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A study on the development and contributions that kendo coaching has made to the internationalisation and development of kendo

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Summary

Study Aim:

To examine the issues that should be considered for further international diffusion and development of kendo in terms of its coaching programmes and teaching methods by referring to coaching qualification policies in the UK and Hong Kong.

Material/ Methods:

Primary sources i.e. the guidebook of coaching courses by the BKA and the HKKA were used to understand what was aimed at and required in their policies. Participative observations and interviews were also used to understand how the policies were implemented.

Results:

The BKA aimed to increase their club numbers by implementing their coaching policy and awarding coaching qualifications. The HKKA aimed to improve their members' kendo level and get them more interested in kendo using the coaching examinations.

Conclusions:

What the BKA and HKKA attempt with their policies is a useful reference for other countries and also as a new way of internationally developing kendo. Future research in kendo should aim to improve the availability of teaching materials on kendo.

Key words:

kendo • internationalisation • coaching qualifications • teaching methods

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BACKGROUND

Kendo began as a combative martial art in the battlefield and developed by adapting its purpose of practice alongside changes in Japan's history and society. Kendo today is played by attempting to strike and thrust targets that are all protected by armour (*bogu*) using bamboo swords (*shinai*), these targets are the *men* (head), *kote* (forearms), *do* (stomach area) and the *tsuki* (throat).

According to the International Kendo Federation (FIK), a valid strike is an accurate strike or thrust onto a target of the opponent's armour with the striking region of the *shinai*, showing a fullness of spirit and correct posture, followed by *zanshin* (remaining spirit) [1p.5]. Adult, competitive bouts in Japan usually last five minutes and the winner is the first to score two points or the one who scores one point and does not concede a point before the time is up.

In 1975, the All Japan Kendo Federation (AJKF) defined the concept of kendo as 'to discipline the human character through the application of the principle of the *katana* (Japanese sword), in order to make kendo practitioners recognise that kendo is different from competitive sports that place an emphasis on winning' [2]. Today kendo is practised by more than two million people in Japan [3]. Kendo is also practised in many other countries and the FIK was established with 17 countries and regions in 1970.

The FIK consists of 47 countries and regions; 10 from the Asian zone, 10 from the American zone and 27 from the European zone [3]. The 1st World Kendo Championships (WKC) in 1975 saw 17 teams take part, this number rose to 43 at the 13th WKC in Taipei in 2006. In addition to the 47 FIK affiliated countries and regions, there are also another 49 in which kendo is practised but the number of practitioners is under 50, so does not meet the conditions for FIK participation. However, this means kendo is now practised in nearly 100 countries and regions.

Thus, numbers of countries where kendo is practised and practitioner numbers have greatly increased with the establishment of the FIK and other factors. This increase in the kendo population itself should be welcomed. What has to be considered, however, is that there are still many countries and regions that do not have enough practitioners to join the FIK and the number of the FIK affiliated countries and regions is much less than those of Judo, which number around 200. What also has to be considered is, as seen in the UK, while hundreds of people start kendo every year, hundreds of other people also stop kendo every year, which means that there are not many beginners who decide to continue once they start it [4]. Future research should aim to clarify the reasons that non-Japanese kendo practitioners have decided to continue kendo as well as their reasons for starting. In terms of teaching, an important task should be to develop teaching systems of how to lead beginners and make them into long-term kendo practitioners.

Methods of solving the above task have already started in some countries. For example, the British Kendo Association (BKA) in the UK dramatically changed their coaching course and introduced a new system in April 2007. The Hong Kong Kendo Association (HKKA) has also started

implementing examinations for kendo coaching qualifications since April 2008.

This study examined these new systems by the BKA and HKKA, by looking at their backgrounds, purposes and contents and by analysing what can be learnt from them and what should be improved for further coaching development in these and other countries. Through this, this study aimed to provide some useful material for furthering the internationalisation of kendo.

METHODS OF COLLECTING DATA

Primary sources such as BKA newsletters and the guidebook of coaching courses published by the BKA were initially collected. Copies of the guidelines and examination questions for coaching qualifications and score sheets printed by the HKKA were also collected. Participative observations and interviews were also used to collect information on first-hand experiences of the courses and examinations, the candidates' motivations and reasons for participating and how they prepared for the examinations. The final method of data collection was exchanging letters and e-mails. This method was used to collect information that the author deemed necessary after the initial data collection was complete.

RESULTS OF THE OBSERVATIONAL ANALYSIS OF COACHING DEVELOPMENT IN THE UK AND HONG KONG

BKA coaching development

In August 2006, the BKA formed a coaching committee that consisted of six members and decided to revise the coaching course. The new coaching course started being implemented in April 2007 through a trial of the new coaching programme and after receiving some feedback given by the participants at a test run in January 2007.

The revision of the course is related to the BKA's aims of spreading and developing kendo in the UK and increasing the number of clubs and junior members throughout the country [5]. To increase the number of clubs, those who are able to teach techniques and do club management work should increase and teachers who can teach juniors have to be trained. These would seem to be a matter of course, but in the previous coaching course where success achieved qualifications titled 'coaching level 1' and 'coaching level 2', these programmes were not included.

In the revised BKA coach development programme, these aims as well as increasing the retention of senior members was stated. Through discussion among the committee members, five areas were included in the revised BKA coach development programme. They were technical knowledge, teaching knowledge, optimising performance knowledge (sports science), knowledge of British context of coaching and knowledge of club management [5]. The coaching committee also changed the names of the coaching qualifications to 'Club Coach Level 1' and 'Club Coach Level 2', and enacted the requirement of candidates for each qualification as Table 1 shows below.

In the revised coaching development programme, a new system of national coaches and regional coaches was intro-

Table 1. Requirements of candidates for Club Coach Level 1 & 2.

Club Coach Level 1	Club Coach Level 2
The candidate	The candidate
(i) must be over 18	(i) must be over 19
(ii) must be 1 st <i>dan</i> or above	(ii) must hold 2 nd <i>dan</i>
(iii) must be a member of BKA	(iii) must be Club Coach 1
(iv) must make their candidacy known to the club leader (at present if the candidate is not a club leader they must make their candidacy known to their national/regional coach)	(iv) must have submitted their post-Club Coach 1 report with counter signatures
(v) will need a limited professional indemnity to cover coaching practice under supervision in their home club or be covered by their mentor's insurance	(v) if deemed necessary, must present evidence over and above the requirements of (vi) of their continued coaching practice. This may be necessary for people who have been Club Coach 1 for some considerable time or who have had an extended break from practice
(vi) will pay, or have paid for them, any fees deemed necessary by the Association	(vii) must present a note from their club leader that they have been involved in the planning of their home club programme
	(viii) must pay any necessary fees to the Association

duced and these individuals play an important role in supporting the candidates at coaching courses. National and regional coaches were appointed by the coaching committee. The title of national coach was awarded to those who have been significantly involved in helping kendo develop. Factors taken into account are things such as; contributions to national/international seminars, competitions and refereeing; and running an influential and successful club over a period of time [6]. With the introduction of the revised coaching programme, 23 practitioners of 4th *dan* and above were appointed as national coaches. The title of regional coach was awarded to those who were deemed to have sufficient knowledge, skills and experience to be able to support coaches and club leaders in their region and to be able to deliver national coaching courses. Other forms of knowledge were also referred by records of attendance and accomplishment in organisations external to the BKA [6].

The coaching course for Club Coach Level 1 involves active coaching practice, discussions and other matters related to work in their home dojo. An example of the coaching practice included candidates acting as an observer, *kakari-te* (attacking side) and *moto-dachi* (receiving side) in turns. The observer observes and provides *moto-dachi* with some feedback about how *moto-dachi* receives *kakari-te*'s attack. The coaching course for Club Coach Level 1 was introduced in April 2007 and 51 practitioners have been qualified at level 1 (as of June 2008), this has already more than doubled the number of qualified coaches within the BKA.

As for Club Coach Level 2, coaching materials and contents of the course have not been completed yet. Some main contents to be implemented for this qualification are; candidates will be required to work on at least 26 hours of coaching before the course and also a report made in the form of a brief record of work done with two or three examples in greater detail, either in a written form or short recorded episodes with a short reflective report (approx 300 words) about their coaching to date. By tackling these criteria, candidates are expected to develop the skills to plan a one year teaching programme in their clubs and be able to teach it. They are also expected to develop the knowledge of what

is needed in teaching particular groups such as young children and the elderly [6]. In the course itself, the coaching committee plans to place an emphasis on making candidates learn how to act as *moto-dachi* as a continuation from Club Coach Level 1.

HKKA coaching courses and exams

The examinations for coaching qualifications recognised by the HKKA were introduced in April 2008. According to the Secretary General of the HKKA, there were two aims and hopes in introducing these examinations. One was to improve the level of kendo in Hong Kong and the other was to encourage members of the HKKA to have a deeper understanding of kendo and gain more interest in kendo through tackling the examinations and achieving the coaching qualifications. The Secretary General knew that there were coaching courses and examinations started in 1995 in Japan and wanted to introduce a similar system. However, it was too complicated and difficult for her to understand the details of the structure and course content in Japan. Therefore she asked some Japanese high grade practitioners and lecturers in Japanese coaching courses to get involved in making the guidelines of the examinations of coaching qualification recognised by the HKKA.

Preparation for the 1st examinations started in July 2007. One Japanese co-worker in making the courses and examinations was a kendo teacher who had the highest grade (8th *dan*) and title (*hanshi*) and was a lecturer in Japanese coaching courses. One Japanese assistant who was fluent in English and was also a well-experienced kendo teacher worked as a translator and interpreter between this teacher and the Secretary General. After several months of discussion, it was decided that there would be three coaching qualifications; elementary; intermediate; and advanced. The requirements of candidates for each qualification were also decided as 2nd *dan* and above for elementary level, 4th *dan* and above for intermediate level and 6th *dan* and above for advanced level. Preparation for the guidelines and examination questions were finalised in winter 2008. The summary of the guidelines is shown below.



Table 2. Summary of the guidelines of the examinations.

Areas of examination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written examination – 1) Techniques, Training Methods, Principles 2) Kendo Kata 3) Refereeing 4) Teaching methods 5) First aid • Demonstration – 1) with Shinai 2) with Bokuto
Grading criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grading criteria: the above five areas of written examinations and two areas of demonstrations and oral examinations are marked by the following points 5: Excellent 4: Remarkable 3: Good 2: Poor 1: Very poor
How to grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written exams are marked by the two examiners who hold 6th dan and above according to the above grading criteria. The average mark given by the two examiners will be the final result of the examinee. • Demonstrations and oral examinations are marked by three examiners who hold 6th dan and above • The average point of the three examiners will be the final result.
Criteria for pass marks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidates whose total marks in the seven areas (the written exams, demonstrations and oral examinations) meet the following standards are recognized as a qualified coach in each level. Elementary level – 21 points or more Intermediate level – 24 points or more Advanced level – 28 points or more

Three or four questions and tasks in each area were given to candidates in advance so that they could concentrate on studying the relevant subjects. From these questions and tasks, the candidates were given one question and task in each area on the day of the examination. This was based on a method of written examinations for grading in Japan.

In addition to the summary of the guidelines in Table 2, the guidelines also state that if a candidate receives two points or less in any area of the examination, a conditional offer will be given even when he or she is given enough points in all other areas. In this case, in order to be officially qualified, the candidate must submit a report on the relevant area to the association for re-examination. Instead of making subjects easier to concentrate on studying and practising, candidates are required to provide sufficient answers in all areas of the examinations.

In the first examination of the coaching qualification, there were 11 candidates for elementary level, seven candidates for intermediate level and four candidates for advanced level. They were given 90 minutes for the written examinations and the questions were written in English and Japanese and answers by the candidates were written in Chinese, Japanese or English. The answers were marked by four examiners immediately after the examinations.

Demonstration examinations began immediately after the marking of the written examinations. Candidates were asked to perform and explain teaching points for elementary level. Candidates were required to perform and explain *kotemen* (striking *moto-dachi's kote* and *men* consecutively) with *shinai* and *harai-waza* (deflecting technique) with *bokuto* (wooden sword).

After the demonstration the marking was finalised. The results revealed that all candidates passed the elementary level, three passed the intermediate level and four were given the conditional offer due to poor performance in the *harai-waza* demonstration, and all passed the advanced level. After making an announcement of the results, the candidates who passed received their certificates and those giv-

en the conditional offer were given one month to make a report and submit it.

The Secretary General of the HKKA felt that these first coaching examinations went very well and is planning to implement them every year. The HKKA is now considering hosting a seminar for those interested in taking the next coaching examinations and instructing them in the relevant subjects they have to study and prepare for before the examinations.

DISCUSSION

As far as the effects of these policies are concerned, it is not possible to present any solid results this early in their development and further research needs to be conducted in the future.

Instead, what will be presented here are the advantages to be gained by introducing a coaching qualification policy like those in the BKA and HKKA and what needs to be improved for further development of the coaching qualification policies. By examining these, the author aims to present what should be considered for the further internationalisation and development of kendo.

For the internationalisation and development of kendo, there are two important tasks; quantitative diffusion and development i.e. increasing the kendo population and qualitative diffusion and development i.e. improving and developing practitioners' techniques, skills and understanding. Kendo classes in physical education and after-school activity will contribute greatly towards increasing the kendo population, especially young practitioners. School kendo development is one of the important tasks to be considered for the international quantitative diffusion of kendo. In this sense, the coaching qualification policies by the BKA and HKKA have great significance.

Another advantage of introducing a coaching qualification policy is that candidates can develop their understanding and skills i.e. teaching kendo skills, in the process of trying

to obtain their qualifications. This basically means developing each individual practitioner. Consequently, this is closely related to the development of practitioners who learn from those who participated in a coaching course. As the author described earlier and in other literature [4,7], to not only increase the number of people who start kendo but also encourage people who have started kendo to continue it and develop their skills, it is essential to devise and develop a supporting system and teaching-learning methodologies and methods. What is especially significant in these policies is that how to act as *moto-dachi* is emphasised in both coaching practice in the BKA Club Coach 1 and 2, as it is common that practitioners of different ages, grades and experiences practise together in many countries. It should be emphasised that making practitioners understand the importance of the role of *moto-dachi* and helping them develop their *moto-dachi* skills are very important to make all practitioners feel that they gain from each practice no matter who they are with. What should also be highly valued is that the BKA set up the aims in the BKA Club Coach 2, 'to develop skills to plan a one year teaching programme in their clubs and teach it' and 'to develop knowledge of what to be considered in teaching particular groups such as young children and the elderly'. By setting up such aims and working toward them, candidates will become able to deal with various teaching-learning situations that are realistic and challenging.

As for points to be improved in the BKA policy, having a common understanding among national and regional coaches about practical tasks and teaching points that are given to candidates is important in implementing coaching practice. There are always different ideas and opinions among coaches. However, if different coaches provide candidates with different information on the same task in the same course, there will be confusion. Even in coaching courses in different areas, providing candidates with different contents and levels of teaching may cause an unfair result for them. To remove such possibilities, materials on teaching and learning contents that coaches can make use of in their coaching courses are necessary. For example, the AJKF provides all instructors with a seminar textbook when they implement coaching courses in Japan. By doing this, the standard of contents provided by instructors in the coaching course is ensured and each coach can think of what teaching approach should be used in each course based on the textbook.

In the case of the HKKA policy, the amount of content on teaching should be improved. Coaches should have knowledge on things such as the technical structure of kendo, kendo *kata* (set form practice) and refereeing. What candidates should learn more of in the process of trying to obtain coaching qualifications is how to teach these. Candidates in intermediate and advanced levels are 4th *dan* and above. Therefore, they should already have a certain level of knowledge in these areas before taking part in the course. In Japan and the UK, there are refereeing seminars and kendo *kata* seminars organised by the AJKF, BKA and affiliated organisations. Thus, in the process of working towards the examinations, teaching approaches and strategies in kendo should be taught, taking into account teaching and learning circumstances in Hong Kong. For this, Hong Kong residents who are aware of kendo circumstances in Hong Kong

need to help develop the coaching policy with advice from Japanese teachers.

A problem that has emerged from this is a lack of teaching materials in Hong Kong as well as the UK issues. According to the results of candidate interviews, most answered the question of what they used to study for their examinations with kendo books and materials and information online written in Japanese or English; except for first aid. These materials are not enough for Hong Kong kendo practitioners. However, most passed and got their coaching qualification. It is of course true that they studied hard for their examinations, however, it can also be said that another reason is that the candidates were given the questions in advance and rather than an understanding of their application they were asked only for knowledge of these areas. If the HKKA aims to develop their members' skills and interest through this coaching policy, it is important for them to improve the materials available on applying their knowledge to teaching-learning situations.

CONCLUSIONS

This study introduced the coaching qualification policies in the BKA and HKKA and examined their advantages and areas to be improved. It is expected that this study and these courses will be useful references when other countries begin similar policies. Therefore, what should be considered when introducing or improving such a policy is not only providing knowledge but also learning teaching methods that consider kendo circumstances in each country. Preparing materials on teaching methods is also important, but their availability is a problem. Although there are some useful books and materials on how to perform techniques, kendo *kata* and refereeing in English [8–14], there is little on teaching methods. The author has been writing articles on teaching and learning methodologies and methods for other countries' practitioners, especially in Europe, to improve this situation [15–17]. These are, however, focussed on technical areas. A future task for the author and other kendo researchers is to present teaching-learning materials of other areas such as kendo *kata* and refereeing.

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