

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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A study of Budo in Japanese school physical education – “competition” as learning content

Submission: 3.11.2022; acceptance: 18.12.2022

Key words: study course, win or loss, offense and defense, play, responsive body

Abstract

Problem. This study aimed to examine the characteristics of Budo in Japanese school physical education curriculum from the perspective of “competition” and to clarify its potential as a teaching material.

Method. The following procedure is taken as a specific examination method: (1) Examining the handling of “competition” as learning content based on the “The Course of Study”, which is the standard for Japanese school education, (2) examining the nature of “competition” in the physical culture and its potential as a teaching material, and (3) clarifying the characteristics of the Budo in Japanese school PE and the possibility of teaching materials.

Results. In Japanese schools, “competition” is presented as learning content only in PE classes. And in Japanese school Budo, ‘win or loss’ and ‘offense and defense’ are presented in relation to the PE subject goals. It was confirmed that ‘win or loss’ and ‘offense and defense,’ words related to “competition” and used in the Budo field in “The Course of Study”, were used as learning contents with the intention of enjoying the competition, which is a ‘play’ relationship in Budo as the physical culture, as well as toward the acquisition of a responsive body. Furthermore, the skill training used as teaching materials in Budo is learned via interpersonal learning, and learning moves aiming at the goal of acquiring a responsive body will maximize the teaching material characteristic of Budo, which targets developing offense and defense.

Conclusions. The findings clarified that Japanese school Budo was characterized by the fact that students learn skills through interaction and then learn how to interact further by engaging in interpersonal competition with the skills that they have acquired, which is also important for learning of physical culture.

Introduction

There are various education-related laws and regulations in Japan that provide for uniform education in schools across the country. One of the subjects in the curriculum is “Health and Physical Education (PE)”, the contents of which are broadly separated into physical education and health education. PE as a subject consists of six “fields” of learning in elementary school and eight in junior high school and high school, including “Physical Fitness,” “Gymnastics,” “Track & Field,” “Swimming,” “Ball Games,” “Budo,” “Dance,” and the “Theory of Sport and Physical Education.” Budo is compulsorily taught to the first and second grades of junior high.

“The Course of Study 『学習指導要領』” for the field of Budo specifies “offense and defense(攻防)” as a form of “win or loss(勝敗)” resulting from “competition”

[Tai 2022]. To avoid misunderstandings, this “competition” does not refer to a contest or an athletic event, but to competing with others. Budo, by its nature as a physical art, embraces interpersonal skills in the form of aggression and defense [Draeger 1990, 1996; The Nippon Budokan Foundation 2009; The Budo and Sports Research Institute 2013]. However, the competitive nature of sports and other physical cultures leads to the excessive exclusion of others, inhibiting the learners’ feelings of collaboration and cooperation, which are essential in contemporary society of lifelong learning [Kohn 1992; Suzuki 2005]. In the context of PE subject, “competition” is ambiguous, and its educational significance is unclear. This suggests that the value of Budo as a teaching material has not been fully understood.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the characteristics of Budo taught in Japanese school physical education

from the perspective of “competition” and to clarify its potential as a teaching material. The following procedure is taken as a specific examination method: (1) Examining the handling of “competition” as learning content based on the “The Course of Study”, which is the standard for Japanese school education, (2) examining the nature of “competition” in the physical culture and “competition” and its potential as a teaching material, and (3) clarifying the characteristics of the Budo domain in Japanese school PE and the possibility of teaching materials.

This research does not attempt to define Budo, such as “what martial arts are”, but to examine how Budo is defined. In the end, this study is expected to provide a basis for considering the significance of Budo as a learning material in school education as well as the types of learning results that can be gained from it.

“Competition” as Learning Contents

“The OECD Learning Compass 2030” [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2019] indicates that the development of “co-agency” and collaborative learning, such as working with diverse others, is among the goals of Japanese school education (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)[MEXT 2018a; MEXT 2018b; Curriculum Division, Elementary and Secondary Education Bureau, MEXT 2021]. However, PE classes involve situations such as ball games, in which students are required to improve their skills and compete with or excel over others.

“The Course of Study” (Curriculum Guidelines) in Japan have been provided for each level of education from kindergarten to high school. A study that confirmed the description of “competition” in all Courses of Study revealed the following [Tai 2022]. “The Course of Study for Kindergarten” [MEXT 2017] does not include the word “competition,” and there are only two instances of the word “challenge.” Next, “the Course of Study for Elementary School” [MEXT 2018a] mentions the word “competition” only in the context of PE. Within the PE section of “the Course of Study for Elementary School,” the word competition (and win or loss) is mentioned under “Running and jumping” (grades 1–4, ages 6–11), “Track and field” (grades 5 and 6, ages 10–12), “Games” (grades 1–4, ages 7–10), and “Ball games” (grades 5 and 6, ages 10–12). There are limited references to competition, and they are only found in the “Track and field” and “Ball games” fields. “The Course of study for Junior High School” [MEXT 2018b] has no mention of words related to competition outside PE [MEXT 2018b]. Each field of PE uses phrases such as “offense and defense,” “competition,” and “win or loss.” Because these words and phrases are the results of or associated with the act of competition, it is necessary to address them as entities that examine the inner nature of competition as

learning content. Nonetheless, the use of these words is limited to only four fields: “Track and field,” “Swimming,” “Ball Games,” and “Budo.” “The Course of Study for High School” [MEXT 2019] also does not mention words or phrases related to competition outside PE. The words related to competition in the learning contents of PE are in the same fields and contexts as those in “the Course of Study for Junior High School.”

Thus, “competition” and related words are found in the curriculum guidelines for junior high school and above, which is when Budo is introduced. And the goals and content described in the “Junior High School Curriculum Guidelines” differ between the 1st and 2nd grades and the 3rd grade of junior high school. This is because the third grade of junior high school is considered part of the same developmental stage as high school. In addition, as mentioned above, the contents described in “The Course of Study for High School” are an extension of “The Course of Study for Junior High School”. Therefore, the following discussion is based specifically on the descriptions pertaining to the third grade of junior high school.

In “The Course of Study for Junior High School,” the word “competition” has been used in the goals of physical education, indicating that various motivations and attitudes should be fostered through the experience of competition and cooperation in exercise. Though there are various ways in which exercise can be used for learning, “The Course of Study” recognize the potential of competition as a teaching material in several types of exercise.

The contents of Budo in the junior high school PE are presented alongside points such as (1) knowledge and skills, (2) the ability to think, judge, and express oneself, among others, and (3) the ability to approach learning and human nature. In addition, there are three other distinctive aspects of learning in the Budo field: understanding traditional ideas, respecting others, and adhering to the traditional ways of behavior.

How does the content of Budo relate to the goals of the subject as a whole? “The fun and pleasure of being able to enhance skills and **competing for win or loss** (author’s emphasis),” which is presented as learning content under “knowledge and skills” for the field of Budo, should contribute to the ‘enjoyment and pleasure of exercise’ as given in the PE subject goals. Furthermore, **‘offense and defense** using basic moves and basic skills (author’s emphasis)’ corresponds to the basic skills to be acquired under the goals. Basic skills are the abilities necessary for the subject goals ‘to practice physical exercise abundantly throughout one’s life.’ “Discovering the challenges of oneself and one’s peers, such as **offense and defense** (author’s emphasis),” shown as learning content of “the ability to think, judge, and express”, leads to the subject goal of “discovering the challenges of oneself and one’s peers.” The main characteristic of exercise under Budo, interpersonal offense and defense, is seen as a problem-based learning activity to acquire rational movement.

Thus, "win or loss" and "offense and defense" appear in the contents of Budo in the context of the PE subject goals. This is an attempt to achieve the subject goals by using the characteristics of the field as PE subject. The next section examines the nature of the competition that is structured into the physical culture treated as a field.

"Competition" in the Learning Material

In sports, such as ball games, "competition" is a major attribute of the sports culture and can even be considered an indispensable requirement [Loy 1968; Sato 1991; Tamburrini 2000; Drewe 2003]. However, PE in school is carried out as part of educational activities, and its purpose is to train children based on their physical bodies and physical exercise. Competition need not be a necessary element in the context of the educational purpose of PE in school; in fact, it can sometimes produce negative effects. Therefore, this section examines competition in the physical culture used as teaching material in Japanese school PE. This has been carried out by organizing a debate on the role of competition in sports (a teaching material for school PE), and examining the significance of competition in the learning environment.

Sports philosopher Sheryle Bergmann Drewe has conducted a detailed analysis of competition in sports [Drewe 2003]. She examines the validity of both the positive and negative views of competition, distinguishing between the extrinsic values resulting from participation in competition and the values inherent in the concept of competition. An overview of her analysis follows.

Positive views of competition in sports include the aspects of character development, acquisition of personality traits, and preparedness for life as extrinsic values. Similarly, the intrinsic values include the satisfaction of complete self-exertion, joint effort, competition as a fraternity [Hyland 1980], and the challenge of pursuing mutually recognized excellence [Simon 1991].

Among these, there is confusion between the correlation and causation of character development and the acquisition of personality traits, indicating the uncertainty of evidence of these values. In other words, these values are not unique to competition. The issue of whether preparedness for life entails the preparation for a competitive society is also questionable, and the unfairness inherent in the belief that winners are highly prepared for a competitive society has been identified.

After confirming that its true nature is "striving together in the pursuit of excellence," [Drewe 2003] it has been emphasized that competition requires the joint effort of those who participate in it; this is an intrinsic value of the positive opinions. Even if one considers intentionally harming an opponent or violating the rules (e.g., fouls) to win a competition to be a counterexample, the above-mentioned essential nature of competition is

established from the perspective of making a collective effort to bring a game to fruition.

Sports rules can be categorized into regulatory rules and constitutive rules, which are "rules that regulate players in a game" and "rules that make a competitive game what it is," respectively. Based on this classification of rules, even the most hostile player, who commits fouls (violating regulatory rules), can be said to be making a concerted effort to make the game happen, as long as they do not violate constitutive rules. Drewe confirms the intrinsic value of competition based on these observations and defines the true nature of competition as stated above.

In terms of extrinsic values, negative opinions regarding competition include the "inequality of competition" and "appeal to cheating." Meanwhile, intrinsic values include the "exclusiveness of competition," "egocentrism to the detriment of others," and the "self-centered pursuit of profit: immorality."

Regarding the "inequalities inherent in competition," which is criticized as an extrinsic value, it is important to confirm the distinction between inequality and difference. In most competitions in sports, though victory cannot be awarded equally, the opportunity to win is fairly provided to all participants; thus, the point regarding the "inequality of competition" does not apply. For the "appeal to cheating," as already noted, there is a confusion between correlation and causation. In other words, cheating in sports may be a characteristic of the cheater's own behavior and cannot necessarily be considered an action caused by competition.

Regarding the egocentric aspect of competition in sports, which is also criticized as an intrinsic value, there is an essential difference between "trying to defeat an opponent within mutually accepted rules" and "ignoring the interests of teammates/opponents" [Perry 1975]. Thus, attempting to defeat the opponent within the ambit of mutually accepted rules means that joint effort is realized in a way that is not egocentric and that opponents must cooperate on the single point of competing.

This is a summary of Drewe's argument, which examines the validity of both positive and negative opinions regarding competition in sports in terms of extrinsic and intrinsic values. Regarding competition in sports, it can be concluded that its true nature lies in striving together in the pursuit of excellence and that opponents cooperate with each other to establish competition.

Competition does not inherently give everyone equal opportunity or yield equal results, and pure competition in a learning environment does not provide all learners equal opportunity for victory. However, when sports, such as ball games, are used as a teaching material, it is necessary to provide competition, which is a characteristic of sports, as part of the learning content. This is because, for example, when the content of study is learning sports as an inherent part of human culture, creating opportunities for everyone to score points and demonstrate their

skills equally does not lead to learning about the essential nature of sports. The goal of school PE in Japan is not just to “develop the physical bodies and strength of the children” but also to “realize the life-long inclusion of sports” [MEXT 2018b]. When learning about the physical culture, such as ball game-based sports in which competition is a prerequisite, it is essential to devise teaching materials that are conscious of both the learning of athletic cultural assets and ensuring the equal learning of learners.

Furthermore, competition in learning does not mean that winning or scoring points is the ultimate motive and the source of enjoyment. Even without going back to the origin of sport, it is well known that “play” is characteristic of sports [Huizinga 1971; Caillois 2001]. Competition in the physical culture, as typified by sports, is attractive because it is “a response to a “play” relationship in which the solution (victory or defeat) remains in suspense” [Nishimura 1989]. It can be seen as encouraging the desire to enjoy the interaction (process) itself rather than as motivating the self-interested goal of winning or scoring points.

Research on interpersonal learning in school PE indicates that some learning activities using ball games and Budo as teaching materials do not target the acquisition of skills in isolation from the situation, but, rather, the creation of “a ‘responsive body’ that is aware of changes in interaction and responds flexibly to an environment (other people) that changes from moment to moment” [Okano 2016]. Regarding the learning design, ball manipulation and movements without a ball, which are used for offense and defense in ball games, and offense and defense using basic skills in Budo should be interpreted as learning that targets the acquisition of a responsive body. Competition in learning can be seen as providing a place within learning to enjoy the process and develop a responsive body while acquiring interpersonal skills.

When designing classes in which competition is viewed as a proactive activity, it is possible that children’s learning will be distanced from the physical culture itself. Contrarily, when competition is viewed as a mode of existence, it can be an effective learning experience for humans as social beings for whom relationships with others are essential.

This section examines competition in physical cultures, such as sports and Budo, which is used as teaching material in Japanese school PE. The essential characteristic of competition in sports is defined as striving together in the pursuit of excellence. The “competition” in learning is to learn one of the qualities of movement culture. There is a motivational meaning in the enjoyment of the “play” relationship, which is a process whose outcome is uncertain. In addition, it became clear that competition could be an opportunity to acquire a “responsive body” through the learning of interpersonal skills. Based on the examination thus far, the next section will discuss the characteristics of Budo in Japanese school PE.

The Potential of Budo as Teaching Contents / Materials

The primary meaning of competition, thus established, is not to decide who wins or loses or to decide who is superior or inferior in terms of excellence. In this sense, the “exclusiveness of competition” and “egocentric pursuit of profit: immorality” in sports would not be appropriate criticisms of competition, especially for school PE. However, it is necessary to examine the significance of the term “win or loss” as an outcome in the learning content of Budo in Japanese school PE. “Competition” and “offense and defense”, as described in the Budo-related learning content identified in Section 3, are one of characteristics of the physical culture of Budo. This section summarizes the study thus far and considers the characteristics of Budo and its potential for teaching materials based on the perspective of “competition” as learning content.

In the field of Budo, the term “win or loss” is used in two areas under “Knowledge and skills”— “experiencing the fun and pleasure of being able to enhance skills and **competing to wins or losses**, understanding traditional ideas, names of skills, how to practice observing and practicing, and improving physical strength, and **developing offense and defense** using basic movements and fundamental skills (author’s emphasis)” [MEXT 2018d].

The fun and pleasure of competing to “win or loss” can be regarded as referring to “the enjoyment of the response to a “play” relationship in which the solution (victory or defeat) remains in suspense” [Nishimura 1989]. In the theory of “play,” which is often used in understanding the concept of sports, competition is a form of “play,” and the essence of “play” lies in the process [Huizinga 1971; Caillois 2001; Sato 1987; Higuchi 1994]. The joy of “competing to win or lose”, as indicated in “the Course of Study,” can be paraphrased as the students’ development of their excellence through the physical culture of Budo and the enjoyment of interpersonal exercise with the resources they have, the outcome of which is undetermined.

In addition, to build the foundation for experiencing joy and pleasure, the learning contents include the acquisition of basic movements and fundamental skills as well as “the development of offense and defense,” which are interpersonal actions that use those movements and skills. The discussion up to this point has confirmed that “offense and defense” in Budo is a basic skill and learning content is an expected part of developing a responsive body. Similar to ball games and other sports, Budo is the physical culture that is based on interpersonal offense and defense. Although there are some Budo activities that are performed by a single person, such as Karatedo kata, these activities are also based on offense and defense against a virtual opponent. While the learning content for developing offense and defense is intended to pur-

sue excellence in interpersonal skills, it is never about achieving superiority over the opponent; rather, it is oriented toward acquiring a responsive body [Okano 2016].

Thus, the examination of the competition-related words “win or loss” and “offense and defense” in the field of Budo in “the Course of Study” confirms that the use of each word in the learning content was made with the intention of enjoying competition, establishing a “play” relationship in Budo as the physical culture, and the acquisition of a responsive body.

In social psychology, competition is classified into direct competition, in which there is interaction between the competitors, and indirect competition, in which there is no direct interaction. Athletics and swimming competitions are considered indirect competition, whereas Budo is classified as direct competition. While conventional PE goals in schools have focused on individual physical manipulation, such as running, throwing, swimming, and manipulating (tools), learning in sports involves direct and indirect competition with others, yet the main skills are expressed in interaction with others [Yamamoto 2016a]. Competition in sports is a form of interaction, as is working well together and cooperating with peers. It has been noted that the interactions of cooperation and collaboration seen in group ball games, such as soccer, do not function well in situations with no competition [Yamamoto 2016b]. The difference in overall behavior depends on how the interaction takes place, and these differences are also related to skill level [Yamamoto 2016a]. One of the reasons competition in sports is addressed in school PE is to learn the method of interaction. Yamamoto states that the purpose of competition is to increase the awareness of oneself and to improve and grow—not to defeat the opponent. Just as human evolution is based on the adaptation to diverse environments, it is possible to learn how to relate to others and conduct ourselves through competition with diverse others.

The skill trainings used as teaching materials in Budo are internalized through interpersonal learning. As Yamamoto points out, students learn skills as an interaction and then learn how to interact further through interpersonal competition with the skills they have acquired. Budo classes moving toward the learning goal of acquiring a responsive body will maximize the teaching material characteristic of Budo.

Conclusion

The current study examined the characteristics of the learning content of Budo in school PE in Japan from the perspective of competition and clarified its potential as a teaching material. The essential characteristic of competition in sports is defined as “striving together in the pursuit of excellence.” The Competition in learning has a motivational meaning in the enjoyment of “play” relationship, which

is a process with no fixed outcome, and that competition has the potential to become the environment in which it is possible to develop a responsive body in the process of the acquisition of interpersonal skills in the classroom.

It was confirmed that “win or loss” and “offense and defense,” words related to competition and used in the Budo field in “the Course of Study,” were used as learning content with the intention of enjoying competition, which is a “play” relationship in Budo as the physical culture, as well as toward the acquisition of a responsive body. Therefore, skill trainings used as teaching materials in Budo are learned via interpersonal learning, and learning moves intended to acquire a responsive body will maximize the teaching material characteristic of Budo, which targets developing offense and defense. Students will learn skills as interaction and then learn how to interact further by engaging in interpersonal competition with the skills that they have acquired.

In Japan, there are uniform national goals for school PE, which specify the qualities and abilities to be nurtured throughout school education and aim at learning about the physical culture. To meet these goals, sports, Budo, and other forms of sports culture must be used as teaching materials based on their characteristics, and care must be taken not to undermine the essence of each form of physical culture. Research must clarify the educational characteristics and structure of Budo and various Budo disciplines as physical culture for instructors and teachers.

This paper focuses on the intersection of the local, closed, and future-oriented situation of school PE in Japan and the special cultural characteristics of competition in Budo. Although it is a local and specific case, I would like to propose that its discussion is a global and general issue.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Numbers JP16K01620, JP22K11630.

This work was supported by the Sasakawa Grants F22-306 for Science Fellows.

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Studium Budo w japońskiej szkolnej edukacji fizycznej – “współzawodnictwo” jako treść nauczania

Słowa kluczowe: przebieg studiów, zwycięstwo lub porażka, atak i obrona, gra, ciało reagujące

Streszczenie

Problem. Celem niniejszego badania było zbadanie charakterystyki Budo w programie nauczania wychowania fizycznego w japońskich szkołach z perspektywy „współzawodnictwa” oraz wyjaśnienie jego potencjału jako materiału dydaktycznego.

Metoda. Jako specyficzną metodę badania przyjęto następującą procedurę: (1) zbadanie traktowania „współzawodnictwa” jako treści nauczania na podstawie The Course of Study, który jest standardem dla japońskiej edukacji szkolnej, (2) zbadanie natury „współzawodnictwa” w kulturze fizycznej i jej potencjału jako materiału dydaktycznego oraz (3) wyjaśnienie charakterystyki Budo w japońskim szkolnym wychowaniu fizycznym i możliwości materiałów dydaktycznych.

Wyniki. W japońskich szkołach „współzawodnictwo” jest prezentowane jako treść nauczania tylko na lekcjach wychowania fizycznego. Ponadto, w japońskiej szkole Budo „wygrana lub przegrana” oraz „atak i obrona” są przedstawiane w odniesieniu do celów przedmiotu WF. Potwierdzono, że „wygrana lub przegrana” oraz „atak i obrona”, słowa związane z „współzawodnictwem” i używane w obrębie Budo w The Course of Study, zostały użyte jako treści nauczania wykorzystywane z zamiarem czerpania przyjemności z rywalizacji/współzawodnictwa oraz relacją „zabawy” w Budo jako kulturze fizycznej, a także w kierunku nabywania reagującego ciała. Co więcej, trening umiejętności wykorzystywany jako materiał dydaktyczny w Budo jest nauczany poprzez uczenie się interpersonalne, a uczenie się ruchów mających na celu nabycie ciała responsywnego. Zmaksymalizuje materiał dydaktyczny charakterystyczny dla Budo, którego celem jest rozwój ataku i obrony. Co więcej, treningi umiejętności wykorzystywane jako materiał dydaktyczny w Budo są przyswajane poprzez uczenie się interpersonalne, a uczenie się ruchów mających na celu zdobycie reagującego ciała zmaksymalizuje materiał dydaktyczny charakterystyczny dla Budo, który ukierunkowany jest na rozwój ataku i obrony. Wnioski. Wyniki badań wyjaśniły, że japońska szkoła Budo charakteryzuje się tym, że uczniowie nabywają umiejętności poprzez interakcję, a następnie uczą się dalszej interakcji poprzez angażowanie się w współzawodnictwo interpersonalne z wykorzystaniem nabytych umiejętności, co ma również znaczenie w nauce kultury fizycznej.