



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### STUDENTS' REPRESENTATIONS ON THEIR TRAINING AT THE PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS INSTITUTE

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#### ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to identify the representations that first-year Baccalaureate students at the Physical Education and Sports Institute (Institut d'Education Physique et des Sports-IEPS) of the University of Burundi have of their training. A written questionnaire was administered to 106 students. The results showed that students who had been oriented at the IEPS were not sufficiently informed about the training on offer at this institute, which did not motivate them to choose it as a training stream. The image that the population has of IEPS is not "good" enough, but students' attitudes towards IEPS are favorable, even if they would like to see the training offer reviewed with a view to improving the quality of training.

## INTRODUCTION

The Physical Education and Sports Institute (IEPS) trains students destined to teach physical and sports education in fundamental and post-fundamental education (Unesco, 2012). Nevertheless, this Institute is not very attractive in view of the numbers noted during pre-registration where post-basic graduates were called upon to express their choice. It is not ranked among the so-called "noble" faculties. Only five students were interested in this field of university education (Academic Services Department of the University of Burundi, 2019). They are inevitably oriented to this Institute and forced to pursue their training there, regardless of the areas of training they took in secondary school. The influence on students' representations of sportsmanship, their school stream and their gender assignment. Some of them do not have an athletic background to draw on for motivation to pursue their training at IEPS (Guillet-Descas, Ottogalli-Mazzacavallo, Épron, Roger, Lentillon-Kaestner, & Szerdahelyi, 2020). This indifference to or rejection of IEPS is rooted in the classical view that what counts in this field is the "muscle", as opposed to the other faculties considered better, which "involve memory". According to Chambon (1990), when parents were asked about the value of disciplines according to the qualities they were supposed to develop in children in terms of memory, reflection and imagination, while mathematics.

French and science received over 67% of the votes in terms of mobilizing memory, and drawing and music in terms of imagination, IEPS received virtually no votes in these terms. Teacher is perceived as less cultured and less intelligent than a French teacher (Gleyse, 2015). Thus, the IEPS laureate sees himself as "undervalued" compared to those from other Faculties and Institutes more highly regarded in society. Moreover, quoting Josse, Gleyse (2015) points out that students read physical education as a subject that "serves no purpose in life", that is not important. Here we see the ambivalence in terms of attraction-repulsion exerted and the teachers who teach the subject. In terms of school standards, Physical education is devalued and has only compensatory value in relation to so-called intellectual subjects. We can assume that these "negative" readings from the point of view of the educational institution will generate a certain number of compensatory acts in IEPS students, and perhaps in this field as a whole. Although IEPS is recognized as a school discipline, the "paradoxical" status of Physical Educational teachers is still somewhat ambiguous. This is reflected in the traditional views held by parents and colleagues in other school disciplines. In France, for example, Physical education teachers are referred to as "gym teachers", "outdoorsmen", "polymuscular", "adepts of the game, the ball and the whistle", "on the bangs of the intellectualist tradition of the education system", "with a lighter workload" and "exemplary in their personal practice" (Dorvillé, 1991 quoted by Guillet-Descas et al., 2020: 283). In many respects, Physical education remains a marginal discipline in the representations parents of schoolchildren have of it (Gleyse, 2015).

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Students' representations of Physical education are important, and they either facilitate learning or, on the contrary, hinder it. In the eyes of students, the profession of Physical education teacher is socially discredited, given its low level of prestige and sense of competence (Guillet-Descas, Ottogalli-Mazzacavallo, Épron, Roger, Lentillon-Kaestner, & Szerdahelyi, 2020). In view of this misrepresentation of the Physical educational teaching profession and of the teacher himself/herself, IEPS students and/or post-fundamental education graduates would not be interested in this field of training in order to escape this socially unappreciated profession. Against this backdrop, a number of questions arise: how do IEPS students perceive the Institute and the profession that awaits them? How do students view orientation and training at IEPS?. The aim of this study is to identify IEPS students' perceptions of their training institute. It will enable them to shift their representations towards a posture aimed at enhancing their status and attracting them to the Physical education teaching profession.

**Theoretical framework:** The study was carried out with reference to the theoretical framework relating to social representations as developed by Moscovici (2015). According to this author, a person's representation of an object is an image he or she has of that object. A representation is not simply an opinion, but speaks as much as it shows, communicates as much as it expresses. This means that the expression of a representation speaks of the real, the palpable, in reaction to the world around us. When a representation relates to a common object or to social life - for example, the Institut d'Éducation Physique et des Sports (IEPS) - it becomes a social representation relating to the training students receive and the profession that awaits them.

According to Moscovici (2015), a social representation comprises three dimensions: information (organization of knowledge about a social object), knowledge (also known as the field of representations) and attitudes towards a given social object (favorable/unfavorable, optimistic/pessimistic, positive/negative attitudes). In the context of our study, our subjects are students at the start of their first-year university training at IEPS, one of whose objects is the representation of their training. Moreover, as students, the other object concerns the profession they will be able to exercise at the end of their academic training. We then speak of professional representations, which are a subset of social representations (Jodelet, 2003 ; Moerman, 2011 ; Moscovici, 2015) or a particular category of social representations of people who carry out or will carry out a professional activity (Michel-Guillou, 2010). Professional representations are therefore, according to Moerman (2011), social representations that are defined as a set of information, opinions, attitudes and values shared by individuals about the same given profession (the future profession of Physical and Sports Education teacher in the context of our study).

## METHODS

**Physical and Sports Education participants in the study:** Students in the first year of their baccalaureate at the IEPS are the target of the study. There were 106 of them, including 75 boys and 31 girls, who had followed various sections in secondary school, namely Lettres modernes/langues, Scientifique/sciences, Section économique, Section technique, Section pédagogique, Section des Sciences Sociales et

Humaines. There were 47 students under the age of 25, while 59 were aged between 25 and 35.

**Data collection:** We collected data using a printed questionnaire administered to all first-year undergraduates at the Physical Education and Sports Institute (IEPS). The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions, part of which were in the form of a Likert scale, and open-ended questions. The questions asked were intended to provide information on (1) the identification of the respondent; (2) the information that the student had about the IEPS before starting training at this institute; (3) the structure/field of representation or image that the students had of the IEPS; and finally (4) the attitude (favorable or unfavorable) that these students had of their training structure.

**Data analysis model:** The study took a quantitative approach to the content of the data collection tool and its target audience. The data collected were processed and analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software, in accordance with the rules and procedures for its use defined by Kinnear & Gray (2005).

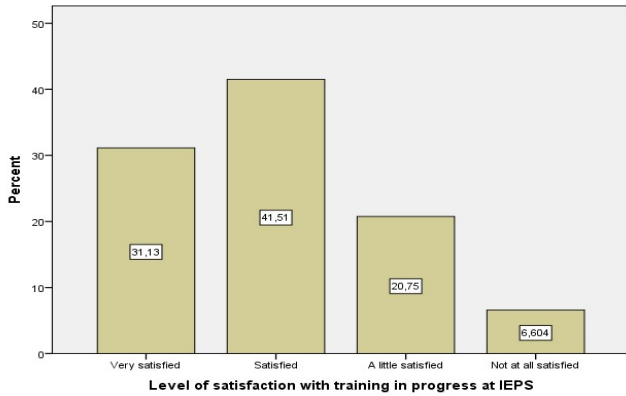
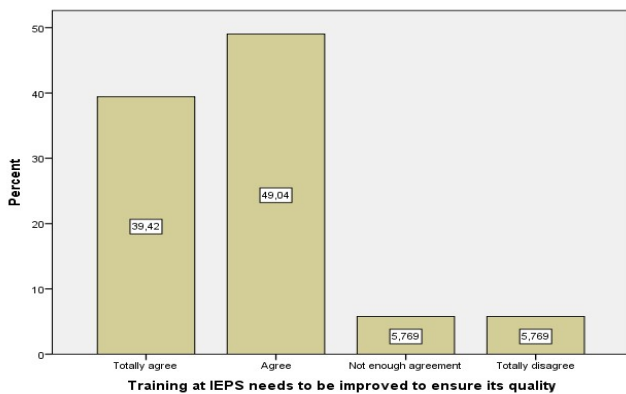
## RESULTS

The gender of the student was statistically related to whether or not he/she had chosen to attend the Institut d'Éducation Physique et des Sports ( $\rho = 0.264^{**}$ ,  $n = 98$  ;  $p = 0.009$ ). In fact, the majority of boys (76.8%) and girls (93.1%) were oriented to the IEPS even though it was not their personal choice. More than the boys, the girls were forced to follow academic training at this institute against their will. Furthermore, the section followed in secondary school had an influence on students' personal choice of IEPS ( $\rho = 0.225^*$ ,  $n = 100$  ;  $p = 0.024$ ). In fact, it was mainly students who had followed technical sections who were oriented to IEPS, even though this was not their personal choice. With regard to the information or knowledge that the IEPS students surveyed have, it emerges that the students who knew people who informed them about the training on offer at the IEPS are much more likely to have personally chosen to pursue their academic training at this institute ( $\rho = 0.281^*$ ,  $n = 101$  ;  $p = 0.004$ ).

As a result, first-year Baccalaureate students surveyed who said they had not personally chosen to be oriented to the IEPS would like more information about this institute in terms of organization, planned training, possible outlets, etc. And if the majority of subjects did not wish to be oriented to the IEPS, they would like to know more about it. And while the majority of subjects do not wish to change their field of training, the students questioned affirm that it is urgent to change the way students are oriented at IEPS by reviewing the orientation criteria to give priority to the future student's personal choice of field of training. This wish is expressed by the majority of subjects, as the following table shows. Furthermore, according to the results, the information that the future student has about the training on offer at IEPS has an influence on the level of satisfaction with the training being acquired at IEPS, and this raises the level of positive judgment of the training in relation to expectations. If, according to the respondents, students who are physically "very strong" (proposed by 34%) or "strong" (37.7%) should be oriented to IEPS, the majority of students surveyed also felt that students with good academic performance in secondary school should be oriented to IEPS (68.3%).

**Table 1. Level of urgency to change student orientation criteria at IEPS**

Level of urgency	Frequency	Percentage	
Valid	Very urgent	44	41,5
	Urgent	23	21,7
	Somewhat urgent	16	15,1
	Not urgent	17	16,0
	Total	100	94,3
Missing system	6	5,7	
Total	106	100,0	

**Diagram 1. Level of satisfaction with training in progress at IEPS****Diagram 2. The need to improve IEPS training**

This would improve the Burundian population's image of an IEPS student and help motivate the choice of IEPS ( $\rho = 0.220^*$ ,  $n = 104$ ;  $p = 0.025$ ). If this were to be the case (population image of IEPS), this institute of higher education would be considered like so many others ( $\rho = 0.211^*$ ,  $n = 101$ ;  $p = 0.036$ ). About the attitudes of IEPS students towards their training institute, the majority (77.14%) show a favorable attitude by taking an interest in sport when there are tournaments in Bujumbura. Moreover, this positive attitude is reflected in the fact that many students (60.95%) are keen to learn more about the organization of the IEPS. And even if the majority of students say they are satisfied with the training they receive at IEPS (41.51%) or even very satisfied (31.13%), as illustrated in the following diagram 1, a cumulative 88.46% of students declare the need to improve the training they receive at this institute (Diagram 2). On the other hand, it's the students who say they have a "not good" opinion of IEPS training who say the training needs to be reviewed and improved ( $\rho = 0.232^*$ ,  $n = 102$ ;  $p = 0.019$ ). Once again, according to the results, what would motivate secondary school leavers to choose IEPS is to obtain a lot of information on the training on offer and on job opportunities.

## DISCUSSION

The end of secondary education (post-fundamental) in Burundi opens the door to higher and university education, subject to passing the State Examination. However, the capacity of public higher education institutions is very limited, which is why entry to certain faculties and institutes is subject to certain conditions, in particular a minimum grade, depending on the number of places available. IEPS is one of the least attractive of these institutes. It is said that high school graduates with poor marks are oriented to IEPS, including those with no sporting biography or who are not physically fit. This orientation undoubtedly has an impact on students' motivation and satisfaction during teaching-learning situations. What's more, they are obliged to prepare for a profession of which they are not proud. Moreover, the choice of a career as a physical education teacher is based on personal factors, such as motivation, belief in one's abilities, prior personal attraction to a sport, etc., and on preconceptions of the profession that can vary for individuals, particularly according to their gender (Bodart & Cauchie, 2021). It's important to underline the important role played by information on personal feeling, on motivation to take courses, and also on the need to find out more about possible outlets. Many students who have been referred to IEPS have had to resort to changing their field of study in order to reorient themselves in so-called "noble" faculties. This situation generally arises when students have not chosen IEPS. Choosing their own field of study would help them feel more comfortable and motivated. The image of IEPS in general, and EPS in particular, remains poor in the eyes of the Burundian population. However, the more positive the population's image of Physical education, the more attractive the institute would be. This idea is in line with that of previous authors, who focus on the place reserved for Physical education, a socially discredited discipline where the skills of laureates are deemed weak (Gleyse, 2015 ; Guillet-Descas, Ottogalli-Mazzacavallo, Épron, Roger, Lentillon-Kaestner, & Szerdahelyi, 2020). As most IEPS students do not intend to change their training stream, their attitudes towards IEPS are favorable, even if they would like the training offer to be reviewed with a view to improving the quality of training.

## CONCLUSION

The majority of students, especially girls, who were oriented to IEPS had not personally chosen this institute. However, if personal choice is not respected, this has an impact on the student's feelings and motivation to pursue training in an unchosen field. IEPS is not an attractive institute. To increase its attractiveness, since the country needs it to train future Physical Education and Sport teachers, information on the training on offer and on the outlets available to final-year secondary school students is one of the levers to be activated. As far as the existing training offer at IEPS is concerned, it deserves to be improved for quality teaching-learning. And while the majority of subjects do not wish to change their field of training, the students interviewed affirm that it is urgent to change the way students are oriented at IEPS by reviewing the orientation criteria to give priority to the future student's personal choice of field of training ; this would maximize the chances of personal motivation and a taste for learning. In addition, the information that the future student has about the training on offer at IEPS has an influence on the level of satisfaction with the training being acquired at IEPS, and this raises the level of positive judgment of the training in relation

to expectations. To guide students into IEPS, alongside academic performance, physical strength should also be taken into account to raise students' self-esteem levels. Despite this, students have a positive attitude to IEPS, and are keen to know more about the training and the opportunities available, which is a source of motivation for learning. The present study is limited to an examination of IEPS students' perceptions of their academic training. A study of IEPS students' perceptions of their future teaching profession would complement the present study. It would point to avenues to be explored for professionalizing training, basing it on real professional needs.

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