

School culture in Tunisian schools

Abstract

Our article from curriculum sociology to make it understood school culture comes from physical education in Tunisian schools. The empirical material on which the analyzes are based comes from two main sources. The nature of the physical activities serving as a support for the teaching sequences in physical education as well as the methods of practice valued in this discipline are apprehended, first of all, from the most recent official texts: teaching programs providing the main orientations, accompanying documents enabling the objectives pursued to be defined precisely, official texts governing the baccalaureate physical education tests.

Key words: curriculum sociology, school culture, physical education.

Introduction

The education system is central to all societies. Education is considered one of the most important fields of a society. Since its independence, Tunisia has allocated a significant part of its capacities to the development of this sector. The school's mission is to provide students with the necessary means to acquire knowledge, to enable them to build their future and succeed in their professional and societal life. Physical education tends to ensure the physical and intellectual development of the adolescent, and the assimilation of socially positive behaviors during the student's schooling (Feyfant, 2008).

Physical and sports education is both a training and learning discipline (Parlebas, 1976). It is aimed at all pupils, it is not limited to the response to be given to the need for movement of the child but must, like any teaching discipline, allow a better organization of the life of the adult and favor everyone's integration into society. The importance of physical education is very quickly elaborated: from a subject of an additional educational nature to the other teaching subjects cognitive-based fundamental (Parlebas, 1986), provides motor and mental training, physical education is used as a tool to help with school exams, it is only to get good grades in exams (Mehrabian and Vienna, 1967). Through the teaching of this discipline, students develop a set of tools that they need throughout

their lives to be in good physical and moral health and to live in harmony with themselves and with others.

The way in which school culture is developed is linked to the process of selection and justification of the cultural elements chosen to be transmitted at school through the teaching of physical education. Considering culture as a preserved and transmitted intellectual heritage, school education never succeeds in incorporating into its programs and courses more than a narrow spectrum of knowledge, skills, forms of expression, myths and socially mobilizing symbols. (Forquin, 1996). Therefore the central question of our work arises: What, in the contents, in the meanings that have the power to challenge our thoughts, can be considered as having an educational value for the expenses of all kinds that supposes the teaching of physical education in Tunisian schools?

The construction of school knowledge results, in part, from interactions between several social actors who can cooperate and confront each other in the conceptions of knowledge to be transmitted at school (Arnaud, 1992). The development of school culture and its merits are subject to various interpretations by different actors. (Draelants and Ballatore, 2019). By taking the example of the teaching of physical education, the subject of recent programs for high schools, we will underline the existence of tensions resulting from the definition of the body culture from which the curricula are developed. To conduct the analysis, two main dimensions are called upon: the nature of the physical activities selected and the methods of practice valued. In terms of cultural contributions, are all physical practices comparable? Do we consider that some are endowed with intrinsic qualities which undoubtedly constitute the form of bodily culture from which teaching content must be developed?

The analytical framework

The prescribed curriculum generally provides a set of clear guidelines as to the nature of the content taught. It constitutes a framework to enable teachers to adapt their teaching to local realities. This relative also favors the expression of the own cultural conceptions of physical education teachers. The typology developed by Demailly thus reveals the profound differences in conceptions distinguishing the middle school teachers studied (1985). The definition of what literature is, the nature of the works on which they wish to focus with their students, their relationship to linguistic standards are all distinctive elements. In the same register, the research carried out by Isambert-Jamati & Gropsiron underlines the divergence of the conceptions and practices of teachers (1984).

Centered on the learning of written narration in college, Tupin's work also highlights such differences in conceptions and practices (1996). Here, deep divergences are manifested, among other things, by the place granted to the first culture of the pupils, in particular that constituted by television fictions massively followed by adolescents. In the studies mentioned, the differences observed between the conceptions and practices of teachers are due as much to their respective cultural and school habits as to their ability to distance themselves from their own references in terms of culture.

In this regard, physical education teachers need to be mindful of the possible impact of their own background as seasoned athletes. A lasting commitment of practitioners to a good level of performance is likely to have repercussions on the image they have of physical excellence and on the way of designing the content to be transmitted in physical education. In this area, the work of Ervani shows that the sporting habitus forged during regular competitive practice at a good level has notable effects on the educational concepts developed by students

preparing for the professorship of physical education (1983). No doubt it is necessary to establish some comparisons with what is observed in the context of the teaching of physical education in Tunisia.

Methodology

The empirical material on which the analyzes are based comes from two main sources. The nature of the physical activities serving as a support for the teaching sequences in physical education as well as the methods of practice valued in this discipline are apprehended, first of all, from the most recent official texts: teaching programs providing the main orientations, accompanying documents enabling the objectives pursued to be defined precisely, official texts governing the baccalaureate physical education tests. This first source is supplemented by data from two national surveys conducted by the statistical services of the Ministry of National Education. Centered on physical education, they made it possible to question by questionnaire, from a national sample, 1140 students and 917 teachers. The survey base chosen is made up of colleges, public high schools and vocational high schools.

The sampling method used is stratified sampling. Three criteria were used to carry out this stratification: the size of the establishments, whether or not they are classified as pilot education, whether they are located in urban or rural areas. Thus, 76 colleges, 51 high schools and 32 vocational high schools. In each establishment, one or more students and teachers were drawn by lot. The number of students and teachers selected at random varies from 1 to 3 depending on the size of the establishment. The response rates are rather high: 78% for pupils and 80.2% for teachers.

Results

The study shows that the three disciplines were clearly overrepresented: athletics, gymnastics and swimming; others were reduced to the minimum portion: artistic physical activities, outdoor physical activities and combat sports

The activities practiced in physical education: a focus a practice deemed fundamental

The most recent physical education curricula for high schools and vocational high schools emphasize the need to confront students with the diversity of bodily experiences. Thus for high school, the integrated approach of the first and final year classes responds to the concern to allow all students to make choices that deliberately engage them in their practice while ensuring the diversity of physical, sporting and artistic activities programmed. . For the vocational high school, it is indicated that the role of physical education is to train a lucid, autonomous and creative citizen in the long term by promoting access to the cultural heritage made up of the diversity of physical, sporting and artistic activities (Parlebas, 1986).

With regard to the choice of physical activities, the teaching teams are invited to draw from two major groupings: a common set ensuring relative national homogeneity and a complementary set allowing local specificities to be taken into account. The common set consists of the following activities: volleyball, basketball, handball, football, rugby, tennis, athletics, swimming, gymnastics, dance, judo, wrestling. The complementary set can include activities such as: boxing, gymnastics.

Depending on local specificities, each high school draws up an annual list of activities that can be practiced in the establishments. On the other hand, the official texts open the range of possible physical activities within the framework of the lessons of physical education. However, a number of formulations and orientations imply that all physical activities do not necessarily have the same value. Let's take the example of programs for second graders. After emphasizing the diversity of the physical activities offered, the texts mention that the pupils must be confronted with some of their social practices and that they must be able to access the cultural meaning of each one.

There are two quite clear orientations here: the idea of a selection among all the types of bodily experiences, some of their social practices, the postulate according to which each physical activity corresponds to a single cultural meaning. Moreover, when presenting the list of activities of the common set, it is indicated that these are the activities most frequently practiced in schools. It is also specified and it must be underlined that the teaching will be based on these activities as a priority. This translates directly into the choice offered to students: for each level of the course, at least three activities are chosen, two of which come from the common set. The latter consists mainly of athletic activities, team sports and racket sports.

Artistic activities and combat sports are comparatively much less represented. The formal curriculum, apprehended here through the teaching programs, brings together a logic of openness to the range of possible physical activities and a logic of relative hierarchy of these. In relation to what is prescribed, what do the teachers do, particularly from the point of view of the distribution of the physical activities practiced. The analysis of the data from the two surveys allows us to draw the following observation: athletics still occupies a predominant place but we note the rise in power of team sports and racket sports (tennis) which are taking the place formerly granted to gymnastics and swimming (Table 1).

The college is somewhat different from the high school by still giving gymnastics a place of choice. The importance given to the different physical activities in the lessons varies considerably. This hierarchy appears in a rather discreet way in the orientations of the official texts. It is strongly accentuated by the choices of teachers. These choices are justified by the existence of material constraints which restrict the range of practices. But beyond that, there is the idea that there are so-called essential physical activities likely to constitute the main foundations of the teaching of physical education. A majority of teachers surveyed 61.8% is of this opinion. When asked to cite precisely the nature of these activities, a trio emerges clearly: swimming, 34.8%.

Table 1. Physical activities practiced in physical education classes during the 2021 - 2022 school year (in percentages)

Physical activity	college	High school	Technical College
Athletics	88	66.4	68.3
Volleyball	34	41.1	25.7
Table tennis	11	9.6	1.3
Basketball	35	25	30
Handball	32.6	20	18.7
Gymnastic	68.6	55.0	56.6
Swimming	10.5	3.7	2.3
Rugby	33.2	21.8	19.1
Boxing	11.8	12	2.7
Struggle	8.4	7.1	2.0
Tennis	6	4.7	1.3
Judo	12.9	9.1	1.8
Soccer	25	23.3	27.2

What can explain the predominant place given to these activities? Swimming probably represents a special case because the argument related to safety, learning to swim to avoid drowning is indisputable. This type of justification does not hold for team sports and athletics. Their international influence, competitions on a global scale, strong presence at the Olympic Games. In addition, these two families of activities by a majority of teachers as having a universal dimension and must, as such, be offered to most students. Another type of justification consists in thinking that there are transfers of learning occurring between these universal physical activities and the others considered to be more secondary.

The questions formulated above should not be interpreted as a relativist position which would deny the existence of intrinsic criteria making it possible to prioritize cultural content with a view to transmitting it in the school context. We simply question the validity of the criteria which, ultimately, seem to be retained to justify the hierarchy of physical activities on which the teaching of physical education is based. There is every reason to think that, in the imagination of a majority of teachers, certain physical activities remain associated with leisure and relaxation and that they cannot, therefore, be the subject of learning, seriously in school curricula. By taking into consideration the nature of the physical activities practiced by the students,

A preference for forms of practice based on confrontation and the production of performances

A convenient way of understanding the methods of practice valued at school consists, first of all, in accounting for the objectives officially assigned to the teaching of physical education. For high school, the programs mention five main objectives: achieve measured performance by a given deadline; adapt their movements to multiple, varied and new environments; carry out actions for artistic or aesthetic purposes; lead an individual or collective

confrontation; guide and develop the effects of physical activity for self-maintenance.

For each physical activity, the official texts specify the type of skills expected, in connection with the five aforementioned objectives. With regard to the objective, to lead an individual or collective confrontation, without a doubt the competitive logic prevails. The discourse produced is devoid of any ambiguity. For all team sports and racquet sports, it's about beating the opponent and achieving victory.

A few examples will suffice to illustrate this orientation. In handball, it is a question of looking for the gain of a meeting by the installation of an attack based on the permanent occupation of the space of play. In table tennis, it is necessary to propose and carry out tactical projects to win matches against identified adversaries of close level. Undoubtedly for security reasons, the guidelines provided for combat sports partially escape this logic of gain.

It is, first of all, a fight generally carried out in training. The objective is not necessarily to beat the opponent as in competition but to put him in difficulty. Moreover, the text leaves open the possibility of choosing between partner and adversary. This suggests a certain distance taken with the logic of confrontation. Official orientations are also marked by an institutional dimension stemming from national or international sports federations. Physical activities must be used in physical education respecting the characteristics and regulations defined by these federations for extracurricular practices.

Thus, in floor gymnastics, it is necessary to design, build and perform in front of an audience a sequence that integrates the acrobatic and aesthetic dimensions of the gymnastic activity and the code of reference. The evocation of the reference code illustrates the institutionalized dimension of the practice, that which refers to the regulations in use during competitions organized by national gymnastics authorities. For example, for the javelin throw or the high jump, it is necessary to prepare and achieve the best performance with a limited number of attempts. This fully corresponds to the type of service expected during extracurricular sports meetings. The link with institutionalized practice is a little looser for artistic activities and outdoor physical activities. In dance, it is a question of proposing a choreographic treatment which questions in a personal way and, in the motor registers specific to the dance, a step of composition identified in a work. Several recent qualitative studies show that, in most of the sequences observed, competition is present even if it manifests itself in forms and with varying intensity depending on the situation: tournaments, relays, etc. (Moreno 2006, Winegrower 2006). competition is present even if it manifests itself in forms and with varying intensity depending on the situation: tournaments, relays, etc. (Moreno 2006, Winegrower 2006). competition is present even if it manifests itself in forms and with varying intensity depending on the situation: tournaments, relays, etc. (Moreno 2006, Winegrower 2006).

To pedagogically justify the priority given to this mode of practice, it is not uncommon for teachers to mention the playful and motivating nature of this approach. In addition, a quantitative study, centered on college, shows that sport defined in the strict sense of institutionalized physical activity, the main logic of which is based on codified confrontation (Parlebas 1999) constitutes, for 43.6% of the teachers questioned, a priority reference for developing the content of their teaching sequences (Poggi 2007). Physical education teachers are also very attached to the institutional dimension of physical activities as it appears in particular through a series of regulations enacted by the extracurricular federal authorities. From this perspective,

Ultimately, the physical culture on which the teaching of physical education in Tunisia is based is characterized by two aspects: the reference to competitive sport and the institutional dimension of physical activities. In this respect, we can assume that the sporting habitus of physical education teachers, their past as competitors deeply

permeate their conceptions of the content taught. The data show that their involvement in the extracurricular sports sphere is relatively strong (Table 2).

Table 2. Sports qualifications of physical education teachers (in percentages)

Holder of a federal coaching diploma	40
Holder of a federal diploma as an arbitrator	10
Holder of a sports training diploma	55
Holder of a sports diploma high level	24
Is currently invested in a sports club	51.9
Is invested in a sports club as a practitioner	28.5
Is invested in a club as a coach	29.4
Is invested in a club as an officer	14.5
Is invested in a federation as a referee	4.9

Gap with the expectations of students and the evolution of the practice of physical activities outside of school?

Several previous studies have shown that there is a mismatch between what the school offers and the expectations of the students. The results given in table (3) show a fairly clear split between activities very infrequently practiced and those which are frequently practiced. For the first, the wishes of practice of the pupils are high; for the seconds, rather weak. Practices and wishes are balanced for a minority of activities: endurance running and football.

Table 3. Physical activities practiced in physical education and students' wishes to practice (in percentage)

Physical activity	Activities practiced in EPS	Desired practice	Differences between practices and wishes
Tennis	2.4	28.1	-25.7
Boxing	4.5	26.4	-21.9
Fencing	0	20.7	-20.7
Cycling	0	16.2	-16.2
Baseball	3.8	19.4	-15.6
Judo	1.2	12.9	-11.7
Rugby	6.2	16.8	-10.6
Gymnastic	1.9	11.4	-9.5
Dance	5.5	13.6	-8.1
Struggle	4.3	10.7	-6.4
Swimming	12.3	18.6	-6.3
Race	35.4	35.4	0
Soccer	19.1	18.4	0.7

Handball	28.2	19.9	8.3
Table tennis	32.1	18.6	13.5
Basketball	31.3	16.9	14.4
Gymnastic	24.5	9.3	15.2
Volleyball	46.1	16.6	29.5
Athletics	55.5	10.5	45.0

At the top of the activities acclaimed by the students are physical activities in the great outdoors. Then come tennis, certain combat sports (including boxing), so-called maintenance activities (gymnastics) and artistic physical activities (dance). Several interpretations are possible. The first consists in evoking the saturation effect inherent in the frequency, in physical education, of certain activities (athletics, volleyball, etc.). By contrast, other activities would be favored by pupils precisely because they are not often offered in the school setting.

An essential question remains: to what extent should schools take these developments into account ? It arises all the more so since the discrepancies mentioned with regard to the nature of physical activities also manifest themselves with regard to the methods of practice. When students are asked about their preferences in terms of physical practices, two main trends emerge. The first reveals a relative distance from the competitive sports model: 52.4% of students say they practice physical activities for fun, without worrying about ranking or performance; Only 31.7% of them mention practicing because it is a competition that allows them to perform and assert their abilities.

In addition, a good proportion of pupils (55.9%) would like to practice physical activities outside of any official structure (sports clubs, leisure associations, etc.); Only 36.2% prefer to practice in a club. This trend seems to corroborate what is observed on a larger scale (all ages combined). Ultimately, on the subject of the nature of physical activities or the methods of practice, there is a discrepancy between what the school offers within the framework of the lessons of physical education, and the extracurricular evolution of the practice of physical activities. .

Conclusion

The school practice of sports and artistic physical activities, the teaching of physical education guarantees all students a common culture. Can this common culture be made up of a restricted core of duly selected physical activities or should it be based on a wide range of practices? The architecture of the college programs includes a very open national list of physical activities, modeled on the high school model. The text also insists on the need to provide middle school students with varied bodily experiences. This contrasts somewhat with the results observed: currently, the most practiced physical activities are athletics, gymnastics, team sports and racket sports (Table 1).

This raises the question of the role that physical education plays in the production of educational inequalities. This has not escaped the legislator since, in the college program, it is stipulated that physical education, at all levels of schooling, aims for the success of all students. In addition, the curriculum evokes the notion of school practice.

This term suggests taking a certain distance vis-à-vis extracurricular practices, without being totally out of touch with them: learning takes place through school practices resulting from social practices, arranged according to educational imperatives.

This orientation is in line with the pedagogical proposals of the Collective for Disciplinary Study and Reflection on Teaching, in particular that which aims to build a school culture of physical activities in physical education (Dhellemmes 2007). In this perspective, teaching content is developed by taking a certain distance from extracurricular practices, especially those practiced in institutionalized structures.

Recommendation

Physical education and sports allows students to acquire several varied skills, verbal, bodily and relational, which is not the case in the classrooms, where the apprentices remain seated and silent to take the other subjects. The originality of physical education is made above all of physical activity and multiple, motor, communication and emotional expression. It can play a major role in giving meaning to existence, an end to our actions and noble objectives. and pure to our action. Physical education is essentially a means of education that is absolutely indispensable for the intellectual, moral, spiritual and social formation of the human person.

The objective of physical education is to release all the energies of the body, then to coordinate them, to discipline them, in order to improve the health of adolescents, to make them stronger, more skilful, more courageous, and thereby to increase its power over the material world and improve its action. Pupils need a basic physical education, practically absent in our schools when we compare the hourly load granted to subjects with intellectual dominance with the learning of physical education.

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