Abstract

In Asian society, martial arts education isn’t simply regarded as what aims to improve fighting skills or build up a healthy body. Instead, that is accepted as what is of great ethical, moral and inner value as a way to become a decent human being.

Martial arts education that is based on traditional ethics has long contributed to character building, and hapkido Dojang are responsible for passing this education onto the next generations. Martial arts education is mainly provided for adolescents in hapkido Dojang, and the educational system of these Dojang are outstanding enough to make them serve as professional educational institutions to foster hapkido-enjoying people out of pure motives.

The educational goals that hapkido-related organizations pursue together are mental training, health promotion, self-defense, physical training and the transmission of cultural heritage. But there is a doubt whether hapkido Dojang make a genuine effort to attain these goals of education. Due to keen competition, most of the Dojang often distort the substance of martial arts education by slandering each other or merely by offering play- or game-centered programs for commercial purposes.

In a word, it cannot be denied that there is something wrong with traditional martial arts education. Martial arts are basically of educational importance as a means to train the body and acquire skills to learn how to live as a decent human and as an eligible member of the world.

The purpose of this study was to examine the right directions for martial arts education in hapkido Dojang in modern capitalistic society characterized by advanced material civilization, limitless competition and individualism.

Under the circumstances, hapkido education may just be regarded as a competitive sport if it only focuses on physical training, acquisition of skills or winning. There is a great challenge for hapkido, which is to turn into the kind of martial art that can contribute to the edification of people along with other martial arts in a manner to be appropriate for modern times.

When it comes to the right direction for hapkido education, competitive commercial logics should be eliminated among hapkido Dojang above all. The Dojang should renew themselves as the places of oriental mental training. They should value mental culture to foster well-rounded people of character who realize the way through physical training, and trainees should be taught to be courteous, considerate, humble, build up character, use decent language and respect others. Modern people’s lives should be sublimated in art in pursuit of human happiness and enjoyment.

Hapkido instructors should be future-oriented and shift their way of teaching with a sense of mission to nurture competent people necessary for society through mental training instead of merely sticking to teaching skills or how to win a competition.

[Keywords] Martial Arts, Hapkido, Dojang Education, Character Education, Cultivation of Morality
1. Introduction

Hapkido has spread and continued to improve not only in Korea but all over the world as one of representative Korean martial arts along with taekwondo, judo and kendo since it was introduced by Choi Yong-sool in 1945 after the liberation of the nation. According to the data released by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, there were 14,076 Dojang in Korea as of late December, 2014, and hapkido Dojang accounted for 17.8 percent of the gyms. This rate is quite great considering the number of martial arts[1].

Now, hapkido is a martial art that has been entrenched in Korean society as part of physical culture. That is of significance as education for physical training and character building, and continues to improve to fit into modern society. Also, hapkido is recognized among people in general for its cultural value. In fact, however, hapkido matches aren’t less prevailing yet in comparison with other martial arts, and efforts are being made to step up the development of hapkido matches[2].

The quantitative increase of hapkido Dojang doesn’t necessarily seem to be followed by qualitative growth. There is a growing tendency for hapkido Dojang to rely on promotional gimmicks to attract trainees instead of publicizing outstanding performance or the importance of hapkido as a way of character building because of a commercialization trend and fierce competition. This tendency results in allowing unqualified or uncertified instructors to be in charge of martial arts education[3]. Nowadays, school education is being criticized in that it fails to be well-rounded education due to the national policy that merely focuses on college admission, and the necessity of traditional martial arts education is increasingly considered important.

In Asian society, martial arts education isn’t simply regarded as what aims to improve fighting skills or build up a healthy body. Instead, that is accepted as what is of great ethical, moral and inner value as a way to become a decent human being[4].

Martial arts education that is based on traditional ethics has long contributed to character building, and hapkido Dojang are responsible for passing this education onto the next generations. Martial arts education is mainly provided for adolescents in hapkido Dojang, and the educational system of these Dojang are outstanding enough to make them serve as professional educational institutions to foster hapkido-enjoying people out of pure motives.

The educational goals that hapkido-related organizations pursue together are mental training, health promotion, self-defense, physical training and the transmission of cultural heritage[5]. But there is a doubt whether hapkido Dojang make a genuine effort to attain these goals of education. Due to keen competition, most of the Dojang often distort the substance of martial arts education by slandering each other or merely by offering play- or game-centered programs for commercial purposes[6].

In a word, it cannot be denied that there is something wrong with traditional martial arts education. Martial arts are basically of educational importance as a means to train the body and acquire skills to learn how to live as a decent human and as an eligible member of the world.

The purpose of this study was to examine the right directions for martial arts education in hapkido Dojang in modern capitalistic society characterized by advanced material civilization, limitless competition and individualism.

2. The Nature of Education in Martial Arts Dojang

2.1. The educational meaning of martial arts

Martial arts are a significant means of education in Asian society, and has contributed to the improvement of ethical values through character building. Nonetheless, many people still think developing skills, sparring and self-defense are the main goals of martial arts training, which are just the external aspects
of martial arts. It should be noted that in a strict sense, the object of martial arts training is to seek after moral values through training and to build up character, not something related to the external aspects.

Thus, traditional Asian martial arts are in pursuit of inner ethical value, namely training oneself to become decent human beings. Therefore the relationship of the body and mind is understood in the process of training as an integrated relationship, not a separated one. This ideology is associated with the meaning of asceticism, which is a unique thought of Asia. That is, true wisdom can be gained through the integration of the body and mind, not by a simple logical thinking. In this sense, the way in traditional Asian martial arts is not a sort of concept but a sort of behavior of practice[4].

In hapkido Dojang, trainees should be trained to become courteous, upright people of character, and superb educational methods should be used, which are appreciate for Asian view of the body and Asian culture that emphasizes self-establishment, self-education and subjectivity. And trainees also should be taught to acquire social values.

A lot of competitions have been held these days along with the development of hapkido, but unlike the cases of other martial arts, the win-at-all- costs mentality must not be allowed to take root in hapkido. This mentality has nothing to do with the essential meaning of martial arts, and this is not what martial arts pursue, either.

2.2. The meaning of well-rounded education

The traditional Asian martial arts are under the huge influence of morality and ethics, which are the philosophical foundations for the martial arts. Asian human education focuses on fostering well-rounded people, and they argue that education of the body and education of mind should both be conducted at the same time to realize well-rounded education, and that this is genuine human education. In this perspective, education that focuses on only one of the body and mind is considered imperfect education that is of little value[7].

Accordingly, the technical characteristics of hapkido as a means of well-rounded education should well be understood to actualize the kind of martial arts education that can train both the body and mind together.

First of all, courtesy is considered important in hapkido training. Trainees should sit upright on their knees and bow low to each other and to their instructors so that they could learn to humble themselves and respect each other. Second, a study established that the breathing method of hapkido makes it possible to gather energy into the lower part of the abdomen and then to send it to every peripheral nerve of the body through the movement of the body and through consciousness, and that the emphasis of inner training enables trainees to strengthen their own spirits through competing with themselves, not with others, and thereby has good effects on mental health [8]. Third, break fall is a skill to protect one’s own body without being injured as much as possible when one falls down himself or herself or by the force of the other. The training of break fall requires patience because one has to keep bumping his or her body into the mat. Long break fall and high break fall are expected to make a contribution to the improvement of confidence and leadership as trainees can cross the obstacles a little higher and a little further in the course of practicing running, throwing themselves at the target and then landing safely. Fourth, techniques are representative skills of hapkido that make it differentiated from other martial arts. This term refers to all the skills to protect not only oneself but also the attacker safely and then to dominate the attacker. The techniques enable the trainee to dominate the opponent using the force of the opponent when the opponent begins attacking first, and enable both of the attacker and the defender to be considerate of each other during training[9].

3. The Right Directions for Education in Hapkido Dojang

3.1. The transmission of cultural heritage
Cultural heritage is a mirror of the philosophy, religion, education, thoughts and history of the race into which the race's souls and spirits are soaked, and that is the foundation for social norms and order in the region. As Korean martial arts that are based on cultural heritage have evolved under the influence of it, the martial arts are definitely built on Korean cultural heritage. For this reason, it could be said that martial arts are behavioral patterns in which there are formality and systematicity and which have underwent the process of civilization.

Hapkido education is significant not as a simple physical training based on cultural heritage but as a mental culture to foster well-rounded people of character who learn the way through physical training. So that is differentiated from western sports that are merely to measure power and skills. This is of philosophical, mental value in that it is human education which stresses courtesy, ethicality and morality.

Hapkido education should be established as an artistic training culture for character building in that it can technically reach the level of the way. So the kind of training culture that can establish the right values of character building should be created through hapkido education.

3.2. The place of character education

In modern capitalistic society, individualism is rampant among teens because of advanced material civilization instead of joining forces to achieve their common goals. Both of parents and teachers pay attention to their grades only without focusing on character education, and even spoiled or unfaithful students are forgiven provided that their grades are good. The lack of character education provokes adolescents into school violence, bullying, or inhuman or nonethical behaviors. Children who grow in such a social climate believe that they must be ahead of others, and that it's useless to be considerate of others or to seek after public interest. Now such an inhuman culture is looked upon one of serious social issues[10].

Character is different from personality or individuality. This is a norm that humans should pursue. Unlike knowledge-centered education, character education is in pursuit of building up character by putting in practice what's moral[11].

There are various skills in hapkido, and techniques could be said as the representative skills of it. Techniques are joint skills to defend oneself through striking, kansetsuwaza and throwing using the force of the opponent when the opponent attacks first. Their characteristic is to exchange skills in a manner to be in concord with each other without competing excessively[12]. Hapkido training seems to be a good martial art education that is useful for both physical and mental training by accelerating physical development, by teaching how to be courteous and considerate and by helping building up character.

The goal of hapkido training is to foster eligible democratic citizens who are courteous, patient, caring and seek after coexistence. Therefore it's quite important for hapkido gyms to serve as the places of character education for adolescents who will become the mainstay of our country.

3.3. The cultivation of morality

Morality refers to inner independent disposition or qualification that one puts into practice what's socially accepted as moral on his or her own volition. This disposition may be innate, but it also can be acquired through learning, which is called moral education[3].

In general, martial arts training focuses on fostering morality rather than intellectual abilities, and requires habituation rather than just receiving education. A habit is a sign of morality, and trainees can acquire martial arts by repeatedly keeping practicing the motions of martial arts. What matters in building up character is not technical training but sparring activities with others. This type of training enables trainees to learn not only skills but how to behave in sparring or real violent situations where it's difficult for them to keep themselves in control. So they are able to teach themselves how to behave to others[13].
Korean hapkido trainees are mostly adolescents. As they are still immature, moral education should be conducted repeatedly on a habitual basis in hapkido Dojang. In other words, instructors should set an example of how to behave morally. They should continue to deal with trainees in a humble, respecting, gentle, friendly and mature way, use tender words yet be hard on themselves.

3.4. The place for self-realization

Everybody has to keep being educated individually or in group from birth to death, and life could be said as the process of socialization or self-realization. In this perspective, martial arts education comes into spotlight as a new discipline for human education, and is especially expected to have very good effects on youth education[14].

Martial arts that are in possession of Asian characteristics are highlighted as sports to satisfy high-dimensional human needs through the harmony of the body and mind, and especially as sports to meet needs for psychological or social self-realization. And the goal of martial arts education is to promote physical and mental health, to acquire ways of defending oneself and to build the right life attitude[15].

Thus, martial arts education offers sociopsychological experience that is quite important for actualizing internal and external human values. Martial arts training enables trainees to evaluate themselves and understand the ways of the world, which serves, in turn, to have positive effects on society and actualize values that society pursues. Therefore the ultimate goal of martial arts training could be understood as the process of self-completion. In other words, trainees are able to have a good self-concept by gaining various achievement experiences that could improve their quality of life, and then they can even reach the stage of self-realization.

In order for hapkido education to advance into the stage of self-realization, what the center of the body and the lower part of the abdomen mean should be understood first of all. Probably it will take a lot of time to reach this stage of self-realization, but steady practice will make it possible to do that. To keep a stable posture during the practice of techniques it’s needed to practice applying force by drawing it from the center of the body (the abdomen and back). Basically, hands and foot are used in hapkido training, but these parts are actually driven by the force generated from the center of the body.

It’s not easy to undergo hapkido training for a long time, but a prolonged, repeated training will make it possible to increase attention to reach the stage of self-realization in which even a quite challenging task can be achieved. Indeed, hapkido education is in pursuit of human happiness and enjoyment by sublimating modern human life into art.

4. Conclusion

Korean hapkido has developed over approximately six decades since it was introduced after the liberation of the nation, being well established as a traditional martial art that represents Korean race’s soul and spirit. Korean society experienced poverty-stricken tough times until the end of the 1980s during which hapkido developed as a Korean traditional martial art. At that time, there were many children in each family that was mostly large in size, and children were properly disciplined by their parents while they had meals together. In and after the 1990s, however, parents just allowed their children to have their own way along with the spread of nuclear families and a decrease in the number of children. Economic development and advanced material civilization have fueled individualism and fierce competition, which is concurrent with the collapse of ethics and disregard of character that are emerging as serious social issues.

Under the circumstances, hapkido education may just be regarded as a competitive sport if it only focuses on physical training, acquisition of skills or winning. There is a great challenge for hapkido, which is to turn into the kind of martial art that can contribute to the edification of people along with other martial arts in a manner to be appropriate for modern times.
Today hapkido education should follow the example of taekwondo education that is recognized in the United States. In the United States, taekwondo education is preferred by parents because it is faithful to the spirits of martial arts and offers character education by teaching trainees to greet politely and abide by rules, and it is highly recognized as a mysterious martial art of the Orient and as an alternative to mental training [16].

When it comes to the right direction for hapkido education, competitive commercial logics should be eliminated among hapkido Dojang above all. The Dojang should renew themselves as the places of oriental mental training. They should value mental culture to foster well-rounded people of character who realize the way through physical training, and trainees should be taught to be courteous, considerate, humble, build up character, use decent language and respect others. Modern people’s lives should be sublimated in art in pursuit of human happiness and enjoyment.

Hapkido instructors should be future-oriented and shift their way of teaching with a sense of mission to nurture competent people necessary for society through mental training instead of merely sticking to teaching skills or how to win a competition.

5. References

5.1. Journal articles


5.2. Thesis degree


5.3. Books


5.4. Additional references

Author
Kim Eui-young / Hoseo University Professor
B.A. Yongin University
M.A. Kyunghee University
Ph.D. Myeongji University

Research field

Major career
- 2006~present. Hoseo University, Professor
- 2016~present. International Society for Sport Science, Editor in Chief