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SOUND KARATE AS A SCHOOL SPORT IN GERMANY

I. Initial conditions for school karate in Germany

In 1993, the ministers of education in Germany resolved that all “...types of sport involving dangerous striking techniques are banned” in all state schools in Germany. Besides taekwondo, kickboxing and others, karate was also classified as one of these banned sports. Following an appeal by the School Sports Officer of the German Karate Federation to review this resolution and possibly modify it or suspend it in relation to karate, the ministers of education reaffirmed the ban in 2000.

It was therefore a great opportunity when the German Karate Federation learned in 2001 that Professor Ascieri from the Italian karate federation had developed a concept specifically for school sports, which he called the “Multimedia/Sound Karate Schools Project”. The German Karate Federation acquired the rights to this concept and the School Sports Officer of the federation adapted it for the German school system.

The elements of the sound-karate system were deliberately designed so that they would no longer conflict with the ministerial restrictions; it was then possible to convince the ministries of education in various federal states of this fact, which led to an approval for sound-karate teaching in state schools in many locations. Even so, teaching in the traditional karate-do is still subject to extremely severe restrictions.

II. The sound-karate concept – aims and contents

A. Aims:

A range of aims are pursued with the help of the concept, which, at a first glance, may even appear slightly contradictory in terms of their variety. There are long-term aims, tactical and strategic aims and political and content aims. When formulating the various aims, it is necessary to avoid overloading this concept too much with target specifications and expectations. On the one hand, it does of course boast a rich source of potential opportunities in all the stated target areas but, on the other hand, we must remember that achieving these

aims depends on a large number of variables and imponderables. So the full range of the aims sketched out below should not give the impression that we have found an ideal solution. However, they will help to emphasise the special quality that the sound-karate concept brings to school sport (and of course also to club sport).

a. Short- and long-term aims – schools:

In the short term, the main aim is simply to make sure that karate is allowed to be taught in state schools in Germany. The ministries of education in several federal states in Germany no longer regard the contents of sound karate as an infringement of the general ban on karate issued by the conference of the ministers of education. As a result, the concept has been and is successful in this area.

In the long term, we are endeavouring to ensure that the positive effects of sound-karate teaching are so evident that no federal-state ministry of education will be able to refute this finding, so that sound karate will be permitted in all the state schools in all the federal states.

It will only be possible to bring about the social acceptance of the martial art of karate when it is represented on an equal basis in school sports.

b. Tactical and strategic aims – karate clubs, the Karate Federation:

Experience above all in Italy has shown that the transfer rates of pupils from school karate to club karate are changing. In the clubs, the pupils can broaden their karate spectrum, explore the traditional karate-do and, if they wish, they can take part in competitions.

The Karate Federation is the main beneficiary of this positive development in schools: the clubs and so the federation get more members, so the federation gets more income, it receives larger subsidies, better possibilities for exerting influence, a greater presence on all decision-making levels and a greater presence in the media.

These developments in the clubs and the federation are just as important for the general acceptance of karate in all levels of society as school karate, which can give a decisive impetus to the entire progress of the sport.

c. Political aims – karate as an Olympic sport:

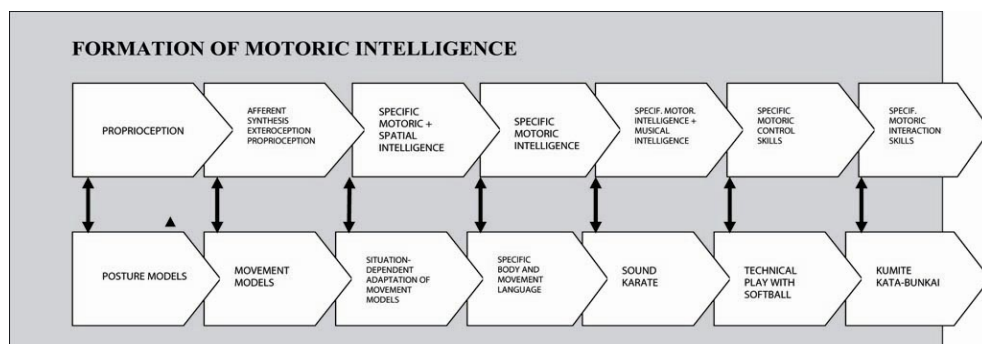
A long-term political aim is that karate should be given the status of an Olympic sport. This status has had a whole series of considerable further effects on every type of sport that was previously regarded merely as a “minority sport”. A crucial effect would be an increase in the media presence. As nowadays the “market value” of a sport is mainly measured by its media presence, this has an enormous influence on all of the other targets.

And this would also complete the circle: the introduction of sound karate in school sports would contribute to an increase in the acceptance of karate in society as a whole, which would then also help us to become Olympic. The new status as an “Olympic sport” would play its part in giving karate a chance as a school sport, where scepticism and rejection have always held the upper hand in the past.

d. Content aims – social education and motor activity:

The essential aims of school sound-karate teaching can be divided into two broad areas:

- Social education:
 - The social-educational effect is immanent in the training of a martial art such as sound karate; the point is to use this fact for school sports.
 - Karate is ideally suited to schools in terms of violence prevention and therapy.
 - Karate is ideally suitable both as an educational instrument for avoiding aggression and for reducing aggression by controlling it.
- Motor activity:
 - The effect of the general movement training in sound karate is particularly relevant for school sport.
 - The emphasis is on the general training of basic sport skills in children and adolescents between 6 and 18 years.
 - Particular attention is paid to the training of motor activity.
 - It is possible to represent the “DNA” of the sound-karate project in terms of training motor activity in graphic terms by citing Gardner (Howard Gardner: ‘Frames of Mind’):



The following always applies:

The specialisation (sound karate) is merely a means to achieve the aims, and never the aim itself.

B. Contents – overview:

- The same content structure applies to all class groups (classes 1-13) and age groups (6-18 years) and consistently follows the principles that are relevant in the “Formation of motoric intelligence” shown above.

- The selective use of media during teaching helps to keep the training varied and motivating.

- Thanks to the flexibly suspended softball, which represents the partner, any remainder of theoretically possible risks for the health is excluded.

- The concept consistently covers three areas for each class group:

- Unstructured exercises:

BASIC COURSE 1-5 with exercises for training motor activity, strength and speed. At this point, no karate techniques are learned or practised.

- Semi-structured exercises:

CIRCLE A, B, C with a mixture of stretching and strengthening exercises and COMBINATIONS OF TECHNIQUES to train motor activity.

TECHNIQUES WITH THE SOFTBALL: A mixture of individual karate techniques and COMBINATIONS OF TECHNIQUES on the suspended softball. The softball replaces a partner and must not be touched when performing the techniques.

- Structured exercises:

SOUND KARATE: Technique, rhythm and motor-activity training. The pupils work with a metronome and the latest pop music, which must be in 4/4 time and between 70 and 110 beats per minute (BPM).

KUMITE: “Sparring training” with implementation of the acquired repertoire of techniques. In the case of beginners, the partner is again replaced with the suspended softball. Advanced pupils may fight with a restricted repertoire of techniques with a real partner, but only where fighting according to the rules with a real partner is permitted.

C. Aims and contents – Class 8 as an example:

Taking class group 8 as an example, which corresponds to the age of approx. 14 years, a sample of the aims and contents can be shown. The following representation dispenses with a reproduction of the graphics showing the exercises in detail.

AIMS, CLASS GROUP 8**GENERAL AIMS**

- Development of senso-perceptive skills
- Consolidation and perfection of motor activity
- Development of movement-related behaviour

- Development of socially relevant behaviour
- Movement and communication
- Karate, learning a new motor activity

SPECIFIC AIMS

- Development of perception skills with particular consideration of “exteroception”, that is, the development of senso-perceptive skills in relation to the “external” environment and the integration of all functions of the perceptive system (afferent synthesis)
 - Hand-eye, foot-eye and segmentary coordination
 - Spatial and temporal orientation
 - General coordination skills with particular emphasis on reaction skills, balance, motoric control and rhythm
 - Mobility
 - Basics of karate, sound karate, interaction in pairs, competition
 - Training of socially relevant behaviour, aggression control
- The specific didactic aims of this procedure are determined in detail in each case after a detailed analysis of the initial situation.

DIDACTICS AND METHODOLOGY

- Exercises for the perception and differentiation of different parts of the body (when prone, moving, etc.), the sport equipment used and the other pupils in motion, etc.
 - Exercises in which basic motoric actions are practised in various ways
 - Ball exercises, preliminary exercises for karate
 - Interactive games with various aids
 - Passive and active mobility exercises
 - Mixed courses, that cover basic motoric actions
 - Circle training
 - Situational games (individual and team)
 - Specific motoric basics (posture, alertness, shifts, defence, attacks with arms and legs, eg, with suspended ball, sound karate, elementary interactions in pairs, semi-free, free, etc.)

The most effective methods for pursuing the aims defined in the planning phase are:

- Playful method
- Method of free research
- Method of problem-solving (karate)
- Method of repetitions (karate)

ASSESSMENT

Assessment is a good possibility to discover whether and how the aims defined in the programme have been achieved. The assessment is made with the following data:

- Observations during training of the performance of the exercises by the individual pupils

- Periodic surveys using motoric tests
- Basics of karate, sound karate
- Basic combat techniques

The assessment of the data and the adjustment to the biophysical development level of the pupils are necessary steps to ensuring an effective contribution to their education.

CONTENTS, CLASS GROUP 8

BASIC COURSE (5)

4 tracks, 7 tasks, each track 10 metres long, after an “error” the exercise must be repeated

- 1st track** 1.) 1 forward roll
 2.) 1 flying roll
 3.) Two-handed throw with a medicine ball (2 kg) forwards (football throw-in)
- 2nd track** 4.) 4 successive pedal movements – right – left
- 3rd track** 5.) Standing jumps with feet closed (knee angle 90°)
 6.) Aimed throw with a tennis ring (up to 4 attempts)
- 4th track** 7.) Final sprint crawling on all fours

CIRCLE C

4 stations, 4 tasks, defined number of repetitions

- 1st station** 2 forward rolls
- 2nd station** 6 mawashi-geri with the back leg, right-left alternately
- 3rd station** 3 backward rolls
- 4th station** 6 ushiro-ura-mawashi-geri with the back leg, right-left alternately

TECHNIQUE EXERCISES

- In Germany, sound karate is currently the only option in school sports due to the existing ban on “types of sport involving dangerous striking techniques”.

- Sound karate involves technique exercises, which are carried out either alone or in a team (3-12 persons, regardless of gender) with music.
- There are 3 specified combinations (blocks of four).
- The following applies to all of the blocks of four: in the starting position, the feet are together, the right fist rests at belt height in the left palm and the arms are braced.

1st COMBINATION

- 1st beat** Right foot back, gedan-barai, left
- 2nd beat** Gyaku-zuki, right
- 3rd beat** Oi-zuki, left
- 4th beat** Back to starting position, then continue with 1st beat (change of sides)

2nd COMBINATION

- 1st beat** Mae-geri, left
- 2nd beat** Back (complete in parallel)
- 3rd beat** Left leg back with simultaneous double block (gedan-barai right and nagashi-uke jodan left)
- 4th beat** Uraken-uchi, right, then continue with 1st beat (change of sides)

3rd COMBINATION

- 1st beat** Mawashi-geri, right
- 2nd beat** Back (complete in parallel)
- 3rd beat** Left back with simultaneous age-uke, right
- 4th beat** Gyaku-zuki, left, then continue with 1st beat (change of sides)

KUMITE

Basic principles

- In Germany, sound karate is currently the only option in school sports due to the existing ban on “types of sport involving dangerous striking techniques”.
- The “KUMITE” described below is therefore only to be regarded as an alternative for countries in which there are no such restrictions.
- A decisive factor for the justifiability of the KUMITE in school sport is that
 - the repertoire of PERMITTED TECHNIQUES is extremely restricted and
 - the PERMITTED and BANNED ACTIONS are clearly defined.

AIMS

- The aim of the KUMITE is to demonstrate the individual technical repertoire in the context of a tactical exercise that has been prepared according to the pupil's age. The aggressive dynamics are symbolised by precisely mastered attacks and defences. The behaviour must always be appropriate and free from any aggressive ostentation. Fighting shouts (kiai) are therefore forbidden.

- The pupils must demonstrate their technical and tactical skills as follows:

Symmetry: Symmetry in the most important attacks

Tactics: Organisation, rationality, creative tactical behaviour in defence and attack

Control: Actions and attacks

Spatial and temporal structuring: Correct choice of distance and timing

WEIGHT CLASSES

- **Male:** At least 35 kg, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60, 65, 70 and 80 kg

- **Female:** At least 35 kg, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60 and 65 kg

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

A. Implementation:

- Duration 80 seconds, intermediate signal after 60 seconds
- Interruption by the main referee if the combat appears unstructured or confused

- Interruption to prevent potentially dangerous situations

- Interruption to assign sanctions if rules are infringed

B. Permitted techniques:

- Without contact to head, face or neck, the following techniques are permitted:

Uraken Mawashi-geri, ura-mawashi-geri

- Controlled to the chest (protected by jacket), the following techniques are permitted:

Gyaku-zuki, oi-zuki, Mawashi-geri

C. Banned behaviour and banned techniques:

- Aggressive posture

- Fighting shouts

- Banned or permitted techniques against excluded parts of the body

- Uncontrolled techniques with arms or legs

POINTS SYSTEM

1. **Arm technique**
1-3 points
(performance – symmetry)
2. **Leg technique**
1-6 points
(performance – symmetry)
3. **Tactics**
1-6 points
(organisation, suitability, creativity
in attack and defence phases)
4. **Controlled attacks**
1-5 points

PENALTY POINTS

- The evaluation and comments on the penalty points are available in the relevant protocols, where the overall evaluation is also specified.
- No draw is possible.
- In the case of stepping outside the combat area, inadequate technique, incorrect technique or banned actions, the following sequence applies:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Caution – “jogai” | 1st infringement – warning
- 1 point |
| 2. Penalty – “keikoku” | 2nd infringement, control, dangerous
and/or banned actions, mubobi
- 2 points |
| 3. Penalty – “hansoku-chui” | 3rd infringement, control, dangerous
and/or banned actions, mubobi
- 3 points |
| 4. Interruption – “hansoku” | 4th infringement, control, dangerous
and/or banned actions, mubobi
Disqualification |

III. Results – consequences for school karate in Germany

If we consider the effects of the distribution of the sound-karate concept in Germany so far, we can see clear consequences for school karate on at least two different levels:

a. Consequences for “school karate” in the German Karate Federation:

The “sound karate” project designed for school sports has also been slightly adjusted and adopted for club sport. “Sound-karate trainers” are being licensed by the German Karate Federation who are already training children and adolescents in many clubs according to this concept.

Most of the decision-makers in the federation were forced to reconsider as it became clear that this concept could promote the introduction of karate for the first time in school sports on a broad scale. With the sound-karate concept, the federation now features for the first time an offer for children and adolescents of all age groups in state schools, which has been specially designed for their requirements and complies with the applicable legal specifications for school sports in Germany. This led to a dramatic rise in the significance of the schools department at the federation and the School Sports Officer was assigned far more expertise and funding. The School Sports Officer is commissioned by the federation to license suitable teachers and trainers as “Sound-karate trainers for school sports”, who can then be deployed accordingly in the schools.

b. Consequences for teaching of karate in schools in Germany:

The main results have been achieved on a political educational level: firstly, it was possible to convince the responsible officer at the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Education of the particular quality of the sound-karate concept for school sports. As a result, the ministry granted its authorisation for the teaching of sound karate in school sports. The School Sports Officer was commissioned by the ministry to assist the introduction of sound-karate teaching at as many schools in Baden-Württemberg as possible. More and more ministries of education in the 16 federal states have been persuaded that the teaching of sound karate does not contradict the general ban on the karate-do in school sports. They have acknowledged that sound karate represents a general increase in the attractiveness and the quality of school sport teaching. As a result, sound-karate teaching in schools is now explicitly desired by the ministries in an increasing number of the federal states.

LITERATURE

SOUND KARATE Schools Project, design: Prof. Pierluigi Ascieri Adaptation for the German Karate Federation: Ralf Brünig, Helmut Spitznagel, 2001