

Evaluating the Current State and Direction of Our Organisation

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In the fast-paced and constantly evolving world of martial arts, where the path an organisation follows is essential, it is crucial to conduct an assessment to ensure that it remains in harmony with the core values and principles of the discipline it represents. In this essay, I will delve into various aspects of our organisation, including membership trends, age and rank demographics, and the implementation of a strategic plan, all within the framework of International Taekwon-Do. As we navigate through our achievements, growth, and strategic planning, it becomes essential to look at the direction that our organisation is heading, in order to find out whether it aligns with the principles and ideals that guide International Taekwon-Do.

One of the most notable achievements in recent times is the performance of our team at the World Championships held in Finland. Despite being a relatively new team, they managed to surpass expectations and secure an impressive 12th overall placing, even with a smaller contingent. To put this achievement into context, it is important to acknowledge International Taekwon-Do's historic consistent placings among the top five countries at every World Championships since 2003. At face value 12th place overall at the 2023 World Championships may not seem particularly notable, but this year's accomplishment was achieved with an inexperienced team due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which put a halt to international travel and competition for over three years. This promising result is a testament to the dedication and skill of our athletes and coaches, and it signals a positive track in terms of talent development and competitive prowess.

Membership trends reflect the organisation's commitment to the principles of International Taekwon-Do. Analysing the breakdown of membership by age categories reveals some intriguing trends. The age group that has experienced the most significant average decline over the past four years is the Under 6s, which has seen an 18% drop. This decline can be attributed to various factors, such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, shifting social factors, competition from other activities, or difficulties in retaining young members. In the last year, we also experienced the loss of a large club with many members in this younger age bracket. Addressing the decline in this age group is crucial for the organisation's long-term sustainability, as it directly impacts the channel of future members and competitors.

Other age categories, such as 6-8 years and 9-11 years, also show declines, though at a lower rate. Understanding the underlying reasons for these decreases is crucial for devising targeted retention and recruitment strategies to ensure the continued growth of our organisation.

Examining the data on membership breakdown by rank further highlights areas that require attention. Junior gup grades (10th Gup) and Junior gup grades (9th Gup) have experienced significant drops, with losses of 18% and 16%, respectively, over the past four years. This indicates challenges in retaining members as they progress through the ranks. Implementing effective retention strategies and mentorship programs can be instrumental in addressing this issue. It is worth noting that some members from these ranks have also progressed into more senior grades, which is an encouraging.

On the positive side, other categories, such as senior gup grades and black belts, have maintained relatively stable or even increasing numbers. This suggests that the organisation has been successful in retaining and advancing members in the higher ranks. Recognising and replicating the factors contributing to this success can be valuable for overall membership growth and the continued health of our organisation.

Assessing the implementation of the strategic plan prompts reflection on whether we have taken on too much too quickly. While I acknowledge that progress is being made in sourcing a new database system, challenges persist in replacing a proven system. The need for continuous advancement, even if it means starting with a less optimal system, or possibly considering more than one system, may be necessary to maintain our path of progress.

Strategic planning requires the involvement of key stakeholders, particularly senior members who bring experience, historical knowledge, and an understanding of the organisation's culture. I believe that this crucial element is currently missing from our approach. The future success of our organisation hinges on our ability to prepare incoming senior members to assume leadership roles. While change is necessary, I would be in favour of a gradual approach, recognising the time and experience required to integrate new leaders. It is crucial to avoid overwhelming individuals by forcing rapid changes, especially in roles that demand significant expertise.

In conclusion, an assessment of our organisation's direction, viewed through the lens of International Taekwon-Do philosophy, highlights the importance of aligning with its core values. Addressing challenges in membership trends, effectively implementing the strategic plan, fostering open and effective communication, and adequately preparing future leaders are essential to ensuring that our organisation remains true to the spirit and principles of Taekwon-Do.

While the overall trajectory suggests that our organisation is moving in the right direction, I believe a crucial aspect remains unaddressed—the utilisation of individuals possessing the knowledge, expertise, and experience essential for a seamless transition into the replacement phase. The commitment to progress, for example the pursuit of a new database system, is commendable.

The martial arts journey, relies heavily on the wisdom of those who have walked the path before us. It is important that our organisation actively engages and leverages the wealth of experience within our senior members. In the spirit of Taekwon-Do, the respect for seniors and the passing down of knowledge are paramount. Tapping into the knowledge of those who came before can pave the way for a more informed and strategic transition.

As our organisation continues its pursuit of excellence, we must recognise that the success of any transition lies not only in the destination but in the manner in which the journey is navigated, a teaching often taught in the dojang to junior members.

In essence, our organisation is not merely defined by its goals and achievements but by the collective wisdom and experience of its members. By actively involving and valuing the contributions of those who possess the necessary knowledge for a smooth transition, our organisation can ensure that its path aligns not only with strategic plans but also with the tenets of Taekwon-Do. In doing so, our organisation can stride confidently into the future, preserving its heritage while embracing the opportunities that change presents.