

# *Leadership in Taekwon-Do*

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In Taekwon do, like in many aspects of life you can use many styles of leadership. Each is different from the one before but still as equally understandable. Humans have evolved over time and as a result have become more unique. This then of course leads to individuality and results in us displaying different responses when it comes to learning.

A good instructor will never assume things about your students. For example, you can't expect that all students will be skilled at a task, or that all students will be of good character and won't have behavioural problems. When instructing you must keep in mind that your goal is to unlock each student's true potential and improve their performance. Your focus should be more on helping the student to learn rather than teaching. If something is not getting through to a student you may need to relook at how you are showing or explaining the technique.

Each person has their own learning style, and instructors have many ways of teaching. A valuable leader/instructor will be aware of these learning styles and adapt their ways of teaching to suit the students they are working with.

All instructors are optimistic when it comes to students learning, they wish to take their students from where they are presently to where they want to be. They all have knowledge to pass on, but information may not be understood or well received if your method of instructing inhibits learning for the individual. For example, an instructor who is highly directive will most likely intimidate children in the club, and therefore inhibit their learning. A Taekwon Do club has individuals who all have different personalities, abilities and even some with disabilities. Each has their own style of learning and different strengths and weaknesses so being capable of adapting the varying leadership principles to work for each of your students is vital for successful learning.

## ***Leadership Principle 1: Transactional***

Transactional leadership, also known as managerial leadership is highly focused on group performance. This principle relies on lower levels of encouragement and being highly directive. It is more suited when teaching adults as they tend to require less motivation. Transactional leaders apply the use of a reward and punishment system, this motivates people to do their best so they can receive rewards (being promoted or getting praise) rather than being punished (press-ups etc). It is a leadership that focuses on the role of authority, organization and performance. Because of the strict rules the leader can come across as intimidating.

This is the leadership principle most commonly associated with adult club trainings as they are generally more self motivated and willing to work hard requiring lower levels of praise. It is a highly directive technique that works well from an instructor's point of view. They can give an instruction and then move around and correct where necessary and if the student is sufficiently self-motivated

they will work in their own time on the corrections and advice given. For students capable of obeying directions and a willingness to train, it has a positive impact on their learning as a lot can be covered in a shorter amount of time.

The punishment and reward system teaches them that respecting and listening to those of a higher rank, can result in praise. When using a transactional style of teaching the student becomes aware that their instructor will set them along a path with a clear goal and concise steps to be taken to achieve this goal. This is a good method to use when leading up to grading or tournaments because the students are more self motivated and don't need as much support. They just require direction and feedback. The instructor is someone the students will look up to and aspire to be like.

There are some downfalls to this principle, an instructor who teaches using transactional leadership are generally quite strict individuals. It is in this kind of situation where children of young ages may become intimidated by their instructor. This then leads to an unfocused mind and learning becomes inhibited. With children a kinder approach with higher levels of encouragement is required. This type of leadership may also be difficult with children and young adults who are disobedient. With individuals who tend to disobey you may need to adapt your leadership style where you present your instructions differently. Phrasing your statement as a question where they choose the outcome may encourage the student to do the task, for example "would you like to do Patterns or line work?" If you continue with a highly directive approach disobedient individuals will rebel and as a result will receive no rewards from training, this may lead to the student leaving the art.

### ***Leadership principle 2: Transformational***

This type of leadership is highly supportive and less directive. This style looks to bring about personal growth/change in an individual and focuses on motivation and confidence building. The instructor motivates their students with lots of support, praise and encouragement to increase performance as they attempt to achieve their goal. The instructor must be able to spot the good techniques amongst the bad and point out and highlight these small successes with the student. For example if a young student is practising their pattern and their techniques are not so good yet but they have good speed, focus the praise on the positive aspect e.g. "wow you have awesome speed, and we will keep working on that forearm low block crossing."

This highly effective leadership style means the students are motivated and their self esteem increases. As a result an enthusiastic training environment is created i.e. once students receive positive feedback, they feel better about their abilities, they are more motivated and it encourages them to work harder and persevere.

It is a good style of leadership for younger children who aren't as skilled at sport or activity and don't have the motivation or ability to direct their own learning. Young children don't take criticism well as they generally have a lower self esteem and any form of harsh critique will create a negative experience. They thrive on positive motivation and praise so it is important to frequently find the good in what they attempt and keep critiques to a minimum.

With this principle there is a fine line when it comes to discipline. You must be careful that while providing encouragement and a positive learning environment, you don't let discipline slip. Even though this is a highly motivational style there must still be an aspect of authority with punishment for breaks in etiquette or club rules. Without this students may become disobedient or disruptive.

Transformational is not the type of principle you would use for students who are aiming to be high performance individuals. Students who want to try and perfect the art, are training for a grading or a tournament need to be critiqued and corrected. Therefore this style where critiques are minimal will not benefit a student with these goals. Students training to improve techniques and application would benefit from the characteristics that fall more under the transactional leadership style.

### ***Leadership principle 3: Distributed***

This type of leadership is one that is broadly distributed. The responsibilities of leadership are shared amongst other sub leaders thus lightening the load on each individual. They may each take on different responsibilities according to their areas of strength and expertise. This method is used in clubs with lots of members of different grades. Instructors in these kinds of settings must be able to hand over control to someone else. Something as simple as a coloured belt taking the lower grades for bag kicking significantly decreases the work load on the instructors, who can now focus directly on the students they are teaching.

By distributing the students between sub leaders the main instructors can select a manageable amount of students that they need to work with. These may be individuals that are looking to grade or compete in tournaments, or even just students that are mentally more mature and wish to make an attempt at perfecting the art. The instructors may also choose to circulate through the delegated groups, of which they can also instruct or simply observe how the delegated instructor is managing. This is not only beneficial to the student but also in developing assistant instructors and higher grades that are also capable of instructing. The smaller groups that this style allows ensure each student is kept on task and receives the full attention of their instructor, something that may not happen if one person tries to take the whole class.

In distributed leadership styles there are also other benefits to the students. Training under different instructors gives individuals experience with a variety of different leadership principles and styles of teaching. Each instructor will have a (different idea of how to show and explain techniques or movements and different teaching tools) way they prefer to show and explain things. This is good for the students, it helps them become aware of some of the other ways they could be taught. This may then help them to realise which style works for them and provides the most beneficial act of learning.

This style of leadership may not be favourable if the majority of a club is grading, or looking to compete in a tournament. In situations where the students need to be perfecting their skills and abilities, distributing responsibility may not be beneficial as instructors will probably want to oversee training of the individuals themselves. This is when the instructors must be careful about selecting sub leaders, as some higher ranking students may not have the same areas of expertise as others. They must ensure they group sub leaders with the students that will benefit the most from what

that individual has to offer. It is also non beneficial if the club has lower numbers of higher grades and large numbers of low grades as these few individuals could be delegated too often to teaching and not have the time to do any training themselves at the club.

#### ***Leadership Principle 4: Adaptive***

Adaptive leadership is meeting the needs of the situation without staying in one comfort zone. This means you are a more effective leader because you can adapt to any situation. Adaptive leaders have the qualities of all the leadership styles previously mentioned. There is always a clear goal but the teaching methods the instructor use while trying to achieve these may alter according to what will benefit the student the most.

Ideally this is the perfect method for an instructor to use. An individual who has the capability to switch between transformational, transactional and distributed is someone who can adapt to the variety of ways their students learn. An instructor who can be supportive, strict and can pass authority to another is one who meets the needs of everyone. A club with this type of leader will achieve the goals they pursue and will bring about a positive environment for training.

The main advantage of this style is the flexibility of the leader, being able to switch between styles to suit whichever group of students they are training. If the instructor is under pressure with lots of students present, it is good to know that they can distribute some of their responsibilities to another member of the club. This is beneficial to everyone as they then have an instructor who is better able to focus on the group in front of them. An adaptive leader can do things however they need to in order to achieve the goals of the club and individuals. Adaptive leaders are capable of making high quality decisions quickly and they have the freedom within the framework to adjust activities and sessions to suit.

There are no real downfalls to an adaptive leader, and this makes it one of the most efficient leadership styles to incorporate into your trainings.

Each principle outlined requires a certain personality and most people will favour one style over another but it is possible to be able to swap between the different styles when necessary. Teaching mini kids requires a totally different leadership principle than teaching a groups of highly motivated older students and a large group of teenagers is going to require another style altogether. An effective instructor will find the right style for each student and adapt their methods of teaching as necessary.