

SPORTS SCHOOL FESTIVAL: EDUCATIONAL VALUES

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Abstract: The study examines the Japanese school sports festival (undōkai) as a cultural and educational practice aimed at the comprehensive development of children—physically, socially, emotionally, and morally. The work answers the research question of what educational values undōkai promotes, based on an analysis of sources and the results of a questionnaire survey.

Keywords: undōkai, educational values, teamwork, inclusivity, discipline, resilience, school festivals, Uzbekistan.

1. Introduction

The Japanese school sports festival (undōkai), is one of the most popular and important cultural events in Japanese education. This event happens every year at most primary and secondary schools. It is more than just a day of sports. Undōkai is part of Japan's way of teaching children in a way that looks at the whole child. This means looking after their physical, social, emotional and moral development. In recent decades, undōkai has also been used internationally as part of cultural exchange and educational cooperation. It has appeared in schools in Indonesia, Ecuador and other countries where teachers have adopted Japanese educational practices.

Undōkai may look simple, with teams competing in games and dances, but it is actually very structured and educational. These values include working together, being disciplined, never giving up, including everyone, getting involved in the community, and learning about different cultures. This paper aims to answer the following question:

What are the educational values promoted through the Japanese school sports festival (undōkai)?

To answer this question, the paper looks at the academic sources that have been uploaded, and a small survey conducted via Google Forms, with responses from more than 40 people. Sources give us information about how undōkai is put into practice, what it aims to do, what the results are, how important it is in culture, and how it has been adapted around the world. The questionnaire was aimed at identifying the importance of academic values and their relevance. These materials show that undōkai reflects broader Japanese educational philosophies and can also support valuable learning outcomes in other cultural contexts.

2. Literature Review

The educational values of the Japanese school sports festival (undōkai) can be identified through research on Japanese physical education, school culture, and international educational cooperation. Across all uploaded documents, undōkai consistently

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appears as a platform that promotes cooperation, discipline, inclusivity, physical development, and community engagement.

A foundational description of undōkai is found in Knowledge for Development in Bhutan. The Japanese curriculum defines the event as aiming “to deepen the understanding of development of a healthy mind and body, maintenance and improvement of health, to master safe working procedures and disciplined collective action, to foster responsibility and solidarity” (Knowledge, 2018). This official definition shows that undōkai is intentionally structured around moral, physical, and social development. The same text explains that undōkai “is a wonderful physical education event to involve not only students and teachers, but also the community” (Knowledge, 2018). Thus, the festival serves as a tool for building community cooperation, reflecting Japanese educational priorities.

The Bhutan case also demonstrates that undōkai functions as an educational and cultural exchange tool. The event helped schools “increase the understanding between a community and a school” and enabled students to “show their improvement both inside and outside of school” (Knowledge, 2018). These examples indicate that undōkai promotes engagement not only within the school but also between different community members, reinforcing the value of shared responsibility. This paragraph is supported entirely by the Bhutan report.

A second document, examining the practice of undōkai in Indonesia, highlights its inclusivity. The study notes that “everyone can participate... it provides an opportunity for all the children, students, and teachers to come together” (Mori, 2019). It also states that undōkai is intentionally designed so that “anyone could easily participate, regardless of their motor skills, knowledge, or attitude toward exercise” (Mori, 2019). Inclusivity is further reinforced by historical evidence: the competitive elements of undōkai “were mitigated by the principle of participation by all” (Mori, 2019). These findings confirm that undōkai is structured to promote equity and collective belonging rather than individual athletic superiority.

The same Indonesian study demonstrates that undōkai builds perseverance. Students reported that the event strengthened their perceived physical competence, expressing beliefs such as: “Even if I cannot do an exercise, I think I can do it if I practice without giving up” (Mori, 2019).

Further context is provided by the ERIC document Japanese High School Sports Festival (ED316510). The report states that undōkai emphasizes “group competition, one of the basic cultural values for the Japanese people, rather than individual competition” (Tamura, 1989). It also explains that undōkai creates “enthusiasm and group cohesion among participating high school students” (Tamura, 1989). These observations indicate that

undōkai reinforces the cultural value of teamwork and contributes to the formation of collective identity among students. Japanese physical education philosophy more broadly also reinforces the educational values present in undōkai. The Russian-language article on comparative PE systems explains that Japanese physical education aims at developing “social adaptation, professional readiness, and the formation of healthy, well-rounded individuals” (Eshmatov, 2025).

The Journal of International Curriculum and Education Studies article clarifies the curricular foundations behind such events. It lists three key goals of Japanese PE: improving motivation, enhancing physical strength, and developing sociality (Shiraishi, 2022). The curriculum also emphasizes inclusive participation, which helps explain why undōkai is designed so all students, regardless of ability, take part. This paragraph is supported by Shiraishi (2022).

Finally, the ERIC article Designing the State of Oregon Teaching Certification Program for Japanese provides insight into the deeper pedagogical principles of Japanese schooling. Tamura et al. note that Japanese education places strong emphasis on “collective identity, harmony, and the moral education of students” (Tamura et al., 1991). These principles help explain why undōkai functions not only as a sports day but as a structured moral and social training environment.

Across all uploaded sources, the following educational values consistently emerge:

1. Teamwork and group cohesion (Tamura, Linda, 2022).
2. Inclusivity and equal participation (Mori, 2019).
3. Discipline and perseverance (Eshmatov, 2025; Mori, 2019).
4. Community engagement (“Knowledge for Development in Bhutan,” n.d.).
5. Holistic physical and moral development (Shiraishi, 2022; Bhutan guidelines).
6. Cultural continuity and transmission (Mori, 2019; Bhutan adaptation).

Overall, the uploaded literature demonstrates that undōkai is not merely a recreational sports event but a comprehensive educational activity that embodies core Japanese values of cooperation, inclusivity, discipline, physical growth, and community unity.

3. Methods

For this research paper, a short survey was created to ask students in Uzbekistan about how important school festivals and other events are to them. Events of this size are not often held in Uzbek schools, so this first data collection was to see if the most important values of undōkai – like working together, never giving up, being strict with yourself, including everyone, communicating and being part

of a community – were important to students in a different school and culture.

3.1. Participants

A total of 40 people took the survey, most of whom were undergraduate students at Webster University in Tashkent. To do this project, people were invited to take part in a survey. The survey link was shared through student group chats and personal networks. It was important to the study that people's feedback was specific to their own experiences and expectations, rather than making general statements. The people taking part did not need to know about the Japanese undōkai in advance, because the point of the study was to find out what people think about school festivals in general, not to see how much they knew about Japanese culture.

3.2. Instrument

The questionnaire was made using Google Forms. It had 11 questions in Russian and English to make it available to everyone. The survey used different question types, like multiple-choice, likert-scale and multi-select, to understand the respondents' general opinions and their preferences for specific educational aspects. The questions included important topics for this study, such as:

- attitudes toward large school festivals or collective events;
- perceived educational necessity of such activities;
- values considered most important for student development (e.g., teamwork, discipline, communication);
- perceptions of inclusivity and equal participation;
- physical, emotional, and social benefits of festivals;
- long-term skills students may gain through participation;

3.3. Procedure

People could complete the survey online whenever they wanted and it remained anonymous. The instructions made it clear that the survey was part of a small student research project for an academic paper. The answers given stayed secret because no personal information was collected. This included names and contact details. Participants did the survey whenever they wanted, usually taking between three and five minutes. The procedure was flexible. This meant that more students could take part without time pressure.

3.4. Data Analysis

In consideration of the exploratory and comparative nature of this project, the collected data was analysed using techniques of descriptive analysis. The following elements were included:

- The frequency of each response was calculated.

— The identification of the educational values most frequently selected by respondents.

— Examining patterns in how respondents perceived inclusivity, teamwork, and developmental benefits

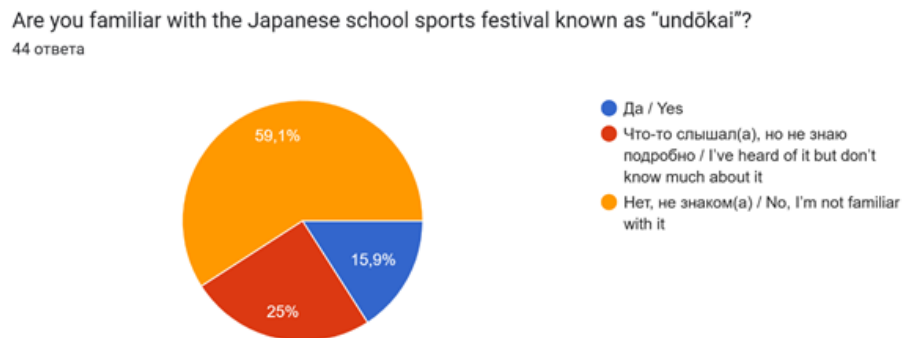
— A comparison is made between these patterns and the values described in the academic literature on undōkai.

The aim was not to test statistics, but to find common themes and what is valued that could help show if what undōkai is trying to do in education matches what students in Uzbekistan expect. The findings were later added to the Results and Discussion sections to link what had been observed with ideas from theory.

4. Results

The results of survey show that most students in Uzbekistan recognize the potential of school festivals to help with education, even though these events are not common in local schools. There are several common features that show the values are based on the Japanese undōkai model.

Fig.4. Familiarity with undōkai



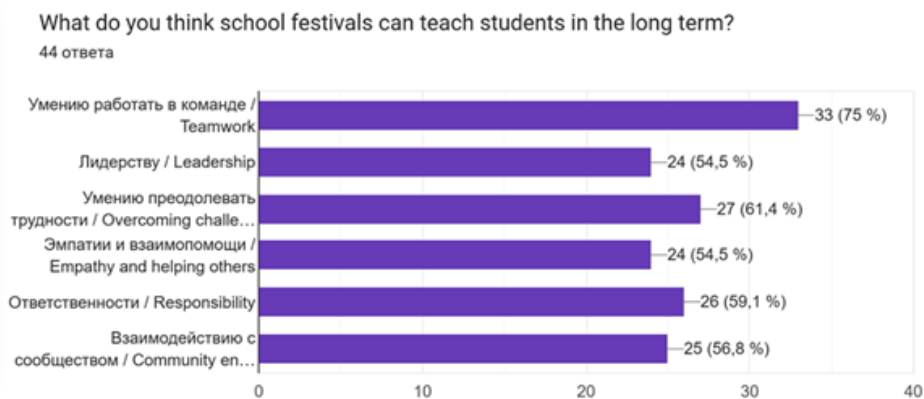
Source: Authors' survey

First, the people who took part in the study showed that they liked the way big, organised school events can help children develop. Most people liked the idea of school festivals and thought they were good for helping students grow. Most of the people taking part had little or no experience of events like undōkai, but their answers show that they agree with the idea of what makes education meaningful. This shows that the educational values of undōkai — like cooperation, taking part and working together to achieve things — are important in more than just Japanese culture.

One of the most important things the study found was about teamwork and cooperation. When asked to say what educational abilities or qualities school festivals could help develop, most respondents chose teamwork, communication and the ability to work well with others. This shows that they agree with the main idea of undōkai, which is about people working together as a group. Participants also said that self-discipline, responsibility

and perseverance are important outcomes. This shows that the participants realise that they can grow as people by getting ready for and taking part in organised group activities.

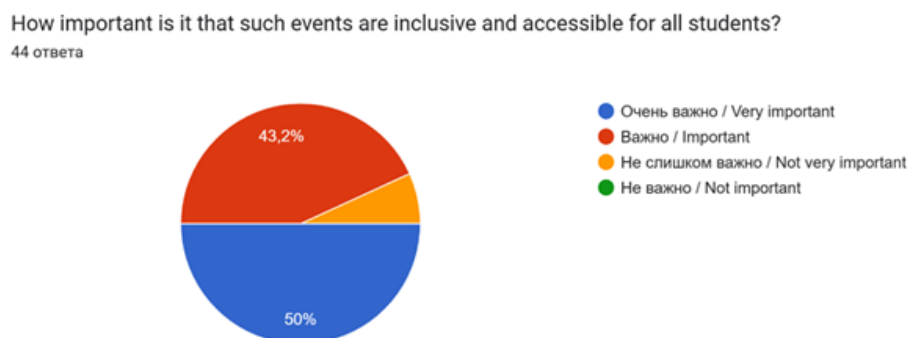
Fig.2. Educational values in sports



Source: Authors' survey

A further prevailing theme in the submitted responses was inclusivity. It was indicated by participants on multiple instances that for a school festival to be considered genuinely educational, it was necessary for every student to be able to participate in a suitable manner. This is similar to the fundamental principle of undōkai, where all students, no matter their skill level, participate in activities such as performances, relay events, and team competitions. The survey suggests that students in Uzbekistan also value educational establishments where nobody is left behind and where the most important thing is success for all, rather than success for the individual.

Fig.2. Educational values in sports



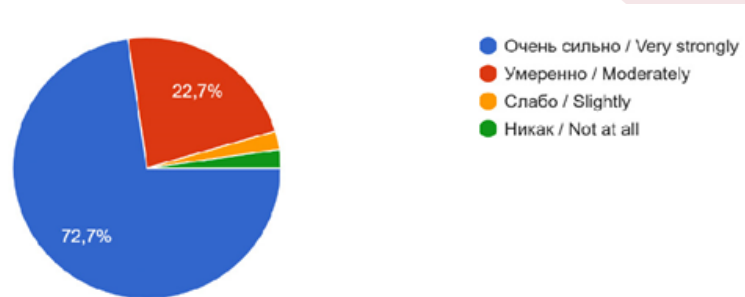
Source: Authors' survey

People also recognised the positive effects of festival-style events. Many indicated that such exercises can improve both physical and mental health. These findings are in line with

what other studies say about undōkai: that it helps people to be motivated, feel confident, fit in with others, and be healthy. The idea that festivals can have a positive effect on people's lives in many different ways shows that they can also be an important educational tool.

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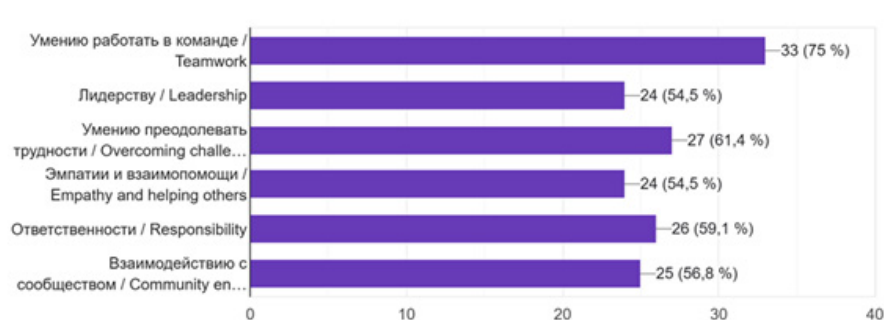
Fig.4. Sport festivals support student’s well-being



Source: Authors’ survey

Finally, the people who took part in the study acknowledged that there could be long-term effects of taking part in festivals. The most frequently mentioned skills were leadership, resilience, getting involved in the community, and dealing with challenges. These results show the strong beliefs of Undōkai, where students try to be leaders, work with their teachers and try their best to get better at things they have been preparing for a long time. The fact that these values were important to students in Uzbekistan is a sign that they believe it is important to do activities that involve physical activity, teamwork, and working together.

Fig.5. Sport festivals in long-term



Source: Authors’ survey

Overall, the survey results show that the educational values of undōkai match those that students in Uzbekistan consider important. Even though they were not familiar with the culture, the people who took part in the study identified teamwork, inclusivity, discipline, cooperation and overall development as being really important for education to be meaningful. These findings suggest that undōkai-style events could be successfully adapted to and appreciated in the context of Uzbekistan education system.

5. Discussion

The results of the survey are similar to what is written in academic literature. They show a strong connection between the educational values of the Japanese school sports festival (undōkai) and the values considered most important by students in Uzbekistan. Although most respondents had never taken part in an event similar to undōkai, the results show that they understand the same most important principles – teamwork, inclusivity, collective effort, discipline, and overall development – as meaningful educational outcomes.

The literature repeatedly describes undōkai as an event that aims to help students develop physically, emotionally, socially and morally. The Japanese education system focuses on teaching responsibility and teamwork, as well as encouraging the development of good mental and physical health (Knowledge for Development in Bhutan, n.d., p. 56). The same ideas appear in studies from Indonesia and Bhutan, where undōkai was used not only as a sport but also as a way to encourage people to work together, be motivated, and get involved in their community (Mori, 2019; Knowledge for Development in Bhutan, n.d.). These values are similar to the results of a survey in Uzbekistan.

The literature and the survey show the same thing: teamwork and cooperation are very important. Studies show that undōkai helps people to feel more connected to each other and to their community through activities and events that they do together (Tamura, 1989). In the survey, teamwork was the most popular educational value chosen, showing that students in Uzbekistan get and like the idea that learning is better when work is done together. This shows that the values in undōkai are not just for one culture, but may be liked all over the world.

Inclusivity is another important thing they both have in common. Japanese sources emphasise that undōkai is for everyone, and it does not matter how good individuals are at sports or what kind of background is there (Mori, 2019). People who took part in the survey also said that it was very important for a school festival to be educational and include everyone. This means that students in Uzbekistan think it is important for everyone to have

an equal chance to get involved and to share their ideas. This shows that undōkai can be successfully used in schools that focus on inclusivity.

The survey also showed that people understand that development is about more than just physical and emotional well-being. Japanese PE literature states that sociality, motivation and health are the most important things to focus on when teaching PE (Shiraishi, 2022). People in Uzbekistan said the same things. Festival-style events can make people feel more confident, stronger, and more cooperative. They can also get people more active. These similarities show that the way undōkai develops can be understood even in places where the tradition itself is not well known.

It identified important skills for the job, like leadership, resilience, and the ability to overcome challenges. These results are consistent with Japanese educational goals, as highlighted in the research literature. In Japan, events like undōkai are used to build character, teach moral values, and strengthen a sense of community (Tamura et al., 1991).

The literature tends to focus on the positive outcomes of undōkai, but some sources indirectly hint at possible challenges. One example of this is the Japanese PE curriculum, which focuses on "disciplined collective action" and "mastery through repeated practice" (Knowledge for Development in Bhutan, n.d., p. 56). While these goals are important, they can sometimes put pressure on or physically stress some training students. Getting ready for undōkai is often really hard. It needs a lot of preparation, practising, timing, and endurance. Research on the changes in Indonesia and Bhutan also says that introducing undōkai takes a lot of time, coordination and effort from teachers, which can be difficult for schools that don't have many resources (Mori, 2019). Furthermore, as undōkai is deeply part of Japanese cultural traditions and community norms, it may need to be changed to fit with other countries' expectations, or to avoid making competition and discipline too important. These possible problems don't mean undōkai isn't valuable, but they show that the event needs to be changed carefully to work in new places.

In general, the results of the survey match the values shown in the literature and what the students said their preferences were. This means that undōkai, or a similar event adapted for local schools, could provide a useful support for educational goals in Uzbekistan. But this will only work if we are careful to manage cultural differences, preparation demands and inclusivity considerations.

6. Conclusion

This paper reviewed the benefits of Japanese school sports festivals (undōkai) for education and assessed their value in Uzbekistan. This was done by studying relevant literature and conducting a small survey. The findings show that undōkai is a way of life that values teamwork, inclusivity, discipline, perseverance, overall development and community engagement. Students in Uzbekistan consider these values to be just as important, although there are cultural and structural differences between the two education systems.

Research shows that undōkai is a well-designed educational programme. It combines three things: exercise, moral development, and teamwork. It also encourages community participation. All of these things fit closely with Japanese educational principles, such as disciplined collective action and responsibility. The survey results clearly show that people believe cooperation, communication, resilience and inclusive participation are all important parts of meaningful learning experiences.

The difference between the two shows that undōkai is not a tradition that is separate from other cultures. Instead, it uses a teaching method that can be used in many different situations. Participants in Uzbekistan, even those with no direct experience, identified the long-term benefits of festival-style events and were positive about adopting similar practices. At the same time, the literature indicates potential challenges including the physical demands of preparation, the intensive organizational requirements for teachers, and the need to adapt cultural elements thoughtfully when implementing undōkai outside Japan.

The study's overall conclusion is that undōkai is a good educational model for students in Uzbekistan. However, adapting this model will require careful planning to make sure that it is inclusive, safe and relevant to Uzbekistan's culture.

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СПОРТИВНЫЙ ШКОЛЬНЫЙ ФЕСТИВАЛЬ:
ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНЫЕ ЦЕННОСТИ

Аннотация: Исследование рассматривает японский школьный спортивный фестиваль (ундокай) как культурно-образовательную практику, направленную на всестороннее развитие ребёнка — физическое, социальное, эмоциональное и моральное. Работа отвечает на исследовательский вопрос о том, какие образовательные ценности продвигает ундокай, опираясь на анализ источников и результаты анкетирования

Ключевые слова: ундокай; образовательные ценности; командная работа; инклюзивность; дисциплина; устойчивость; школьные фестивали; Узбекистан

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MAKTAB SPORT FESTIVALI: TA'LIMIY YO'NALISHLAR

Annotatsiya: Tadqiqotda yapon maktab sport festivali (undōkai) bolaning har tomonlama - jismoniy, ijtimoiy, hissiy va axloqiy rivojlanishiga qaratilgan madaniy-ma'rifiy amaliyot sifatida ko'rib chiqilgan. Ishda undokay qanday ta'lim qadriyatlarini targ'ib qilishi haqidagi tadqiqot savoliga manbalar tahlili va so'rovnom natijalariga tayangan holda javob berilgan.

Kalit so'zlar: undōkai; ta'lim qadriyatlari; jamoaviy ish; inklyuzivlik; intizom; barqarorlik; maktab festivallari; O'zbekiston

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