

## **How does Taekwon-Do provide leadership qualities for youth? What do you do in your club specifically to develop leadership, and what ideas do you have to further develop leadership in your club or the organisation?**

Mike Lowe, 25 August 2021

Writing about the ideal instructor, General Choi Hong Hi once wrote, *“Soldiers are as strong as the general who leads (sic) them, and, in a like manner, students can only excel under an excellent instructor.”*<sup>1</sup>

According to New Zealand’s Ministry of Youth Development, the definition of youth is restricted to young people between the ages of 12 and 24.<sup>2</sup>

The subject of this essay will be how then, do we marry the qualities required of an ideal instructor with the needs of our youth, so that they have the potential to become the best possible versions of themselves?

Young people in the 12-24-year-old group can be described in terms of three characteristics and needs—social, emotional and cognitive.<sup>3</sup>

Socially they are searching for personal identity that focuses on acceptance within peer groups. Role models are influential in their development of self, and they tend to be increasingly ready to accept leadership roles.

Emotionally, they are increasingly ready to accept responsibility and to be treated as an adult.

Youth cognitive or intellectual characteristics include the tendency to like finding their own solutions to problems, and valuing opportunities to present their ideas. They are capable of making choices and solving problems; they can set goals, make plans to achieve them, and evaluate those plans.

So, the problem for our organisation becomes how we can best provide opportunities for our youths to develop into leaders within their clubs and our organisation.

With the average age of Tiger Taekwon-Do being 11 years, I currently do not have any youth students in my club. However, as the club continues to grow, there will be opportunities to increase the proportion of youths, and therefore offer leadership roles to those students. Until that time arrives, some comments can be made on what processes would likely be set in place for when the occasion arises.

Leadership is the art of motivating the actions of others.<sup>4</sup> Youth leaders with that quality will first and foremost love doing, and learning about Taekwon-Do. They will tend to observe the Tenets of Taekwon-Do—courtesy, integrity, perseverance self-control and indomitable spirit. Motivators are willing to help fellow club members to meet their needs and tend to be good communicators.

When the opportunities arise, I will be taking notice of individuals who have the desired attributes and skills to lead other individuals or small groups within my club. They will regularly attend training and observe the Tenets of Taekwon-Do. They also can capture peoples’ attention by being outgoing, welcoming and fun, as well as inspiring by their actions and attitude.

Leadership is setting clear direction in the face of uncertainty. I have an expectation that my youth leaders will ultimately with guidance and direction, be able to lead regular training sessions with

1. Choi, H. H. (1983). *Encyclopedia of Taekwon-Do*. Vol. 1, p. 87. Ontario. International Taekwon-Do Federation
2. [Microsoft Word - Policy document 14 10 2010 version 3.doc \(myd.govt.nz\)](#)
3. [athlete-development-characteristics-and-needs.pdf \(sportnz.org.nz\)](#)
4. [7 Definitions of Leadership - Simplicable](#)

groups of students. I would expect that those leaders will be capable of planning as well as conducting their own lessons, and deal with parent queries.

Leaders are knowledgeable and share wisdom with the people who they associate with. Taekwon-Do wisdom is accumulated by people engaging in the process of training in and studying Taekwon-Do. Wisdom is also gained as people learn from their life experiences as they grow older. Generally, I would expect to find a youth leader with these qualities to be at least in their late teens or older, and a Black Stripe grade or higher.

Leadership is an ability to exude confidence and attract followers. This quality tends to be innate and not something that can be easily trained, therefore a youth leader with this ability in my club will be outgoing and socially confident. Strongly linked to this is the quality of being decisive with good judgement.

Leadership is the ability to influence thoughts and actions, which is developed with time. A youth leader will be more effective when they are recognised as a person in authority and have the confidence to act with authority—they are wise and knowledgeable and take responsibility for the group that they lead.

Leadership is the ability to innovate, which leads to improved effectiveness or efficiency in an organisation. At the club level, such change could be different drills, skills, marketing ideas or administrative processes. In order to encourage my youth leaders to innovate, I would plan to have regular meetings and training sessions with them. I would also encourage my leaders to visit other clubs to pick-up different training methods and organisational structures.

Having skilled, enthusiastic and dependable youth leaders in our clubs who can assist with instructing duties is a tremendous asset. Their presence can lessen the burden placed on the head instructor and provides an opportunity for a club to grow and mature. When someone like this is identified within our ranks, we need to cherish them and treat them like gold. So how do clubs and ITKD as an organisation act to value our youth leaders?

There are many strategies which can be used, so which is appropriate comes down to a matter of scale. Some strategies would suit a small club with just one or two assistants, while others are appropriate for a larger club with five or more leaders. Some could be used for ITKD as a whole.

Youth leaders need to feel special and valued. As a minimum, if there is any equipment which they require then it should be provided free of charge. Give them a unique dobok with your club logo, their name and title such as 'Assistant Instructor', 'Staff' or 'Leadership Team' embroidered on it. Provide them with lesson planners, calendars, technical handbooks and drink bottles. Opportunities should be made for them to share ideas together and team teach. Periodically there should be leadership team meetings, and team bonding activities such as movie nights and tramping trips. If a club has a website or social media presence, there should be a page devoted to staff that publicises their individual biographies, accomplishments, and members' feedback.

Our leaders' opinions on all operational matters concerning our clubs should be listened to, and if there are issues then steps should be taken to rectify them. One question that arises very early when new youth leaders are engaged, is how they will be rewarded. How this is addressed comes down to whether both parties agree that the leadership role is a voluntary or a paid position. If the role is voluntary, then although there is no payment for the time input, there could be other forms of material benefit such as free clothing, and the offer of payment of course and grading fees.

Any personal development that leaders engage in should be recorded as a point of reference for not only what they have done to improve their current skills and knowledge, but also act as a guide for future development opportunities. The types of activities that should be recorded include team training and bonding; team teaching; observations of other instructors; technical seminars; cross-code coaching courses; generic coaching courses and First Aid courses.

LOOK BEYOND MONEY • Simply thank your coaches by sending texts to say things like “I really appreciate you and the awesome work you do” costs nothing. A coaches uniform or jacket can be a reward recognizing their place in the club. • You could also see if you can get sponsors to provide you with tickets to events or vouchers for a meal. An end of season coaches function is a great way to thank them.

My youth leaders would continue to train in their own regular classes while teaching, and so it is important that they do not feel as though they are overburdened and exploited. I would manage this by offering to compensate them for their time and trouble. There are different ways of managing this, so depending on individual preferences, it would be in the form of a contract-based role, where the rewards would be in the form of a combination of things such as: direct payment; no or discounted training fees; payment of grading fees; payment of course and seminar fees.

International Taekwon-Do has an Instructors’ Induction Course, which is designed to help students become better instructors by developing skills such as effective communication and lesson planning. As our club’s head instructor, I would send my youth leaders to this course as appropriate.

ITKD also has an Instructor Development Advisor, Master Christine Young, who’s role is to identify, develop and motivate students with the potential to become good instructors. These students would learn to become assistant instructors in their clubs, and possibly open new clubs. Ideally, these students would periodically be given opportunities to develop their instructing skills by various means including reading books, magazines or internet articles, watching videos and participating in group training and discussion sessions. It is possible to learn instructing skills and drills by observing coaches in other sports, so whenever possible, future instructors should be encouraged to attend cross-code coaching programmes.

Contemporary pedagogy informs us that regarding the development characteristics and needs of 12–24-year-olds, many will appreciate the opportunity to become team leaders as a part of maturing into young adulthood. Consequently, clubs which have a culture of identifying and nurturing youths who are confident; attract, motivate and influence followers; are innovative and capable of planning a course of action, will be doing much to aid in the development of outstanding character in their students.

1. Choi, H. H. (1983). *Encyclopedia of Taekwon-Do*. Vol. 1, p. 87. Ontario. International Taekwon-Do Federation
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