

## Worthy of Being Passed On 2

*Having stated that an art worthy of being passed on should be integrated, and having introduced the methods in which it can be integrated, there is only one more step: creating a teaching method that can produce the people who will accurately represent and carry on the art.*

Having studied and taught martial arts for nearly 50 years, in my opinion creating a learning system that produces students worthy of carrying on an art is the most challenging aspect of making the art last beyond a single lifetime. Most students, who, after having studied a few arts for a few years feel ready to found a system, feel that they address both the content of the art and its method of teaching by creating a curriculum. One's curriculum is a logical starting place, but balancing research with application (a.k.a. exploration and exploitation), and developing skills in people-management are just as important.

**THE CURRICULUM:** Does it cover all major aspects of your art without demanding seclusion in a monastery and 24-hour-a-day study to complete? Can it be tested in exams that do not demand minute details but give a sense of whether the student knows the material? Has it accounted for *what* the student knows as well as being able to measure *how well* the student applies what she knows?

**EXPLORATION VS. EXPLOITATION:** Does the art allow for growth, for variation of techniques, for adjustment to different body types, for handling similar techniques in different situations? Can the techniques be used immediately after they are acquired or must they be practiced extensively first? Is there a reasonable balance between incorporating/discovering the new and integrating it into the old so that students apply what they learn after a reasonable period of time?

**PEOPLE MANAGEMENT:** Does the art, and the curriculum that supports it, contribute to the dedication and sincerity of the students, or is that something the head instructor must inspire? Do students learn fast enough to stay with the system but slow enough to learn it thoroughly? Is the system too insubstantial to make students proud of what they are learning or so extensive that they feel they will never master it? Is student contribution and loyalty rewarded or taken for granted? If rewarded, do the rewards come so soon or so frequently that students expect them after only a little effort? Are there aspects of the founder's personality that rub the students the wrong way? Does he/she have a standard method to deal with every problem that may arise? Can the founder handle the balance between student review boards or black belt councils and personal control? Does he/she have a method to garner enough students so that the percentage that achieve black belt will be sufficient in number that a tenth of those will spread the art by opening schools? Or is black belt achievable for most of the students, producing plenty of potential school operators but few really talented representatives? Are those who remain loyal

to the art and interested in its teachings also interested in passing on the art, or are they interested in achieving a position of authority for themselves?

Sometimes an art is worthy of being passed on because it is unique enough, integrated enough, can be easily taught, and is effective when used, but is not passed on because it has not produced the right people. In such a case either the teacher is flawed, the method is flawed, or most likely, the art does not interact with the right students at the right time. To the extent the art's teachings satisfy a perceived need in society or fill a gap in older methods, the teachings may survive separate from the art. In such a scenario, it is unlikely that either the art or its founder will be credited for their contributions.

Having studied and taught martial arts for nearly 50 years, in my opinion, it is better that the martial arts are enriched by a lost art's legacy (the teachings themselves) than that the art compete with others for an individual teacher's or the collective membership's ego gratification.