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## PEDAGOGY

JOAO TOMAS<sup>1(A-F)</sup>, JOSE SARAGOÇA<sup>2(A,D)</sup><sup>1</sup> PhD student, Department of Sociology, University of Evora (Portugal)<sup>2</sup> PhD, Department of Sociology, University of Evora (Portugal)

Corresponding author: Joao Tomas, address: Departamento de Sociologia, Universidade de Evora, Colegio do Espirito Santo, Largo dos Colegiais, 2, 7000-803 Evora

e-mail: d11297@alunos.uevora.pt, phone: +351 916291072

# Budo as philosophical background of Karate-Do: does the training method really matter?

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**Key words:** *budo*, *karate-do*, training method, sport, traditional

### Abstract

**Background.** The practice of Japanese originated martial arts, like Karate-Do, is associated with an individual “path of enlightenment” or the way of living (*Do*), that surpasses the athletic practice for itself. The concept of *Budo*, with all values, moral principles and patterns of behaviour, is traditionally linked to this path or way, being the philosophical background of the practice. The globalisation of the Karate-Do have created two main ways or training methods with different main goals – traditional one and sports Karate-Do. Problem. The main objective of this study is to compare the evaluations of different *Budo*- associated aspects, values, principles and domains, to find the differences between *karateka* who are engaged in both training methods.

**Method.** A questionnaire was applied, in Portugal, to a group of 78 *karateka* with more than two years of continued training, who are engaged or use a traditional or sports training method.

**Results.** The results show a high and similar evaluation scores of all items questioned on both training methods, only with single and not consistent differences.

**Conclusion.** Without generalising, we can assume that *karateka* observe the philosophical background of Karate-Do (*Budo*) in only one way, even when they are engaged in different methods of practice with different main goals. So, Karate-Do philosophy is one, only daily practices in *dojo* and goals differ. However, further investigation is needed to support these conclusions.

### Introduction

Budo concept is something deeply connected to the Japanese originated martial arts, and Karate-Do is a Japanese originated martial art, or more precisely associated with Ryukyu (Okinawa) archipelago. This word (and concept) Budo is built by the combination of two different words (or symbols) – *Bu* and *Do* – and it is important to know what each one means to understand the main concept.

*Bu* element is found in the Japanese terms like *Budo*, *bujutso*, *bushido* and *kobudo*, all of them refer to aspects of what is known as martial arts [Wilson 2010]. Besides, this word can be directly translated as “martial” (and connected with war), is a concept far more comprehensive, more related to the art of peace. This comprehensiveness can be seen in the writings of Matsumura Sokon cited in Alexander [1993] who refers to seven virtues

in *Bu* concept: forbidding violence; keeping the discipline in the soldiers; keeping the order in the citizens; spreading the virtue; developing a peaceful heart; helping to keep peace between people; making people and nations prosperous.

*Do*, according to him, is more easily translated as the “way”. On the more comprehensive and philosophical approach, it is a way of physical, mental and spiritual self-development [Japanese Association of Budo, 1987]. Draeger [1973] cited in Figueiredo [2006: 247] concludes: “*Do* in Japan is instrumentally multiforme, it embraces a group of practical activities associated with secular Japanese life, exemplifying the human faith in cultural humanism bonded in a connection between the philosophy and its ethical use, and praising the moral character as measure of a man. The objective forms of *Do*, the activities *per se*, involve the transference of the attitude towards life, from the particular to the univer-

sal and from this to the absolute. The mastery on the bond activity of development surpasses the technical skills of an expert, shows the perfect disciplined life, on the permanent composure, in every situation. The strength of the interior control is seen on the smooth simplicity of the actions". Although this *Do* concept observed in this study is connected with martial arts, like the definition above said, it is not a martial arts concept by itself. We can encounter this concept in multiple aspects of traditional Japanese culture which involve persistent and diligent learning and dedication in time to achieve perfection like *shodo* (traditional calligraphy), *kado* (or *ikebana*, flower arrangements), *chado* (tea ceremonial) and so on.

*Do* activities are very valued in Japanese culture as expression of the traditional values and traditional pattern of living, ergo a direct connection with the ancestors and the roots of the traditional Japanese way of living [Davies, Ikeno 2002].

After this brief explanation of the words which form the concept of Budo, this is easily described as a modern athletic culture based in the Japanese traditional culture which exists on the background of the traditional combat arts, and that is maintained on the process of modernisation (*ocidentalization*) of all these combat arts [Uozumi 2010]. Japanese Association of Budo [2014] official definition of Budo is: "Budo is a form of Japanese physical culture that has its origins in the ancient tradition of *bushido* – literally, "the way of the warrior." Practitioners of *budo* develop technical martial skills while striving to unify of mind, technique and body; to develop their character; to enhance their sense of morality; and to cultivate a respectful and courteous demeanor. Thus, budo serves as a path to self-perfection". This budo definition uses *bushido* not like an ancient concept but as it was proposed by Nitobe [1904], a concept which works like a framework of the ancient Japanese cultural tradition. Budo, more than an abstract concept, is present in majority of the daily practices and rituals of the Karate-Do training, like the *dojo* by itself, salutation, language used, uniforms and so on. One of the ways in which Budo values could be expressed in Karate-Do is the *dojo kun*, or the instructions for the place of training of the way, but these "instructions" are intended to be the basis of the pattern of behaviour of the athletes far outside of the *dojo* walls. As Filho [2013: 32] notices "Karate-Do is filled by numerous values, some expressed in postulates present in ancient texts, and other, in a not so obvious way, in daily practices present in the training sessions and the words used". Analysing the different *dojo kun* associated with the four main Karate-Do styles – *Shotokan*, *Goju-ryu*, *Shito-ryu* and *Wado-ryu* – we can conclude that humility, sincerity, effort and dedication, etiquette and good social behaviour, tranquillity and inner and outer peace, are the values and principles that emerge from all behaviour codes.

The process of modernisation (*ocidentalization*) of Karate-Do brings with it the institutionalised competition, the first Japan Championship was held in the 1957 and since then we have assisted to a crescent growing of sport Karate competitions which made Karate-Do part of the Olympic movement in Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. This evolution and globalisation of the Karate-Do practice created two separate (but co-existing) perspectives of training – sports (where the aim is to compete and achieve better results) and traditional (where the focus is lifelong practice cultivating the traditional values and methods of practice). Haramnoure [2013] cited in Cynarski and Lee-Barron [2014] talks about the differences of these two perspectives in the following words: "First of all, in martial arts, the axiology is different from that of sport. In sport, the main goal is to score, to win the competition. In martial arts we find the aims to be far more aspirational, tending to concentrate upon the improvement of the psychophysical personality and the task of becoming a better person in general. It is argued that sport can co-exist with the traditional martial arts without detriment to either".

The main objective of this study is to take into consideration athletes of both ways of training and, basically, compare their perspectives on different Budo aspects.

## Methods

The study followed an exploratory design and consisted of an online questionnaire sent to 78 karate athletes in Portugal, between July and October of 2016. The sample criteria were: to be over 18 years old; to be active in and to have more than 2 years of continued practice of Karate; to be registered in the national federation (Federacao Nacional de Karate – Portugal).

The questionnaire was part of the survey conducted for the obtaining the PhD degree. This questionnaire had 4 questions related to different aspects of the theme:

- Aspects related to Karate-Do practice (initial and final salutation; presence in *dojo* of Japanese symbols; *dojo kun* as ethical code; usage of *karategi*; usage of coloured belts; coach/*sensei* as authority figure; physical exercise as tool of spiritual development);
- Values (honour; loyalty; sincerity; courage; humility; justice; benevolence; respect; self-control);
- Comparative of values with different social contexts (distinct of other sports; distinct of family; distinct of school; compatible with society; compatible with work; compatible with religion; facilitating of other groups integration; compatible with sport success culture);
- Attitudes toward different life domains (itself; family; work; friends; community).

The reply to all questions varies between 1 (nothing/not important) and 5 (everything/the most important) on a Likert-like scale.

## Results

The sample was constituted by 78 Karate-Do athletes, 69 (88,5%) were male and 9 (11,5%) were female. The average age was 36,7 years old, an average of years of practice of 19,2 years and 73% (n=57) had a *Dan* level. 65% (n=51) were engaged in a traditional method of training, and the rest 35% (n=27) were engaged in a sports method of training, of these 51,8% (n=14) were engaged in institutionalised competitions.

A previous note is necessary before showing the statistical results of the comparative tests, in this case, Mann-Whitney test. We opted for not using any p-value correction (like Bonferroni) because it seems conservative for the scale and type of the study, this means that we opted for a greater risk of having type I errors (false positives) rather than type II (false negatives) errors. This option was taken also because of the similar descriptive statistic results (mean presented in the comparison) of the participants replies to the fields observed.

The first question was about values (related to Karate-Do) and the level of importance in *karateka* behaviour. The results are presented in the table below in form of mean scores being the *p* value the result of Mann-Whitney test between this and method of training variables (table 1).

**Table 1.** Mean scores and Mann-Whitney significance result of level of importance of some values in *karateka* behaviour

Value	Sport	Traditional	<i>p</i>
Honour	4,44	4,71	0,062
Loyalty	4,67	4,76	0,356
Sincerity	4,74	4,82	0,021*
Courage	4,22	4,71	0,001*
Humility	4,67	4,82	0,120
Justice	4,67	4,76	0,176
Benevolence	4,11	4,76	0,000*
Respect	4,89	4,88	0,932
Self-control	4,56	4,88	0,016*

Next the participants were asked to evaluate certain aspects related with Karate-Do practice. The results are presented in the table below in a form of mean scores being the *p* value the result of Mann-Whitney test between this and method of training variables (table 2).

**Table 2.** Mean scores and Mann-Whitney significance result of some aspects related to Karate-Do practice

Aspect	Sport	Traditional	<i>p</i>
Initial and final salutation	4,78	4,71	0,836
Japanese symbols in <i>dojo</i>	3,44	4,18	0,000*
<i>Dojo kun</i>	4,44	4,59	0,561
Usage of uniform ( <i>karategi</i> )	4,56	4,65	0,865
Usage of coloured belts	3,78	4,06	0,250
Coach/ <i>sensei</i> as figure of authority	4,78	4,82	0,291
Physical exercise as catalyst of spiritual development	4,67	4,76	0,176

We also asked the participants to compare the values and principles transmitted by the practice of Karate-Do with certain domains of life. The results are presented in the table below in a form of mean scores, *p* being the value of the result of Mann-Whitney test between this and method of training variables (table 3).

**Table 3.** Mean scores and Mann-Whitney significance result of level of comparative between values and principles transmitted by Karate-Do and some domains of life

Life domains	Sport	Traditional	<i>p</i>
Different from other sports	4,33	4,29	0,959
Different from family	2,56	3,35	0,009*
Different from school	4,44	3,65	0,001*
Compatible with society	4,22	3,94	0,266
Compatible with work	4,11	4,00	0,684
Compatible with religion	3,00	3,82	0,003*
Facilitator of another groups integration	4,33	4,41	0,916
Compatible with sports success culture	4,44	4,18	0,279

Finally the participants were asked to evaluate the perceived influence of Karate-Do practice in their attitude towards some social institutions. The results are presented in the table below in a form of mean scores, *p* being the value of the result of Mann-Whitney test between this and method of training variables (table 3).

**Table 4.** Mean of scores and Mann-Whitney significance result of level of perceived influence of Karate-Do practice in the attitude towards some social institutions

Attitude	Sport	Traditional	<i>p</i>
Yourself	4,33	4,65	0,028*
Family	4,11	4,24	0,205
Friends	4,00	4,24	0,225
Work	4,00	4,24	0,225
Community	4,11	4,12	0,960

Next we shall go on to discuss the results, trying to provide some answers.

## Discussion

We can observe the results in the same order that was presented before. We used the significance level for the statistical test of  $p < 0,05$  (the results with \* mark) and considered the difference of value of half a point (0,5) on average to be a strong difference between the methods.

Observing the results of the level of importance of some values in *karateka* behaviour we can see that the athletes of the traditional method show mean scores slightly higher than the athletes of the sport method. However, the results are similar in all variables (except "benevolence" where we encounter a difference bigger

than 0,5) for which we cannot assume a real difference between both methods. These results mixed with the inconstant results of Mann-Whitney test (4 values with significant relationship – sincerity, courage, benevolence and self-control – and 5 values without significant relationship) do not allow to infer in a categorial way that there exists a direct relationship between the evaluation of the different values and the training method.

Looking at the evaluations of some aspects related to Karate-Do practice we can also see that the athletes of a traditional method show mean scores slightly higher than the athletes of the sport method. However, the results are similar in all variables (except “Japanese symbols in *dojo*” where we encounter a difference bigger than 0,5) for which we cannot assume a real difference between both methods. In this case, and looking at the Mann-Whitney test results, we can also assume that the training method is not decisive on the global evaluation of some aspects related to Karate-Do practice, except for “Japanese symbols in *dojo*”. In this aspect in particular the result of Mann-Whitney test showed a perfect significant result, which mixed with a bigger difference of mean scores, and allowed to infer that the traditional method athletes have a closest connection to the presence in *dojo* of this kind of symbols, which could be connected to the main aim of this method of training – self-development and evolution in a specific way of life based on the traditional Japanese culture.

When we look to the level of comparisons between values and principles transmitted by Karate-Do and some domains of life we can see that the higher mean scores alternate between both training methods. Watching closely we can see that in three variables – “different from family”, “different from school” and “compatible with religion” – there is a difference of scores over 0,5 and also a significant connection to the results of the Mann-Whitney test. This data shows that the training method could really have an effect in the choices or evaluations related to comparative evaluation with agents or instruments of socialisation, however, the lack of consistency of results in all domains asked does not permit to assume, in general, that the training method influences this comparative evaluation. Regardless of that this is interesting to see that the evaluation of difference of values transmitted by two main socialisation agents – family and school – goes in opposite ways, athletes of a sport method show less difference in the values transmitted by family, on the other hand the athletes of the traditional method show less difference in the values transmitted by school.

To sum up, in the perceived influence of Karate-Do practice in the attitude towards some social institutions we can see the athletes of a traditional method show mean scores slightly higher than the athletes of the sport method, however, the results are similar in all variables. With these results we cannot assume that training

method is really important to influence the attitude of the athletes toward different domains of their life. Looking at the results of Mann-Whitney test we can see that only variable with a significant result is “attitude towards yourself”. We think that this result is related to a more intense self-development focused on the traditional training method instead of sport result and competition of the sport method.

Looking to the results globally – a slightly higher mean scores and a positive relation with aspect “attitude towards yourself” of traditional *karateka* – could mean that traditional *karateka* are more critical about the effects of the practice than sport *karateka*, but the data available did not allow for any objective answers to this question, however, this is a question to be taken into consideration in the future studies.

Another aspect that is important to discuss in this kind of studies is the social desirability bias.

Social desirability bias could be an issue in this kind of study because we ask participants about their perceptions and feelings. We did not check, in a formal way, the potential influence of this social desirability, however the way how the questionnaires were applied – online and not in person – and the guarantee of confidentiality reduces the risk of this bias. We strongly believe that this social desirability did not influence, in a great manner, the replies given by the participants because they did not have any direct contact with the interviewers and the theme and kind of questions are not particular subject of social pressure, like religion or sexuality.

## Conclusions

This study, firstly, for its exploratory nature, and secondly for the lack of previous studies in the area, does not allow for global generalisation based on the data recorded and its analysis, however it shows some interesting results.

At beginning of the study we assumed as hypothesis that the training method was a distinctive aspect of the practice and that we were able to see main differences in all aspects, values and domains connected to the philosophical basis of Karate-Do – Budo. Instead, we observed that the data is clear in one aspect: there is no great and significant difference in the evaluations by athletes of both training methods. We can see, in general, a slightly higher scores in many aspects the traditional *karateka* were asked about, however, that difference is not considered big enough to assume that the method is the main and distinctive aspect of these scores. Also, Mann-Whitney test results showed that there is not any significant or sufficiently important difference to assume the training method as a distinctive aspect of the practice.

To sum up we conclude that *karateka*, besides of the training method in which they are engaged, consider themselves as athletes of one martial art – Karate-Do

– and look to the values, principles and patterns of behaviour inscribed in Budo as philosophical background of the practice in the same way, above the main goals of the practice itself and the daily training methods used.

However, this study is limited to some athletes in one specific reality (Portugal) and further investigation is needed to support these results.

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## Budo jako tło filozoficzne Karate-Do: czy metoda szkolenia naprawdę ma znaczenie?

**Słowo kluczowe:** budo, karate-do, metoda treningu, sport, tradycyjny

### Streszczenie

Tło. Praktyka japońskich sztuk walki, takich jak *Karate-Do*, wiąże się z indywidualną *ścieżką oświecenia* lub sposobem życia (Do), która przewyższa sportową praktykę samą w sobie. Koncepcja Budo, ze wszystkimi wartościami, zasadami moralnymi i wzorcami zachowań, jest tradycyjnie związana z tą *ścieżką* lub drogą, będąc filozoficznym tłem praktyki. Globalizacja Karate-Do stworzyła dwa główne sposoby lub metody treningowe z różnymi głównymi celami – tradycyjnym i sportowym Karate-Do.

Problem. Głównym celem niniejszego badania było porównanie ocen różnych aspektów, wartości, zasad i domen związanych z Budo, wśród karateków, którzy są zaangażowani w obie metody szkoleniowe.

Metoda. Kwestionariusz zastosowany został w Portugalii w grupie 78 karateków z ponad 2-letnim nieprzerwanym stażem szkoleniowym, którzy są zaangażowani lub stosują tradycyjną lub sportową metodę szkolenia.

Wyniki. Wyniki pokazują wysoką i podobną ocenę wszystkich elementów pojawiających się w kwestionariuszu w obu metodach treningowych, tylko z pojedynczymi i niejednoznacznymi różnicami.

Wniosek. Autorzy przyjmują założenie, że karatecy obserwują filozoficzne tło Karate-Do (Budo) tylko w jeden sposób, nawet jeśli wdrożone są różne metody praktyki z różnymi głównymi celami. Tak więc filozofia Karate-Do jest jedna, różnią się tylko codzienne praktyki w *dojo* i cele. Konieczne są jednak dalsze badania w celu poparcia tych wniosków.