

## 4<sup>th</sup> Dan Essay

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I have started off first of all with a little research on leadership.

*What is a leader? A **leader** is simply someone whom other people will follow.*

The definition of the word is quite simple: *Leadership, the action of leading a group of people or an organization, the state or position of being a leader.*

However, from here on there is a lot of wide-ranging thoughts on what skills/characteristics are important in a leader. Some of the attributes of leadership that I found were: Initiative, adaptability, communication, organization, empathy, critical thinking, mediation and conflict resolution, assertiveness, authenticity, birth order, dominance, emotional intelligence, intelligence, narcissism, self-efficacy for leadership, self-monitoring.

As you can see, some of these attributes are not teachable, and some are not applicable to Taekwon-Do. However, there are many that are able to be taught or encouraged in a person and many of these are also built into the basic framework of what we are already teaching in Taekwon-Do.

#### *Quoted:*

*Leadership is a matter of intelligence, trustworthiness, humaneness, courage, and discipline ... Reliance on intelligence alone results in rebelliousness. Exercise of humaneness alone results in weakness. Fixation on trust results in folly. Dependence on the strength of courage results in violence. Excessive discipline and sternness in command result in cruelty. When one has all five virtues together, each appropriate to its function, then one can be a leader.*  
— Jia Lin, in commentary on Sun Tzu, *Art of War*

## **HOW DOES TKD PROVIDE LEADERSHIP QUALITIES FOR YOUTH?**

I believe that taekwon-do already encourages people to be confident and self-assured as they progress through the ranks. In my experience, I have found that the people who are able to be strong leaders are usually confident, assertive people. In taekwon-do they are often confident in their knowledge of taekwon-do, and/or confident in themselves as a person.

Some people are naturally good leaders, and other people will listen to and follow them, as they are often naturally showing strong leadership traits. I think it is then very important for us, as seniors in the organisation, to make sure that they are also good people who are then leading others in the right direction.

Our taekwon-do organisation already provides a good framework for youth who might possess leadership qualities by allowing them to:

- Become an official at a tournament, after completing an Officials Course.

- Assisting with instructing at a club level especially by taking warm ups, or small groups for specific activities (overseen or assisted by a senior)
- Organising events (guided by seniors), whether at a club level or higher.

One of the issues I have found with developing leadership in youth, is that due to their age and stage in life, they are often self-focused. This often means that they are focused on what they can get from their training and less about what they can or are contributing.

There are also already so many outside distractions and pressures (school, exams, jobs, other sport, etc) already trying to draw them away from taekwon-Do, that if you, intentionally or not, apply pressure to take on increased responsibility or help out, it can be too much and can be the final straw which mean that they leave the club.

However, contradictory to this, and due to the “all inclusive” attitude that we have in Taekwon-Do, where everyone is important and can contribute, regardless of age, grade or ability, I have also seen youth naturally helping and showing great leadership potential. Some examples are: 7-year-olds teaching techniques to classmates who are struggling, teenagers voluntarily including young kids in their team pattern, or kids who have been training for a while helping Mum or Dad (who have just started Taekwon-Do) to learn what they need to do.

I believe that it is because of the “all inclusive” attitude that we have in Taekwon-Do (which is already a well engrained cornerstone of our organisation), that we are already naturally building leadership qualities in youth and providing an opportunity for them to contribute.

## **WHAT DO YOU DO IN YOUR CLUB SPECIFICALLY TO DEVELOP LEADERSHIP?**

At my clubs, I use junior students (in both rank and age) to help demonstrate techniques and movements in front of the class, then follow this up by praising them for doing it. In doing this they get more confident and comfortable with being in front of people, demonstrating, talking to people and explaining things to the group.

Another thing that I use, is that if I ask the class a question, I try to avoid saying “No” or “You are wrong” if they give an incorrect answer, instead I try to use phrases like “Nice try, but it’s not the answer that I’m looking for” or “I see that you know the answer, but the wording that I was looking for was...” This way they are more likely to want to stand up and answer a question in the future. Hopefully this is then helping to give them more confidence in standing up in front of others to voice their opinions and ideas, whether at taekwon-do, school, work or some other area of their life.

I also emphasise the fact that whoever is teaching is “The Boss”, whether it’s a blue belt teaching a basic technique to a white belt, or a green belt taking a warm up. When they are in the front they are to be treated with the same courtesy as any black belt instructor. This way the person teaching gains the confidence of knowing

that people will follow them and listen to their ideas, building their self-confidence and public speaking abilities.

While they are teaching, I also treat them as I would any other black belt, by doing as I'm instructed and letting them get on with teaching. Then at the end of their teaching I will usually take them aside for a moment and let them know if they have taught any techniques incorrectly, offer some advice on how they can improve their instruction for next time they are teaching, or just congratulate them for their efforts.

## **WHAT IDEAS DO YOU HAVE TO FURTHER DEVELOP LEADERSHIP IN YOUR CLUB OR THE ORGANISATION?**

My clubs don't have a formal framework set up for leadership as some other clubs do. Like all clubs we have the requirements of ITFNZ as a minimum standard, for people to do instructor courses and assist at club prior to their black belt grading.

Using junior grade adults to assist with classes is another way that I have found to build leadership for the future, usually starting with simple activities, such as holding pads or helping kids with basic techniques.

Generally, I have found the best person for this role is someone who is a parent or has teaching experience, as they can relate to the younger students, but are also used to giving orders and making people do as they are told. Their life outside of Taekwon-Do is also generally settled and has a regular routine, which makes them reliable and consistent (in my opinion one of the most important aspects of a good instructor). They are also used to planning ahead and helping others achieve their requirements/goals.

Using this idea, I have asked particular people who have started taekwon-do and are usually parents or teachers, to come along and help out with our clubs kids classes, with activities such as holding pads etc. They have then moved on over time, as they progressed through the grades, to helping in more senior sessions and have become pivotal people in our club and regular contributors to our organisation.

If you look at our organisation you will see that most of our instructors fit this basic description - they have family members to look after, and/or have backgrounds in some sort of teaching, they are settled in their life and they are reliable.

Over the years I have seen a lot of people who have been encouraged to become an assistant instructor, or start a club, before they were really ready to commit to it. This most often ends with them leaving the club, closing the club or sometimes quitting taekwon-do completely, which is obviously the exact opposite of what we are hoping to achieve.

So, in summary, I believe we should encourage and support our students as they take on leadership, let them try and also make mistakes, then congratulate them for trying and continue to offer more support for their future attempts, so that they can continue to grow as they teach, instruct and move our organisation into the future.