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The Evolution of Teaching Methods in Jiu-Jitsu: From Tradition to Modern Pedagogy

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Summary

This article analyzes the evolution of teaching methods in Jiu-Jitsu, from its traditional roots in feudal Japan to contemporary pedagogical approaches. Initially, teaching was marked by a rigid and hierarchical transmission, centered on the figure of the master and the exhaustive repetition of techniques, focusing on martial effectiveness. With the arrival of Jiu-Jitsu in Brazil and the systematization promoted by the Gracie family, new practices such as *sparring* were incorporated, expanding the formative character of the modality. From the 1960s onwards, the development of competitions and the need for sports preparation structured technical curricula and introduced greater emphasis on athletic performance. In the 1990s, with the globalization of Jiu-Jitsu and the rise of MMA, sports sciences began to engage with the practice, promoting innovations such as student-centered teaching, game-based training, and the use of immediate feedback. Currently, contemporary methodologies, including deliberate practice and the use of educational technologies, contribute to a more inclusive, dynamic, and scientific training process that values not only athletic performance but also the holistic development of practitioners. It is concluded that Jiu-Jitsu has consolidated itself as a constantly transforming pedagogical field, balancing tradition and innovation to meet the demands of an evolving society.

Keywords: Jiu-jitsu; Sports pedagogy; Martial arts; Student-centered instruction; Deliberate practice; Motor learning; Sports science.

Abstract

This article analyzes the evolution of teaching methods in Jiu-Jitsu, from its traditional roots in feudal Japan to contemporary pedagogical approaches. Initially, teaching was marked by a rigid and hierarchical transmission, centered on the figure of the master and the exhaustive repetition of techniques, focusing on martial effectiveness. With the arrival of Jiu-Jitsu in Brazil and the systematization promoted by the Gracie family, new practices such as *sparring* were incorporated, expanding the formative character of the modality. From the 1960s onwards, the development of competitions and the need for sports preparation structured technical curricula and introduced greater emphasis on athletic performance. In the 1990s, with the globalization of Jiu-Jitsu and the rise of MMA, sports sciences began to engage with the practice, promoting innovations such as student-centered teaching, game-based training, and the use of immediate feedback. Currently, contemporary methodologies, including deliberate practice and the use of educational technologies, contribute to a more inclusive, dynamic, and scientific formative process that values not only athletic performance but also the integral development of practitioners. It is concluded that Jiu-Jitsu has consolidated itself as a constantly transforming pedagogical field, balancing tradition and innovation to meet the demands of an evolving society.

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INTRODUCTION

Jiu-jitsu, one of the most widespread martial arts in the contemporary world, is not just...

It is a combat practice, but also a fertile field for the study of pedagogy applied to sport.

Its methodological evolution over time reflects social, scientific, and cultural transformations.

that shaped the way knowledge is transmitted. From the traditional model, strongly



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centered on the figure of the master and learning through repetition, up to modern pedagogical approaches, which incorporate concepts from cognitive psychology and student-centered teaching, the trajectory of Jiu-Jiu-jitsu reveals a constant process of adaptation to the demands of different eras and audiences.

This article explores, from a technical and historical perspective, the evolution of teaching methods in Jiu-Jitsu, analyzing the impacts of modern pedagogy on learning, student retention, and... technical and human development of the practitioners.

Traditional Roots: Education in the Founders' Era

Jiu-jitsu, in its origins in feudal Japan, had an eminently pragmatic character, being conceived as a technique geared towards survival in hand-to-hand combat. In this context, the teaching did not prioritize the training of athletes or the dissemination of sports, but rather... The transmission of martial arts knowledge that would guarantee efficiency in real-life confrontation situations. The practice was driven by the immediate need for effectiveness, which directly shaped the pedagogical methods used at the time.

The first teaching models were structured on a logic of direct transmission and hierarchical, in which the figure of the master assumed a central position in the learning process. Rigid discipline, absolute respect for authority, and the exhaustive repetition of movements formed the basis of this traditional pedagogy. The student was seen as a passive recipient of knowledge, They must faithfully reproduce the techniques demonstrated, leaving no room for questioning or adaptations.

During this period, some characteristics became prominent: the emphasis on training, Mechanical and repetitive, in which the practitioner performed the same movement until it was complete, internalized in an almost automatic way; the centrality of the master, who held the monopoly on He knew and conducted teaching in a vertical manner; and, finally, the absolute priority given to martial effectiveness. That is, the immediate and practical application of techniques in combat, without concern for explanations, in-depth conceptual or didactic explanations.

When Jiu-Jitsu arrived in Brazil at the beginning of the 20th century, through figures such as Mitsuyo Maeda, this pedagogical tradition has been preserved in its fundamental aspects. However, The Brazilian cultural context ended up promoting significant transformations. The Gracie family, In particular, he played a central role in this process, by systematizing training and introducing the concept. Sparring — popularly known as "rolling." This is a realistic combat simulation practice . It became incorporated in a structured way into teaching, becoming not just a method of learning, but also one of the pillars that would consolidate Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu as a martial art, and a unique sport on the world stage.



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The Transition: From the Traditional Method to the Sports Method

From the 1960s onwards, with the consolidation of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu and the growing... With the popularization of championships, a period of significant transformation in the methods began. teaching. The competitive aspect gained prominence and began to direct a large part of the practices. pedagogical approaches within academia. This change reflected not only the pursuit of efficiency in combat, but also the need to prepare athletes for specific environmental challenges. sports, which required a more systematic approach to learning.

In this new scenario, academies began to structure more defined technical curricula. linking the graduation process to content organized according to each level. Furthermore, Physical conditioning has gained central importance, incorporating concepts of training periodization. Development of endurance, strength, and conditioning, all geared towards peak performance. Athletic. Another element that stood out was situational practice, in which the training sessions simulated... specific moments of the fight, allowing the practitioner to experience situations in a controlled manner. of passes, defenses and transitions, fundamental for technical and strategic improvement.

This period, therefore, marked the transition from a strictly traditional pedagogical model, focused on mechanical repetition and rigid hierarchy, for a more sports-oriented and organized teaching approach. Jiu-jitsu has become established not only as a martial art focused on self-defense, but also as a rising competitive sport, with its own rules and preparation methods. focused on performance on the mat. This systematization represented an essential step. for the projection of jiu-jitsu at a national level and, subsequently, internationally.

The Advancement of Sports Sciences and the New Pedagogy

Starting in the 1990s, Jiu-Jitsu underwent a significant transformation. driven by the rise of Vale-Tudo and, later, MMA. This international visibility It accelerated the dialogue between martial arts and sports science, bringing it to the tatami. Knowledge derived from biomechanics, physiology, psychology, and pedagogy. Education has left behind... from being based solely on tradition and mechanical repetition to incorporating scientific practices who sought to optimize performance, understanding of movement, and holistic development of practitioner.

From a pedagogical point of view, this period was marked by the introduction of new approaches. which changed the logic of knowledge transmission. The influence of constructivism, inspired by Thinkers like Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky began to value the student as an active agent in... learning process, encouraging him to solve problems and reflect on his own



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experiences in combat. In this same context, game-based training has gained ground, bringing Playful exercises that simulated real fighting situations, promoting not only engagement, but also the development of decision-making skills under pressure.

Other pedagogical advances were consolidated during this period, such as student-centered teaching, which adapted methodologies according to the profile, needs and individual objectives of each practitioner, and the use of immediate feedback, made possible by real-time technical analysis and even through video recordings. This set of transformations marked the transition from one model to another. from an instructor approach, in which the teacher was the sole source of knowledge, to a more... dialogical and participatory, in which the practitioner assumed greater autonomy and became the protagonist. from the construction of their technical learning.

Contemporary Pedagogical Methods in Jiu-Jitsu

Currently, the teaching of Jiu-Jitsu is no longer limited to a single, rigid model and has become... incorporating different pedagogical strategies, which can be adapted according to the context of Each gym and its members have their own goals. This flexibility represents a significant step forward. because it allows learning to meet the demands of both high-performance athletes and... The needs of practitioners are geared towards health, leisure, or self-defense. Among the approaches Among the most relevant are game-based training, student-centered teaching, and practice. deliberate and the use of educational technologies, each bringing distinct benefits, but complementary.

Game-based learning is one of the most effective training methodologies. Innovative techniques within the tatami. This approach fosters the practitioner's creativity by placing them in... Dynamic and unpredictable situations that require real-time decision-making. In addition to simulating By faithfully replicating the challenges encountered during a fight, this method keeps training more effective. Motivating exercises break the monotony of traditional repetitive ones. Thus, the student does not... It not only trains your technical skills, but also improves your adaptability and responsiveness. Strategic thinking under pressure: essential aspects in competitive contexts.

Student-centered teaching, in turn, shifts the focus away from the teacher as the sole figure. It is a source of knowledge and values the individuality of the practitioner. This methodology respects the... different learning paces and takes into account variables such as age and conditioning. Physical condition, fighting style, and personal goals. With this in mind, the training process becomes more personalized. and efficient, promoting a more engaged environment. Furthermore, by feeling that their interests These factors are taken into consideration, and the student develops a sense of belonging, a decisive factor for long-term retention. deadlines within gyms.



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Another fundamental pillar of modern pedagogy in Jiu-Jitsu is deliberate practice.

Unlike simple mechanical repetition, this methodology is based on short sessions and intensive, focused on refining specific technical details. Supported by research from sports psychology, deliberate practice shows that progress occurs through repetition, conscious, accompanied by structured feedback. This makes learning more focused and effective, reducing errors and accelerating the development of complex skills. In this way, the student learns to correct errors in an active and constructive way, raising the quality of their work performance.

Finally, the growing use of educational technologies in teaching Jiu-Jitsu is noteworthy. Digital tools, such as online training platforms, instructional videos, and software... Biomechanical analysis allows knowledge to be accessed outside the mat, extending the learning that extends beyond the in-person setting. This integration of theory and practice shapes the... The concept of "hybrid learning," in which the student can review techniques and analyze their own... Performance and the ability to study complementary strategies anywhere. The result is training a more comprehensive approach, combining practical experience with theoretical and scientific support.

Impacts of Modern Approaches

The adoption of these contemporary methodologies has produced significant impacts on the way how Jiu-Jitsu is taught and practiced. First of all, learning has become faster and... effective, since studies in sports pedagogy demonstrate that movement retention is... This is greater when the student actively participates in the knowledge construction process. Active participation, stimulated by games, feedback, and student-centered methodologies, creates a cycle for more consistent and lasting learning.

Another important impact relates to student retention in academies. Modern teaching, because it is more dynamic and personalized, it reduces absenteeism and makes the environment more attractive, especially for beginners who often got frustrated with the rigidity of traditional methods. Academies that apply these approaches create a welcoming, engaging, and... Gradual progression, which increases the bond between the practitioner and the martial art.

Beyond the technical aspect, contemporary methods also promote holistic education of the practitioner. Alongside motor and strategic skills, competencies are developed, socio-emotional skills such as creativity, cooperation, resilience, and problem-solving abilities in pressure scenarios. This set of skills transcends the mat, positively impacting performance the personal and professional lives of students.

Finally, the modernization of teaching methods has broadened the audience for Jiu-Jitsu, making it...

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a more inclusive practice. Children, the elderly, and people with special needs have begun to...

To find in the tatami a learning space adapted to their conditions and possibilities. This

The opening reinforces the role of Jiu-Jitsu not only as a martial art or competitive sport, but also as an educational and social practice, capable of promoting health, well-being and integration. community.

Conclusion

The evolution of teaching methods in Jiu-Jitsu reflects the art's own transformation: from a A shift from traditional practice, transmitted in a rigid and hierarchical manner, to a global discipline that engages in dialogue. with science, pedagogy and technology.

Modern methodologies, by valuing student autonomy, the use of games, and teaching... Focused on the individual, they not only enhance technical learning, but also make Jiu-Jitsu... A more inclusive, attractive, and sustainable jitsu in the long term.

The contemporary challenge is to find the balance between tradition and innovation. ensuring that the core values of art — respect, discipline, and resilience — coexist with the demands of a society that requires dynamic and scientifically sound pedagogical approaches based.

Thus, Jiu-Jitsu is not limited to being a martial art or a competitive sport, but is... reaffirms itself as a constantly evolving pedagogical laboratory, capable of training not only Not just fighters, but more complete individuals.

About the Author: Yuri dos Santos is an influential instructor and social educator with extensive experience. experience in transforming lives through Jiu-Jitsu. With a remarkable track record in In the Department of Justice and Social Development of Paraná, Yuri worked directly on rehabilitation of juvenile offenders, reinforcing their belief in sport as an essential tool. for the development of young people. His experience includes the organizational management of the Gracie Academy. Barra Colombo and the supervision of socio-educational processes. Yuri also collaborates with large names in the sport, such as three-time world champion Ralfa Jhonny, and participates in volunteer projects. like the Seeds project.

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