From the Dojo to the Classroom: Lessons from Global Martial Arts Pedagogies

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Workshop Overview

• In this interactive workshop, we will explore the possibilities for using the principles of global martial arts pedagogy in higher education settings.

• Informed by the theoretical ideas of Henning Eichberg (1998), we will:
  o Examine uses of space in martial arts pedagogies across the world (20 min);
  o Explore the transferability of these strategies to academic classrooms (20 min);
  o Debate on the challenges and possibilities (5-10 min).

**Activity:** To plan a session or module using this basic time-space and movement principles.
Space (and Time-Space) in the Martial Arts

- **Principles:** The martial arts, as the world’s fighting systems, make use of space in various ways such as the distinct:
  - Spatial alignment of and distance between students;
  - Interaction of students, teachers and fellow learners;
  - Teamwork and cooperative learning;
  - Use of natural and artificial environments.

- **Premise:** Although the content between a martial art (such as Capoeira) and an academic discipline (such as biology) might be very different, the modes of delivery could transfer via usage of space. This has been seen in teaching physics and organic chemistry (Elliott, forthcoming).

- **Proposal:** The core principles of martial arts pedagogy might be transferred to certain situations in HE classrooms.
Standing Still and Sitting Straight

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5n4e8fmTzo

• Seen in the basic stances of the traditionalist Chinese martial arts (featured in Jennings, 2010; Allen Collinson, Vaittinen, Jennings & Owton, 2016) and also the Mexican martial art of Xilam (Jennings, forthcoming).

• Starting with a short period, and building up to a (potentially) lifelong habit.

• These stances can begin with two legs and can later progress to one leg; postures could also be adapted for physical disabilities and impairments. Relaxation and breathing are important to sustain the postures in the sense of “martial mindfulness” (Goto-Jones, in press) or “martial movement sequences” (Sparkes, 1985).

➢ Students often spend their days sitting down listening to lecturers or with faces down onto screens and phones. Imagine getting them standing up to read on their devices, watching videos and talking among their peers. Interspersed bouts of standing and sitting might aid attention, and they might find their own space in the room to do this.
Communal Circles

- Seen in the interactive, communal Capoeira circle or *roda* (seen in Downey, 2004; Stephens & Delamont, 2010).
- The students participate, encourage, watch and judge at the same time.
- It might motivate students to see the complexity of argumentation and to observe weaknesses in their own (very human) teachers.

*A debate between two lecturers could fire debate and ignite the imagination we crave in our students. By watching two adept academics, they could learn how to play the game of the scholarly discipline in question. You could pair up with a fellow teacher to talk about a contentious issue. Students could gather round in a circle, observing the gestures, expression and tone - the “whats” as well as the “hows” of talk (see Smith & Sparkes, 2005).*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XVQ04KHiPWg
• Seen in the basic line work and *kata* of Kendo, for instance. Kata as the building block or essence of Budo (Dodd & Brown, 2016).

• Learning the same thing at the same time in the same manner an easily observable position. Much of this stems from the militarisation of Japanese martial arts at the build up of the Second World War.

• Developing order before moving out into seeming chaos.

> You can teach students a basic technique for interviewing or for conducting questionnaires. Get them to ask the exact same questions, and observe the interviews side by side. Students can then swap partners in a rotation system until all students have been paired together for a group analysis and reflection.
Free Movement

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mINR3Az07VA

• Seen in the sticky hands (*chi sau*) Wing Chun Kung Fu, which should be interactive, inquisitive and analytic.

• Akin to pushing hands or sparring. Cooperative yet slightly competitive. Structured yet free. It should therefore be balanced and spontaneous.

➤ You have a group of master’s students with lots of room in the seminar room. They could break into pairs and utilise the different spaces, changing as they see fit, swapping with partners to be able to communicate their plans for the case study. They will fire some difficult questions, probe for more information and be prepared to be “writing like fighting” (Channon, forthcoming) at a later point.
Transitional/Assisted Action

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sq2figwlX9s

• As seen in ring sports such as boxing and lucha libre, with their cornermen/cutmen and tag teams respectively.

• The advice and support from peers. To yield and tap for help is not necessarily a sign of weakness (Hirose & Pih, 2010). Learning to fight is an issue of content (see the Love Fighting Hate Violence manifesto).

➢ Get students into groups of threes, with students of different experiences, specialties and strengths. Ask one student to receive some challenging questions and scenarios until they request help from a teammate or are supported by them. Change when help is needed. Ask for peer support and specialist knowledge.
Therapy

• The massage integral to the Indian martial art of Kalarippayattu (Zarrilli, 1998). This is often done with a therapist and an apprentice.

• Each therapist (like a critical friend) has their own methods of ways of working, and can offer help with the structure and content. Likewise, students can observe experienced gurus to learn about both the content and the style of movement and strokes.

➢ With an essay support session, one undergraduate student could observe the feedback given to their peer, learning from this process in light of the flesh and skeleton of their essay. This essay is a supplement to the main assignment, and by developing writing skills, one could perform very well with the main point of assessment.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dh_wTNs9jMk
Outdoor Movement and Musing

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_P_ir0s_gU

- Seen in much of contemporary Taijiquan (Tai Chi Chuan) in parks and open spaces (Frank, 2006; Brown, Jennings & Sparkes, 2014).

- Roaming in the fresh air for personal exploration, taking things at one’s own pace. Adding to the idea of walking methodology (Evans & Jones, 2011).

➤ You are with a postgraduate student who is struggling with the central theme for their thesis. So far, you have given them ideas for the methods, theory and topic, but there are long pauses of hesitation. Instead of cancelling the meeting, you could offer them ten or fifteen minutes to walk around the campus in a quiet area to compose their thoughts and bring ideas together for a continued dialogue back in your office or in a café.
I would like to work with one or two HE lecturers on a project for my Senior Fellowship (SFHEA) application over the next one or two years. You might be able to help me...

- We could use some of the principles from martial arts pedagogy to design dynamic and flexible classroom environments.
- This could include exercises such as standing on one leg, concentrating on seated posture or breathing mindfully.
- We could collaborate by me working as a mentor of martial arts pedagogy and you on your own applications.
Exercise (20 min)

- Working in groups of three or four, please plan a session or even a module (time permitting!) using the core principles of time, space and movement explored here.
- You might use your own knowledge of phenomenology, experiential learning or sport and physical culture to help you.
- I can help facilitate this by explaining with diagrams and suggesting videos and images to fuel your imagination.

➢ Think of a scenario where student apathy, silence and fatigue are an issue. Where and when could you use some of the strategies of circles, lines, dialogue, open space and corners of support for your module?
Reflections in the Council of Warriors (5 min)

- What kinds of scenarios and solutions did you come up with?

- How can we use the core ideas from martial arts pedagogy – one concerned with potential violence – to the relatively peaceful setting of the classroom?

- What kind of guidance is needed to develop this over an entire academic year?
References


• Channon, A. (Forthcoming). Writing is fighting.


• Elliott, M. (Forthcoming). *How to succeed in organic chemistry: A shu-ha-ri approach.*


• Jennings, G. (Forthcoming). The Mexican body culture of Xilam.


Thanks for taking part

Any further thoughts or questions?
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