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Methods of Teaching



Teaching Methods

Introduction

The focus of my dissertation has been selected to be 'Teaching Methods in Taekwon-do' as it reflects an area in which I not only have considerable experience and therefore able to comment, but believe that it is a subject in which I have developed novel approaches in order to improve my ability to teach. My philosophy regarding the teaching of Taekwon-do has been influenced by consulting old and new texts and then incorporating them into approaches that I have personally developed.

General Choi Hong Hi identifies eight key qualities that an instructor must possess in order to be an 'ideal' instructor:

1. Strong moral and ethical standard
2. Clear outlook and philosophy in life
3. Responsible attitude as an instructor
4. Scientific mind in matters of technique
5. Knowledge of the vital spots of human anatomy
6. Unshakable integrity in political and financial dealings
7. Dedication to the spread of Taekwon-do throughout the world
8. One who gains confidence from his seniors is trusted by his fellow instructors, and is respected by his juniors.

Although these points are very important, they are rather generic, and alone, would suit only the ideal student. However they are difficult to implement in a class that could be made up a variety of students with differing aspirations and differing learning abilities. In short they do not address students as individuals. This will be the topic that I will cover within this discussion.

The Collins English Dictionary defines 'teach' as to 'instruct, educate and train'. Within the 'do joang' it is important to bring out the best in all students therefore different approaches may need to be taken in order to develop students to their full potential.

Years of teaching experience enable an instructor to gauge which approaches work best with which students. This could be dependent on upbringing, colour, race, religion or personality.

The Taekwondo Encyclopaedia cites that:

"An instructor should never tire of teaching. A good instructor can teach anywhere, any time, and always be ready to answer questions"

I have been teaching for over ten years and can honestly say that acting as an instructor has resulted in beneficial relationship to both the student and the instructor. The students benefit from my teaching. But also by acting as a teacher for a variety of students, seeing them succeed and strive to continually improve, maintains and promotes my interest in Taekwon-do and instructing. After all you never hear the saying 'Wise Young Man' it is only with age, comes knowledge, wisdom and experience, which you can aspire to become a 'Wise Old Man' (or woman) .

Central Doctrine

Adams (2007) believes that a number of different approaches are required to effectively develop a student – in terms of performance and as a person.

It is my belief that in order to achieve this it is necessary to firstly understand the student and their background. Some students that have come to my classes have had behavioural problems and have been bullied at school, others are actually the bullies or while another set may have a disability. I have needed to use a totally different approach for these differing categories. Most importantly, I have had to play different roles for individual students which can be categorised as innovator, friend, manager, trainer, role model and educator.

Innovator

I use innovative techniques for teaching both the theoretical and practical aspects of Taekwon-do.

A coach is not expected to know the answer to every question that a student may raise. However they are expected to have the skills to find the solution to a problem. When I am teaching Taekwon-do I encourage my students to find the answers for themselves by using any research necessary be it the Taekwon-do handbook, the internet or the encyclopaedia, which ever is required. By trying to find the answer for themselves they will be looking through all the other information and taking much more in than if the answer was simply provided by me.

Knowledge and experience allows me to come up with new ideas and challenge existing ones to create my own style and innovative techniques of conveying the principles and my knowledge of this martial art. This can make training more enjoyable and means I can relate better to the individuals in my classes, knowing which approaches work best and maintaining interest.

A former olympic champion once used the motto:

“If you always do what you have always done, then you will always get what you always got”

My own club motto is:

“You are never too good to be bad”

These both can be interpreted as needing to continually develop and improve coaching and training methods. A prime example of this within my classes is my development of ‘One Step Continuous’. This is an adaptation of the Three Step, Two Step and One Step sparring systems. In my modification, the attacker will make the first move, the opponent will block the attack and counter and this will continue until an attacker touches the target. I devised this because I think it helps a great deal with speed, reaction and accuracy with sparring, techniques and thinking.

It is a common tendency for some students to become bored of repeating techniques, and too often students become impatient and wish to progress to a higher belt before

they have mastered the previous one. Classes that are repetitive and that have the same content week after week can become boring – although I do believe that line work and drilling does work, this needs to be mixed up with a variety of things within each session.

Friend

As an instructor I will go through a variety of emotions with my students – success at a grading or a loss at a competition perhaps. This needs to be done in a friendly but respectful environment so that the student can come to me with their queries or for advice as to how they can improve next time.

By acting as a friend it may help to motivate students although self-motivation will play a large role in performance. Most students will practice Taekwon-do because they want to and because they enjoy this Art. Some parents force their children to attend but I am proud to say that the majority of children – although they can be shy or hard to work with initially, they have made excellent progress and gain from attending classes.

Manager

As I run my own Martial Arts club I need to be able to plan training sessions, perform all the administrative tasks, organise competitors (entrance forms, transport and background information i.e. making sure they all know the rules and what to expect on the day!). In the managerial role good leadership skills are needed to organise and direct people effectively.

For my children's classes I have some of my higher-grade students and parents (who have all completed the BTC Instructors courses) that help out so that I can break down the class into smaller groups. This ensures that students get more out of the class and have greater individual guidance. I am able to oversee all of these groups to make sure that techniques are being taught how I would expect and the development of my students is maintained.

Trainer

The key part of this role is to make sure that my students are able to meet the physical demands for Taekwon-do – be it fitness levels, theoretical understanding or practical ability. There may also be psychological demands especially for grading and competition. With the younger students, I have found an effective method is to carry out a mock grading so that they become aware of the formalities and layout before they take their real grading.

Studies have shown that students will greatly improve if they have well-planned and well-structured training. I alter my lesson plan based on upcoming events e.g. focusing on combinations, sparring techniques and competition formalities in the lead up to competition.

I also have a separate fitness and sparring lesson so that those wishing to compete or just improve their all round fitness have the chance to do so. This enables students to make sure they are able to cope with the physical demands required. I change the technical content based on the student's grade but I do want to see everyone trying something new even if it above their grade. A prime example of this is a jumping

360° middle knife hand guarding block. My yellow belt students are able to perform this even though it is in a pattern well above their perceived ability.

Role model

Typically students will watch and copy their instructor. The instructor will usually be higher grade than them and should lead by example and in return students should always demonstrate their respect to senior grades. This is especially true of younger students who will look to their instructor for guidance and the instructor can therefore be a very influential person. Influences therefore should always be positive.

As part of the 'role model' theory, I believe that I demonstrate my abilities and prove that certain techniques work by the titles I have won in competition and also from managing to exert self control and use effective locks etc whilst I was working in the security sector involved in crowd management.

Educator

This can be viewed in two ways – sport specific or related to life and social skills. Teaching methods and styles should be altered to match the experience and motives of the students. Beginners will need to have a chance to practice their techniques. I provide starters a welcome pack that gives them background information including a sheet with all the basic Taekwon-do terminology on it so that they get the chance to actively participate in each class.

As a coach I must ensure that students are performing techniques correctly. This ensures so that they don't injure themselves and make sure they know why they are doing things. For example, what purpose a block serves and what part of the body is the correct part to use for a particular block. Competitively it can also make the difference between winning and losing, being hurt or caught by an attack in sparring, walking a way from a situation/confrontation or standing firm and holding face.

Equal Opportunities

Sports Coach UK states that equal opportunities is:

“Treating people as individuals and providing them with opportunities on the basis of their skills, talents and qualifications so that they are neither disadvantaged nor denied access on the grounds of their age, disability, ethnicity, race, sex or sexual orientation.”

It is the responsibility of the coach to ensure that equal opportunity guidelines are adhered to at all times so ensure that anybody who wants to participate can do so. This does not mean that for example a visually impaired person should train in a full contact situation for sparring – common sense and health and safety would deem this an inappropriate move. Classes should be able to be adapted to incorporate everyone.

Most government bodies, sport and coaching clubs would now consider themselves equal opportunity employers. Barriers that previously stopped or dissuaded minority groups from taking part are being removed.

My classes as discussed earlier are so multi-cultural and multi-racial that it encourages others to take part and can remove invisible barriers that others may

perceive that aren't quite true – i.e. a black student may feel uncomfortable in a class where every other student is white. Within my classes students support each other and create a camaraderie that enables them to develop their skills and promoting progression.

Conclusion

My study leads me to draw several conclusions; primarily the fact that teaching and coaching students is not an easy role that just anyone is able to take up. I have been known to ask each of my adult students to do one part of the warm up at the start of a class. They have all been surprised how different it feels to be on their own facing the class. Their minds often go blank and then become very nervous, realising that teaching isn't as easy as they first thought it might be!

There are a wide range of skills and experience that are required to give your students the high level of teaching that they deserve. My first hand experience allows me to see these in practice and my theoretical research means I can understand these in a much deeper context and expand my existing knowledge.

No matter what background, colour or belief my students or their family may have, I am confident that they will be welcomed and feel comfortable within all of my classes. The atmosphere within the club and that developed by the instructor will ensure they will not even be conscious of their differences as they will get on well together and work side by side with others. The outcome is that the students develop their skills both in body and mind to the best of both mine and their capabilities in and outside of Taekwon-do, which strengthens my saying

'To be the best you have to beat the rest'.

Case Studies follow on

Case Study 1 - Religion

Background: 58 year old male

Religion: Rastafarian

Colour: Black

Training: 2003 - present day.

Information: This fact alone makes him unique within the world of Taekwon-do. He is a single dad of two, who both also are members of the club.

His inherent gentleness and lack of exploitation in this code of conduct is reflected in his method of training. His laid back approach can be seen through his patterns, where he takes time to study each movement before progressing to the next. He takes a keen interest in educating his mind with the theory of Taekwon-do, analysing techniques and understanding the application.

Rastafarians live “simple lives” that focus on family, health, natural foods, and healing. He often offers advice to other students about injuries, suggesting natural products and stretching techniques.

Throughout my 15 years of competitive national and international Taekwon-do, I have never seen another student who was Rastafarian. Is this because the sport is seen as a ‘contact sport’ and goes against the ethos of gentleness and passive behaviours or because it is deemed as a predominately ‘white’ art?

Conclusion: With this student training at my club, which is both multi-racial and multi-cultural all colour and religion boundaries are crossed. This is due to all students competing and training together.

Case Study 2 - Disability

Background: 14 year old male

Religion: Hindu

Colour: Asian

Training: 1998 - 2005.

Information: This student has cerebral palsy. The symptoms are disorders of movement and posture, due to widespread brain dysfunction sometimes added learning difficulties.

He started the class alongside his siblings as he had no other hobbies and often felt alienated from active sport. Although his mind was willing, his body was not. Whilst he was unable to initially keep any balance, he soon proved he could retain Information, and his Taekwon-do knowledge was vast superior to anyone of his grade. With this progress, he developed an understanding of control and concentration, which led to him learning to ride a bike for the first time in his life in his teenage years.

This student took a grading in front of Grand Master Rhee Ki Ha, whilst being asked questions it became apparent that his body posture and breathing combined with slurred speech was not deemed as 'normal'. It was remarkable that his condition now only came to light, as he had just completed a two hour seminar and was in the middle of his grading.

By the time he reached the grade of having to break, he was told as in order to progress he would only have to show he could hold his leg up to measure. But with this student's continued dedication and improvement, he actually managed to measure and break a board with a sidekick.

Conclusion: With this student training at my club, he was not singled out and none of the other students saw his disability. He took part in club demonstrations and was nominated for 'Student of the Year' by fellow students. He stopped training due to further education at university but still comes along to watch club demos and presentation evenings.

Case Study 3 - Bullying

Background: 11 year old male

Religion: Catholic

Colour: Mixed Race

Training: 2001 – present day

Information: This student was being bullied at school due to his severe eczema and allergies, which resulted in extreme lack of confidence. He was left out of school trips because of the amount of medication he had to take, which included an epi-pen, which may have had to be administered to save his life if a severe reaction occurred.

The fact that he was promoted to 1st Dan shows how Taekwon-do has changed his life, he now regularly wins medals in all three disciplines in national competitions. He has grown in confidence in school and can now ignore his bullies.

The fact that one of his bullies challenged him to a fight and he responded by saying he could not fight outside of his class, but if the student wished to come down to the training hall, he would fight him under controlled conditions. The bully did come down to train but when he saw the skill of his 'victim' and the respect he had in the class, the tables were turned – him self now being in unfamiliar surroundings. He then chose not to participate in the sparring, but even returned to school boasting about what the students could do.

Conclusion: With this student training at my club, he was not singled out and none of the other students treated him different because of his eczema. His black belt status at this young age is a true inspiration to other younger students. He has being voted the 'Student of the Year' and 'Most Improved Student of the Year' for a couple of years in succession by his team-mates.

Case Study 4 - Class

Background: 25 year old female

Religion: None

Colour: White

Training: 2003 – present day

Information: This student was brought up with a privileged background, attended an all girls school. Educated to degree level at university, her perception towards people of darker skins was stereo typed e.g. muggers, unemployed, drug pushers etc. This was the same regarding people of different religions; Sikhs only wore turbans, all Muslims were violent, Rastafarians only smoked weed and sat on beaches.

Working class people were seen to be just benefit scroungers with the only bag that was to be used to carry onions would be a Prada or Gucci bag.

Conclusion: From joining the club, she could see first hand that all her views and opinions were unfounded. All cultures and religions mix openly and all are seen as an united team when representing the club at tournaments. She now regularly wins her sparring category. This is an achievement since her background did not incur or have the need to have hands on for physical contact with other races, religions or people. She did not encounter conflict in any way, due to the fact she was brought up in a rural riverside village.

My personal conclusion

Diversity is a word now used to keep us in line and to make people have to think even before they speak, and to remind us that not every one is of the same colour, age, gender or ability (this is now reflected by multi-cultural mannequins through shop window displays, training aids, and even children's toys). Where they once only portrayed a white person (European), they can now be seen to represent black, (African, Caribbean, West Indian) appearance of skin colours.

My own experiences of prejudice stem from my early competition days when sometimes I was the only black person in my belt category. I would often overhear comments such as 'Make sure you beat that coon' or 'Here's the blackie again'. Much to the disappointment of these competitors, their behaviour only fuelled my determination to win – which I successfully have done for approx 15 years. If there was to be a positive side to these actions it was that I was certainly remembered.

As a result of not having anyone to tell or talk to, I felt no one would understand how much even the most trivial comment could affect someone (what is funny to one could be offensive to another). Therefore, I will always make myself available to listen to any student - male or female, black white or other, that think they are being hard done by for whatever reason.

Even now, at a grading or seminar, if a black or Asian student steps up it is automatically assumed that they are from my club. (I take this as a compliment as it tells me that what I am doing is noticed, even if nothing is said).

Students training at my club can see people for who they are – not what they are or listen to what they are told - may it be good or bad.

Barriers are broken down.

After all

"One person's friend is another person's enemy"

"A view from one person's eye is never the same as someone else's eye"

I will leave you with my final quote;

"Stand up for what you believe. Stand proud and stand strong, for you are who you are and let no one take that from you".





