

# Implementation of Republic Act No. 9850 as the National Martial Art and Sports of the Philippines

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**Abstract** Republic Act No. 9850 is an Act Declaring Arnis as The National Martial Art and Sport of the Philippines. The official adoption of arnis as the national martial art and sport shall be promulgated by inscribing the symbol of arnis in the official seal of the Philippines Sports Commission and by making it as the first sports competition to be played by participating teams on the first day in the annual Palarong Pambansa. The purpose of this study is to assess the implementation of the act with the Physical Education Department of the Ramon Magsaysay Technological University through face-to-face interview of ten PE Instructors. This qualitative study focused on the dissemination and implementation of the act. It was found out that arnis should be properly incorporated into the curriculum as Physical Education subject.

**Keywords** Republic Act No. 9850, Department of PE-RMTU, Qualitative research

## 1. Introduction

Arnis, also known as Eskrima, Kali, Garrote and other names in various regional languages, such as Pananandata in Tagalog; Pagkalikali, Ibanag; Kabaraon and Kalirongan, Pangasinan; Kaliragma, Bisaya; and Didja, Ilokano, is an indigenous Filipino martial art and sport characterized by the use of swinging and twirling movements, accompanied by striking, thrusting and parrying techniques for defence and offense. This is usually done with the use of one (1) or two (2) sticks or any similar implements or with bare hands and feet also used for striking, blocking, locking and grappling, with the use of the same principles as that with the canes [1].

Arnis also includes hand-to-hand combat, joint locks, grappling and weapon disarming techniques. Although in general, the emphasis is put on weapons for these arts, some systems put empty hands as the primary focus and some old school systems do not teach weapons at all.

For all intents and purposes, arnis, eskrima, and kali all refer to the same family of Filipino weapon-based martial arts and fighting systems [2].

Arnis was declared as the Philippine National Martial Art and Sport on December 11, 2009, through Republic Act 9850 signed by Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. As per R.A. 9850, the official adoption of arnis as the national martial art and sport shall be promulgated by inscribing the symbol of arnis in the official seal of the Philippine Sports Commission

and by making it as the first competition to be played by participating teams on the first day in the annual Palarong Pambansa [3]. The Philippine Sports Commission is the lead agency to implement the provisions of this Act.

RA 9850 [4] is expected to help propagate arnis as a modern martial art/sport that can compete with its popular foreign-originated brethren like taekwondo, karate, and judo. Under the law, arnis will be made a mandatory course or subject in all schools in the country unlike before when arnis was only offered in a few schools as an elective physical education subject. It also institutionalizes arnis as a regular event in the annual Palarong Pambansa. RA 9850 is a consolidation of House Bill No. 6516 authored by South Cotabato Rep. Arthur Pingoy Jr., and Senate Bill No. 1424 authored by Majority leader Juan Miguel Zubiri, who himself has trained in arnis.

The Department of Education, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, and the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) have been tapped to promulgate the rules and regulations to carry out the act.

### 1.1. Objective

The purpose of this study is to assess the implementation of the act with the Department Physical Education of the Ramon Magsaysay Technological University (RMTU).

### 1.2. Review of Literature

Practitioners of the arts, arnis, are called arnisador (male, plural arnisadores) and arnisadora (female, plural arnisadoras) for those who call theirs arnis, eskrimador (male, plural eskrimadores) or eskrimadora (female, plural eskrimadoras) for those who call their art eskrima, and kalista or mangangali for those who practice kali.

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In recent years, there has been increased interest in Arnis for its usefulness when defending against knives and other street encounters. As a result, many systems of Arnis have been modified in varying degrees to make them more marketable to a worldwide audience. Usually, this involves the increased emphasis on locking, controls, and disarms, focusing mainly on aspects of self-defense. However, most styles follow the philosophy that the best defense is a good offense. Modern training methods tend to de-emphasize careful footwork and low stances, stressing the learning of techniques in favor of more direct (and often lethal) tactics designed to instantly end an encounter.

In the Philippines, the spread is more significant due to the efforts of Richardson "Richard" Gialogo and Aniano "Jon" Lota, Jr. through the Department of Education (DepEd) Task Force on School Sports (TFSS). Arnis was first introduced in 1969 to some public and private school teachers when Mr. Remy A. Presas taught his personal style of Arnis which he called "Modern Arnis." It was when he taught his own style to the students of the National College of Physical Education (NCPE) when he was given the chance to teach there. The style "Modern Arnis", Mr. Remy Presas' personal style, is not synonymous with the concept of modern or contemporary Arnis, where it has become a full-blown sport embraced by the Department of Education, although there are some similarities because Arnis is Arnis. There was no formal program for Arnis from 1970's to 1980's. Although some schools taught Arnis, these were neither official nor prescribed.

The earliest historical record was the DECS Memorandum No. 294 Series of 1995 which entailed the Arnis Development Program Phase I. This was a joint effort of the Department of Education, Culture and Sports or DECS and the Office of then Senator Orlando "Orly" Mercado who awarded a budget from his pork barrel for the implementation of a national Arnis program. The Office of Senator Mercado was given the authority to designate the Arnis instructors for the said program.

The next event was the Arnis Development Program Phase II. It was just a continuation of Phase I through DECS Memorandum No. 302 series of 1997. The same group conducted the seminars; known as the Arnis Association International (AAI), the Arnis instructors designated by Senator Mercado, they were informally called the "Mercado boys." In this memorandum, there were two seminars conducted: October 6–11, 1997 in Baguio City and November 10–15, 1997 in General Santos City. The Arnis Module Development, however, did not push through. It was also during this time when the first Arnis instructional video was developed by the Bureau of Physical Education and School Sports (BPSS) entitled "Dynamic Arnis". This video featured the Gialogo Brothers: Richardson and Ryan Gialogo, direct students of Jeremias V. Dela Cruz.

However, the national Arnis program of Senator Orly Mercado and DECS died a natural death. It was only after nine (9) years that Arnis found its way back into the Department of Education (formerly known as Department of

Education, Culture, and Sports or DECS). On February 5, 2004, the Task Force on School Sports (TFSS) of the Department of Education (DepEd), the new agency after the defunct BPSS, met with the National Sports Association (NSA) for Arnis in a Senate hearing. The Head of the TFSS was National Coordinator Mr. Feliciano N. Toledo II, considered the "Father of Arnis" in the Department of Education. He met with the top NSA officials at that time; however, nothing happened.

It was only in 2006 when the Task Force on School Sports had a new program for Arnis. The "National Training of Trainers in Arnis and Dance Sports", sponsored by the Task Force on School Sports, Department of Education (DepEd), was held at Teacher's Camp, Baguio City on March 13–17, 2006 and was conducted by two top-caliber figures in the Arnis community: Mr. Aniano Lota, Jr. and Mr. Richardson Gialogo, then Secretary-General and Vice-President respectively of the National Sports Association for Arnis. And this was the start of the modern, contemporary and prevailing Arnis in the Department of Education.

In just two months, Arnis became part of the Palarong Pambansa (National Games) as a demonstration sport. The 2006 Palarong Pambansa was held in Naga City, Bicol Region with nine (9) out of the Seventeen (17) regions of the Philippines participating. National, regional and provincial Arnis Seminars were conducted by the tandem of Mr. Aniano Lota, Jr. and Mr. Richardson Gialogo from 2006 to 2007 in coordination with the TFSS National Coordinator, Mr. Feliciano "Len" Toledo, and with the financial and logistical backing of the Department of Education. In 2007, Arnis was already a regular event in the Palarong Pambansa with all seventeen (17) regions participating. Five (5) weight divisions in the Full-contact Event and four (4) categories in the Anyo (Forms) Event were played and became part of the official medal tally of the participants. This was held in Coronadal in Mindanao.

Arnis Seminars were continued in national, regional and provincial levels. In 2008, Arnis was played in the Palarong Pambansa and again, with all seventeen (17) regions participating. All nine (9) events were played. This was held in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan.

Aside from Sports Officiating and Accreditation seminars, Coaching and skill training seminars continued in national, regional and provincial levels. Requests from cities and even districts were also welcomed. In 2009, Secondary Girls (High School Girls) were finally included in Palarong Pambansa and again, all seventeen (17) regions participated. From the original five (5) member teams, the number doubled with the inclusion of the girls. The medal tally also doubled from nine (9) to eighteen (18). The 2009 Palarong Pambansa was held in Tacloban, Leyte in the Visayas.

The "Writeshop of the Revision of the Physical Fitness Test and the Development of Learning Competencies in Arnis and Archery" was held in Teacher's Camp, Baguio City on October 5–8, 2009. Phase I of the National Curriculum for Arnis was finished and in 2010, Palarong Pambansa was held in Tarlac, In Luzon, both secondary boys

and girls competed in the eighteen (18) categories. It was here that the Department of Education Arnis Association Philippines or DEAAP had its first national elections. In the 2011 Palarong Pambansa, Elementary students joined. The road to success has begun.

## 2. Research Questions

This study aimed to assess the implementation of arnis in the physical education program in RMTU as follows:

1. Awareness in the RA No. 9850.
2. Interest and engagement of Physical Education (PE) instructors in seminars and training regarding arnis.
3. As an aspect of the individual-dual sports curriculum according to its content and process.
4. Knowledge, skills and proper applications of teaching arnis.
5. The number of PE instructors who are teaching arnis with proper knowledge and know-how based on a total number of Physical Education instructors.

## 3. Methodology

### Research Design

The study made use of qualitative method through the use of semi-structured interviews and observations. [5] state that “it is qualitative when they need to collect, interpret and make judgments about data that cannot be measured – such as what people say and do, and why”. [6] believe that qualitative research enables people to give their meaning to the setting in which they are surrounded.

### Participants

The study was conducted in Ramon Magsaysay Technological University, Department of Physical Education with ten Physical Education instructors as the respondents.

### Data Analysis

The researcher obtained written consent from each of the research participants and explained what the research was all about, followed by face-to-face interview questions.

Efforts to obtain a syllabus from those presently and previously teaching individual-dual sport subjects were made. Their comments on their effectiveness in the conduct of the subject were encouraged.

Gathered data were coded categorically and an analysis on the implementation of arnis in the PE curriculum was made.

## 4. Results and Discussions

The research was conducted to assess the implementation of the act in the Department of Physical Education in the Ramon Magsaysay Technological University in terms of awareness, interest and engagement of the PE instructors,

part of the curriculum, proper applications according to content and process, and number of PE instructors/teachers who are teaching arnis.

The study covered all the physical education teachers in the Department of PE in RMTU, using a structured face-to-face interview. These are findings of the study as follows:

In terms of awareness in the RA No. 9850, physical education instructors responded that they are not fully aware. They have the knowledge with the republic act but unaware of the content of it, declaring Arnis as the National Martial Art and Sports of the country.

Physical Education instructors were not engaged in seminars and training as to discipline in Arnis and in teaching Arnis. Although they have the interest to be engaged they lack the initiative to look for any institutions or organizations that extends physical education faculty development activities. The respondents just rely on themselves on what they have known about Arnis when teaching based on their knowledge and from textbooks. Their way of teaching regarding the subject matter is good but emerging training, seminars, and applications are better to enhance the knowledge and skills of the students.

In terms of inclusion in the individual-dual sports curriculum according to its content and process, physical education instructors admitted that arnis was not implemented as part of the curriculum. Arnis was taught as part of a particular individual-dual sports subject only. Applying Arnis depends only on the PE instructor if he/she opted to since the curriculum used was silent with the strict implementation. But it should be included in the course curriculum as a separate subject following the republic act.

Arnis was taught based on theories and with no proper applications as part of Individual-Dual Sports subject in tertiary level and only upon the discretion of the physical education instructors.

Moreover, there were only 1-2 physical education instructors who are teaching arnis in tertiary level since 2012, this is due to lack of proper knowledge and know-how in the subject. Some instructors were just teaching based on theoretical perspective. Furthermore, the physical education instructors with proper knowledge were able to train students and had participated in different Arnis tournament in national level.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The Filipino martial art, by its nature, is combat oriented. It emphasizes fighting and self-defense skills. Arnis has been designated as part of the curriculum of physical education courses. But, based on the foregoing findings, It was found out that Arnis was not fully implemented by the Department of PE and was not properly disseminated by the PE Instructors to PE students due to lack of proper knowledge and applications.

This study served as mind opener of the DPE and PE

Instructors regarding Discipline in Arnis and in Teaching Arnis. PE Instructors must undergo Arnis seminars and training for them to be fully aware of the Republic Act. Department of PE should incorporate Arnis in the curriculum used.

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