

Exercise in French Physical Education Teaching Since 1945.

A Civilising Intellectualisation as the Consequence of Sport and School Standardisation

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Abstract

In France, since the Second World War, physical and sports education (PSE) methods have seen considerable renewal. However; the word “exercise” has remained in the professional vocabulary. This permanence inevitably raises questions about the conditions under which the term is used. The mutations undergone by this basic unit of the student's physical activity reflect the profound changes that have occurred in the discipline. Desiring to give greater coherence to their teaching and thus work towards greater school legitimacy, French PSE teachers have progressively developed a more and more complex argument. This argument has permitted them to rationally link the body movements that have to be performed with the aims that can thus be achieved, in a dynamic which bears the imprint of the “civilising process”. This study is a historical analysis of a particular element in the teacher-student relationship: exercise. Hexagonal physical education, through its incorporation of norms, makes it possible to fully understand the educational concepts of the moment and their evolution throughout the second half of the 20th century. Although often neglected in university research, the notion of exercise nonetheless represents a remarkable indicator of a society's educational approach.

Keywords: Physical education, France, Exercise, Teacher, Civilising process

1. Introduction

In all the European educational systems and at all levels (Hardman, 2006), there is a difference between discourse and practice. In the educational field, the nuances among actual *curricula*, formal *curricula* and hidden *curricula* (Perrenoud, 1984) are considerable. The extent of the difference can be found in the multiple levels of discourse which accompany the field of education and the teaching process itself. For a long time now the world of education has paid attention to learning and methods (Berry, 1931), but a reading of numerous sources very often reveals the absence of the term “exercise”. Official texts and physical education methods talk a great deal about recommended practice and yet rarely mention what constitutes the basis of the student's activity: exercise.

With regard to French physical education, Demenÿ proposed as early as 1902 a scientific and extended vision of the discipline: “*Joy and pleasure are the seasoning of exercise, which should be substantial and attractive at the same time; it is the educator's job to provide them*” (p. 154-155). If the term seems to represent a consensus, it belongs nowadays to the specific refined vocabulary of the world of education. In France, the expression “teaching situation”, which appeared at the end of the 1960s, supplanted the term “exercise” in physical and sports education (PSE) without totally replacing it. But do they really refer to the same activity? After the Second World War, the advent of sport and leisure as a modern cultural phenomenon (Dumazedier, 1962) greatly influenced PSE and transformed the notion of exercise. The multitude of scientific references (L'éziart, 1997) introduced into the field also influenced the teachers' vocabulary.

Although political guidelines and pedagogical modalities aligned, according to the era, with greater or lesser difficulty (Raulin, 2006), they nonetheless were immersed in a larger social space which was part of the general coherence. As the carrier of the current norms, the body embodied the social cohesion of the citizens who were both docile and autonomous (Ehrenberg, 1983). Exercise; therefore, organised the moral and physical education of the child as envisaged by the French pioneers of this teaching discipline which, in the long term, undertook a slow civilisation of morals (Elias &

Dunning, 1986). Moreover taking responsibility for a future citizen implied the incorporation of the culture of reference (Martinand, 1989) that was sub-political (Beck, 2001, 400). The channelled violence at the heart of the physical activities utilised with an educational purpose transformed the nature of the relationship between the teacher and the student. The confrontation of the learner with legitimate knowledge inevitably changed. This analysis facilitates a better understanding of the role of the teacher and also questions the aptitude of the students to conquer the freedom to be themselves (Moreau, 2014), using the Official Instructions (OI) which mark the history of PSE, as well as the publications of many authors, as its corpus.

Although the word “exercise” was a permanent feature of the 20th century, its meaning, its reality and its use evolved. However; from a generic point of view, exercise in PSE could be conceived of as a set of different mainly physical and mechanical procedures, developed or used by a teacher. They were accompanied by instructions on performance that principally aimed at the acquisition and development of specific abilities that were indispensable for the physical training of the students, but also the learning of essential qualities for their moral and social education.

From 1945 on, exercise acquired different qualifiers (analytical exercises, practical exercises, sports exercises, teaching situations, problem situations, tasks, etc.). This evolution was the result of a regular reconsideration of the discourse aimed at the school and social sphere. Already in 1949, Seurin had underlined the richness and scope of its role when he argued that: “*physical education [...] is a method of general education based on physical exercise*” (Seurin, Marchand, Sère, & Haure-Placé 1949-1950, p. 29). As well as the nature and structure of the exercise, the teachers were the ones who proposed it, placed it in a coherent context, and guided and controlled it. They guaranteed a healthy, moral, and social education.

A study of the notion of “exercise” implies giving thought to the pedagogical relation. The “pedagogical triangle” (Houssaye, 1993) highlights three categories of links – learning, teaching, and training – which unite the three poles of pedagogical activity: the student, the teacher, and knowledge. If such a schematic description presents certain limits from a historical point of view, it has nonetheless the dual merit of attracting attention to the new interest in the child on the part of the adult, and insisting on the necessity to think about the consistencies which surround the three poles. The emergence and integration of sports, a phenomenon of civilisation, at the heart of French, and more widely, international, education systems (Gori & Terret, 2005), are part of the internalising of a standardisation device which deserves to be studied in detail. The progressive entry of sports into the heart of the French school inevitably modified the definition given to exercise. Should it be seen as an opportunity for emancipation or rather an increase in constraints?

In fact, this article shows in what way, during the 20th century, the French school managed to shift the educational constraints from the teacher's actions to the activity of the students using the argument of their assumption of responsibility, and more generally, their autonomy. There arose a strong intellectualisation which marked this teaching discipline in parallel with, and associated to, this important evolution in the concept of the transmission of PSE contents. Finally, as the 21st century approached, French physical education in schools seemed to lose its corporeal specificity in its search for recognition and legitimacy. Henceforth, at the heart of exercise, competences and knowledge became the main aims of a physical education which abandoned analytical gymnastic movements, motor behaviour, technical sports gestures, and other skills characteristic of another age.

2. The Disappearance of Ordered Exercise in the Middle of the 20th Century

Initially, exercise responded to the search for coherence in the subject of “physical education”. The methods of gymnastics and physical education represented the ideal framework for ensuring a logical relation between the exercises proposed on the one hand, and the intimately associated aims and goals on the other. The strength of the method lay in its ability to be convincing about the evident harmony between exercise and the initially desired educational perspective. It generally highlighted representative values of the nation and its population, in France as abroad. The student was therefore ousted from the learning process. The only ones who counted were the teachers who were the possessors of knowledge which they wished the students to acquire under the guise of a justifying method. In line with the demands of Demenÿn his Higher Course of Physical Education of 1903, the creation of the CAPEP (Note 1) in 1933 (Note 2) justified this school subject on the scientific criteria (Arnaud, 1986) that govern exercise (intensity, series, repetitions, tests, measurements, etc.). The educational goals with a health perspective were largely based on knowledge of physiology. The argument became more difficult for moral and social education. If the meaning of exercise expanded for the teacher, it nonetheless decreased for the student in spite of the endless reminders of the desired aims (Loudcher & Vivier, 1993). The pedagogical approach was still that of a rigid socially and physically integrated authority, allowing considerable external constraints to manifestly persist.

2.1 Exercise Confined by Narrow Methods

In France the ordered exercise at the beginning of the 20th century, with its military aspects, still had its place after the Second World War. The eclecticism maintained in the OI of 1st October 1945 led every theoretician to state their rationale

and organise the exercises that would constitute the means, presumed infallible, to achieve the corresponding aims. The methods competed in their search for credibility, and reduced the margins for uncertainty in every exercise. The student was almost secondary. The multitude of statuses affecting French physical education teachers (Véziers, 2007) did not permit them to take initiatives which could disturb the methodical hegemony.

Thus the sets of exercises included in the Natural Method and their prolongation during the 1960s were rigorously organised (Delaplace, 2005). Their classification, their ordered division, and the number of re-editions of the reference work by Hébert (1936) made a case for a complete and efficient approach. This organisational mode constrained the rational and scientific logic of physical education methods. The neo-Swedish method, supported in France by Seurin and *Methodical physical education*, split training gymnastics and applied gymnastics, reopening the path to so-called constructed exercises (Note 3). This rationale was evident in the numerous criteria selected: purpose, aim, intensity (pace, repetition, link to breathing), justification, different gymnastic currents, form of movement or complexity and efficiency. Endowed with the set of qualities which it had to develop in the student, exercise justified the usefulness of the subject by highlighting its educational role.

Vers une éducation physique méthodique [Towards methodical physical education] offered an example of a lesson plan (Seurin et al, 1949, vol. 2, p. 9): warm-up, training exercises, applied exercises, then cool down. Further on, Seurin and his disciples presented the two main rules governing the lesson:

“a) Every physical education lesson is made up of two principle parts: mainly analytical training exercises; and applied exercises mainly motivated by sport or natural activities ; b) In both categories, the exercises should be chosen for each lesson so that they respect the progression and programme set for the period”. (Seurin et al., 1949, vol. 2, p. 10).

Thus every exercise had a dual classification: internal, as the exercise made sense in itself, and external through the global comprehension of the activity governed by what came before and what came after.

In general terms, the methods that were still in force in France after 1945 advocated rigor, both in the instructions which accompanied the exercise, and in their implementation by the student. These demands were intended to eliminate any deviation in the movement and corresponded to a strict form of education. This unconditional surrender to the standardised corporeal order was also a guarantee of freedom. In spite of the emergence of the king-child (Prost, 1992), the development of a revolutionary policy (Langevin & Wallon, 1947) and the fact that the horrors of two world wars were gradually being forgotten, the model which was incorporated still reflected obedience and severity: *“Immobility and rigidity are perceived as signs of the self control and impassibility which may be demanded of them in combat”* (Roynette, 2000, p. 273). The Nazi persecutions and the collaboration of the French State had left their mark.

2.2 The Physical Education Teacher-Instructor

At that time physical education teachers were experts in physical exercises but they were not considered educators; however, the two were not incompatible. Their status emphasised their relationship to knowledge. The role of master, impregnated with a particular conception of the child, reinforced the position of an instructor who had still not adopted the works of Freinet or Piaget. The new interest in the baby boomers (Quincy-Lefebvre, 2001) was still limited.

Hébert, whose impact on physical education during the post-war years remained strong, clearly stipulated that the instructor announces the exercises, controls the pace, and the changes to other types of exercises (Hébert, 1948). The term “exercise” then represented the minimum work unit in stable conditions. At each new stage of learning the exercises evolved according to their own progression. The monitor was limited to reproducing them. The student was reduced to an obedient element. In return, the instructors’ roles shrank since they could not become the educators of children considered as objects. The constraints, emanating from the methods and the institution, nonetheless ensured submission to the school norms, a prelude to social norms. In return they generated in the heart of French youth an increasing desire for autonomy (Bantigny, 2009).

Later the methodical physical education, advocated by Tissé and then Seurin through the French League for Physical Education (LFEP), was reinstated in the OI of 20th June 1959. The authors assumed that the teachers would be more efficient in applying the method than adapting it to their own tastes, denouncing the teachers’ choice of sport. For the members of the General Inspectorate who were the instigators of this text, only the constructed exercises ensured the complete training of the student. However; the principles governing the texts reconsidered the teachers. Little by little they became the vector of education, thus shifting the emphasis placed on exercise.

2.3 Criticisms of Ordered Exercises

The different attempts to bring an end to the eclecticism of physical education (Prévost, 1989), before and then after the Second World War were a failure. The criticisms of the traditional pedagogical modalities became more virulent without however altering their scientific foundations. The coherence of educational action shifted. The birth of a professional journal the *Revue Éducation physique et Sport (Revue EP.S)*, made it possible to openly publicise an alternative approach

to methodical physical education. Disagreeing with the statements of the president of the LFEP, Raoul Fournier, the first editorial of the EP.S Journal in July-August 1950, imposed a new position for sport in its relation with school practice (1950, p. 3). It was thus the case of a transitional phase between one dominant model and another.

In parallel, Baquet strongly criticised ordered exercise. His seminal work represented not only a defence of educational sport, but also an attack against a Høbertist or Swedish-style practice, judged outdated and ineffective: “*sport has its virtues, but virtues which are taught*” (Baquet, 1942, p. 13). Here we have one of the first mentions of the teacher being responsible for the educational process in PSE.

Up until the 1960s, physical education experienced an inertia generated by the perpetuation of coherent and explicit methods with regard to the exercises used which in the end were essentially mechanical. The end of the dogma, proclaimed in the Ministerial Instructions of 1945, coincided with the emergence of the baby boomer generation, eager to take full advantage of their bodies (Chesworth, 2006). The functioning frameworks relaxed. In parallel, PSE methods appeared that used the elementary unit of exercise differently (Attali & Saint-Martin, 2013). This mutation brought about a different and coherent consideration of the teachers. In the end they gradually became the ones responsible for education in a society where social control continued its work at deeper levels of incorporation and opened the door to an apparent pedagogical freedom.

3. From Play Exercise to the Sports Teaching Situation (1960-1980)

The integration of sports into school physical education (Attali & Saint-Martin, 2013) had consequences which influenced the relation with exercise. Once the conception based on sports exercise reduced to high performance techniques had been surpassed, efforts were gradually directed towards a didactical treatment of the subject. As a result of the concept produced by the working group on the reform of the OI directed by Trincal in 1965 and completed with the results of the Missoffe committees (Lemonnier & Attali, 2014), physical and sports activities gradually became impossible to avoid in PSE. The expression “teaching situation” appeared at the end of the 1960s. It illustrated a profound transformation which affected the whole teaching strategy. It highlighted the search for a new coherence which had to link the use of the innovative means of PE with the aims and goals of the subject taught in a school which was overwhelmed by its democratisation (Merle, 2012). Henceforth, pedagogical reflection eliminated systematic and stifling standardisation. The students became individuals considered from then on, by this new perception of exercise, in their uniqueness and complexity.

3.1 Training Exercise Dethroned by Educational Exercise

The teacher-educator replaced the teacher-instructor. Their concern was to make sure that the physical activities they proposed responded to the goals, purposes and virtues they themselves had chosen. The idea that sports activities could divert the laudable educational intentions of the teacher remained. The General Inspectors insisted on the fact that the autonomy of the teachers was coupled with responsibility. The Instructions of 1967, co-signed by Missoffe and Peyrefitte, respectively Minister of Youth and Sports and Minister of National Education at the time, underlined “*the scope of the educators’ responsibility in the drawing up of their own teaching and [appealed to] their personal initiative, to the extent of their competence, and under the control of the teaching inspectorate*” (OI of 19th October 1967). The profession, although divided (Attali, 2003), managed to unite around a term which was unanimously shared, that of the educator, and the mission involved.

This competency of the teacher only seems to be novel at the official level. In 1942, Baquet pointed out that “*the main difficulty for the teacher [...] is to make the practice of sport lead to the application outside of it of the virtues it has developed*” (p. 14). However; the child remained on the sidelines. The mechanical purpose of exercise still prevailed. In 1946, this influential author, in the first issue of the INS Journal (*Initions nos sportifs*), developed a sports model that had been fashioned within the profession. The adepts of this school of thought wished: “*for a healthy sports education, most often carried out in the open air; to give each individual self-knowledge, not only with regard to physical valour, but from a moral and social point of view*” (Baquet, 1946, p. 4). If physical training maintained its health aims, initiation into different sports offered an alternative. The sports perspective, in contrast, indicated a new representation of the practitioner. The unitary profile of an impersonal student, indistinguishable from the mass, changed under the influence of the pedagogical innovations of the years from 1960-1970 (Laffage-Cosnier & Vivier, 2015). The synthetic sports exercises marked the sports orientation of PSE. The use of the term “exercise” decreased considerably in official discourse. Only mentioned about ten times in the Instructions of 1967, it was only used five times, of which four were with the meaning of activity, in those of 1985. The subject was organised around two types of exercises: instructional exercises and educational exercises. The multiplication of aims induced a growing and generalised interest in the student.

At that time, the taste for effort and performance (Fleuriel & Schotte, 2011) in PSE also contained the notion of pleasure. The relation of the student with sport became individualised (Note 4) and affected both the choice of activities and the exercises involved. The main role of the teacher consisted in presenting the intrinsic virtues of the activity. The initiative

left to the teachers conferred on them the task of constructing their teaching, in a school which was also searching for a new balance.

3.2 *The Primacy of Synthetic Exercise over Analytical Exercise*

During the 1950s, the classical division of physical education into training gymnastics and applied gymnastics remained. But gradually the balance between the two broke down. The applied exercises that were more synthetic took precedence over the training exercises that were judged to be too analytical. This pedagogical reconfiguration aimed at a demanding generation of young people (Lemonnier, Attali, & Parisse, 2016) facilitated access to a common culture which was eminently corporeal. The school opened its doors to the world under the influence of its democratisation. The rules inherent in sports practices constituted the visible levers of a power that contributed to fighting against all social violence by advocating self-control and the acceptance of constraints and frustration.

This major change did not modify the guiding idea of basic physical education. Even though their conceptions diverged, Seurin, Baquet or Le Boulch all adhered to the principle of the inculcation of solid foundations. Seurin talked of preliminary gymnastics (Seurin et al, 1949). Baquet perceived *sports initiation* as a normal prolongation of basic physical education. Le Boulch considered that his “*psychokinetic method was (...) basic physical education*” (1969, p. 27). At the beginning of the 1960s, at least in discourse, there unflinchingly existed a basic physical education that was preparatory to sports exercise.

Sport appeared as a synthetic exercise, bringing with it social and pedagogical virtues induced by the educator. Already in 1947, the proposals of Baquet, expressed an idea which was predominant in the 1960s:

Sport is a social fact, it could remain as a sometimes harmful distraction, if it continues to be practised without guidelines, without a competent educator, or on the contrary it could participate in the education of the masses, and in the selection of the elite, if the governments take interest in it and prevent it from falling into the hands of the merchants. If we so desire, sports games could become a real school for practical sociology (p. 3).

In the 1960s, this mutation was accelerated by a vehement and verbose confrontation among those who held fixed ideologies on the subject. It foresaw the reconsideration of schoolchildren and students, which was exacerbated and crystallised in 1968 (Lemonnier et al., 2016). The human sciences influenced the subject (Collinet, 2006) by making it re-think its relation with the learner, while still permitting the more subtle interiorisation of apparently individualised norms. As proof, *L'Essai de systématique* deployed by Teissi é (1957) at the beginning of the 1960s, was reflected in the OI of 19th October 1967 in order to find a consensus among the different methods being used. A motor education inspired by sport became dominant in this school subject because it satisfied a structuralist approach to motor behaviour henceforth marked by autonomy and control of one's actions in the form of the following breakdown: mastery of movements, mastery of one's own body, mastery of apparatus, mastery of adversities. Physical and sports activities became the means to greater and more general objectives and aims.

3.3 *The Term “Teaching Situation”: the Apex of the Search for Educational Coherence*

At the end of the 1960s, the expression “teaching situation” marked the move to a new coherence among the three poles of the pedagogical triangle. The use of physical and sports activities disturbed the harmony that made it possible to link educational purposes, objectives of the subject taught and means used.

The expression “teaching situation” marked a break:

The noun exercise and the verb to exercise seem to us to imply an idea of the repetition of movements with the aim of improving the “physical” performance of an individual. With such a meaning they cannot cover all the teaching situations which we use (Marsenach, 1970, p. 21).

Physical activity was reconsidered with regard to the social and moral scope at which PSE aimed. Although “teaching situation” replaced “exercise”, the author underlined that it had the same relation with the teaching act. This terminological *imbroglio* augured greater complexity in the professional vocabulary. The experts replaced a term that had been used for a long time with another, more attuned to their theoretical framework, but which presented the problem of reconciling theory with practice (Liotard, 1997). Methodological distinctions, conceptions about sports practices and the terms used multiplied with the advent of university research after the creation of STAPS (Note 5). The discourse in the decade from 1980 to 1990 then became much more complex but also more confused. Famose, a well-known psychopedagogue, having denounced the verbiage (policy principle, operative principle, policy rule, etc.) (Famose, 1994), posed the question of what ought to be taught in physical education, but more importantly denounced this eclecticism of the experts in their relation to physical activities. However, this coherence differs according to whether it is expected by the authorities, the teachers or the students (Lemonnier, 2010).

In short, the acceleration of the integration of sports into physical education in the 1960s modified the balance among

purposes, goals and means. The education of a body with controlled movements was still in vogue. On the one hand, the purposes multiplied to satisfy the desire for a more cultural, more complete, and therefore more complex education of the student. On the other, the excitement around sports means finally shifted the centre of gravity of the “PSE system”. Furthermore, education was achieved thanks to a visibly pleasant activity, sport, which made it possible to unite a school population that had become more heterogeneous because of the democratisation of the educational system. The organisation of the PSE class progressively focused on the students themselves appropriating and then interiorising the norms.

4. The Loss of Meaning in Physical Education During the Decade from 1980-1990: an Undiscovered Epistemological Coherence

In the era of “globalisation” (Cronin & Holt, 2003), “mediatisation” and the democratisation of school which was particularly significant in France (Attali & Saint-Martin, 2004), PSE exercise, converted into a motor task, was a pretext to invite the student to invent “cognitive” solutions to the problem set by the teacher. Between the oil crises and budgetary restrictions, schools had to prove their efficacy with an evaluation (Maccario, 1982). Synthetic exercise was being brought into question. Each child developed his or her own trajectory to access knowledge and skills. The teacher was able, and henceforth obliged, to accept the multiple paths taken by the students to access learning. Motor development gave way to cognition in the communication era (Mac Luhan, 1977). Exercise was no longer conceived as the interface between a certain technique and a socially recognised value but became a place with moving borders where each individual was brought to flourish. The teachers thus fixed more and more benchmarks in their actions, for themselves but above all for the learner. The observation of the “*shift from the neglected child, reduced to silence and immobility, to the king-child, as the accepted centre of interest as an autonomous individual with their treasures and their rights*” (Prost, 1992, p. 25) branded the rise of individualism (Khilnani, 1996) and its consequences on the world of education when the democratisation of the school cleared the institution of all responsibility in the increasing failure of the learners (Prost, 1992, p. 111). However; with growing unemployment, diplomas acquired even more importance. Learning to learn became the new school creed. Avoiding failure at school meant averting social failure.

The students were placed at the heart of the teaching process as the agents of their own training. The teacher was transformed into a resource person: a mediator who organised the encounter between the student and knowledge in a world where institutions were in decline (Dubet, 2002) and the social norm changed rapidly.

4.1 The Application of Constructivist and Cognitivist Conceptions

In physical education, the considerations of the Pedagogical and Scientific Council of the FSGT (Note 6) and Alumni of the ENSEP (Note 7) from 1970 on finally brought into question the notion of exercise. An epistemological turning point occurred between the associationist conceptions, on the one hand, and the constructivist (Piaget, 1974) and cognitivist (Jarnet, 2005) theories, on the other. In summary, the former considered that the skills were constructed by the teacher for the student. The latter made the students responsible for being the actors of their learning. However; these conceptual supports were fluid, became entangled, repelled each other, or combined at the discretion of the teachers faced with the different realities in the field. In both cases, the students were confronted with a task which invited them to rally themselves to succeed. The teacher became a didactic engineer of physical education and of the evaluation of the student’s progress. Taken to the extreme, the teachers monitored each instant of motor learning in indivisible slices, which they observed using multiple indicators.

The teachers could spell out their approach. But the complex coherence of their actions was made more difficult for the students to understand. This incomprehension therefore had consequences for the students’ motivation, which became an additional factor to be integrated into the pedagogical approach (Ntoumanis & Standage, 2009). “*The student who does not want to learn*” (Bertone & Méard, 1996) highlights a child who no longer blindly obeys. They had to be convinced of the utility of their acts (Fize, 1994, p. 44). The multiplication of the expectations and needs of each student meant the personalisation of teaching, manoeuvring between interiorisation of the social norm and personal construction.

The emergence of the notion of task and its complexity were a prime example of the mutation of the system of teacher-student-knowledge. The task could be defined as a determined and compulsory job to be done, imposed by oneself or by a third person. This scientific reference comes from the desire of the PSE actors to take into consideration the goal, the means and their adaptations, the rules to be respected and the free will of the practitioner. The harmonisation of all these factors conferred coherence on a subject that was becoming more complex as illustrated in the six poles of the “general model of the interaction of different difficulty factors” (Famose, 1990, p. 62). Thus learning was subjected to theoretical abstraction. The immediate meaning of the motor act was lost. From the 1980s on, the gradual abandonment of the term “motor behaviour” in favour of the notion of “task” ratified the loss of the reference to motor skills. The profession understood itself but the discourse became inaccessible to students.

The combined notions of problem-situation and problem-situation-resolution (Famose, 1983) similarly illustrated how

the intervention of the teacher in the students' practice was modified. In the case of the problem-situations, the difficulty of the task proposed confronted the student with the possibility of failure. The learner was required by the teacher to construct an intellectual resolution strategy. Then the problem-situation-resolutions left the teacher with the choice of theoretical support which completed, depending on the observed motor weakness, the general cognitivist framework. Anatomy, physiology, psychology, sociology, & educational sciences; the references that the teacher called upon were increasingly numerous and theoretical (Amade-Escot, 1993). Exercise became the culmination of a complex approach that used all the scientific references for legitimation. The OI of 1985-1986 required the students to be capable of identifying, evaluating, organising, and managing their practice. This intellectual tooling demanded that the student develop a didactical analysis analogous to that of the teacher. The notion of a resource person here acquired a whole new significance. The strength of the bond with the collective project demanded an interiorisation compatible with a concern for self that was fully emerging (Foucault, 1994). The teacher thus became the keystone and the compass.

Exercise allocated an important role to evaluation. This modality ensured the coherence of the whole and permitted the teacher to perceive the progression of each student, in the motor, moral and social planes. It also revealed, symptomatically, the cognitivist orientation of physical education at the beginning of the 1980s. The phases of the evaluation were determined and defined. It became of prime importance for the profession (SNEP, 1985). To define physical education as a teaching discipline like the rest (Hérard, 1986, p. 27-28) was to grant its knowledge a place which was initially given to skills. Institutionally the new version of the baccalauréat of 1983 broke with the sports model of the 1960s. Continuous evaluation was definitively replaced in 1988 by one test during the training course. The place of the one-off sport performance gave way to more theoretical and general learning. Tests of knowledge, in the form of Multiple Choice Questions abounded, as so many manifestations of school mimicry (Bordet, 1996). Knowledge replaced motor skills. However; the works of Georges (1983) counterbalanced this fad which flattered the "knowledge experts" and ended up discrediting movement. This imbalance can be seen in the complex considerations of the General Inspectors, Pineau and Hébrard. They distinguished three types of acquisitions linked to three types of principles: "operative", "action" and "management". Although they all aimed to perceive "*knowledge in action identifiable for the effective realisation of the tasks proposed in a field for action*" (Pineau & Hébrard, 1994, p. 17), the cognitive was more important than the corporeal. At the end of the 1980s, in a similar approach, the regional education inspector Delaunay, drew up a "structural programme" with four types of subject content of which only one explicitly referred to motor behaviour (Martin, 2004, p. 118). At the teaching level, the teacher led the student to conceptualise the general framework in which the exercise was performed. The educational sciences, of growing importance, had to be applied to resolve the difficulties born of the democratisation of teaching and its heterogenisation (Isambert-Jamati, 1985). Faced with a much larger public, PSE was implemented according to the theoretical modalities that broke with its mission for motor development in favour of its social aspects.

From 1981 on, when Mitterrand became President of the Republic, the left came into power, were then obliged to share it (1986) and thereafter recovered it (1988). The beginnings of research at the university in STAPS during the ten years from 1985-1995 became superimposed on these political changes and further increased the difficulty to comprehend subject guidelines (Martin, 2004, p. 115). Different working groups opposed each other and haphazardly discharged their own vocabulary onto a field that was avid for scientific legitimacy (Davisse, Delaunay, Goirand, & Roche, 2005). These divergent visions of PSE were based on the "*different existing sciences and their own research methods, which can provide knowledge (...). These are necessarily fragmented and are not always coherent among themselves. PSE thus feeds on knowledge from different scientific horizons which it has to articulate*" (Léziart, 1997, p. 65).

Even though the developmentalist current, supported by Delaunay (Nantes) was in ascendancy at the start of the 1990s, the subject remained immersed in incertitude (Chaigneau in Martin, 2004, p. 131). The central notions of skill and knowledge in themselves were also an additional source of ambiguity as underlined by Berthel who was asked about this topic by the *Revue EPS* (Coll., 2002, p. 11). Weighed down by ideological discourse, the corporeal dimension was forgotten. Motor behaviour faded. Exercise was not part of the debate. Practice became the place for the expression of individual choices, at the school level, as well as at the level of the effort made (Pociello, 1996). The body was therefore an incarnation of individual options and the standardised aspect of exercise became an interiorisation induced at a deeper level of abstraction.

Since the 1990s, caught between the desire to reconcile school pedagogical demands, institutional expectations, and the scientific innovations of the microcosm of the intervention sciences, the teacher has been obliged to give general coherence to a "heterogeneous jumble". The scientific fields called upon to justify the elaboration, evaluation, and encouragement of exercise resulted in a complex outcome which was difficult to understand for the teacher, and even more complicated to explain to the students. School was in crisis, with regard to its meaning and utility. The meaning of pedagogical activity comes from the meaning it is given by its social aspect. In order to train a "*cultivated, lucid, autonomous [...] and responsible citizen*" (OI 31st August 2000), the subject adopted the school aims and, in the

framework of motor learning, worked towards the self-acceptance of the dominance of mental processes. The motor act is the mastered product of skills and knowledge. Autonomy and responsibility take shape in this intellectual vision of motor behaviour. In this democratic system, institutional constraint would constitute the indispensable origin of student freedom.

4.2 From Conceptualisation to Metacognition

After the advent of the 1980s, *Learning to learn* (Meirieu, 1990) was a slogan that increasingly mobilised teachers. The learning process favoured the student-knowledge relation. The new aims of physical education on social questions and, more generally, on citizenship, aspired to giving the people of tomorrow the possibility to evolve: changing their jobs and their lives more often, adapting to the new forms of leisure and information.

To help the child to merge into a perpetually renewed society (Rosa, 2010), the PSE teachers elicited conceptualisation on the part of the students. They sought to make them gain awareness of their mental strategies so that they could subsequently apply them elsewhere. In the institutional and conceptual plane, these approaches clearly distinguished school physical education from federated sport. This vigilance, defended by the dean of the General Inspectorate Pineau, was accompanied by the spectre of a return to the Ministry of Youth and Sport in the run up to the 1988 presidential elections (Martin, 2004, pp. 117-125). The use of the term *resources* thus confirmed a new conception of the child as a potential decision maker. This vocabulary reflected the world of work and ergonomics (Hamel, 2007). According to this metacognitive conception it was no longer enough to require cognitive processes but there had to be a learning of abstract thinking. The motor specificity of physical education was brought into question.

The spirit of conceptualisation appeared at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s. The Jospin framework law of 10th July 1989 inferred an education along these lines. This conceptualisation, before its integration into the field of PSE, was magisterially explained in the discourse:

“Having located knowledge and ordered and established a hierarchy in the form of concepts, the student should now be asked to conceptualise and categorise, that is to say to learn, think, reason, and understand. Requiring this chain of mental operations which lead to this power of abstraction implies the implementation by the teacher of precise and rigorous methodological interventions. This implementation will permit the child to make full use of their intellectual tools of perception and information processing” (Astolfi, 1992).

This type of discourse reflected the media context of the era, perturbed by the upheavals of an information war, with its scoops and buzz. In the middle of this hubbub and stream of images (Lash, 1988), the teachers found themselves charged with the determining mission of clarifying the concepts that the learners, at the same time, had to make their own. The process was further complicated by the fact that the public strongly distrusted the schools.

Gay, Petit, & Perrot demonstrated this line of thought (1993), denouncing a sclerotic conception of the technical movement, omitting the motor plasticity necessary for its adaptation to the shifting environment of practice. This first example illustrates the principle of metacognition – or the conceptualisation of conceptualisation – and intended to clearly explain the risk of a loss of meaning. Metacognition was therefore a particularly attractive theory for the PSE teachers searching for recognition in the 1990s. *“To be teachers like all the others”* was the struggle of a profession which found a new justification in the mobilisation of cognitive processes. In the year 2000, the emphasis on learning citizenship as one of the main purposes of this school subject in part hid the corporeal dimension in favour of a malleable concept.

In fine, one could ask if, for a student, the learning of abstraction is compatible with a motor action. From the viewpoint of the fight against school failure, is the requirement of cognitive processes in motor learning not running the risk of penalising the students experiencing difficulties and in contrast helping those who are already successful? This logic would constitute a greater risk for a subject whose first aim is to develop and educate corporeal functions with the aid of tools i.e. the exercises. For the students, it is more a question of appropriating and managing abstract concepts than being really skilful with their bodies.

Self-control (Foucault, 2008, p. 7) takes on a new form for which the mastery of the body is “rejected” or, at least, subjected to central cognitive and intellectual control. According to this standardised school vision, the spirit always controls the body thus sustaining two thousand years of Judeo-Christian civilisations, and intellectual processes permit learning secrets which favour the inhibition of violent impulses.

5. Conclusion

In every era, exercise turns out to be the main pedagogical tool available to French physical education teachers to ensure their mission. Whatever definition it is given, it is endowed with a greater function by the teachers: that of ensuring coherence in their teaching to better assert and emphasise their usefulness in the school system. Exercise therefore, always has a meaning for the teacher even if it takes different forms. It is the guarantee of harmony between the physical activity envisaged by the student and the educational targets determined by the teacher.

Thus, ordered and constructed exercise targets the transmission and acquisition by the student of skills with an obvious educational role. The teaching situation, itself, is above all a space for social exchange, a central element of socio-pedagogy. The “problem-resolution” situation aims to favour conceptualisation or, even better, the conceptualisation of conceptualisation in the student. Embodied by the famous “discussion of ideas” among the students of the PSE course (Gréhaigne, 2006), the understanding and construction of the teaching situations by those who implement them is becoming more and more complex. They are not really intelligible except for the students whose faculties of abstraction have already been crowned by the school system (Barrère & Martuccelli, 1998).

In France, the teachers’ desire to justify the presence of physical education in school has led to their adopting characteristics that basically do not belong to it. Its recent eviction from the common core of knowledge set for compulsory education (Note 8) seems to mean that the body, on which the subject is founded, does not necessarily interest the institution, in spite of the efforts of the profession “to confer on the subject that uses equipment the status of a school discipline” (Arnaud, 1986, p. 208).

The perversion of exercise as a function of the pedagogical fashions which traverse the field of PSE makes teaching progressively more difficult and its objectives less visible. By contrast, although the concept of exercise always seems to have a meaning for the teacher, it is not so for the student. Finally, and paradoxically, putting the students at the centre of the educational system does not necessarily mean permitting them to give an easily understandable meaning to their physical activity.

At a time when social exchanges are dematerialising, where wars themselves increasingly resemble video games, the materiality of the body constitutes a place for the incarnation of the norm (Larsson, 2014). Too superficial in the images broadcast by the media, the body norm can again become more solid thanks to an education that gives it a physical reality. In terms of hexagonal PSE, this tendency could explain the return of the body to the Official Instructions for the subject in 2008. The “civilising process” as a euphemisation of violence induces a tangible exhibition of the body (Linhardt & Moreau de Bellaing, 2013) that physical education can appropriate in a hazardous situation. Exercise thus constitutes the point of homogeneity of activity, of the standardising conditions that legitimate it and of the motivational lever which gives meaning to the whole. The PSE teacher must be the guarantor of this fundamental, original French education.

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Notes

- ¹ PE Teacher's aptitude certificate.
- ² Journal Officiel de la République Française, 18th August 1933, p. 8743.
- ³ For example the Instructions of 20th June 1959, influenced by Seurin, stipulated: "*It is advisable to remember here the educational value of the exercise, which should not be confused with the simple movement, or physical activity. (...); it is in fact rigorously controlled and evaluated. The exercise is thus lively and always effective*".
- ⁴ According to the process of subjectification in Foucault, 1984.
- ⁵ The establishment in 1975 of the 74th section in Sciences and Techniques of Physical and Sports Activities (STAPS) of the National Committee of Universities, in 1982, the official organ recognising university research.
- ⁶ Fédération Sportive et Gymnique du Travail.
- ⁷ Ecole Normale Supérieure d'Éducation Physique.
- ⁸ Official bulletin of national education n°29 20th July 2006.

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