

## **How do we assimilate moral culture into the psyche of the modern day students**

On the surface this appears to be a pretty easy question to answer. And the answer I give is 'By producing technically excellent and knowledgeable Instructors with an unshakable moral foundation'. Not my words though, I have paraphrased the General.

What isn't so easy to answer is why we need to. And doing something without knowing why is pointless, and dangerous.

So in order to assimilate moral culture into the psyche of the modern day student, we must first have an excellent instructor that has an unshakable moral foundation. They will be the role model, and they will through their character, their dedication and their actions, effect emulation from their students and others that come into contact with them, thereby achieving the goal.

But what is a moral culture?

We all understand the 5 Taekwon-Do morals/tenets because our coloured belt handbook tells us what they mean; but a moral culture is not explained until the black belt syllabus is read.

The first section of the condensed encyclopaedia, before you even get to any techniques, is devoted to Philosophy and Moral Culture, which essentially is how to behave properly, and not just from a Korean point of view. There is a very good reason for this. Ask yourself why the first section in a book about a martial art is all about how to behave and not how to perform the martial art?

General Choi has spent a lot of time explaining what a moral culture is, the different ways it behaves; and he summed it all up for us in the 5 words of the tenets. There are examples given in the front of the encyclopaedia from Korean, Chinese, Japanese, and even Greek cultures. Examples of what he believes are good moral cultures, and examples of the bad. This is for us to read, and to absorb, to understand, and to follow. To make us better instructors producing better students with a high moral character.

In order to produce a student with these characteristics, we must first be an example of them ourselves. I have over the years seen some bad examples of how to behave. It is our job as instructors, as mentors of our young people, to set the example by which we want them to follow. Because when we allow ourselves to be treated with disrespect, we do not teach respect.

If a student does not bow to the instructor at the beginning of class this is disrespectful; but it is the instructor that is at fault, not the student. Because a properly taught student that has respect for their instructor and who sees them as a role model in their lives, would not do this.

Let me give you some examples of what we currently tolerate: Students addressing instructors inappropriately, being taught to push or break the rules competing when they are unable to win with discipline and courtesy, students not supporting their club or region in events, acting inappropriately in front of other students, and worst of all not understanding the responsibility that goes with being a martial arts student.

Why should we not tolerate this? Why do we need this kind of moral culture?

In other societies around the world, notably America, police forces are currently adopting the broken window policy, sometimes called the zero tolerance policy. This says that if a neighbourhood has a broken window it means the people there don't care, and that this invites criminals to move into the area to break more windows, tag buildings, and recruit more criminals. To stop this happening, start first by fixing all the broken windows.

An instructor is like the leader of their neighbourhood. They can try to demand respect for their words, but they will never have it until they demonstrate that what they say is what they do. The Instructor needs to fix all the broken windows. This must happen before any Moral Culture can be taught.

It all comes down to the instructor and it always will. The student's success, the clubs success, the regions success, and the organisations future all depend on our instructors. Not our board of directors, but our instructors. And if we want excellent instructors producing excellent students, we must first be excellent instructors. This is in fact the 'Do' part of Taekwon-Do.

Our founder realised this because he placed it at the beginning of the encyclopaedia, so that before you even learned your first technique, you learned why...you learned the 'Do'. Our late ITF president Grand Master Tran taught this at the ITF technical seminars. Maybe he thought we needed a reminder about the 'Do', that we had perhaps forgotten why we learn Taekwon-Do. This was his legacy to ITF and after his tragic death I hope they continue it.

So what can ITKD do to assist us to become better instructors, better role models; because there are already courses, camps, seminars, tournaments...in fact everything that you could want to attend. But is there a course specifically targeted at our young and upcoming stars, our future leaders, instructors and mentors, on not just how to teach the Do in NZ, but how to 'be' the 'Do'.

We do teach the 'Do' to an extent in the BB gradings. This is covered during the course of the 2 days, and especially on the Sunday morning. Mr Lowe also teaches it with his instructor courses. But I think we could be doing more.

One of the things we should do is to put together a camp and gather our young students, our potential future leaders and instructors, and teach them what it means to be an instructor. Our current instructors should also not escape as there is always room for improvement.

As a general rule and by international standards we New Zealanders are a polite bunch. We usually let things slide rather than create a fuss or a scene. This doesn't help when it comes to installing and using a broken window policy at training. But I believe it is essential that we do so.

So we understand how to assimilate Moral Culture into students, and now we understand why we need to do so.

We should:

- Hold a camp or even regular camps with the 'Do' at the forefront.
- Ensure our seniors set the example and not let the little things slide by.
- No matter who you are and no matter where you are, treat students above and below you with the same amount of courtesy and respect.
- Take the time to realise that the little things really do matter, but also remember that there is a time and a place for etiquette and discipline.

- As instructors, re-read what it means to be an ideal Instructor, and fully understand the student/instructor relationship. I also think that these two areas should be 1<sup>st</sup> gup syllabus. We have many 1<sup>st</sup> dans teaching and even though the ITF does not recognise instructors till they make 4<sup>th</sup> dan, their students see it differently.
- As students, we need to also re-read the 5<sup>th</sup> gup syllabus on the student part of the student/instructor relationship, but more than just read it, take it to heart and practise the “Do’ part of Taekwon-Do

We will then be well on the way to assimilating moral culture into the psyche of the modern day student.