

## School sport, one of the pillars of South-South cooperation between Morocco and African countries

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**Conflit d'intérêts :** L'auteur ne signale aucun conflit d'intérêts.

**Pour citer cet article :** ZAHIR.N.(2021) « School sport, one of the pillars of South-South cooperation between Morocco and African countries », African Scientific Journal «Volume 03, Numéro 9» pp: 366-385.

Date de soumission : Novembre 2021

Date de publication : Décembre 2021



DOI : 10.5281/zenodo.5862445

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## Abstract

Investing in youth through school sport is one of the axes of the South-South Cooperation Strategy adopted by the Kingdom of Morocco in its relations with the countries of the African Continent, and this in accordance with the Royal vision which aims for growth economic and human development in Africa.

Sport is at the center of the concerns of international institutions such as the United Nations. It is also an important factor in achieving the objectives of sustainable development, in particular the 4th objective relating to quality education. Thus, sport becomes an institution and identity necessity in the new development model of African countries to equip African youth with the skills of the 21st century.

The Moroccan strategy to develop African school sport has been seen in the dynamics established at the continental level and in the various actions carried out by our country to give it its deserved place at the international level. Among the flagship actions, there is the organization of the Gymnasiade<sup>1</sup> 2018, as well as the first and second African school sport forums. At the institutional level, Morocco holds the Vice-Presidency of the International School Sport Federation and the Presidency of the African School Sport Federation.

It is in this context that our article aims, through an exploratory and documentary study, to highlight the efforts made by Morocco to promote African school sport and to propose levers for the development of Moroccan leadership in this field.

**Key words:** South-south cooperation, school sport, African youth, Morocco, school sport development strategy

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<sup>1</sup> Gymnasiade or Olympic school sport games are a multi-sport competition reserved for under 18s, organized by the international federation of school sport, every 4 years since 1974.

## 1. Introduction

The Kingdom of Morocco has developed in recent years a strategy to promote active cooperation in the service of school sport and youth in the African Continent.

This strategy is a consecration of the policy of our country in terms of South-South cooperation and shared development with Africa and this is in accordance with the vision of His Majesty King Mohamed VI.

In his speech to the 29th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the African Union in Addis Ababa, the King of Morocco underlined that "a proactive policy oriented towards youth will channel energy for development. The future of Africa lies with its youth"<sup>2</sup>. Hence, the fundamental character of investing in youth.

In this context, school sport is one of the most powerful educational means to achieve the objectives of sustainable development and a tool to prepare young people to enter the workforce. It is also an essential lever for the promotion of national sports and the strengthening of cooperation links between African countries.

It is in this perspective that Morocco is committed to meeting the challenge of developing African school sport through the mobilization of all stakeholders in the sports and educational fields in order to establish active cooperation in the service of school sport in the Continent.

Thus, several actions have been implemented, including the organization of the first African forum on school sport (15 and 16 January 2018) and the second African forum (25 and 26 April 2019), the organization of the Gymnasiade 2018, the establishment of the International School Sport Federation in Africa, the active participation in African school competitions (Ivory Coast, Tunisia, ...) as well as the organization of remote learning. This leadership, combined with the exceptional performance of national school sport in international competitions, has allowed Morocco to gain the trust of the international and African community and to have the vice presidency of the International School Sport Federation (ISF)<sup>3</sup> and the presidency of the African School Sport Federation (ASSF) following its creation during the General Assembly held in Agadir, Morocco from July 6 to 9, 2018.

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<sup>2</sup> Extract from the speech of His Majesty King Mohammed VI to the 29th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, Addis Ababa, July 3, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> ISF: is an international organization, founded in 1972. It is one of the key players in sport around the world. It aims to promote the values and interests of education through sport through the organization of school championships and the provision of enriching life experience and multicultural exchanges to young people. The main competitions organized by the ISF are the Gymnasiades or Olympic games for school sport.

Through an exploratory and documentary study which uses different quantitative and qualitative data, we have tried, in this article, to highlight the efforts made by Morocco in terms of South-South cooperation with its African partners in the field of school sport in order to revitalize it and give it the place it deserves on a global scale. We hope as well to underline the prospects for the development of African school sport in light of the results of the study.

In order to achieve these objectives, we first recall the main lines of Morocco's policy towards African countries, and the advantages of sports practice among young people, before drawing up the state of play of African school sport and addressing the main actions carried out by Morocco to establish an active collaboration at the service of African school sport, to conclude with the proposal of some development levers in order to take advantage of this dynamic created around school sport at the continental and international level.

## **2. Morocco's policy towards African countries**

Morocco's policy towards African countries emanates from the vision of His Majesty King Mohamed VI built around the principles of active cooperation, co-development and solidarity, and it is justified in the historical and cultural ties that attach Morocco to its African roots.

Morocco, due to its privileged geographical location, has always been the hub of Africa and a gateway for foreign investors wishing to invest in Africa, thus creating an economic dynamic at the level of the Continent. Additionally, given its strategic relations with its European, American, Gulf and Mediterranean trading partners, Morocco plays an important role in triangular cooperation by opening up investment opportunities for the benefit of countries in the South (Zouiri, 2018).

Morocco's African vocation is reinforced by Morocco's return to the African Union, which is only a return to home, as emphasized by the King Mohammed VI in his speech at the 28th African Union Summit in Addis Ababa on January 31, 2017 "Africa is My Continent, and My home... we have chosen to return to family. A family that we had not really left... we chose to reunite with the family ". Indeed, Morocco has always extended its hand to African countries for the sharing and transfer of its know-how and expertise, as evidenced by the various official royal visits made to several African countries and the various bilateral relations developed and which aim primarily at the prosperity of the African citizen.

"Africa is 30 million square kilometers of opportunities. It has the youngest population on the planet. In 2050, it will have 2.5 billion inhabitants, half of whom will be under 25 years old.

This youth...constitutes a precious asset for development and an unprecedented opportunity for emergence, which our continent must capitalize on.<sup>4</sup>

Aware of the strength of youth as a vector of change, Morocco places the human being at the center of its concerns. It has signed more than 1000 multidimensional cooperation agreements over the past two decades, covering various fields and aiming at the human, economic, social and cultural development of the continent.

Among the priority areas of this cooperation according to Aiboud Benchekroun & Slaoui (2018), we can mention:

- The establishment of a fair and supportive legal framework, notably in the area of migration and human mobility;
- The fight against the devastating effects of climate change;
- Investment and exchange of recent experiences in human and sustainable development;
- Facilitation of international trade and financial exchanges;
- The joint realization of structuring economic projects;
- The fight against the devastating effects of climate change;
- Food security and promotion of the agricultural sector;
- Human resources training and skills development.

With regard to the last point and according to Amadeus Institute (2015), Morocco has tripled the number of foreign students enrolled in Moroccan public universities over the past 5 years "7000 students of sub-Saharan origin in 2014, the vast majority of whom receive scholarships". This cooperation also extends to school education through various actions that affect the education and training system, particularly in partnership with CONFEMEN<sup>5</sup> and CONFEJES<sup>6</sup>. Education is one of the major challenges facing Africa. The latter is characterized by a strong growth of its population and a youth in full expansion. It is the region of the world where the need for education is increasing the most. "By 2030, the number of children to be enrolled in school will increase by 619 million (+50%), including 444 million in sub-Saharan Africa alone"

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<sup>4</sup> Extract from the message of His Majesty King Mohamed VI addressed to the participants of the fourth edition of the Crans Montana Forum, March 16, 2018

<sup>5</sup> CONFEMEN: The Conference of Ministers of Education of the States and Governments of la Francophonie is an institution created in 1960. It has three essential missions: mutual information, reflection on themes of common interest, and consultation between ministers and experts concerning education systems

<sup>6</sup> CONFEJES: Conference of Ministers of Youth and Sports of La Francophonie, is an institution created in 1969, which works for the promotion of youth, sports and recreation within the French-speaking world.

(UNESCO, 2015). Hence the need to ensure equitable and inclusive quality education and to provide a lifelong learning opportunity throughout life.

Among the levers on which African countries must act to participate in the improvement and efficiency of education systems we cite physical education and school sport.

### **3. Argument in favor of physical activity among young people**

Physical activity and sport have undoubted benefits for young people's physical and mental health and academic performance, it has been shown that appropriate physical activity helps young people to<sup>7</sup>:

- develop a healthy musculoskeletal system (bones, muscles and joints);
- develop a healthy cardiovascular system (heart and lungs);
- develop neuromuscular awareness (coordination and control of movement);
- maintain an appropriate weight.

In addition, youth who are physically active are more likely to engage in healthy behaviors such as avoiding tobacco, alcohol and drug use, and are more able to overcome anxiety and depression, perform better in school and integrate easily into society.

In the educational system, physical education and sports (PES) and school sport are considered means of education, training and improvement of the physical and moral health of the individual. Made compulsory in schools, PES and school sport are a school in their own right where students develop skills such as teamwork, respect for others, decision-making, discipline, valuing effort and surpassing themselves.

The school sport association (SSA) is the first contact with associative work. The involvement of the student in the ASS is a means of learning about citizenship, voluntarism, "living together" and a certain number of positive attitudes. Attitudes and values able to achieve the pedagogical objectives assigned to the educational system.

In addition, "Physical inactivity is one of the leading risk factors for non-communicable diseases mortality. People who are insufficiently active have a 20% to 30% increased risk of death compared to people who are sufficiently active" (World Health Organization, 2020).

Faced with this situation, the world health organization diseases (WHO) is alarmed and calls on States to act to increase the levels of physical activity among people and especially among young people in order to reduce the burden of non-communicable diseases. In this sense, it

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<sup>7</sup>World Health Organization. Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, endorsed by resolution WHA57.17 at the Fifty-seventh World Health Assembly, 22 May 2004

recommends for children and young people aged 5 to 17 years a physical activity of at least 60 minutes per day.

Several institutions and international organizations, such as CONFEMEN, CONFEJES, ISF<sup>8</sup>, IAAF<sup>9</sup> and UNESCO<sup>10</sup> are working to revitalize PES and school sport in education systems, especially in African countries, which still suffer from several constraints.

#### **4. Current situation of school sport in Africa**

Physical education and sports certainly plays an important role in African education systems, with at least two hours per week for certain levels of education, allowing students to be initiated to sports practice and to express all their athletic and gymnastic potential. In addition, inter-class or inter-school sport competitions animate the schools with the objective of constituting sports elite able to represent the school, the province, the region and the country in school championships.

However, despite the efforts made by the Ministries in charge of Education, the practice of PES and school sport in these countries is subject to constraints.

Indeed, according to a study conducted by UNESCO in 2005 in ten West African countries, members of CONFEJES, the situation of PES and school sport results from the persistence of the main constraints that do not favor the motivation of its teaching<sup>11</sup>. These constraints are essentially linked to:

- The problem of dual supervision which, in theory, is exercised by the ministries in charge of education and those of sports. The lack of a precise definition of supervision or dual supervision creates ambiguity which has a negative impact on results ;
- The lack of infrastructure, teaching aids and didactic materials ;
- The insufficient number of specialist teachers, some of whom are assigned to teach other disciplines or to administrative functions ;
- The problem of initial and continuous training of teachers (insufficiency, absence or abandon) which does not allow the necessary pedagogical mastery of their profession ;
- The reduction of time and space reserved for physical education and sports in the organization of the school ;

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<sup>9</sup> IAAF : International Association of Athletics Federations

<sup>10</sup> UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

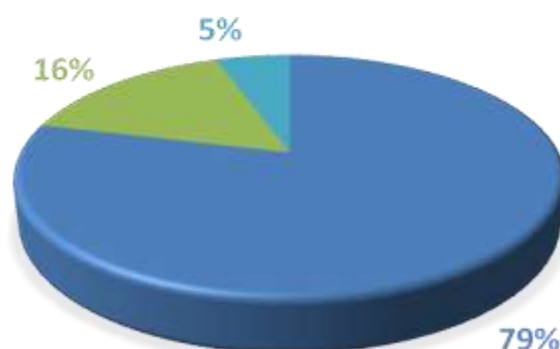
<sup>11</sup> Conférence des Ministres de la Jeunesse et des Sports de la Francophonie (CONFEJES). Plaidoyer pour la relance de l'éducation physique et sportive (l'EPS) à l'école. <https://www.confemen.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/PLAIDOYER-POUR-LA-RELANCE-DE-LEPS.pdf>



- The insufficient budgetary allocations for these types of activities ;
- The little interest given to PES by the different actors of the educational system ;
- Socio-cultural constraints that put girls at a particular disadvantage.

Almost the same observation, in terms of management, human and financial resources, is consolidated by the results of a study conducted by the (National Education Department of Morocco, 2018), among 19 African countries. The survey focused on different aspects related to African school sport. It highlighted in terms of management of school sport (figure1) that it is provided by a single supervisory ministry in 79% of countries surveyed, while it is shared between two Ministries in **16%**, and three ministerial departments in **5%** African countries.

**Figure 1:** Supervisory Ministries



**Source :** Strategy for the development of african school sports, 2019

This management is done according to laws governing school sport in most countries, while six countries do not have any.

The management of school sport is ensured by PES teachers according to 48% of respondents, but in some countries, due to lack of human resources, other actors such as trainers or volunteers are used.

With regard to financial resources, as shown in the figure 2, 68% of the respondents confirmed that school sport has its own budgetary resources, while 32% said that they did not.



**Figure 2:** Financial resources



**Source :** Strategy for the development of african school sports, 2019

In the light of the above, we note that African school sport suffers from obstacles and especially from the absence of a common and unified vision, which influences its results and prevents its positioning on an international scale. However, some countries, such as Morocco, have managed to impose themselves thanks to a good organization of school sport through the establishment of a department in charge of school sport in 1998, which became in 2002 the Department for the Promotion of School Sport (DPSS) and the creation of the Royal Moroccan Federation of School Sport since 1996.

It is in this sense that Morocco has taken the initiative to mobilize African countries in order to create a synergy and implement a strategy to revitalize African school sport.

### **5. Main actions undertaken by Morocco for the revitalization of African school sports**

The development of school sport in Africa is an objective shared by the Kingdom of Morocco, the International School Sport Federation and the African School Sport Federation (ASF). In fact, the ISF seeks to expand its network of affiliated countries worldwide, especially in the African continent which is expanding rapidly in terms of demographics and social development. Among the axes of its program "vision 2030":

- To make the events even more inclusive in order to continue the opening of ISF to the world.
- Organize competitions in all continents, especially by strongly developing the organization of continental events.
- To integrate more strongly the national school sport structures and to create continental platforms and offices.

In this context, we will see a close collaboration between Morocco and the ISF. This collaboration has manifested itself through several actions that were inaugurated by the

agreement, unanimously, to the Kingdom of Morocco to organize the Gymnasiade 2018 at the General Assembly of the ISF, held in Marmaris in Turkey on May 13, 2016. This choice of Morocco as the first African country to organize such a global event is due mainly to the influence of the activities of the king of Morocco in Africa and the results achieved by Moroccan school sport on the international scene in recent years.

Other actions will follow which will allow ISF to grow with 20 new members of which more than 50% are African countries.

The Kingdom of Morocco was therefore able to confirm its presence in the governance bodies of school sport at the international level through several successful actions that will lead to the establishment of the African School Sport Federation (ASF) and the election of Morocco to the vice-presidency of the ISF.

### **5.1 The 1st African School Sport Forum, an opportunity for an experiential exchange in the service of sport in the continent**

The first African School Sport Forum was organized under the High Patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, on January 15 and 16, 2018 in Rabat under the theme "School Sport: a lever for the development of African sport", and this, at the initiative of the Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education and Scientific Research, in partnership with the ISF and the Royal Moroccan Federation of School Sport. This forum aims to develop a clear vision on the priorities for the promotion of school sport in Africa and the creation of opportunities for cooperation and mutual assistance between African countries for the development of school sport.

The seminar was attended by various speakers from all over the world: Ministers and officials in charge of school sport in Africa, ISF officials, experts in school sport, representatives of UNESCO, the International Olympic Committee, CONFEMEN and CONFEJES as well as international champions.

The Forum's work was crowned by a set of recommendations formulated in a document entitled "Rabat Appeal" in which the participants called on the authorities responsible for education to include sport as an integral part of the curriculum to promote health, gender equality and quality education, and to pay particular attention to the development of quality sports facilities, especially those located within schools.

They also invite them integrating all young people in international sports competitions, within the framework of a participation that is an active involvement of all countries to share the values of solidarity, team spirit and respect.

The participants also recommend an efficient and innovative use of funding sources, stressing the need for transparent management, allowing the authorities concerned to carry out their tasks with professionalism.

Finally, they encourage the organizations involved in school sport at local and international levels to coordinate their action plans, through well-defined objectives, while taking into consideration the charter of Olympic values of education and sport of UNESCO and the objectives of sustainable development.

Thus, this forum has laid the foundations for an active cooperation between, on the one hand, Morocco and other African countries and, on the other hand, between African countries and ISF, in order to implement a strategy to promote school sport at the level of the African continent, thus benefiting from the experience and expertise of Morocco in this field.

It also allowed to sensitize and mobilize African states to participate massively in the Gymnasiade 2018 and to support ISF in its missions to promote school sport in schools.

## **5.2 The Gymnasiade<sup>12</sup> 2018, edition of all records**

The organization of the seventeenth international school games "Gymnasiade2018" in Morocco, and for the first time in Africa, is a strong sign from international bodies, recognizing the leadership of our country as a locomotive for the revitalization of African school sport.

This event, organized under the high patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, from 2 to 9 May 2018, in the cities of Marrakech and Casablanca, has been a great success on all levels, thanks to the synergy of skills and efforts of all components and actors of sport at the national level. It was even described by experts as the edition of all records.

Indeed, the first record concerns the number of participating countries which reached an unprecedented number: 58 countries;

The second record concerns the number of participants which reached 3000 participants between athletes and supervisors;

The third record is the number of African countries of the order of 20 far exceeding the usual figures in previous gymnasiades;

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<sup>12</sup> The Gymnasiade is a school sports event, associating education, culture, sport and supreme values (peace, friendship, fair play...) between young people from different Continents and organized every two years by the International School Sport Federation.

The fourth record refers to the number of sports organized which are 18 (karate, archery, cycling, tennis, golf, fencing, aerobics, wrestling, swimming, boxing, petanque, judo, taekwondo, artistic gymnastics, rhythmic gymnastics, surfing, chess, athletics).

The last record, and the most rewarding for the Kingdom of Morocco is the ranking achieved (2nd after Ukraine and exceeding the USA, European countries, Latin America and Asia) with 87 medals obtained, including 33 gold.

It is important to recall, in this context, that the premises of the creation of the FASS took root during the Gymnasiade 2018. Indeed, a preliminary meeting with the 20 African countries took place on May 7, 2018 as evidenced by the reports and photographs available.

Moreover, Morocco has managed to win the bet of organizing this world sports event thanks to the basic collaborative work between the Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education and Scientific Research, the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Moroccan Sports Federations concerned, without forgetting the International School Sport Federation, as well as the contribution of several other governmental and non-governmental bodies.

This event was institutionalized by the signing of a framework agreement on June 11, 2017 between the Minister of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education and Scientific Research, the Minister of Youth and Sports and the President of the ISF. Subsequently a meeting with the Presidents of the Moroccan Sports Federations of the different sports, was held on July 11, 2017 in Rabat, in addition to a series of other meetings with the local authorities of Marrakech and Casablanca as well as technical meetings and visits to the competition sites by national and international representatives.

The organization of this event was an opportunity for Morocco to promote his cultural and civilizational richness thanks to the quality of the reception, the organization and the quality of the sites of reception and the competitions, and thanks to the various activities and educational workshops programmed. The impacts of the organization of such an event go beyond the records mentioned above, since Morocco was able to confirm its strong presence at the level of African and international school sport. This strong presence will be concretized through the confidence that will be granted to it to occupy decision-making positions at the level of African and international school sport as we will see in what follows.

### **5.3 Towards a synergy of actions through the establishment of the African School Sport Federation**

Thanks to the efforts made by Morocco and the progress made by African school sport, Africa has been able to impose itself institutionally at the level of international school sport management bodies. Indeed, Morocco, in the person of Mr. Secretary General of the Department of National Education, was elected, unanimously, president of the African zone of the ISF, thus becoming a member of the executive committee of this Federation for a term of four years, and this during the General Assembly of the ISF held from 17 to 21 May 2018 in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil.

In order to give a new lease of life to African school sports and pool skills through a continental organizational structure, Morocco proceeded to the establishment of the African School Sport Federation, and this during the Constitutive General Assembly (GCA) held in Agadir in the Kingdom of Morocco from 6 to 9 July 2018. It is in fact an independent entity chaired by Morocco and headquartered in Rabat, and works closely with the ISF. Present at this GCI were representatives of the ISF and 17 African countries.

This GCI, which was attended by 17 African countries, also allowed the validation of the statutes of the FASS, the election of the executive committee, the creation of 5 African zones (North, South, East, West and Central) and the election of presidents of the zones.

It should be noted that the creation of ASSF is an action that contributes to the development of inter-African cooperation through the promotion of sports practice among young people in Africa and the strengthening of the presence of the African elite in international competitions on the one hand, and its executives in the governance bodies at the international level on the other hand.

Among the objectives<sup>13</sup> assigned to this federation we quote: organize school sports competitions, institutionalize experiential exchange programs and continuing education in training, refereeing and management for the benefit of stakeholders in the field of school sport and young officials. It can call upon African and international expertise. It represents African interests within the ISF and other sports institutions or international partners.

The creation of the ASSF is certainly, a concretization of a common will to unite the efforts to stimulate the African school sport, however, one of the big challenges in front of this young

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<sup>13</sup> Extract from the Statute of the African School Sport Federation, 2018.

federation and which conditions the success of its missions remains the search of funds and resources of financing of its activities.

#### **5.4 The development of African youth at the center of the work of the 2nd African forum of school sport**

Continuing the momentum created around African school sport, Morocco organized, under the high patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, the 2nd edition of the African School Sport Forum, under the theme "School sport: a lever for the development of African youth". The objective of this forum is to put in place a comprehensive and integrated strategy for the promotion of African youth through African school sport that clearly defines the objectives and actions to be taken.

This forum held in Tangier on 26 and 27 April 2019, has seen the participation of various stakeholders including ministers and African officials as well as experts in school sport at the international level and has adopted a strategy for the development of African school sport.

This strategy is based on six priority areas<sup>14</sup>:

1. School sport activities: focusing on the sports most practiced in African countries and those that promote African participation in international championships.
2. Training: by promoting the supervision of sports practice through the organization of face-to-face and distance training in the sports and animation professions.
3. Competitions: through the organization of local sports events and the encouragement of participation in regional and international championships, in order to allow the greatest number of young Africans to develop on the sports and educational levels.
4. Cooperation and partnership: through the establishment of a better synergy between the institutions in charge of school sport and the development of partnerships with national and international organizations.
5. Detection and Orientation of talents: it is a question of developing tools of prospection and detection of sports talents in order to support the emergence of future champions.
6. Sport-studies: by training high-level athletes who can reconcile their studies with their sporting career.

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<sup>14</sup> Presentation by the Secretary General at the 2nd African School Sport Forum held in Tangier on April 26 and 27, 2019.

Moreover, at the institutional level, the strategy aims at setting up a legal framework for school sport by strengthening the structures through the creation in each African State of a department in charge of school sport.

### **5.5 E-learning, an opportunity for the continuous training of school sport executives in Africa**

Morocco's leadership is also manifested in the supervision and training of executives through the continuous distance training of teachers of physical education and sports. Thus, 57 teachers from African countries have benefited, in 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, from a free and high-quality training, supervised and assisted by Moroccan experts in the areas of training and refereeing of five team sports: football, volleyball, basketball, handball and rugby.

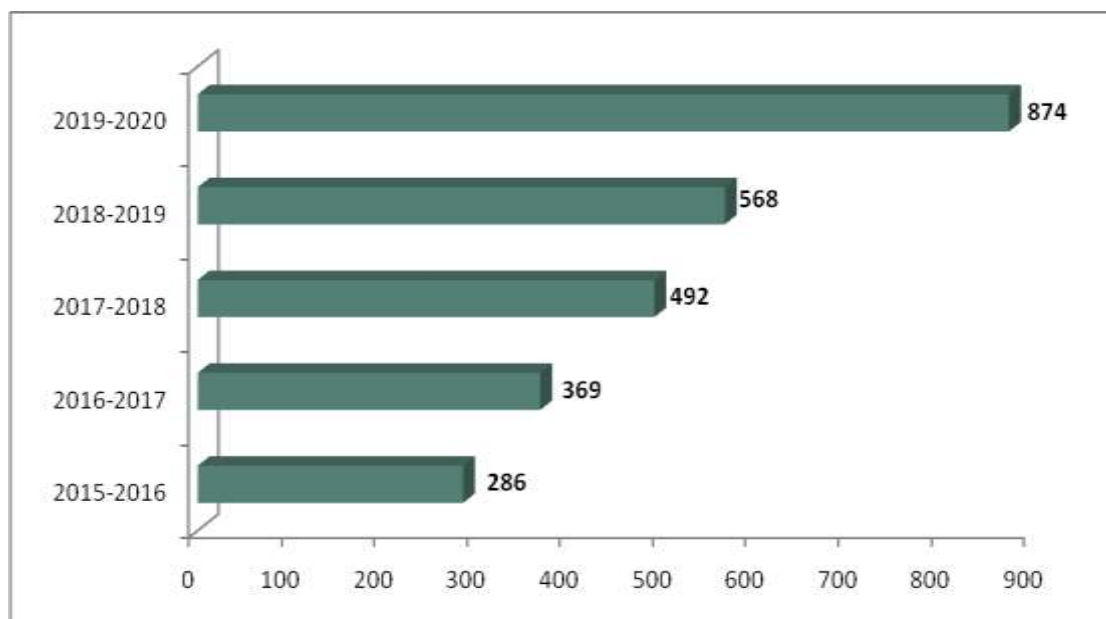
It should be recalled that Morocco initially initiated this distance learning project for its physical education and sports teachers in response to the guidelines of the Ministry of National Education in terms of integration of information technology and communication (ICT), securing school time, optimizing expenditure and lifelong learning (Zahir, 2019).

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 attribution of a certificate of participation in the training.

This project has seen an evolution in the number of beneficiaries from one year to another as illustrated in figure3. 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 facilitation 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 MCQ, a practical dimension, by requiring teachers to film sessions of the teaching cycle with their students highlighting the achievements of the training. Once films are made, they are evaluated according to an evaluation grid to ensure the objectivity of this operation.



**Figure 3:** Evolution of the number of distance training beneficiaries

**Source :** Prepared by the Author

Regarding the animation techniques, and in order to enrich the training and ensure a strong interactivity between the tutors and the beneficiaries, we have enriched the 5th training session by programming videoconferences and virtual classes to complement the communication tools offered by the platform.

Regarding 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. This opening to African countries has the advantage of giving teachers the opportunity to share their experiences and develop their professional skills. It also consolidates Morocco's position as a pioneer in the field of distance learning in Africa.

Before launching the training, a call for applications is open and communicated to African countries through diplomatic channels and via 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 two (02) males and two (02) females. The second year we doubled the number for each country.

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

- be teachers of PES in a school or in an association and be able to practice with students;
- to be willing to follow the training;
- have a fairly good command of computer tools;

- have access to the Internet;
- to have relatively good command of the French language;
- have the possibility of filming video sequences with their students during the teaching sessions.

The evaluation of this experience of opening up to African countries in terms of distance learning shows that teachers are generally satisfied with this experience of distance learning despite the constraints of Internet connection that have been underlined by some teachers in certain countries. Indeed, all the respondents were satisfied with the training and expressed their gratitude to the Moroccan government for the efforts made to advance African school sport. They expressed their wish to renew the training and to extend it to other fields with recommendations for a hybrid training that combines distance-learning and practical courses organized in Morocco.

## **6. School sport is a vector of international outreach**

Tuesday, March 3, 2020 is a historic moment for African school sport characterized by the election of Morocco to the vice-presidency of the International School Sport Federation, in the person of the Secretary General of the Department of National Education.

This election, which took place in Belgrade, Serbia, on the occasion of the ISF General Assembly, is a recognition of Morocco's efforts to develop inter-African cooperation to promote school sport in Africa and to strengthen the African presence in the governance bodies of school sport at the international level, thus enabling it to sit on the management committee and the executive committee of the International School Sport Federation. The stakes are high because it is as much about the positioning of Morocco in the upper echelons of the ISF's decision-making bodies as it is about the diplomatic stakes for Morocco's image on the international scene.

In addition to this election, Morocco assures, as we have already underlined, the presidency of the African Federation of School Sport thanks to the large support of the countries of the Continent, while the post of presidency of the ISF-Africa commission was granted to the Republic of Ivory Coast.

Thus, the ISF vice-presidency is the crowning achievement of a series of successful international and African sports events organized by the Kingdom of Morocco. This recognition of the pioneering role of Morocco in the management and animation of sports in Africa was also manifested through the choice of Morocco as the host of the Extraordinary General

Assembly of the ISF which was attended by 90 countries from around the world on June 30, 2019 in Agadir. Among the agenda of this event is the election of members of the Executive Committee of the ISF for the period 2019-2022, and the submission of applications for the organization of the "Gymnasiade 2022".

### **7. Levers to strengthen Morocco's positioning in Africa in the field of school sport**

The presence of Morocco in the decision-making bodies of international school sport federation and the establishment of the African School Sport Federation are opportunities for the development of African school sport. Thanks to the mobilization of the Moroccan government, the latter has made concrete progress, as evidenced by the organization of major sporting events and the good results achieved by African champions at the national and international levels. However, Morocco must work harder to strengthen inter-African cooperation and truly achieve the goals assigned to school sport as an educational tool and a vehicle for peace and immunization against all forms of deviance and extremism.

Several avenues are likely to be explored to achieve this objective, including:

- Supporting and strengthening the African School Sport Federation in its missions: Morocco must accompany and support this young federation for the establishment of the legal and institutional arsenal and ensure to attract more member states. It is important, in this sense, to put at the disposal of this federation all its experience and expertise in the management of school sport, and especially to help it to acquire financial resources by involving the various local, regional and international socio-economic actors.
- To accompany the school sport federations of the African countries and to help them in their mission of popularization of the sporting practice for the African young people on the scale of the Continent and to encourage them to create school sport associations (SSA). In fact, the SSAs are places for learning citizenship, associative work, "living together" and a certain number of positive attitudes. Attitudes and values that are in line with the pedagogical objectives assigned to educational systems.
- To be a driving force in the organization of sports events: given its experience in this field, Morocco is called upon to initiate and propose sports activities capable of developing a sports offer for African youth.

- To renew and improve the offer of distance training for the benefit of the actors of the African school sport and to establish a perennial platform of exchange and mutualization of competencies and expertise in the field of continuous training.
- Opening up to other partners: it is important to expand its partnerships with other institutions and international organizations working to promote PES and school sport in education systems, such as CONFEMEN, CONFEJES, IAAF and UNESCO, etc. These partnerships should focus on the areas of training, coaching and exchange of expertise.
- Accompany and sensitize African countries to place school sport at the heart of development policies in order to ensure a strong and sustainable multisectoral presence.

## 8. Conclusion

Through this article, we see that school sport, like other sectors, has made its contribution to the South-South partnership adopted by the Kingdom of Morocco, in accordance with the vision of His Majesty King Mohamed VI for the development of the African continent. To strengthen its leadership, Morocco must channel its efforts to build a strong African school sport that enhances human capital and meets the requirements of the digital society.

In this regard, Morocco must continue to advocate the importance of sports practice for the benefit of African youth in general, and initiate school sport activities and training specifically. It must also make available to African countries all its expertise to institutionalize school sport as a component of education systems, and especially expand the school sport network and open up to other international organizations interested in promoting physical activity in education systems.

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