state control in the organisation of sports. In order to be subsidised, all clubs must now implement Marshal Pétain's policy. The official instructions of 1 June 1941 defines what physical education should be at school and changes its name to General and Sports Education (GSE). The motto of these official instructions is: “Be strong to serve better” (Marshal Pétain). Jérôme Carcopino (director of the *École normale supérieure*, historian) gives Borotra carte blanche to introduce the GSE into the school and to straighten out the youth of France: it is an eugenic education which aims at “the development of the race and the transformation of youth”. On 6 July 1942, Pétain creates a short course (training of gymnastics teachers in 6 months). Their training is done in the regional centres of the GSE (CREGS).

The IREPs lead to the CAPEPS (created in 1943) which allows teaching in high schools. The CREGS play the role of a *stopgap* because of the lack of teachers in relation to these new needs linked to the War. There are therefore two professional statuses. In a few months, the number of teachers is multiplied by 4. The *Brevet sportif populaire* (BSP), created by the Front populaire in 1938, is replaced by the *Brevet sportif national* (BSN). A PSE test based on the BSN and optional is introduced in the baccalaureate during the 1941-1942 school year. This test will become compulsory in 1952.

After the liberation in 1944, Physical Education is attached to the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sport. It still hesitates between general physical education and introducing to different sports.

#### **II-5. From Liberation to the fall of the Fourth Republic**

The Fourth Republic does not have as a priority the organization of physical education. It is an unstable period of political and social rupture. France is trying to rebuild itself in the midst of a crisis. Those who came to power at the Liberation, including Charles De Gaulle, were logically against Pétain's laws and the EGS. Consequently, on 18 August 1945, the Directorate General for Physical Education and Sport (DGEPS) is created and attached to the Ministry of National Education. At its head, Jean Sarrailh former member of Léo Lagrange's cabinet takes up the ideas of the Popular Front. This DGEPS drafts the new Official Instructions of 1945. This text illustrates the influence of the sporting method. In the preamble, the break with the Vichy policy (PSE instead of EGS) is presented. Physical education cannot be reduced to a single method of teaching. The teacher can choose between three teaching methods: sports, natural or eclectic (Joinville). Nevertheless, the lack of means is glaring. Marianne Amar makes a catastrophic assessment of the IVth Republic's facilities (1 PSE teacher per 3,000 students). In 1953, 52 departments do not have a hygienically adequate swimming pool; 8 departments have none at all; 60% of high school students do not have a teacher (Amar, 1987).

In December 1958, the new Assembly elects De Gaulle as President. A High Commission for Youth and Sports is then created at the Ministry of Sport, replacing the DGEPS, with Maurice Herzog at its head. He is the promoter of a sporting status on an international level which illustrates De Gaulle's desire to give sport its full importance. Thus, we can read that:

“If France must shine abroad through its thinkers, scientists and artists, it must also



shine through its athletes [...]. A country must be great, above all, by the quality of its youth, and one cannot conceive of such youth without a sporting ideal, especially in Coubertin's homeland" (Statement by Minister Haby, December 1959).

In the early 1960s, there is a massive influx of students into middle school (baby boom effects). The government extends compulsory schooling from 14 to 16 years through the Berthoin reform (MEN, 1959), which implies two more years of physical education in school. Herzog has to deal with two factors: on one hand, the extreme diversity of physical education practices that accompanies the official instructions of 1945, and on the other hand, the publication of Pierre Seurin's work, who draws up an inventory of the main methods in order to propose a synthesis (Prévost, 1989). The official instructions of 20 June 1959 result from these two elements. From now on, introduction to sports enters the ~~lesson~~ school program: each lesson must contribute to the different aspects of development in a short time. On 29 August 1959, Herzog imposes the PSE as a compulsory test for the French baccalaureate. This situation shows the importance of discipline within the School. It includes, Gymnastics, rope climbing, athleticism, and swimming. Only points above 10 are considered in the average. Published for the first time in 1957, the Letessier's Table (Table de Letessier) is created as a common scale for all educational institutions. The scale very soon becomes the essential instrument for a major part of the physical education tests in school and civil exams. Thus, it contributes progressively to the integration of sports, and more particularly athleticism, into the school system of the 1950s-1960s. Therefore, the scale allows to find a subtle compromise between the drive of modernizing the teaching contents and the need to respond to the essential seriousness and rigour characters of any teaching subject what complies with academic standards (Fortune and Martin, 2008). The official instructions of 1959 constitute the transition between the principles of 1945 and the ones of 1962 and 1967 initiating the integration of sports into physical education.

## **II-6. Sportivization and the birth of new education (1960-1970)**

The State maintains the choice of physical education and sports which appeals teachers. J. Comiti's Successor (Secretary of State) takes a series of measures reducing the number of teaching hours to 3 hours a week in the first cycle (first, second and last year of preschool: children aged 3 to 5 years) and to 2 hours in the elementary school (children aged 6 to 8 years). The circular of 7 September 1972 suppresses the hours of sports association so that they be given outside school time: therefore the physical education teacher suffers a hourly deficit, as well as redistribution of teachers resulting a drop in recruitment. The Sports Animation Centres (*Centres d'animation sportive* (CAS)) are created for students who want to play sports outside of school hours, but PES teachers refuse to supervise the CAS's. A conflict then arises between them and the government. The Mazeaud Law (MEN, 1975) aims to rise sports education as a national priority. It turns it as a service and is at the origin of the creation of the National Institutes for the Training of Physical Education Teachers (INSEP), but teachers wish to be trained by the Ministry of National Education (MEN). As a result, the Mazeaud Law leads to the creation of a new science and technology concept (STAPS) and the DEUG STAPS (a two-year university degree) in 1975. Training is then provided by the MEN and no longer by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sport. In 1977, the STAPS bachelor's degree (a three-year university degree) is introduced. This law is a considerable step forward with the appearance of a STAPS university course, although the choice of content is focused on sports education. Now we talk about physical education and sports.

Achievement of the specific objectives is assessed by quantified measurement of the performance achieved, which in turn is made possible by the increased mastery of codified and regulated sporting techniques. However, this vision reveals itself to be very soon insatisfactory in the educational institution. Indeed, the "mastery of execution", will quickly be based only on the performance, neglecting the academic progress made by the pupil, relying too much on

data and not consequently enough on the achievement. Then, in the early 1970s, PES teachers think that technique, high-level sport and children do not match together. They also believe that receptive methods do not allow the pupil to discover, invent, create. They want a new education and are interested in active pedagogies. During *Formation Professionnelle Continue* (FPC) courses, particularly in the Montpellier academy, they create tools based on the work of Wallon, Piaget, Mérand, Vygotski, Paillard, Meirieu, from the *Groupe Français d'Éducation Nouvelle*, and analyse, evaluate, and scrutinize each learning situation (Ansari, Deshayes, Dupon-Lahitte and Grolière, 1993, p. 83). With this, they will use, evaluate and understand the contribution of creativity, non-directiveness, the different roles of the teacher, these new pedagogies, pedagogy by objectives, evaluation, project pedagogy, didactics, the learning process and the cybernetic approach. To do so, they design a new session and contribute to the creation of new curricula. The teachers close with this current accept this evolution of PES in a quasi-consensus. This does not prevent deeper tremors from reappearing and then disappearing like: the individual versus the group, motricity versus technique, sport versus PES.

Thus, different points of view and even different ideologies come to revive the disputes over the Sport-PES conflict, which can be very violent. But PES teachers close to these currents, to the Unity and Action trend of SNEP, are tired of receiving lessons from the “purists of sports education” and reject them, proposing a PES for both male and female students instead. During the same period, many authors such as Jean Le Boulch, Pierre Parlebas, Jean-Marie Brohm, challenge the government logic for sports and propose a playful and artistic motor education. However, the period of the “Trente Glorieuses” (Thirty Glorious years) has already come to an end and a new era is taking shape for PES, which has to deal with underperforming at school.

## **II-7. Underperforming at school in the 1980s and its impact on PSE**

From 1981, the presidency of François Mitterrand is a game changer. Education is once again becoming a national priority. Unsuccessful schooling must be fought and with it all inequalities. The 1980s (especially from 1986 onwards) are therefore the time for renewal. The management of PES teachers is reintegrated into the national education system and must therefore officially conform to the school, which is the place of transmission of knowledge par excellence. The image of the PES teacher changes, he differs from the coach. From now on, physical education can no longer be confused with sport. The increase in the number of sports and artistic physical activities (APSA) also makes it necessary to teach an understanding of motor action so that the student can adapt it to any new situation. Thus, PES continues to evolve based on concepts such as neuro-motricity, learning processes and the notion of brain plasticity. With the contribution of PES didactics and programme writing (since 1983, creation of the vertical PES commission, of the disciplinary technical group and finally of the group of experts), the discipline has a new step to take: to develop and use the fundamentals of each sporting activity as a reference for the knowledge to be learned. Jean-Pierre Chevènement reinforces the renovation begun and will be at the origin of new Official Instructions for secondary schools in 1985, including PES. The Jospin Education Orientation Act of 1989 constitutes a new charter for the French education system. It states that “the public service contributes to equality of opportunity. Artistic education and PES participates directly to the training of all pupils” (MEN, 1989). The idea is to act on the training of pupils and teachers, to associate, with socio-economic desires, a systematic desire to transform traditional educational frameworks of practice.

After the legal texts from 1985 to 1988, which extended the introduction of sports into PES programming (begun by the instructions of 1962 and 1967), the publication of the 1996-1998 programmes for secondary schools and 1999-2002 for high schools, constitutes an important step towards the current state of the official texts which now administratively structure the contents of the PES.

The PES, which is now better organized by official texts, is still based on the evolution achieved between 1970 and 1980. Sports and competition are still the backbone of the lessons

and programmes. It still relies on the twenty years in which the teachers themselves, through internships, have completely transformed and rebuilt their discipline, rejecting the theory of receptivity of knowledge, to arrive at a PES based on and merging the two theories, constructivist and cognitivist.

The François Bayrou's reform of secondary schools in May 1994 put forward 158 proposals to define a "new contract for the school" (MEN, 1994). These measures have only one objective, to increase the efficiency of the education system in the fight against underperforming at school. They are articulated around 4 main axes, one of which is to fight against social and cultural inequalities: the emphasis is on the French language, civic education and PES, which obtains a fourth hour in sixth grade. The organisation of the school (and PES) from 1980 to the present days is based on local democracy. The Government delegates its powers to the local authorities. The concept of public establishment is replaced by the concept of Local Public Education Establishment (EPLÉ in french) placed under the supervision of local authorities (high school and region, middle school and French department, primary school and municipality).

In the 1980s and 1990s, PES seems to have regained some of its true identity. On the one hand, PES is gaining in academic and social legitimacy, and on the other, this institutional recognition comes with a price of homomorphism, of a discipline in line with the others. But what about its specificity? The official instructions of 1985 (secondary school) and 1986 (high school) and their addenda (1987-1988) partly answer to that question: "PES is not to be confused with the physical activities it proposes and organises". Didactics and pedagogical reflection have led to considerable progress, but PES still pursues the same goals: learning to act, to control one's emotions, to surpass oneself; health, etc. However, the official instructions of 1985-1986 comes up against the problem of contents. The officially proposed solution is to provide PES with a national curriculum and a common reference system.

The 1990s are therefore marked by these debates between the supporters of a strict curriculum and those of an evolving national frame of reference where interpretation is still important. It is a question of assessing skills, providing that they have been taught, which is not always the case. Regarding the sixth (1996), fifth and fourth (1997), third (1998) and second (1999) programs, Pierre Bourdieu and François Gros (1989) announce that:

"the program is not imperative code. It must function as a guide for the teacher and students, who must find in it a clear statement of the objectives and requirements of the level of instruction considered".

From that time on, the appropriation of knowledge (skills) in PES is a necessity in the process of school integration for two reasons. Firstly, knowledge is the guarantee that PES participates in the training of the individual. Secondly, knowledge confers autonomy and responsibility.

## **II-8. Training Reforms: Current Issues and Concerns**

We will retain two important reforms. First of all, the reform of the *Baccalauréat* introduced at the start of the 2019 school year (MEN, 2018), potentially changes the position of PES in pupils' educational pathways. For the time being, questions remain. The series as we know them today (Literary, Economic and Social Sciences, and Scientific) of the general Baccalaureate have been abolished and replaced by a course organized in modules. Pupils now follow a core curriculum of disciplines and specialization courses, including two "major" and two "minor" disciplines. It is precisely this question of specialities that worries part of the teachers' unions. The half-day Wednesday previously dedicated to PES is disappearing to make way for all the specialities combined. Another major problem is that all disciplines are in one way or another involved in a speciality, except for PES. There is therefore a real danger that PES will disappear and become a simple option, losing its compulsory nature for all pupils from primary to high school.

## Conclusion

In France, PES is a highly structured discipline in schools, both at the departmental and at national level. It belongs primarily to the school domain, but it is largely open to the civil sectors, through school sports associations, which organise external gateways, sports meetings and competitions. PSE is also a discipline in identity crisis. Looking at the intentions, the historical analysis allows us to answer that there is indeed a democratization in law of the school and therefore of PES despite many obstacles, in reality, democratization does not always go hand in hand with success.

Taking an interest in the issues at stake in Physical Education and Sport means first of all taking an interest in the missions and functioning of the school in a perspective of democratization of access to culture and emancipation for each and everyone. Indeed, all school subjects contribute to “developing the knowledge, skills and culture necessary for the exercise of citizenship in the modern society” (MEN, 2013). The draft of the common base proposed by the Ministry of National Education (2014) states that school provides “access to a living culture” which “promotes physical, cognitive and sensitive development; enables pupils to act, to conquer and thus gradually exercise their freedom and their status as responsible citizens”. The challenge is clearly stated: “To acquire this culture is indispensable to reduce inequalities and provide access to knowledge for all”. Each discipline brings its own specific contribution to this global educational project, with objectives that have evolved over the years in line with the needs of society. In addition, each one maintains a close relationship with social and cultural practices: French with literature, oral and written communication, theatre, plastic arts with painting, sculpture, photography, technology with architecture, mechanics, computer science, music education with the choir, instrumental practice and, lastly, PES with sports, dance, etc.

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