

Community Development in Taekwon-Do

By Chanthie Thach (II Dan)

Assistant Instructor of the Tamaki Taekwon-Do Club Inc.



1. Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my sister, Thu Thach, for her constant guidance throughout my Taekwon-Do life, her help in the preparation of this grading and completion of this essay.

I dedicate this essay to my fellow Instructors and members of the Tamaki Taekwon-Do Club.

2. Thesis Statement

For the purpose of this essay I will use Tamaki Taekwon-Do Club as an example to explain how community development through Taekwon-Do can be achieved. I will explore the Club's vision by discussing the strategies that have been set and goals yet to be achieved. I hope these ideas can be of value to other Taekwon-Do Clubs throughout New Zealand.

3. History

Tamaki Taekwon-Do Club was formed with the ambition to spread the knowledge of Taekwon-Do to residents living in the Mount Wellington region.

The Club formed towards the end of 2005 and commenced training at Sylvia Park Primary School hall on a twice weekly basis. It began with a kid's holiday programme and was very successful. Our first students are still



training with us to this day. Due to the increasing student membership and a desire for improved training facilities, there was a need to move to a new training area.

In 2007, the Club moved to its present full-time facility – “The Mount Wellington Rugby Football Club”. The facility has been renovated over the last two years to provide a suitable training environment for the students. Funding from various charitable organisations provided the equipment necessary for training, such as safety mats. The Club began to grow towards a more developed organisation and this was achieved with our four main Instructors, Dr Thu Thach (IV Dan – Head Instructor), myself (II Dan – Assistant Instructor), Ms Amanda Insull (II Dan) and Miss Zharna Letfus (1st gup).

The Club runs six classes on a weekly basis. Sessions are held over two nights - Monday and Thursday, with three classes per night – kids (5:30pm-6:30pm), adults (6:30pm-8pm) and seniors (8pm-8:30pm). Further sessions are held on Sunday (3pm – 5pm) for preparation for black belt gradings. Students of the club have been successful in both areas of grading and tournament, attaining senior belts and competing on both regional and national levels.

The training area is also used by a number of other Taekwon-Do groups, in particular – *The Auckland Taekwon-Do Academy*, which trains on alternate nights for students competing in tournaments and students preparing for their dan gradings.

4. Our vision



The Club is situated in a low-moderate socio-economic area in Central Auckland. A number of our students experience significant financial hardship, therefore, in order to help them succeed in Taekwon-Do, we had to identify these issues and adjust our fees accordingly +/- club subsidies to events and seminars.

We learnt that we had to identify with our students, understand their background and experiences and thus be able to tailor our instructing and management of the Club. We wanted our students to succeed in other areas of their life through the teachings of Taekwon-Do, in particular the Do aspect.

Our Club is based on the concept of community development through empowerment. In order to achieve this, we had to foster our students within a supportive training environment, to help shape our students on an individual level in which they will be able to control and develop themselves towards success.

Our vision for the Club was not only to spread and share the teachings of Taekwon-Do within the Mount Wellington region but it was also to develop and grow this community, to create opportunities and minimise the effects of financial hardship, to shape the youth to become future leaders and role models, and to live in a safe and supportive environment.

We embrace the last two lines of the student oath, *“I shall be a champion of freedom and justice...I shall build a more peaceful world”*, and the tenets of Taekwon-Do because it gives our students a purpose to have Taekwon-Do in their life.

5. Community development

“You must be the change you wish to see in the world.”

Mahatma Gandhi

Defining the community

The Tamaki Taekwon-Do Club is a community of students living within the Mount Wellington and surrounding regions, learning the art of Taekwon-Do. It encompasses a wide age range, from children (4-12 years), youth (13-18 years), young adults (19-25 years) and older adults (26+ years). There are a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds and variable socio-economic status, predominantly the low to middle status.

Community development is an approach that is currently being used to help students reach their potential by developing their personal skills. This provides the student with the ability and control to make better choices, and in turn improves their behaviour in Taekwon-Do, school, home and work. This is because the student is able to identify their own problems and have an understanding of what they must do in order to rectify them and develop strategies to improve the situation. It is an empowering process where the student uses their power and knowledge from within to make decisions on their own. Thus increases their self-esteem and motivates them to change their ways and succeed.

Key community development characteristics

There are a number of principles that characterise community development and this includes increasing the following aspects:

a) Social capital

Increasing social capital is important in community development. They are relationships between people which aid to the development of trust leading to co-operation to achieve common goals and beneficial outcomes. By building relationships it creates a network of people that they can rely on and support each other. Thus, in turn increase efficiency and effectiveness, make the community be more self-reliant and it also increases sustainability.

b) Developing leaders

Leaders can help guide, strengthen and maintain the networks between people. The students with the help of Instructors can develop themselves to become leaders and role models for their fellow students.



For most Instructors, the aim is to have a successful Club, in order to do that, they have an important role in promoting participation, empowering their students, developing senior students whom a capable to undertake those leadership roles, which includes being a 'good' role model for junior students. Thus the students will be led by their example, which will encompass good behaviour and an attitude to succeed. Building a strong student and Instructor

relationship is fundamental in the development of leaders, this relationship enables the student to develop important interpersonal skills that can be used to develop their communication abilities and behavioural skills to add to their leadership qualities. In effect, the leadership that is established can help increase confidence and networks, change behaviour, and can help the Club run smoothly.

c) Creating supportive environments

In order for people to be led by the leaders they must be fostered within a supportive environment. This can be the physical environment, such as the training hall, or non-physical environment, such as people's attitudes. The students must feel like they are training within a safe and supportive environment, such that the facility must be user friendly and comfortable as well as the community of people. It also involves changing the structures of the Club, such as earlier and shorter training sessions to suit the needs for young children, to enable them to perform and focus well and to allow them to be home earlier so to sleep at appropriate times. Establishing rules and boundaries, in addition to the Taekwon-Do rules, to guide students and maintain order in the Club, this could be transferred to non-training environments.

d) Developing personal skills

We acknowledge that attitude and behaviour plays a significant role in a student's ability to perform well in Taekwon-Do, as well in the world they live in. In order to change behaviour the student would need to develop skills that they can use to enable change and development. This includes improved decision-making, self-awareness, listening, communication, leadership, co-operation, planning and organisation skills. Often people with poor behaviour and personal skills have limited resources and low literacy levels. By developing these skills, the students become more confident in communication and develop qualities that would result in them becoming leaders and thus Instructors in the future. Furthermore, the student can use apply these skills in their own non-training environment such as school and work.



6. Research – identifying issues

Research is a powerful tool that we have used in order to help us identify the issues that can hinder a student's performance in training. Over the course of three years, we have observed the actions and behaviour of our students and we gathered vital information that allowed us to identify issues such as, reasons why students were not behaving well during training, not coming to training on a regular basis and on time, and why some students were not improving in their skills. These issues are common across all age and gender groups. The determining factors included low income, lack of transport and time, and other

significant commitments. These factors are the social structures that surrounds an individual, thus shaping their actions and behaviour. It is important for Instructors to acknowledge these factors as it prevents them from victim blaming, an action that blames the individual for their poor performance in Taekwon-Do. Furthermore, lack of strong family and friend networks, low socio-economic status and other commitments in school, work and home can cause the student to not focus and lose motivation in Taekwon-Do. With this knowledge in mind it gives us ideas to work with, so that an effective framework can be developed. The framework includes creating strategies to buffer the effects of the inhibiting factors. They are aligned with the community development concepts so that the strategies are successful in changing the behaviour of each student.



7. Strategies

In order to fulfil each community development principle, I have listed a number of strategies which are stepping stones to help develop the students and thus their ability in Taekwon-Do. This is only an example of strategie and not a complete list. Instructors are encouraged to identify issues and develop strategies accordingly. Achieving short term outcomes, such as increasing the individual's self-esteem and improving the community network, leads to progression towards our ultimate purposes of "being a champion of freedom and justice" and "building a more peaceful world".

1. Social capital

Strategies:

- Develop a support group among parents and students
- Organise Club activities, such as end of the year functions to encourage social interactions and develop key relationships, as well as prize-givings to acknowledge important Club contributions and the students achievements
- Organise combined Club training to develop community networks
- Organise guest Instructors, this would add to the body of skills and qualities for students to learn from
- Have fun activities and games for warm-up to develop social interactions
- Develop relationships with students and parents
- Respect for a student's cultural and social capital
- Ensure confidentiality in order to build trust
- Ensure that the Tenets of Taekwon-Do are utilised

2. Developing leaders

Strategies:

- Develop leaders amongst kids, youth and adults

- Enrol senior students in Instructor training courses, First Aid courses and other development seminars
- Develop roles and responsibilities for students and parents
- Invite guest Instructors, so to motivate students to aspire to be like the Instructor
- Encourage students to have a Taekwon-Do role model that they can look up to and develop a relationship with
- Encourage the senior students, and junior students who show leadership skills, to take warm-ups and kids class, under the supervision of the black belt Instructors
- Encourage students to be lead the class and lead by example
- Encourage students to attend coloured belt and black-belt gradings, to support the Club and learn from other practitioners, dan gradings in particular would provide motivation for the students

3. Building a safe and supportive environment

Strategies:

- Ensure that the Club do-jang is clean and safe to train in
- Ensure that training hours are flexible and reasonable for the students and parents, for example our Kids Class runs at an appropriate time, from 5.30pm to 6.30pm, this would gives the children sufficient time to train and go home to have dinner and sleep at a reasonable hour
- Acknowledge the students, especially students who are new, and welcome parents and caregivers
- Develop a Club management team, so called the “Club Committee” to organise the running of the Club such as treasury roles. Identify students or parents who would be able to fulfill Club roles or help them develop the skills necessary to do so
- The Instructors needs a positive attitude to develop the happy and supportive atmosphere
- Inform the students and the parents of the rules and regulations of the Club
- Encourage the students to introduce themselves to newcomers

4. Developing personal skills

Strategies:

- Encourage the students attend Taekwon-Do courses and seminars
- Get people involved in the Club, for example taking the roll, organising club activities, funding and so on
- Encourage senior students to lead the Club and instruct on a regular basis
- Encourage students to talk to newcomers which helps to build their confidence and communication skills and develop relationships
- Ensure that students adhere to the Taekwon-Do rules as per the handbook

5. *The implications of community development in Taekwon-Do*

Community development serves to identify and address the issues experienced by every student, and helps to identify factors that would hinder the student's training and progress in Taekwon-Do. By intertwining community development concepts into the structure of Taekwon-Do training, it will help buffer the effects of issues affecting a student's ability to learn, build a foundation that will help sustain the future of the club, reach long term benefits, and also contribute to the wider community and society.



Throughout a student's life-course in Taekwon-Do there are a number of financial requirements, such as fees associated with joining/registration, uniforms, sparring gear, gradings, seminars and tournaments. With this constant financial demand, students and parents will struggle to meet costs and thus contribute to hindering their Taekwon-Do progress, as outlined previously.

Development of strategies to buffer the effects that may be caused by not having the ability to afford and access Taekwon-Do needs. The supportive environment approach can help the students or parents approach the Instructors when they need special considerations and in turn, the Instructors are able to identify the issues and develop strategies to overcome these issues. Such as an easier payment schedule, purchasing second hand uniforms or applying for funding to subsidise costs and relieve financial pressures. Transport is another significant issue, however in developing a supportive environment with strong networks it has helped address this need greatly, allowing ease of access to transportation within the pool of members. The students of the Club have learnt to care for each other, within the training and non-training environment, and many students have developed good friendships.

The characteristics of community development as discussed previously are essential for the development of the Club. It increases the confidence of students, builds support networks, encourages good behaviour, teaches students to be good role models for the younger/junior students and it enables students to approach for help when required. The outcomes are beneficial for the Club as the students are disciplined to learn and are empowered to do well in Taekwon-Do and their life outside of training. The positive changes that the students will gain from Taekwon-Do will ultimately help shape the student as an individual in society. And as members of society, they will also be empowered to change and better their own situation – the world they live in. It may be by achieving success in education or work, engaging with people, taking more responsibilities, being a leader,



helping others and so on. The student will be more active and have the required skills to create better opportunities and to achieve success. Not only does the individual benefit, the people and the society they live in will also benefit. Their actions will assist the development of the future, because it is primarily the people that determines the course and function of society. For instance, strategies can assist the development of the children and the youth. It teaches them how to be good role models and leaders and be disciplined as per the tenets in their social environment. And because the youth are “our future”, this will lead to creation of a world that is “more peaceful”, “just and free”.

6. Community development framework

I have developed an example of a framework to show how the community development approach can be implemented. This framework can be found in the Appendix. It includes researching and identifying issues of the target groups, and the concepts of community development to achieve intermediate outcomes and long-term benefits.

7. Conclusion

The community development approach has worked well at the Tamaki Taekwon-Do Club, because it provides for the unique community that we have. The approach enabled us to achieve our vision on both an individual and community level. And as a result, helping the students become successful in Taekwon-Do and their life. The approach recognises and embraces the last two lines of the student oath: “I shall be a champion of freedom and justice”, and “I shall build a more peaceful world”. This is important because as Taekwon-Do practitioners, we should be advocating the ‘Do’ as well as the other fundamental rules and conduct of Taekwon-Do training. We can use Taekwon-Do to achieve justice and equity in the world, and to develop and improve the individual, community and society. It will empower the people so that they can continue to bring about the change that is needed to make this world a better place.

APPENDIX Community development framework

Research and population groups		
Factors that can impact on an individual		
Children (under 12 years)	Young adult (under 25 years)	Adults (26 years and over)
Education	Educational demands	Increasing responsibility
Cultural factors	Identity	Relationship issues
Social and family structure	Social relations	Family
Gender	Physical development	Work responsibilities
	Independence	Work place security



Action areas			
Community development principles			
Building safe , supportive environments	Developing leaders	Developing personal skills	Increase social capital
Strategies e.g. respect, honesty, safe training area, flexible training hours, organised management etc.	Strategies e.g. invite guest instructors, have role models, delegate roles and responsibilities etc.	Strategies e.g. developing leadership skills, co- operation, listening skills etc.	Strategies e.g. support groups, combine trainings, guest instructors, fun activities, camps, prize-giving etc.



Intermediate outcomes	
Individual	Community
Increased sense of: Belonging Self-esteem Self-determination and control	Accessible and responsive community Safe, supportive and inclusive environment



Long-term benefits	
Individual	Community
Improved Taekwon-do skills and capabilities	Improved productivity at work, school and home "Peaceful" and "just" world