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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### THE PROBLEM OF TEACHING BASKETBALL IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SENEGAL

\*Cheikh Tidiane TINE

Université Cheikh Anta Diop, Dakar, Sénégal

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##### \*Corresponding author:

Boni LAYA

#### ABSTRACT

Physical education is a compulsory subject in middle and secondary schools. Its teaching still faces a number of difficulties, particularly where team sports are concerned. The problem of teaching team sports is analyzed here using the example of basketball as the subject of study, using a methodology based on surveys of teachers and observation of PE sessions. The results of the field survey reveal that the teaching of team sports in general and basketball in particular is faced with a number of problems, including the lack of teaching aids, which is not conducive to the smooth running of the teaching-learning process, and overcrowding, which affects the quality of pupil supervision, inadequate timetabling in the context of large classes, the pedagogical problem posed by the non-existence or poor condition of sports facilities, the thorny issue of assessment and the shortage of teachers to meet the needs of the field.

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the greatest challenges facing society today. School, one of the institutions to which societies attach particular importance, is not only a place of instruction, but also of education in the sense of developing an individual's intellectual, moral and physical faculties. For Durkheim (2005), the school has a more important role than the family in the phenomenon of socialization. Physical and Sports Education (PSE) is a compulsory school subject in general and technical secondary schools in Senegal. Its program which also corresponds to a set of socialization aims, must take account of specific local conditions: material and socio-cultural. PE, which is an integral part of the Senegalese education system, is "the part of general education that uses physical exercise as a means. It is a set of methodical and regular practices designed to develop, improve or maintain the physical, intellectual and moral qualities that enable the individual to adapt better to his physical and social environment, to develop and strengthen his health" (Lafont, 1987: 341). Physical activity affects the individual as a whole and helps to build his or her personality by helping him or her to develop physically, intellectually and morally. Physical activity encourages personal development, disease prevention and health promotion, the development of social capital, etc. Physical education is an intervention practice and offers a multitude of opportunities for the physical education teacher to enable pupils to build skills (motor, social, emotional, etc.).

Physical education develops motor skills and motor behaviour, as defined by Parlebas (1981), is the specificity on which the legitimacy of physical education is based.

"PE introduces students to the pleasure of practicing sport and responds to the educational challenges of the common base by enabling all students, girls and boys together and on an equal footing, a fortiori those furthest removed from physical exercise and sport, to develop five skills worked on in continuity throughout the different cycles"<sup>1</sup>. The practice of PE in the school environment contributes to the child's development by cultivating a taste for effort, solidarity, team spirit and mutual aid, as well as developing the mental, psychological and health aspects of the learner. PE shapes the individual in all his or her dimensions. In Senegal, the Official Instructions (I. O) organize and regulate the practice of PE. Physical and sporting activities are both the object and the means of PES; they only have a function in relation to the ends. Rousseau (1762) even encouraged the practice of physical activities for two reasons: their direct effects on the body and their indirect effects on intelligence through the development of the senses.

In the content of the PE teaching program at school, we find individual sports such as floor gymnastics and athletics on the one hand, and team sports such as football, handball, volleyball and basketball on the other. Derlon (1989) specifies that team sports games are among the 7 physical and sports activities most frequently programmed or used in PE.

Team sports are sports where the rules of practice lead to motor interactions. Playing them contributes to a child's development in that it fosters a taste for effort, solidarity, team spirit and mutual aid, and develops psychological and health aspects. Basketball is a team Special Official Bulletin No. 11 of 26 November 2015 sport played exclusively by hand between two teams of five on a rectangular court. However, the situation of PE teaching remains problematic in Senegalese schools (Diouf, 1995; Diouf, 2012; Gueye, 2022; Biagui, 1992) and that of basketball specifically is not the most glowing. Thus, the question that serves as a guideline for this research is formulated as follows: What are the problems encountered in the teaching of basketball by PE teachers in secondary schools? A field survey based on a qualitative approach provided some answers to this research question.

## METHODOLOGY

The research is being carried out in several schools in different parts of the country in order to obtain a panoramic view of the problems hindering the teaching and development of basketball. The field survey was carried out by administering the interview guide to PE teachers who were willing to take part in the research and who had at least five years' professional experience, and by direct observation of lesson sessions to identify certain difficulties in practice. The semi-directive interview technique made it possible to survey two categories of teachers: on the one hand, teachers who have basketball as their speciality or option and, on the other, those who do not have basketball as an option but who teach it to their pupils. The aim was also to check whether the difficulties encountered in teaching basketball were perceived and/or experienced in the same way by the two categories of teachers. The teachers involved in the survey work in Dakar (Maurice Delafosse, Blaise Diagne, etc.) and in certain regions (Ziguinchor, Fatick and Thiès). Semi-structured individual interviews supplemented the information obtained from observing the difficulties of teaching PE in schools. The 14 interviews (6 with basketball options and 8 without) were transcribed and analysed. Significant passages from the players' speeches are reproduced verbatim to illustrate the ideas put forward.

**The problem of teaching materials:** Teaching PE requires equipment and facilities. However, priority seems to be given to other so-called 'cognitive' subjects, and in many schools PE remains the poor relation when it comes to the resources needed for practice. Without teaching aids, the teaching activity will not be able to develop properly, which is why it is so important.

*"Teaching aids are an important element in the running of basketball lessons and the quality of teaching. It is important for the teacher to have a certain amount of equipment and teaching resources to be able to teach effectively and in a way that is adapted to the needs of each pupil.*

*There are not enough teaching materials available for teaching basketball, which causes problems for the running of lessons. For example, if a teacher does not have enough basketballs adapted to the different skill levels of the pupils, or enough baskets, it makes it difficult to practice and learn the game. Floor markers, videos and images and other printed resources are useful for*

*teaching basketball, but the lack of them makes it difficult to pass on the concepts and techniques of the game," says the respondent.*

Even a craftsman, no matter how skilled he may be in his trade, if he is not given the tools he needs, the result cannot follow. And the same applies to the teacher. The lack of teaching materials, combined with the overcrowding in many schools, is not conducive to effective teaching and learning. *"When you come to basketball with just one ball for 30 pupils and you don't have a court, or it's a 5-metre-hard court to bounce the ball on, you have problems teaching,"* says this teacher, who has experienced the lack of teaching aids in large groups. The inadequacy or even non-existence, depending on the region, of teaching materials for certain subjects means that *"some pupils can get as far as the final year of secondary school without ever having the chance to touch a basketball"*, says one teacher. Teaching and learning materials are at the crossroads of the interactions that take place between the teacher, the pupil and the learning objects. It is a medium. Teaching materials are important for effective educational action. However, *"it can be difficult to obtain enough material to teach a team sport, particularly in schools with limited budgets. Insufficient equipment has a negative impact on the lesson. Pupils remain inactive because there are one, two or three balls on a virtually non-existent playing surface"*, says a teacher who is saddened by the reality of the situation. Teaching materials are often expensive, and the lack of resources is seen by some as the reason why PE is relegated to second place. It's up to PE teachers to fight to restore the discipline's dignity and importance in our schools' curriculum. To do this, it would also be a good idea to review the coefficient given to PE in the certificate assessments to motivate pupils to invest themselves more.

**On the subject of overstaffing:** Overcrowding is defined as the high or excessive number of pupils enrolled in a class for a given school year. Increased demand for education as a result of population growth has led to a "school explosion", with large numbers of young people enrolling in lower and upper secondary schools. Class sizes in many establishments are exceeding reasonable levels, and the quality of teaching is suffering as a result. In the teaching of PE groups, overcrowding is a real problem that hampers the teaching of motor skills. The time available for learners to engage in motor skills is not always satisfactory given the number of pupils and the time allocated to PE. Overcrowding has consequences for pupil supervision in PE. For this teacher: *"Overcrowding can actually pose problems for the normal running of group sports sessions, such as basketball. If the number of pupils is too high, it can be difficult to manage the group and give each pupil the necessary attention and supervision. It can also make it difficult to play and learn the game, as there are often too many people on the pitch and it's hard to express yourself and participate fully. Overcrowding further complicates the teaching of PE, especially team sports. "Certain numbers can get in the way, especially when you don't have a suitable practice area and sufficient equipment to teach team sports. So it's important to make sure that the numbers aren't too high to allow team sports sessions to run smoothly,"* says one teacher.

Physical education teachers who are considered to be effective in their work can find it difficult in a context of large classes.

Large class sizes are a concern for educational establishments. They do not allow the teacher to work effectively to help the pupils acquire the desired behaviour. If the right gesture is acquired by repetition, the high number of pupils does not allow everyone to make several passes to install the skill. Faced with the difficulties associated with high pupil numbers, teachers are looking for strategies to adapt to the teaching situations they encounter.

*"Admittedly, the work isn't easy, it's a bit complex. Each time, we try to set up situations that will allow the students to feel part of the session, and the most important thing here is to allow sufficient time for motor commitment through the situations proposed. So instead of using analysis to teach a pupil a pass, we find ourselves in situations where we try to accommodate and adapt to find situations that will allow the pupils to make the pass in the game. That's how we do it every time. Having a large number of players is not desirable, but there's nothing we can do about it because that's the way the system is. Fortunately, we've been well trained to deal with these kinds of situations on the pitch. So far, we're managing",* says one of our interviewees.

The problem of overcrowding is exacerbated by the lack of PE teachers on the ground and, increasingly, by the lack of training of some of those involved in teaching the subject, if we consider the government's recruitment of five thousand (5,000) teachers who have not yet received any of the professional training needed to carry out their teaching duties.

**On the question of the number of hours:** The amount of time devoted to PE is one of the major problems. The two hours a week devoted to PE are insufficient to properly achieve the objectives of the program. Teachers do not have enough time to convey the values embodied in team sports. Teachers don't have enough time to teach the values and fundamentals of team sports like basketball, and the sessions sometimes resemble entertainment sessions. According to teacher D. T, who has opted for basketball, *"the amount of time is so inadequate, the necessary amount of work is never done and the objectives set are difficult to achieve"*. His counterpart, I. F, was of the same opinion when he stated that *"a basketball cycle of 4 or 6 sessions lasting 2 hours is not enough to include all the values found in basketball. There are a lot of things we need to review. Fortunately, the committee in charge of physical education and sport at national level is leading the fight by taking steps to give more consideration to the discipline. It's complicated with 2 hours of time. The government needs to review all this to ensure that lessons run smoothly"*. The inadequate amount of time set aside in the official instructions affects the training of pupils, who do not reach the final year of their studies with proven skills in the field of physical education and sport. This shortage of time truncates the learner's training at colleague level and continues right through to high school. The problem of the amount of time devoted to physical education and sport is a debate that has plagued the subject for years. In some schools, team sports are sometimes sacrificed on the altar of the sports disciplines on which students in exam classes have to be assessed. According to one teacher interviewed:

*"For example, when you have a third or final year class, you don't even teach team sports. We base our teaching on the disciplines that students are likely to practice in the*

*exam. Given the shortage of teaching hours, we try to focus more on gymnastics, speed, triple jump, shot put, long jump and high jump. For most teachers with exam classes, teaching team sports becomes optional. At times, in some schools, team sports are not even taught to pupils in examination classes. In preparatory classes, many teachers manage to insert team sports teaching from time to time and don't take enough time for it"*.

There is a tendency to neglect team sports, which are not assessed in examinations such as the baccalaureate and the middle school leaving certificate. In some schools, teachers tend to neglect team sports and focus solely on individual sports, on the pretext that these are the disciplines that are assessed in certificate examinations. Teaching team sports is not necessarily a priority. This can be seen in many ways in the words of this teacher: *"It can be difficult to find enough time to teach and practice team sports in schools where timetables are full and there is little free time"*.

There are long sessions (2 hours) and short sessions (1 hour). Long sessions may not be conducive to the acquisition and assimilation of the content taught, as the pupils only have lessons once a week. For this teacher, who has opted for basketball and is a fan of short sessions: *"Two hours of basketball a week for three learning sessions in the cycle may not be enough to enable them to develop the necessary skills, especially if they are beginners and need to be taught the techniques of the game. There is not enough time to allow pupils to practice by applying the techniques of the game"*.

However, some feel that two (2) a week may be enough if certain conditions are met. According to teacher C. B, an optional basketball teacher, believes that *"the number of hours can be sufficient if and only if the number of pupils is reduced and the teaching materials are sufficient. I think that the two hours per week can be sufficient, as exceeding them could lead to training and not the teaching of basketball that we're talking about here. It all depends on the context in which we find ourselves. Teaching basketball is not too difficult, unlike training"*. Whatever the case, it is important to ensure that the amount of time devoted to teaching basketball is sufficient to enable pupils to develop their skills.

**The infrastructure equation:** Sports facilities are a powerful lever for exercising the right to sport and a tool for promoting physical education. Sports facilities at school level are pedagogical facilities for the teaching of PE. PE is a school subject in which physical, sporting and artistic activities, which are the medium of instruction, enable pupils, in all their diversity, to enjoy rich physical experiences and build motor, methodological, social, safety and health skills. These skills are built on the playing fields, which must be available in quantity and quality.

Sports facilities dedicated to teaching PE remain a pedagogical problem in many schools. When, for example, there is no playing field, no pit for high jump or long jump, no portal for rope climbing, no athletics track, no mats for gymnastics, teaching PE becomes difficult if not impossible. For this respondent, *"especially in the lower secondary level, space is lacking or is only available weeks after the start of the school year, because you have to pull out the weeds to create a practice area"*.

In addition to insufficient teaching hours and overcrowded classrooms, teachers also have to contend with either a crying lack of sports facilities in some schools, or the advanced state of disrepair of existing facilities. The fact that PE is relegated to second place in some schools is due to a lack of infrastructure (playing fields and sports halls) and ignorance of the importance of the discipline as a corollary. It is often very difficult to find a suitable place to play basketball, especially in schools where space is limited. *"Even if a playing area is available, it may be too small for basketball to be played properly"*, said one of the teachers interviewed. In schools where there is no shortage of space, there is a lack of facilities for physical and sporting activities. *The problem is that even if you want to teach basketball, you can't because there are no courts in most schools in Senegal*", says this teacher. The poor state of the courts makes playing basketball difficult, if not dangerous. The playing areas do not always meet the safety requirements necessary for good practice. In this teacher's opinion, *"it can be difficult to get the right equipment and facilities for teaching basketball. This can have a negative impact on the quality of teaching and playing the game"*. Pupil safety must be guaranteed, and this is the responsibility of the teacher and the school. *"Some sports facilities may not be properly secured or maintained, which can be a safety issue for pupils"*, says one teacher. Solutions need to be found to infrastructure problems so that pupils can benefit from quality teaching in the required safety conditions. It should also be noted that in the absence of changing rooms, pupils are often required to dress and undress in class, which can be very embarrassing, especially for girls.

### Assessment

Assessment is now considered to be one of the components of the teaching-learning process. It is essential to every learning cycle, from both a social and a pedagogical perspective. Assessment seeks to optimize student learning. It therefore occupies an important place in teachers' professional practice. Having imparted knowledge, the teacher must then measure the results of this imparting. In PES, as in all other disciplines, there is a need to assess progress and have it assessed. Assessing means measuring, estimating, judging in order to determine value. Assessment therefore involves measuring, judging and deciding. It is not only a control or measurement tool, but also a lever to help pupils progress and facilitate intervention. It is not only a pedagogical tool for training, but also an integral part of training. In terms of the initial objectives and aims of the action, assessment is both simple and complex.

Assessment in PE consists of analyzing the degree of acquisition of the teaching content worked on in class and the methodological and social skills used during the training cycle(s). Assessment in PE, especially in team sports, remains a difficult exercise for teachers. When it comes to assessing basketball, non-optional teachers often find it difficult to get it right. As one teacher puts it: *"Assessment is generally a difficult task for teachers. Assessment in team sports, especially basketball, remains a real problem, especially for non-optional teachers. We can use adapted assessment tools or ask for help from an assistant or another teacher"*. The lack of versatility among some teachers accentuates the problems of assessment in certain team sports. Large classes make the task even more complex. This is confirmed by the comments of one of the teachers interviewed: *"I have problems with assessment in classes with large numbers of pupils. If the number of pupils*

*is too high, it can be difficult for me to monitor the progress of each individual pupil and provide them with appropriate feedback. This can make it difficult to assess student learning and progress. This can have a negative impact on the quality of basketball teaching.* When assessing basketball, some teachers don't even know what they are supposed to be assessing (process, gait, accuracy, wrist movement, pushing the ball, etc.). To overcome the difficulties of assessing basketball practice, a theoretical assessment can be envisaged.

### The teaching of PE and basketball in perspective

In the light of the information gathered at the end of the field survey, a number of proposals or recommendations were made to improve the teaching of team sports in general, and basketball in particular. The recommendations made by the teachers interviewed are as follows:

- Increase the number of hours to encourage the teaching of different PE disciplines;
- Reduce class sizes to improve student management and involvement in activities;
- Use assessment tools such as monitoring sheets or observation grids to track the progress of each individual student;
- Construction by the State or local authorities of multi-purpose facilities for teaching team sports, particularly basketball. The construction of a sufficient number of sports facilities accessible to all would enable mass participation in sport and the organization of competitions as part of the revival of school and university sport. One of the recommendations of the Third International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport, held in Paris from 30 November to 3 December 1999 under the aegis of UNESCO, was that *"within the formal educational institution, sport should be used as a means of transmitting educational values, learning responsibility and learning citizenship, awareness of which is so lacking"*. It is therefore necessary to promote sport in schools by building sports facilities;
- Make team sports a compulsory subject in all classes and at all levels, so that they can be assessed in the various examinations;
- Involve pupils with disabilities in basketball sessions and allow them to participate to the extent of their abilities, to make teaching more inclusive. If it is true that PE is first and foremost for the weak, this must be reflected on the pitch;
- Draw up an official program for teaching basketball in schools at different levels, with an assessment method or scale similar to other disciplines such as athletics and gymnastics, and encourage in-game assessment to better appreciate collective social qualities;
- Develop open, quality communication and establish a relationship of trust with pupils to encourage them to participate fully and express themselves freely. It should be noted that PE is the only school subject that offers the opportunity for more direct and intense communication and collaboration between pupils and teachers.

## CONCLUSION

The teaching of PE is generally subject to many problems in secondary schools. As far as basketball is concerned, it still faces a number of problems in schools, including a lack of teaching aids, which is not conducive to effective teaching and learning; overcrowding, which affects the quality of pupil supervision; insufficient hours in large classes; the pedagogical problem posed by the non-existence or poor state of sports facilities; the thorny issue of assessment; and a shortage of teachers to meet the needs of the field. Added to these difficulties is the neglect of the teaching of team sports, which are not included among the subjects to be assessed in examinations such as the middle school leaving certificate and the baccalaureate. Teaching them is not a priority, especially in exam classes.

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