

E-learning, an opportunity for continuing training in school sport in Africa: some results of the evaluation of the pilot project

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Abstract: The training of human resources and the development of school sport are among the key elements of the South-South partnership strategy adopted by Morocco in its relations with the countries of the African Continent, and this in accordance with the Royal vision which aims at economic growth and human development in Africa. In this context, Morocco has carried out over the last years several initiatives to promote African youth through school sport, including the continuous distance training of Physical Education and Sport teachers in training and refereeing of team sports.

The objective of this article is to present the results of the evaluation of this pilot project and to raise the challenges and levers of development in order to strengthen the leadership of Morocco in African school sport.

Keywords: E-learning, continuing training, school sport, South-South cooperation, Morocco

I. Introduction

Over the past two decades, Morocco has involved in active South-South cooperation with other African countries, under the impetus of the Royal Guidelines. This cooperation aims to promote the emergence of a new development model for Africa. "The South-South partnership between Morocco and its African partners is multidimensional in nature and covers the political, economic, social and cultural components" (B. Aiboud Benchekroun and A. Slaoui, 2018).

The Moroccan offer places the human being at the center of its concerns and aims to promote an innovative development model at the service of African youth. "...This youth will contribute to the peace, stability and socio-economic development of the Continent."¹

The preparation and education of the youth certainly passes through school sport. It is in this context that the Kingdom of Morocco has developed a strategy for the promotion of African school sport which aims to mobilize African countries to give school sport the place it deserves and to strengthen the African presence in the governing bodies of school sport at the international level.

The Moroccan leadership in this field has manifested itself through the implementation of a series of successful actions including: the organization of the first and second African school sport forum and the Gymnasiade 2018, the establishment of the African School Sport Federation (ASSF) and the organization of distance training, which culminated in the position held by Morocco as vice president of the International School Sport Federation (ISF).

In this article, we will focus on the experience of distance training conducted by our country to develop the professional skills of physical education and sports teachers in African countries, since the training of human capital is one of the levers to develop school sport.

This article is an evaluation of this project. In order to achieve our objective, we conducted a field survey, via questionnaire, among the African beneficiaries of the training.

In the first part, we will briefly recall the guiding principles of the distance training project, launched by Morocco since 2016, in the fields of coaching and refereeing team sports. In the second part, we will present some results of the evaluation of the experience of training teachers from African countries, and in the last part, we will conclude with recommendations to better improve the offer of distance training in favor of our African teachers.

II. Presentation of the Distance Continuing Training Project for Physical and Sports Teachers in Morocco

Morocco has initiated a distance learning project in the fields of training and refereeing team sports in response to the orientations of the Ministry of National Education in terms of information and communication technologies (ICT) inclusion, securing school time, optimization of expenses and lifelong learning.

Among the development levers of the Moroccan education system on which the various reforms insist,

¹Extract from the message of His Majesty King Mohamed VI, addressed to the participants of the fifth Crans Montana Forum, Dakhla, 2019

we should mention the promotion of ICT and the training of human capital. In this sense, Camara (2015) states that "the creativity, energy and innovation of African youth will be the driving force of the political, social, cultural and economic transformation of the continent".

It should be recalled that the remarkable progress in the field of ICT and the rapid expansion of networks and the Internet have made today's world increasingly interconnected. Indeed, ICTs foster knowledge sharing and lifelong learning and can promote equity and quality in education. Having digital skills is a condition for achieving the fourth sustainable development goal (SDG4) on education (ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all), (Unesco, 2015).

As such, distance training could be an alternative to traditional training and an opportunity to develop teachers' skills throughout their career, and therefore, positively impact the quality of teaching.

It is in this context, and based on the fact that school sport is a tool for the development of human capital and that its success inevitably depends on the enhancement of the teaching function, that Morocco has made distance learning a strategic choice to ensure the training of its teachers in the field of school sport. Thus, and in partnership with the National Center for Pedagogical Innovation and Experimentation and the Royal Moroccan Federation of School Sport, the School Sport Promotion Department launched in 2016 a distance training project in training and refereeing in five team sports (football, basketball, volleyball, handball and rugby) targeting teachers of physical education and sport (PES) in Morocco.

The training was deployed on the platform of the Department of National Education "collab.men.gov.ma" and tutored by Moroccan experts who participated in the development of content. It is also crowned by the awarding of a participation certificate in the training.

Among the objectives assigned to this project, we cite:

- Qualify teachers of PES in refereeing and school sport training;
- Allow teachers to train without affecting the students school time;
- Improve the quality of the organization of school sport competitions;
- Strengthen the initial training of teachers in the Regional Academies of Education and Training;
- Promote the culture of self-learning and collaborative work.

In order to carry out this project, we have drawn from active pedagogy and training engineering the essence of their principles and approaches (N. Zahir, 2019), to implement training courses, responding to the needs of teachers and mobilizing different skills and knowledges. The objective is to improve the profession of the teacher in charge of school sport while reinforcing the spirit of the educational reform with regard to the promotion of digital technologies and the development of human capital.

We have opted for a modular training to serve active learning through pedagogical activities, communication activities (forum, chat, video-conferences, frequently asked questions) and evaluation activities using different digital resources (text, images, videos...). We have diversified the resources and activities to compensate for the physical absence of the tutor and to allow the learner to learn and solve problems in teams, but above all to become master of his learning by developing a sense of self-direction in his acquisitions (D. Peraya, 2012).

The content covers general knowledge common to all disciplines such as physical preparation, planning, and communication as well as technical and practical knowledge related to physical and sports activity (PSA) such as knowledge about the PSA in question and the rules of the game.

As for the skills to be developed by the teachers, they are mainly related to the ability to manage a match in refereeing and to form and manage a team for training as it is illustrated on the following table:

Table n°1: Skills to be developed by PES teachers

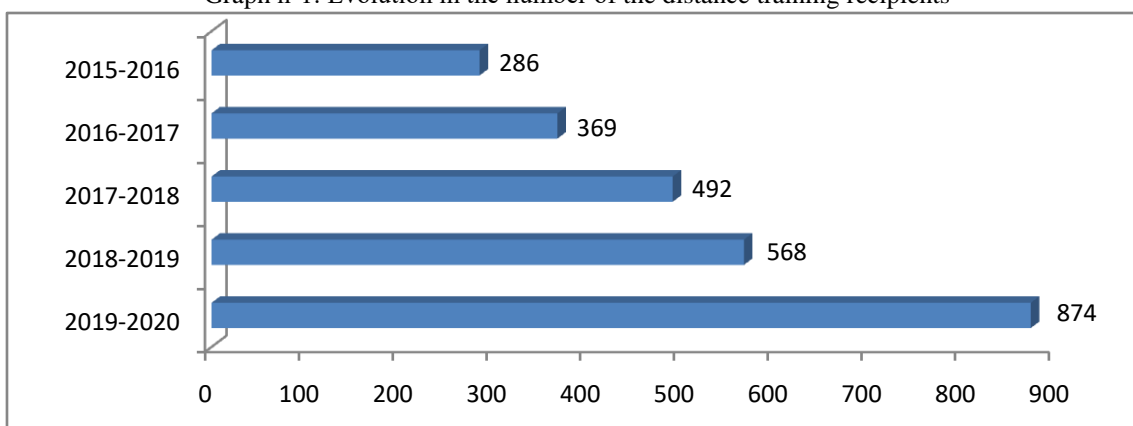
Refereeing	Training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To know all the rules of behaviour and the communication tools of an efficient referee in order to conduct and lead a game wisely. ▪ To acquire knowledge of the rules of the game in order to decide in accordance with the official rules in force. ▪ To know how to position oneself and move around the playing area in order to identify relevant information and to communicate the decision using appropriate conventional gestures. ▪ Acquire administrative knowledge inherent to the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Know the fundamentals of coaching to design, plan and manage training sequences. ▪ Know the factors and variables related to the chosen physical activity and sport, the player and the context necessary for training. ▪ Acquire the fundamental principles of training in order to develop physical, technical-tactical and mental training content. ▪ To know the different systems in attack and defense and how they work. ▪ Know how to plan and periodize the training

proper functioning of table officials.	act in time and space.
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This project has seen an increase in the number of beneficiaries from one session to another as shown in graph n°1. Over five sessions, we were able to train 2589 teachers. The distance learning project has also seen other improvements especially in the mode of evaluation, in the animation techniques and in the target audience.

Regarding the mode of evaluation, we have integrated from the 3rd session, in addition to the summative evaluation via multiple choice questions (MCQ), a practical dimension, by requiring teachers to film sessions of the teaching cycle with their students highlighting the achievements of the distance training. Once the video is made, they are evaluated according to an evaluation grid in order to guarantee the objectivity of this operation. Indeed, the video allows, among other things, to criticize and evaluate oneself as a practitioner or even to opt for a simple confrontation with a peer in order to promote exchanges. Through reflective practice, we aim to question ourselves about our actions, our questioning and our relationship to knowledge and to students (C. Laporte et al. 2022).

Graph n°1: Evolution in the number of the distance training recipients



Regarding the animation techniques, and in order to enrich the training and guarantee a strong interactivity between the tutors and the beneficiaries, we have enriched the 5th training session by programming video conferences and virtual classes in addition to the communication tools offered by the platform (email, chat, discussion forums).

Concerning the target audience, we have extended the training to African countries from the 4th session, allowing teachers from these countries to benefit from free and quality training, supervised and assisted by Moroccan experts in the disciplines taught. The development of professional skills of school sport actors is a shared desire between the supervisory ministries and the various actors who participated in the first and second forum of African school sport held in Morocco consecutively in 2018 and 2019 in order to make school sport “an essential source of global educational experience and training of young balanced citizens for the future”.² This training is a response to this desire while providing a space for sharing experiences and developing networks of professionals and communities of practice around school sport.

Before launching the training, a call for applications is communicated to African countries through diplomatic channels and via the members of the ASSF. This call specifies the conditions of participation including the number of beneficiaries, deadlines and prerequisites. The first year, we required 4 candidates from each country including 2 males and 2 females. The second year we doubled the number for each country.

The candidates proposed by their countries must meet certain conditions, in particular:

- be a PES teachers in a school or association and able to practice with students;
- to be willing to follow the training;
- have a good command of the IT tool;
- have access to the Internet;
- to have a relatively good command of the French language;
- have the possibility to film video sequences with their students during the teaching sessions.

²Extract from the Declaration of the 1st Forum of African School Sport "Rabat Call", 15-16 January 2018 in Rabat, Morocco

III. Some Results from the Evaluation of the PES Teachers Distance Training Experience in Africa

In 2019, 25 teachers from seven African countries benefited from the training as shown in the following table, and in 2020, 28 teachers from three African countries were able to attend the training over a period of two months. This period coincided with the declared containment following the coronavirus outbreak, which explains the reduced number of countries that responded positively to the call for applications.

Table n°2: Number of teachers from African distance training recipient countries by year.

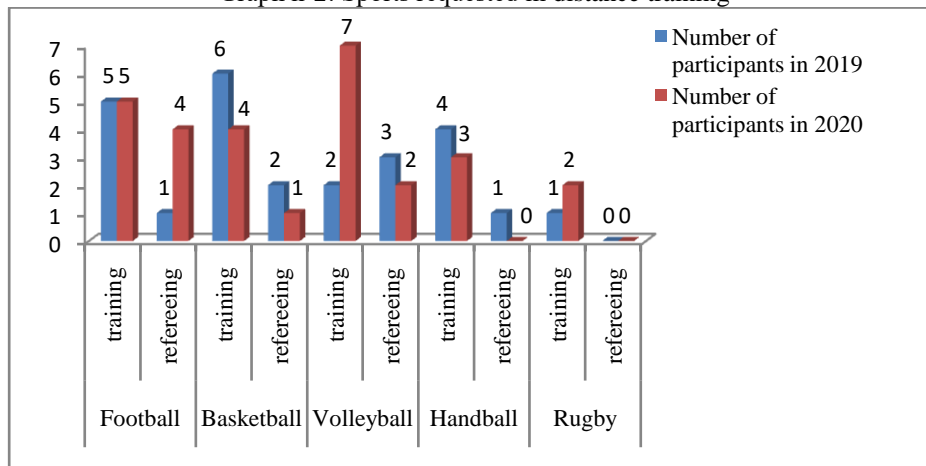
Year	African countries participating in the training	Number of applicants	Number of recipients	Perseverance rate
2019 (4th session)	Algeria, Ivory Coast, Niger, Burkina Faso, Cameroun, Togo, Madagascar	26	25	96.15%
2020 (5th session)	Niger, Cameroun, Union of Comoros	32	28	87.5%

From the table, we note that participation is still low, which requires a communication campaign to African countries to publicize the training and its benefits for the professional development of teachers. However, we note significant perseverance rates of about 96.15% in 2019 and 87.5% in 2020.

The distribution of teachers according to courses, shows that the courses favored by African teachers concern first those inherent to training and secondly those of refereeing as we can see on the graph n°2.

Regarding the sports solicited in training, we note that all sports interest the teachers except for rugby refereeing which seems not to attract them.

Graph n°2: Sports requested in distance training



In order to evaluate this experience of opening up to African countries in terms of distance training, we conducted a survey, by means of a questionnaire, among the 53 teachers who benefited from the two sessions. This survey allowed us to determine the degree of satisfaction with the training, to identify the difficulties encountered and possible dysfunctions and to determine their proposals and expectations for future training as well as areas for improvement.

The results of the survey show that the teachers were generally satisfied with this distance learning experience. Indeed, all the respondents were satisfied with the training and expressed their gratitude to the Moroccan government for its efforts to advance African school sport. According to one of the teachers, "this training is the most beautiful meeting in terms of fulfillment and personal development", according to another, "this training to international standards will allow us to better supervise our students on the field with all forms of didactic and pedagogical tricks to bring us to understand, under the supervision of experts and pedagogues".

In general, all aspects of the distance learning system were highly appreciated by the respondents (content, platform, pedagogy used, communication tools, evaluation tools, tutoring, administration of the training, etc.), however, Internet connection constraints were highlighted by 15% of the respondents.

Open-ended questions were asked about the strengths and weaknesses of the training as well as their expectations and suggestions for improving the training experience.

From the answers, we note positive appreciations of the training, as we have underlined, especially in terms of content, communication, evaluation, support and networks developed.

Some elements are now less appreciated, especially the consistency of the content in relation to the duration of the training. We also reiterate a strong desire to renew the training and extend it to other sports and other teachers with recommendations for a hybrid training that combines distance learning and practical courses organized in Morocco.

We have structured the responses by degree of frequency in the following table:

Strengths	Weaknesses	Propositions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rich and well-structured content. ▪ Various communication and evaluation tools. ▪ Exchange and sharing with colleagues from Africa. ▪ Pedagogical methods used. ▪ Availability of tutors and administrators. ▪ Relevant exercises and activities. ▪ The production of a video in a learning situation with children is unprecedented. ▪ This training responds to the current context (confinement) where you do not need to travel. ▪ The organized videoconferences allow the course to be enriched. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The pace is intense given the importance of the modules. ▪ Difficulty accessing the platform at the beginning of the course. ▪ Difficulty accessing the videoconference. ▪ Some minor spelling mistakes in the content. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extend the training, especially to other areas. ▪ Allow other colleagues to benefit from this training. ▪ To allow us to intervene each time the need is felt in the various activities and inter-countries school competitions. ▪ To organize face-to-face training so that we can put into practice the acquired knowledge. ▪ Organize training on site in Morocco for further exchanges. ▪ To launch a training in athletics to allow colleagues to benefit from it. ▪ To vary the training offer and to integrate beach volleyball considering the extent that it takes on the world scale and in African countries. ▪ Allow us to become tutors. ▪ To give us the maximum time on the video project to be able to make a complete session of at least 1 hour.

From these responses, we note that the opinions as well as the expectations and suggestions expressed by the teachers show seriousness and great involvement on their part. This will constitute for us, obviously, guidelines that will guide us to improve the offer of distance training for the benefit of our African colleagues.

Discussion and Conclusion

Morocco, through the Ministry of National Education, contributes to the dynamics of inter-African cooperation through the launch of a promising project of distance training for the development of the skills of school sports executives in the areas of training and refereeing team sports.

The results of the evaluation of this experience indicate that there is a need and a willingness to follow the training on the part of the African beneficiaries despite the connection problems, as evidenced by the positive assessments of the respondents and the perseverance rates.

Open & distance training seems to provide a real benefit to Africa’s development (T. Karsenti and S. Collin, 2010). The Ministries and Federations in charge of school sport must be aware of this and must ensure that they develop distance training offers in phase with the changes in the educational systems and that they meet the needs of the teachers and the different actors in the field.

The difficulties encountered are mainly at the infrastructural level (e.g. Internet network as confirmed by several authors such as T. Karsenti and S. Collin, 2010). Therefore, in order to take advantage of the training and guarantee a follow-up and a high enough retention rate, African countries must support their candidates in technological infrastructure, especially in terms of internet connection.

They must also accompany the African laureates to implement the achievements of the training on the ground by involving them in school sport activities or in practical continuing training

The exchange and sharing of skills and expertise in continuing education must be present with force to promote the development of a strong school sport at the continental and international levels.

For its part, the Kingdom of Morocco must take a number of measures to ensure the sustainability of the distance training project and strengthen its leadership in Africa. Among the measures to be taken and which seem to us to be priorities in light of the results of this study, we cite:

- Communicate about the distance training project and make it known to African decision makers to ensure the participation of a large number of countries;
- Support and strengthen the distance learning project with human resources and all the necessary logistics to renew it;
- Expand the training offer to other physical and sports activities, to other managers involved in school sport and to other fields such as detection, sports animation, PES teaching, first aid, etc.
- Provide a hybrid training mode that alternates between distance learning and practical courses in presence organized possibly in Morocco;
- Consider organizing webinars and videoconferences led by experts from Africa to complement distance learning;
- Opt for the Microsoft teams collaborative platform. This is the rising alternative to Discord (A. Hilario, 2022). Its simplicity of use and the ease of managing virtual classes and archiving discussion threads have made it the platform of choice in educational systems.

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