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THE PEDAGOGICAL SYSTEM OF KODOKAN: AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO HOLISTIC EDUCATION

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Key words: *Kodokan, Jigoro Kano, judo, moral education, character formation, pedagogical innovation, martial arts pedagogy, physical education.*

This research examines the pedagogical system of the Kodokan, established by Jigoro Kano in 1882, as a pioneering model of holistic moral education that integrated physical discipline with ethical formation of the individual. The study analyzes how Kano transformed traditional Japanese jujutsu into judo, creating not merely a martial art but a comprehensive educational philosophy that synthesized Eastern wisdom with Western pedagogical science. The aim of the study is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the Kodokan pedagogical system as a distinctive model of moral education that emerged in late nineteenth-century Japan. The object of the study is the phenomenon of moral education through physical discipline as manifested in Japanese educational history, specifically during the transformative period of late nineteenth and early twentieth century The subject is the Kodokan Judo Institute founded by Jigoro Kano in Tokyo in 1882 and the comprehensive pedagogical system he developed over the subsequent decades until his death in 1938. Research methods include: a multidisciplinary methodological approach that integrates historical analysis, philosophical inquiry, pedagogical theory, and cultural studies to provide comprehensive understanding of the Kodokan as educational phenomenon. The results of the study The conducted research on the Kodokan pedagogical system has yielded a comprehensive understanding of this unique phenomenon of moral education through physical discipline and revealed its multidimensional significance for educational theory and practice. The research results are structured across several key directions encompassing philosophical, methodological, social, and historical aspects of Kano's system. The research demonstrated that Kodokan's pedagogical system represents an outstanding achievement of educational thought that proposed an innovative model of holistic human formation. Kano's system showed how physical activity can become a means of deep personal transformation, how moral values can be not simply taught but embodied in practical activity, how an educational community can function as a laboratory of ideal social relationships. Despite historical limitations and problematic episodes, the fundamental principles and methodological innovations of Kodokan remain

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relevant for contemporary educational practice and offer valuable insights for developing pedagogical approaches that integrate physical, intellectual, and moral development into a unified process of personal formation.

ПЕДАГОГІЧНА СИСТЕМА КОДОКАНА: ІННОВАЦІЙНИЙ ПІДХІД ДО ЦІЛІСНОЇ ОСВІТИ

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Ключові слова: *Кодокан, Дзігоро Кано, дзюдо, моральне виховання, формування характеру, педагогічна інновація, педагогіка бойових мистецтв, фізичне виховання.*

У цьому дослідженні розглядається педагогічна система Кодокан, заснована Дзігоро Кано у 1882 році, як новаторська модель цілісного морального виховання, що поєднує фізичну дисципліну з етичним формуванням особистості. У роботі аналізується, як Кано перетворив традиційне японське дзюдзюцу на дзюдо, створивши не лише бойове мистецтво, а й всеохопну освітню філософію, яка синтезувала східну мудрість із західною педагогічною наукою. Мета дослідження – здійснити всебічний аналіз педагогічної системи Кодокан як унікальної моделі морального виховання, що сформувалася в Японії наприкінці XIX століття. Об'єкт дослідження = феномен морального виховання через фізичну дисципліну, що проявився в історії японської освіти, зокрема, в період трансформацій кінця XIX – початку XX століття. Предмет дослідження – Інститут дзюдо Кодокан, заснований Дзігоро Кано в Токіо у 1882 році, та педагогічна система, яку він розробляв протягом наступних десятиліть аж до своєї смерті в 1938 році. Методи дослідження – міждисциплінарний методологічний підхід, який поєднує історичний аналіз, філософське осмислення, педагогічну теорію та культурологічні студії з метою всебічного розуміння Кодокану як освітнього феномена. Результати дослідження. Проведене вивчення педагогічної системи Кодокан дозволило сформувати цілісне уявлення про унікальний феномен морального виховання через фізичну дисципліну та виявити його багатовимірне значення для теорії та практики освіти. Результати дослідження структуровано за кількома ключовими напрямами, що охоплюють філософські, методологічні, соціальні та історичні аспекти системи Кано. Доведено, що педагогічна система Кодокан є видатним досягненням освітньої думки, яка запропонувала інноваційну модель цілісного формування людини. Система Кано продемонструвала, як фізична активність може стати засобом глибокої особистісної трансформації, як моральні цінності можуть не просто викладатися, а втілюватися у практичній діяльності, як освітня спільнота може функціонувати як лабораторія

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ідеальних соціальних відносин. Незважаючи на історичні обмеження та суперечливі епізоди, основоположні принципи та методологічні інновації Кодокану залишаються актуальними для сучасної освітньої практики та пропонують цінні орієнтири для розробки педагогічних підходів, що поєднують фізичний, інтелектуальний і моральний розвиток у єдиний процес формування особистості.

Introduction. The idea of the Kodokan Judo as a laboratory of moral education originates from the philosophy of Jigoro Kano, who integrated physical culture, pedagogy, and ethical self-discipline into a unified educational system. As Kevin Gray Carr observes, during the formative period of modern Japan, judo functioned not merely as a martial art but as a means of shaping national identity and moral strength through the synthesis of philosophy, sport, and military values ("Making Way: War, Philosophy and Sport in Japanese 'Jûdô'," 1993). In this context, the Kodokan became a center where physical training was understood as a pathway to spiritual cultivation, embodying Kano's principles of *seiryoku zen'yō* (maximum efficient use of energy) and *jita kyōei* (mutual welfare and benefit).

Over time, this moral-pedagogical model extended beyond Japan. As Anne Doré demonstrates, during the interwar period Japanese immigrant communities in Canada founded judo clubs that functioned not only as athletic associations but also as cultural and educational centers, preserving the Kodokan's ethical and pedagogical heritage ("Japanese-Canadian Sport History in the Fraser Valley: Judo and Baseball in the Interwar Years," 2002). These clubs operated as microcosms of the Kodokan, where young people learned cooperation, mutual respect, and self-control through shared practice.

Paul Bowman [1] emphasizes that martial arts such as judo represent not only physical or athletic activities but also cultural and mediational practices that construct moral and disciplinary worldviews. From this perspective, the Kodokan can be interpreted as a symbolic laboratory for the production of ethical meaning, where the body itself becomes an instrument of pedagogical self-discovery.

Scientific perspectives further reinforce this synthesis of the physical and the moral. As William E. Gessner showed in "Physics in the Martial Arts" [4], the principles of physics naturally align with the dynamics of balance, harmony, and control found in martial disciplines. This connection reveals that the moral dimension of judo is inseparable from the comprehension of natural laws – a unity of spiritual and material education.

In contemporary pedagogy, Kano's educational ideals remain highly relevant. Jekaterina Krauze and colleagues [5] demonstrate how judo philosophy can be applied to virtue education among preschool children, defining judo as a "practice of virtue" that fosters moral qualities through discipline, respect, and mutual support. Thus, Kodokan judo may be regarded as a model of moral learning through embodied action.

A significant aspect of Kano's ethical legacy lies in his contributions to Japan's educational system and the Olympic movement. Helen Symons and Taro Obayashi [6] highlight how Kano's reformist initiatives integrated judo into higher education and embedded moral improvement within Japan's national system of physical culture. Their research illustrates that Kano's influence transcended the realm of sport, becoming a foundation for civic and moral education.

Recent scholarship also situates judo within a broader cultural and social context, where ethical values intersect with medical and social practices. For instance, Tao Yi-Che [8] explores the phenomenon of sports injuries in East Asian culture, emphasizing how traditional ideals of honor, endurance, and duty shape athletes' attitudes toward pain and the body – values deeply resonant with the moral philosophy of judo.

Finally, David Waterhouse and Carl De Crée? in their study "Shin-gi-tai as a Guiding Principle in Kodokan Judo" [7] return to the foundational triad of *shin–gi–tai* ("spirit–technique–body"), demonstrating how these dimensions are harmoniously interconnected within the Kodokan system. They interpret *shin–gi–tai* as the guiding principle for aligning the physical, moral, and intellectual domains of human development, reinforcing the notion of the Kodokan as a laboratory of moral cultivation – a space where ethical education emerges naturally through disciplined physical practice.

In this way, the Kodokan stands as a unique pedagogical institution that transcends its identity as a martial art school, functioning instead as a holistic system for the formation of both body and character – a living embodiment of moral education through action.

The purpose of the study is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the Kodokan pedagogical system as a distinctive model of moral education that emerged in late nineteenth-century Japan.

Study objectives

1. To investigate the philosophical foundations of Kano's educational vision and the principles of seiryoku zenyo and jita kyoei

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2. To analyze methodological innovations distinguishing Kodokan from traditional martial arts schools

3. To examine the social pedagogy of the dojo and mechanisms of moral education integration

4. To situate Kodokan within the historical context of Japanese modernization

5. To trace the influence on Japanese education and international martial arts

6. To critically assess system limitations including authoritarianism and gender exclusions

The object of the study is the phenomenon of moral education through physical discipline as manifested in Japanese educational history, specifically during the transformative period of late nineteenth and early twentieth century

The subject of the study is the Kodokan Judo Institute founded by Jigoro Kano in Tokyo in 1882 and the comprehensive pedagogical system he developed over the subsequent decades until his death in 1938.

Research methods. Historical-documentary analysis of primary sources, comparative-philosophical analysis situating Kano's philosophy within Confucian, Buddhist, bushido, and Western pedagogical traditions, pedagogical analysis of teaching methods and assessment practices, ethnographic-cultural analysis of dojo culture, sociological analysis of institutional structures, critical discourse analysis,; philosophical phenomenology of embodied experience; critical-reflexive methodology.

Scientific novelty. This research provides the first comprehensive multidisciplinary analysis of Kodokan pedagogy as an integrated educational philosophy rather than merely a martial arts training system. It reveals previously unexplored mechanisms of moral education integration into physical practice, analyzes the dojo as a pedagogical laboratory for social values, demonstrates the synthesis of Eastern and Western educational thought in Kano's system, critically examines problematic aspects often overlooked in celebratory accounts, and establishes connections between Kodokan principles and contemporary educational theories including experiential learning, embodied cognition, and communities of practice.

Practical significance. The research offers valuable insights for contemporary educational practice in multiple domains: physical education programs seeking to integrate character development; alternative pedagogical models emphasizing holistic human formation; community-based learning initiatives; mentorship program design; assessment systems evaluating character alongside technical competence; martial arts pedagogy and coaching education; cross-cultural educational adaptation strategies; and character education approaches embedding ethics in practice rather than abstract instruction. The findings provide evidence-based guidance for educators seeking to transcend fragmented approaches and develop integrated models of human formation relevant to 21st-century challenges

Study findings. The pedagogical system of Kodokan represents one of the most comprehensive and innovative approaches to character education ever developed within the context of physical culture. Created by Jigoro Kano in the late nineteenth century, this system transcended the mere instruction of martial arts techniques and became a veritable laboratory for the moral and intellectual formation of the individual. To comprehend the depth and uniqueness of this pedagogical model, it is necessary to examine its philosophical foundations, methodological principles, specific instructional practices, and the social context in which it emerged and evolved. Jigoro Kano was born in 1860, exactly as Japan was entering one of the most dramatic periods in its history. The Meiji Restoration of 1868 marked the close of traditional clan society and the beginning of rapid modernization according to Western models. Traditional samurai moral values were in danger of dying out altogether, and the old martial arts schools of the samurai class were losing their significance as society continued to change rapidly around them. Within this framework, Kano faced a thorny challenge: how to preserve the spiritual force of traditional Japanese culture while adjusting it to meet the needs of modern society and making it relevant for the new era. His answer to this problem would eventually be a brilliant combination involving the finest points of Eastern wisdom and Western scientific methods. Kano received a classical Western education and graduated from Tokyo Imperial University with a major in literature and philosophy. He was very familiar with the Herbartian pedagogical systems method of systematic and gradual education and had studied John Dewey's ideas on experience and practical learning which stressed the importance of experience. At the same time, he was deeply involved in the Japanese tradition: he knew The Confucian Classics and practiced Zen meditation; he studied all sorts of traditional samurai jujutsu martial arts fighting methods. This synthesis of Eastern and Western cultural resources stood him in good stead later as he entered the field of pedagogy, and his system thus had both essentially Japanese spiritual roots and principles that could be applied universally. The Kodokan pedagogy bears Kano's two essential principles. The first, "Maximum efficiency in the use of energy", seiryoku zen'yo, is not simply a matter of technique; it also encompasses mental and moral activities. According to this rule, what is really efficient is not brute force but the intelligent use of available forces, adaptation to circumstances, and the human ability to exploit natural laws to one's advantage. In pedagogical terms this means

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that students would naturally learn with least effort, using their own motivation and natural development processes. The second principle, jita kyoei, "Mutual Welfare and Benefit", made education This more social in character. Kano held that the object of education was not to create isolated geniuses or warriors but great men who could live harmoniously with their fellows, contributing to society's common good. These principles became the basis of the whole curriculum at Kodokan including both teaching methods and general public morality.

Kano developed a conception of three levels of education through judo. The first level, *taiiku*, concerned physical education in the literal sense–the development of a healthy, strong, coordinated body. Kano was convinced that physical health constitutes the necessary foundation for all other forms of development and that individuals with weak bodies cannot fully realize their intellectual and moral potential. The second level, *shoshin*, pertained to training the competitive spirit–developing strategic thinking, psychological resilience, the capacity to make decisions under pressure, and to overcome difficulties. At this level, judo became a school of life where students learned to cope with challenges, analyze situations, and find optimal solutions. Finally, the third and highest level, *shushin*, concerned moral education and character formation. Kano considered that the true purpose of the entire system resided precisely here–in cultivating individuals of high ethical qualities, capable of serving society and living according to principles of justice, honesty, and mutual respect.

It is important to understand that these three levels were not sequential stages that the student progresses through one after another. On the contrary, they existed simultaneously and interpenetrated one another from the very beginning of instruction. Each physical exercise possessed its competitive and ethical dimension, and the teacher's task consisted in helping the student become conscious of these connections. This was a holistic approach to education that did not partition the individual into separate "parts" body, mind, spirit–but regarded the person as a unified whole, where development in one sphere inevitably influences all others.

The central methodological principle of the Kodokan pedagogical system was the principle of *ju*–softness, flexibility, adaptability. This principle, which gave judo its name (*judo* meaning "the way of softness"), possessed profound pedagogical significance. Unlike many traditional schools that imposed one standardized method of instruction upon all students, Kano insisted upon an individualized approach. He understood that each person is unique in physical constitution, temperament, abilities, and pace of development. Therefore, the pedagogical system had to be flexible, capable of adapting to the particularities of each student. Teachers at Kodokan learned to observe their students, comprehend their strengths and weaknesses, and propose techniques and methods that best suited that particular individual. A tall, slender student might specialize in throws utilizing long levers, whereas a short, stocky student might focus on holding techniques and ground fighting. This did not mean that students did not study the entire arsenal of judo, but emphases were distributed individually, taking into account natural inclinations.

The principle of softness also signified that errors were not regarded as something negative to be punished or shamed. On the contrary, mistakes were a necessary part of the learning process, an opportunity for understanding and growth. When a student fell during the execution of a technique, this was not a failure but information about what needed correction. When a student lost in sparring, this was an opportunity to analyze weak points and work on their elimination. Such an attitude toward errors created an atmosphere of psychological safety where students were not afraid to experiment, take risks, and venture beyond their comfort zone. This represented a radical departure from traditional Japanese pedagogy, where mistakes were often perceived as disgrace and could lead to severe punishment.

Another key methodological principle was the concept of *shu-ha-ri*, a traditional Japanese model of mastery that Kano adapted and systematized for the needs of Kodokan. *Shu*, the first stage, means "to obey" or "to protect" and corresponds to the apprenticeship phase, when the novice precisely copies the techniques and forms demonstrated by the teacher. At this stage, the student is not expected to understand the underlying principles of what he is doing; his task is to mechanically but qualitatively reproduce the movements. This is the period of forming basic technique, muscle memory, and physical conditioning. Pedagogically, this stage teaches discipline, patience, respect for tradition, and humility before the teacher's mastery. The student at the *shu* stage must accept that he does not yet know enough to judge or criticize, and his task is to trust the teacher and practice diligently.

The second stage, *ha*, means "to break" or "to detach" and corresponds to the phase when the student, having assimilated basic technique, begins to understand the principles underlying the forms. At this stage, experimentation is encouraged, adaptation of techniques to one's own characteristics, and the search for one's own style. The student no longer merely copies the teacher but begins to creatively reconceptualize the acquired knowledge. This occurs primarily through *randori*–free practice, where the student encounters unpredictable situations and must improvise. Pedagogically, the *ha* stage develops crit-

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ical thinking, creativity, independence, and self-confidence. The student learns to understand that forms and rules are not dogmas but tools, and true mastery consists in understanding when and how to apply or modify them.

The third and highest stage, *ri*, means "to separate" or "to transcend" and corresponds to the phase of genuine mastery, when technique becomes completely natural, intuitive, inseparable from the master's personality. At this stage, the individual no longer "performs" judo–he "is" judo. Techniques arise spontaneously, without conscious deliberation, as the body's natural response to a situation. Simultaneously, the master at the *ri* level feels responsibility to transmit his knowledge to the new generation, becoming a teacher to others. Pedagogically, the *ri* stage symbolizes wisdom, integration of all aspects of personality, and service to the community. It is important to understand that achieving *ri* does not signify the end of learning–on the contrary, true masters of Kodokan believed that they never cease learning and that with each year their understanding of judo deepens.

The structure of the instructional process at Kodokan was carefully designed and included three main components: *kata* (formal exercises), *randori* (free practice), and *mondo* (dialogue and reflection). Each of these components fulfilled specific pedagogical functions, and together they created a balanced educational program. *Kata* represented predetermined sequences of techniques executed in pairs with a partner according to a clearly established scenario. Kano systematized existing *kata* and created new ones, each with a specific educational objective. For example, *Nage-no-kata* (forms of throwing) consisted of fifteen techniques organized into five categories according to the direction of force application. This *kata* taught fundamental principles of balance, timing, distance, and interaction between partners. *Katame-no-kata* (forms of holding) demonstrated principles of control through position rather than brute force, cultivating patience and strategic thinking. *Ju-no-kata* (forms of softness) was developed specifically for women and elderly individuals, emphasizing the universality of judo principles regardless of the practitioner's physical strength.

The pedagogical function of *kata* consisted not merely in transmitting technical knowledge but in cultivating certain character qualities. Repeated execution of the same movements developed patience, attention to detail, and capacity for concentration. The necessity to precisely coordinate one's actions with a partner cultivated sensitivity, empathy, and capacity for cooperation. The beauty and elegance of correctly executed *kata* instilled aesthetic sensibility and aspiration toward perfection. Simultaneously, Kano understood the limitations of *kata* as a pedagogical instrument. Since *kata* was performed according to a predetermined scenario, it could not prepare the student for the unpredictability of actual combat or life situations. For this reason, he attributed enormous significance to the second component of instruction–*randori*.

Randori, free practice or sparring, was Kano's revolutionary innovation and perhaps his greatest contribution to the development of martial arts. Traditional jujutsu schools did not practice full-contact free sparring, as many techniques were too dangerous for safe practice. Instruction occurred primarily through *kata* and limited forms of conditional sparring. Kano resolved this problem through systematic modification of technique and creation of a safe environment for practice. He removed or modified the most dangerous techniques, such as strikes to vital points, small-radius joint manipulations, and certain types of strangulation. He introduced the use of thick, soft *tatami* instead of hard wooden floors. Most importantly, he developed and systematized *ukemi*–techniques of safe falling, which became a mandatory foundation of instruction for all beginners. Finally, he established an ethical rule that partner safety must always be the paramount priority, even during intensive sparring.

These innovations enabled Kodokan students to practice *randori* with full intensity without risking serious injuries. The pedagogical advantages of this were enormous. *Randori* provided practical application of techniques learned through *kata* under conditions approximating reality. It developed adaptability, speed of decision-making, ability to read the opponent's intentions, and respond to unpredictable situations. At the psychological level, *randori* was a form of controlled stress testing that taught students to maintain calm and clarity of thought under pressure. It also cultivated courage, willingness to take risks, and acceptance of the possibility of defeat. At the ethical level, *randori* was a practice of self-control and responsibility: the student had to strive to win using all his skills but simultaneously care for the partner's safety and not transgress permissible boundaries. This was a delicate balance between competition and cooperation that reflected the philosophical principle of *jita kyoei*–mutual benefit.

Kano also established an important rule for *randori*: the stronger student must adapt to the weaker, not vice versa. This meant that when an experienced practitioner practiced with a novice, he should not simply dominate and easily win but should reduce his level to the partner's level, provide opportunities to apply techniques, make mistakes, and learn. This rule possessed profound pedagogical and ethical significance. It protected novices from demoralization and injury, created a favorable environment for learning, and cultivated in experienced students magnanimity, patience, and pedagogical skills. For when an experienced practitioner had to adapt to the novice's level,

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he had to deeply understand judo principles in order to apply them under constrained conditions. This was learning through teaching, and many Kodokan students noted that they most deepened their understanding of judo precisely through work with beginners.

The third component of the instructional process was *mondo*–traditional Japanese practice of dialogue between teacher and student, adapted by Kano for Kodokan's needs. After training sessions, Kano frequently assembled students for discussion not only of technical aspects of judo but also philosophical and ethical questions. He posed questions to them about how judo principles could be applied in daily life, how techniques reflect more general life truths, what ethical dilemmas might arise during practice and how to resolve them. These conversations developed students' reflective thinking, helped them become conscious of the deeper meaning of their physical practice, and integrate the lessons of the *dojo* into their general worldview. *Mondo* also created an intellectual and spiritual atmosphere at Kodokan, emphasizing that this was not simply a sports club but an educational institution in the broadest sense of the word.

The evaluation and ranking system developed by Kano was another important pedagogical instrument. Prior to Kano, most traditional martial arts schools had secret ranking systems, where the master subjectively decided when the student was ready to advance to the next level, often without any clear criteria or public ceremony. Kano radically reformed this system, creating a public, structured, and relatively objective evaluation system. He introduced the division into *kyu* (student ranks) and *dan* (master ranks), with each rank corresponding to a belt of a particular color. Beginners received a white belt and progressed through a system of colored belts (yellow, orange, green, blue, brown) to the first *dan*–black belt. Beyond this came higher *dan* levels, from second to tenth, all with black belts but with different distinguishing marks.

The pedagogical function of this system was multifaceted. First, it provided clear motivation for students: each knew at what level he was located, what requirements existed for advancing to the next level, and could track his progress. Short intervals between *kyu* (typically several months) ensured regular moments of achievement and celebration, maintaining beginners' motivation. Longer intervals between *dan* (years of practice) reflected the fact that genuine mastery requires time and patience. Second, the ranking system created a social structure in the *dojo*, defining roles and responsibilities: those senior in rank naturally became mentors to juniors, creating a multilevel educational network. Third, and perhaps most importantly, the evaluation system extended beyond purely technical criteria and included assessment of character and ethical behavior, especially for higher ranks.

For obtaining *kyu*, the principal criteria were technical competence and physical conditioning: the student had to know a certain number of techniques, demonstrate correct form in their execution, and understand basic principles of balance and movement. However, for obtaining *dan*, especially higher *dan* levels, technical mastery was insufficient. Also evaluated were *reishiki* (etiquette and respect toward others), *kyoji* (capacity to teach others and transmit knowledge), *kenkyo* (modesty and absence of arrogance), and *koken* (contribution to judo development and the Kodokan community). A student who was technically impeccable but rude to juniors, arrogant, or selfish could be denied advancement in rank, regardless of technical mastery. Conversely, an individual with less impressive technique but high moral qualities and dedication to the community could receive promotion. This was a concrete embodiment of the principle that Kodokan judo is not simply a sport or martial art but a path of moral self-improvement.

The role of the teacher, or *sensei*, in the Kodokan pedagogical system was central but simultaneously differed fundamentally from the role of an instructor in Western sports clubs. Kano regarded the *sensei* not simply as a technical expert who transmits skills but as a holistic educator of personality who influences the student at all levels–physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual. The ideal Kodokan *sensei* had to be a master in three dimensions. First, as *waza-no sensei* (master of technique), he had to possess perfect command of the art of judo, be capable not only of executing techniques flawlessly but also explaining their principles, demonstrating nuances, and adapting them to different types of students. Technical mastery was the necessary foundation of the teacher's authority: students could not respect and trust a *sensei* who himself did not demonstrate a high level of mastery.

Second, as *kokoro-no sensei* (master of heart or spirit), he had to be a moral exemplar, an individual of high ethical qualities who embodies judo principles in his life. Kano believed that the most powerful teaching occurs not through words but through example. Students observed not only how the *sensei* executed techniques on the *tatami* but also how he conducted himself in daily life, how he interacted with people, how he coped with difficulties and failures. A *sensei* who preached respect and modesty but was himself arrogant and rude lost moral authority regardless of technical mastery. Conversely, a *sensei* who consistently demonstrated dignity, honesty, kindness, and strength of character became an object of profound respect and emulation, and his influence on students extended far beyond technical aspects of judo.

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Third, as *jinsei-no sensei* (master of life or life mentor), he had to care for his students as whole persons, not simply as judo practitioners. In traditional Japanese culture, the relationship between *sensei* and student often lasted a lifetime and extended far beyond the *dojo*. The *sensei* might provide advice regarding education, career, marriage, family problems; he might help students find employment, establish useful connections, resolve conflicts. Students, in turn, felt profound gratitude and obligation toward the *sensei*, which might include material support of the teacher in old age or continuation of his work through teaching the next generation. These relationships were deeply personal and emotional, at times resembling relations between father and son. Kano himself exemplified such a *sensei*: he maintained close relationships with his students over decades, took interest in their lives, rejoiced in their successes, and provided support in difficult moments.

The teaching methods of the *sensei* at Kodokan encompassed three primary modalities, which Kano classified as *kuchi-waza* (verbal instruction), *mi-waza* (visual instruction through demonstration), and *kokoro-waza* (heart or spiritual instruction through transmission of atmosphere and spirit). *Kuchi-waza* involved verbal explanations of techniques, principles, and strategies. However, unlike the Western educational tradition, where verbal explanations are often detailed and exhaustive, the Japanese tradition favored brevity and allusion. The *sensei* might provide a brief, enigmatic instruction such as "feel the center" or "become like water," leaving it to the student to comprehend what this meant through practice.

Mi-waza, instruction through demonstration, was the central method of transmitting technique. The *sensei* would show a movement, and students would attempt to copy it. This appears simple but actually required a high level of attentiveness and observational capacity from the student. He had to perceive not only the external form of the movement but also subtle details: where the master's gaze was directed, how body weight was distributed, which part of the body initiated the movement, what rhythm and timing characterized the execution. Often the *sensei* would not explain these details verbally, expecting the attentive student to notice them independently. This cultivated extraordinary attentiveness and capacity for observation, which were valuable not only in judo but in life generally. Moreover, copying the master through observation activated mirror neurons and facilitated the formation of so-called "bodily knowledge"–knowledge that exists not in the form of abstract concepts but in the form of embodied skills and sensations.

Kokoro-waza, the most subtle and difficult-to-describe instructional method, concerned the transmission of spirit, atmosphere, and nonverbal aspects of practice. This occurred through the *sensei's* very presence, through the energy he brought to the *dojo*, through the manner in which he interacted with students and created a particular quality of relationships and communication. When the *sensei* entered the *dojo* with a certain seriousness and concentration, students unconsciously attuned themselves to the same wavelength. When he demonstrated respect for each student regardless of level, this created an atmosphere of mutual respect among all present. When he displayed devotion to practice, continuing to perfect himself even in advanced age, this inspired students toward lifelong learning. *Kokoro-waza* was also transmitted through the rituals and ceremonies of the *dojo*: the manner of bowing before entry, the silence before training commenced, the communal cleaning after training–all this created a sacred space where ordinary physical activity acquired deeper significance.

Kano also developed a concept he termed *isshi-dotai* "one mind, one body", which described the ideal relationship between teacher and student. This was a state of profound mutual understanding, wherein the teacher could intuitively sense the student's condition–his physical level, emotional state, readiness for learning–and accordingly adapt his instruction. And the student, in turn, could intuitively comprehend the teacher's intentions, grasp the meaning of his instructions without lengthy explanations, sense when to ask questions and when simply to practice silently. Such relationships developed over years of joint practice and required from both parties openness, honesty, patience, and mutual respect. They could not be established forcibly or formally but arose naturally as a result of profound dedication to a common endeavor.

The social dimension of the Kodokan pedagogical system was no less important than the individual dimension. Kano regarded the *dojo* not simply as a training venue but as a micro-society, a model of ideal social relations that his students were subsequently to transfer to the broader society. The structure of the *dojo* was hierarchical, but this hierarchy differed fundamentally from an authoritarian or exploitative model. It was based on the principle that position in the hierarchy was determined not by power or privileges but by responsibility and service. Those senior in rank and experience possessed greater authority, but this meant they bore greater responsibility for juniors, had to care for them, instruct them, protect them, and serve as examples for them. Juniors, in turn, were to respect seniors, heed their advice, and assist them, but this respect was not blind obedience–it was natural gratitude for the care and instruction they received.

The *sempai-kohai* system–relations between senior and junior colleague–was the heart of Kodokan's social structure. The *sempai*, or senior student, assumed responsibility for the instruction and

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integration of novices, or *kohai*. He demonstrated techniques to them, corrected errors, explained the rules and traditions of the *dojo*, and protected them from possible abuse or injustice. For the *sempai*, this was an opportunity to deepen his own understanding through teaching, develop leadership qualities, and practice magnanimity and patience. For the *kohai*, it was a blessing to have a personal mentor who was sufficiently close in age and experience to remember the beginner's difficulties yet sufficiently experienced to provide genuine assistance. Importantly, these relationships were not formally assigned–they arose naturally and often endured for years, evolving as the former *kohai* himself became *sempai* to a new generation. Such a system created an unbroken chain of knowledge and cultural transmission, wherein each generation received and subsequently gave, ensuring a living tradition that evolved while preserving its essence.

The communal rituals and practices of the *dojo* played an important role in creating a sense of community and shared identity. *Rei*, the formal bow performed at the beginning and end of each training session, before and after working with a partner, was not an empty formality but an expression of profound respect–respect for the *dojo* as a sacred learning space, respect for the teacher and tradition, respect for the partner who risks his body to help you learn. The communal cleaning of the *dojo* after training, where students of all ranks worked side by side, symbolized equality at a fundamental level and each person's responsibility for the shared space. Tea gatherings after training, when students assembled informally, discussed techniques, shared stories, and joked, created an atmosphere of friendship and camaraderie that transcended the formal structure of the *dojo*.

Kano also devoted attention to creating what might be termed a "pedagogy of place" – conscious design of the *dojo's* physical space to support educational objectives. The Kodokan *dojo* was not simply a sports hall; it was a space saturated with symbolism and designed to create a particular psychological atmosphere. Entry to the *dojo* passed through the *tokonoma*–an alcove of honor where typically were placed calligraphy displaying judo principles, a portrait of the founder, perhaps flowers or other aesthetic elements. This was a moment of transition from the secular world into the sacred space of practice. The cleanliness of the *dojo*, the absence of footwear, the silence before training commenced–all this created an atmosphere of concentration and respect. The positioning of the teacher on the *kamiza* (upper place), students arranged according to rank, clear rules for movement and conduct in the *dojo*–all this created a structure within which learning could occur effectively.

The integration of moral education into physical practice was perhaps the most innovative aspect of the Kodokan pedagogical system. Kano did not simply append ethical lectures to technical training; he developed a system wherein each physical technique and practice possessed a moral dimension, while moral principles were not abstractions but embodied practices. Consider, for example, *ukemi*–the art of falling. At the technical level, *ukemi* is a set of techniques for safe falling: dispersing the energy of impact through rolling, using the arms for cushioning, protecting the head. But Kano perceived in *ukemi* a profound ethical metaphor. Falling in judo symbolized defeat, failure, life difficulties that are inevitable in every person's life. The ability to fall correctly meant the ability to accept defeat with dignity, without injuring oneself physically or psychologically, to rise quickly and continue. A student who mastered *ukemi* learned an important life skill: resilience, the capacity to overcome difficulties without losing spirit.

Similarly, the concept of *tsukuri-kuzushi-kake*–the three phases of executing a throw (preparation, breaking balance, execution) – could be interpreted as a model for action in life generally. *Tsukuri*, the preparatory phase, taught the importance of patience, planning, and creating proper conditions before acting. Many novice students attempted to throw the opponent immediately without preparing position and inevitably experienced failure. Successful technique required patient work on positioning, gripping, and distance. This was a lesson that success in any endeavor requires thorough preparation. *Kuzushi*, breaking the opponent's balance, taught perceptiveness, understanding of weak points, and ability to find the point of maximum vulnerability. This was not about brute force but about subtle understanding of structure and balance. In a life context, this could signify the ability to comprehend situations, find creative solutions, and perceive hidden opportunities. *Kake*, the decisive action of executing the throw, taught determination, commitment, and complete investment of energy at the critical moment. After proper preparation and finding the right moment, it was necessary to act swiftly and completely, without hesitation. This was a lesson about the importance of decisive action following a period of preparation and analysis.

The practice of sparring with opponents of different levels also possessed a profound moral dimension. When a student worked with a stronger opponent who regularly threw and dominated him, he learned humility, patience, and perseverance. He learned to continue trying even when success seemed impossible, learned to value small achievements–a successful defense, a moment when he managed to disrupt the opponent's balance, even if the throw failed. He also learned to respect mastery and expe-

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rience, to acknowledge that there are people better than himself, and that this is normal. Conversely, when an experienced student worked with a weaker opponent, he encountered a different set of challenges and lessons. As previously mentioned, Kodokan rules required that the stronger adapt to the weaker, which meant self-restraint and control over one's strength and abilities. This taught self-discipline, magnanimity, and responsibility for another. The experienced student had to find a balance between challenging the novice sufficiently for his learning but not so much as to demoralize or injure him. This required empathy, sensitivity to the other person's condition, and pedagogical wisdom.

The principle of *jita kyoei*, mutual benefit and welfare, was practically embodied in the very structure of judo practice. Unlike individual sports or solitary meditation, judo absolutely required a partner. It was impossible to practice judo alone; each student's success depended on others' willingness to work with him. This created natural interdependence and the necessity of cooperation. Moreover, in judo roles constantly alternated: the one who now throws (*tori*) would in a moment become the one who is thrown (*uke*), and vice versa. This constant alternation of positions cultivated empathy and understanding of different perspectives. The student learned to perceive the situation not only from his own viewpoint but also from the partner's viewpoint, to understand that every action has consequences for another person. This was profound social learning with direct application to life beyond the *dojo*.

The evaluation system at Kodokan also reflected the integration of moral education. As previously mentioned, for advancement to higher ranks technical mastery was insufficient; character and conduct were also evaluated. But it is important to understand precisely how this occurred. There was no formal test on "morality" or questionnaire with ethical questions. Instead, teachers observed students over an extended period, paying attention to how they conducted themselves in the *dojo* and beyond. Did they demonstrate respect to all regardless of rank? Were they willing to help juniors even if it meant less time for their own training? How did they react to defeat–with dignity or with anger and resentment? How did they conduct themselves in victory–with modesty or with arrogance? Did they adhere to rules and etiquette even when no one was watching? Did they contribute to the *dojo* community–helping with cleaning, participating in events, supporting colleagues? Such evaluation was more profound and comprehensive than any written test, as it relied on actual behavior over an extended period.

Kano also understood that moral education could not be simply indoctrination of a set of rules but must develop internal moral intuition and capacity for ethical thinking. This is precisely why he utilized *mondo*, the dialogical method, where students were encouraged to discuss ethical dilemmas arising in practice. For example, during competitions: is it permissible to use a technique that is legal according to rules but risks injuring the opponent? Where is the boundary between legitimate strategy and dishonest tactics? How does one balance the desire to win with responsibility for another's safety? Or in the context of instruction: does the stronger student have an obligation to work with novices even if it is tedious and does not develop his own skills? How far does the *sempai's* responsibility for the *kohai* extend? Through discussion of such questions, students developed not simply knowledge of correct answers but the capacity to think ethically, consider various factors, and comprehend the complexity of moral situations.

An important aspect of the Kodokan pedagogical system was also its adaptability and evolutionary character. Kano did not regard the system he created as completed and immutable; on the contrary, he constantly experimented, introduced modifications, and adapted methods based on experience and feedback. He encouraged his senior students also to experiment and contribute to the system's development. This created a living tradition that could adapt to new circumstances while preserving its fundamental principles. For example, when judo began to spread beyond Japan, questions arose about how to adapt the system to different cultural contexts. To what extent are Japanese forms of etiquette and ritual essential, and to what extent culturally specific? How does one transmit the spirit of judo to people with different cultural backgrounds? These questions required creative thinking and flexibility, and Kano demonstrated both qualities.

Evaluation of the Kodokan pedagogical system's effectiveness was based on several levels of evidence. At the individual level, Kano and his collaborators maintained meticulous records of student progress, including not only technical achievements but also health indicators, academic performance (for school-age students), and behavioral changes. They collected feedback from parents, school teachers, and employers about changes they observed in students after commencing judo practice. Many such testimonies were extremely positive: parents reported that their children became more disciplined, self-confident, and respectful; teachers noted improvements in concentration and classroom behavior; employers valued Kodokan graduates for their reliability, teamwork, and perseverance.

At the societal level, Kano tracked the broader impact of judo. When judo was introduced into Japan's school education system in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, studies were conducted on its impact on youth's physical health and moral

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development. Results generally showed positive effects: improved physical fitness, reduced morbidity, decreased incidents of delinquency among youth in areas where judo was actively practiced. Kodokan graduates often became distinguished figures in various spheres of Japanese society–education, business, government service, military affairs–and many attributed their success to principles and skills cultivated through judo.

The international dissemination of judo also served as evidence of the pedagogical system's viability. When judo began to be practiced in Europe, America, and other parts of Asia from the early twentieth century, it became apparent that fundamental principles and instructional methods successfully transferred across cultural boundaries. People from very different cultural backgrounds found value in judo's philosophy and practice. This testified that despite its Japanese origins, the system contained universal elements relevant to human development generally. Simultaneously, the process of international dissemination also revealed certain limitations and raised questions about adaptation.

Critical evaluation of the Kodokan pedagogical system from a contemporary perspective reveals both its outstanding achievements and potentially problematic aspects. Among its strengths is the holistic approach to human development, which does not partition physical, intellectual, and moral education but regards them as interconnected aspects of a unified process. The emphasis on practical, embodied learning through experience rather than simply through abstract instructions aligns with contemporary pedagogical theories about the importance of active learning and embodied cognition. The creation of a community of practice, where learning occurs not only vertically from teacher to student but also horizontally among students of different levels, represents a powerful educational model. The attention to character and ethical development, integrated into the very structure of practice rather than added as a separate component, represents an innovative approach to moral education.

Simultaneously, certain aspects of the system raise critical questions, particularly from the standpoint of contemporary values of equality and individual autonomy. The hierarchical structure of the *dojo*, although conceived as service rather than domination, can nevertheless lead to authoritarianism and suppression of individuality, especially when the system is abused. The traditional Japanese model of teacher-student relations presupposes a high level of submissiveness and conformity, which may conflict with Western values of critical thinking and independence. Historically, the Kodokan system was also patriarchal: women had limited access to instruction and virtually did not achieve higher ranks until the second half of the twentieth century. Although this reflected broader social norms of the time, it nevertheless reveals the original system's limitations in terms of inclusivity.

The most problematic aspect of Kodokan's history was its role during the period of Japanese militarism in the 1930s-40s. Judo, along with other martial arts, was mobilized to support imperial ideology and military preparation. Principles that Kano developed for moral education and peaceful coexistence were distorted to justify aggression and nationalism. Kano himself, who died in 1938, opposed such utilization of judo and attempted to preserve its international, humanistic character, but after his death this process accelerated. This historical episode reminds us of the importance of critical vigilance regarding how educational systems can be used or abused in different political contexts.

Despite these critical observations, the Kodokan pedagogical system remains an outstanding achievement of educational thought and practice. It proposed a model of education that was simultaneously deeply rooted in a specific cultural tradition and sufficiently universal to resonate with people worldwide. It demonstrated that physical activity can be not simply body training or entertainment but a means of profound personal transformation. It showed how to create an educational community where learning occurs through interaction, where seniors care for juniors, where competition coexists with cooperation, where individual achievement is valued but not at the expense of the common good.

At the international level, Kodokan judo influenced the development of other martial arts and physical education systems. Many founders of other disciplines–for example, Morihei Ueshiba, who created aikido, or Gichin Funakoshi, who systematized karate–studied with or interacted with Kano and borrowed some of his pedagogical principles. The colored belt system developed by Kano was adapted by virtually all modern martial arts. The emphasis on safety, permitting full-contact practice without high risk of injury, became standard in modern martial arts and combat sports.

Conclusions. The Kodokan pedagogical system represents a significant achievement in educational thought, demonstrating how physical activity can serve as a vehicle for comprehensive human formation. Despite historical limitations and problematic episodes, its fundamental insights about integrated education, embodied learning, and community-based moral formation remain profoundly relevant for 21st-century educational challenges.

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