



# MY CHALLENGES IN SWITCHING TO ITF TAEKWON-DO

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR REQUIREMENT OF GRADIN TO 4TH DAN

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# Taekwon-Do a way of life.....

## Contents

1. Who am I?.....	1-2
2. Note!.....	2
3. My relocation to South Africa.....	2-4
4. Discovery of ITF TAEKWON-DO....	4-6
5. My interest into ITF TAEKWON-DO.....	6-7
6. End of practice of martial arts.....	7-8
7. A return home with ITF TAEKWON-DO.....	8-10
8. The culture of moral development in TAEKWON-DO.....	11-13
9. TAEKWON-DO is more than just a Self-defence.....	14-15
10. Conclusion.....	14-16
11. Acknowledgments.....	16-17

## **Who am I?**

My name is David Ntambwe Mbuyi and I'm turning 40 years old soon. I live in Kinshasa the capital city of the Democratic Republic of Congo/DRC Where I started practising Taekwondo WT/Olympic in 2000 at that time the total ignorance of the authentic Taekwon-Do ever existed.

It was for me a way of learning how to defend myself against the rising up of many gangsterism within the city. Although my first ever challenge started at that specific moment due to my family believes and religion. My family and religion had that old thoughts of practising a form of self-defence, or a combat sports was for the less educated peoples.

Therefore I had to make up a story in order for me to admit myself into a Taekwondo dojang of my nearest community. Unfortunately I had to drop out after grading at orange belt with the old system grading or 7<sup>th</sup> gup today.

After few years without practising and moving out the area, I finally came across another dojang and also been training regularly there until I finally graduated to my black belt 1<sup>st</sup> Dan in 2006 under a veteran Korean officer and Master Park Son.

Then after I went to my adulthood, I could finally decide for myself without many obstacles from my family and religion. In 2007 I travelled to Seoul/South Korea to prepare and camp for the Beijing 2008 Olympics' Games where I and my fellow

countrymen discovered many other challenges such hard training system, weigh cutting etc.... In 2010 I had to take up 2<sup>nd</sup> Dan grading test under an ongoing broken ankle surgery, I successfully passed my 2<sup>nd</sup> Dan. I had to wait another long time period before grading to 3<sup>rd</sup> Dan under a special recommendation from Master Yossef Malik from Senegal from Kukkiwon committee.

I grew up in a religious family. Although my father was a competitive boxer and soccer player at his younger age well at a national level and as an old boy (40y). I was the only son in that big family to take up that big step into a martial art path.

Our everyday life always included studying and we always go to church. During my practise of Taekwondo WT, I have competed in a various Kyorugi international competition such: Incheon Open 2007 and won gold medallist at -74kg category, Tornoa de la Paz Angola 2008; won gold medallist again at the same category. At the national level, I have multiple won gold medallist -74kg category.

In 2011 I moved away from home and relocated in South Africa/Cape Town for studying. Since it was difficult to maintain a sufficiently high training intensity in Taekwondo as a student in the capital region without a car, a job so I had to adapt to another life challenges.

## Note!

I want to start by saying that what I write in this thesis is in no way scientifically proven, but I write based on my own experiences, observations and what I have learned about switching from Taekwondo WT and while practicing ITF Taekwon-Do both physically and psychologically.

## My Relocation to South Africa

It was exactly on the 16<sup>th</sup> May 2011 I arrived in Cape Town/South Africa, with a strong and positive set of minds regarding the development and achievement on my sport career. Although things aren't always as we planned. As I have lived on the seaside and Eastern Suburbs of the Cape Town Metropolitan Strand Municipality a very far apart area from most of the other activities of Cape Town. With a very few casual activities, I spent 2 months without been able to be submitted at my profession's program. So I decided to move away from Strand and emerged on a more suitable area of Garden Village a very small community into Maitland Suburbs, where I could easily reach Town. For my 1<sup>st</sup> year I did not think no more of practising or pursuing my career within the martial art, as I had to study, finding a job to sustain my daily need.

A year later of my staying into the city, I met a wonderful lady who took my life astray from many of my pursuing goals to the point of getting married in 2012 and moving together as married couple.

That was a turning around of things into my career and life, my wife at the time discovered I was a martial artist or Instructor; which she persuaded me to open a school or class of self-defence for the youth on the community.

I finally agreed to the idea of teaching Taekwondo to the community, even though I could not expect so many challenges in the process; below are the challenges and obstacles faced.

- The local municipality or community council rejected my application.
- The South Africa Taekwondo Federation rejected my application for licensing or local dojang.
- The gangsterism within the area saw that as a challenge or obstacle to the youth do not fear the threats.
- Lack of funds or financial support from parents of students.

After a period of perseverance and hope I could not keep up with the school and sadly had to close down.

I did not lose hope at the time so I carried on searching for another opportunity; though I still could not find a proper taekwondo school or dojang. I started training with a Goju-Ryu style at Cape Town Peninsula University for a while, I was not impressed with their practise and lack of discipline.

I had finally found a proper Taekwondo dojang in Sea Point area; it was a sort of an academy mixing Taekwondo WT and Yong Mudo with Mr Quintin Harman as Senior Instructor. I then started training Taekwondo WT with him for a while. It was still a tremendous challenge toward myself due my daily and new life responsibilities as a new comer in the city as well as new married man also new father. As in August 2013 I become a father of a girl, couples months before the birth of my daughter I became unemployed, the situation made it more difficult for me to travel from my area to train at Sea point.

My training with Mr Quintin Harman became on and off, and exactly without understanding how I did not have the same passion on practising Taekwondo WT any more.

As I had to be a bread winner for my family, I kept on seeking for an employment with a very low chance of getting one due to the employment system that runs into the country. During my employment searching, I had one of my old student from my previous class; a South Korean young man let me met his driver whom spoke well about me to his driver and finally agreed to lend me one of his car. And I stared to work as a private taxi driver.

During my taxi driving duties, that's when another unforeseen event happened to my life. My young student spoke to me about a Taekwon-Do Dojang he saw on Facebook called «**GI-BAEK TAEKWON-DO**» situated at Green Point on another seaside area of Cape Town.

I decided to visit **GI-BAEK TAEKWON-DO** together with my student Gyu Park, although I was not impressed at all on my 1<sup>st</sup> sight of that new style of Taekwondo.



## Discovery of ITF TAEKWON-DO

It was exactly the year 2013 end I visited GI-BAEK TAEKWON-DO, without being impressed at my 1<sup>st</sup> sight. Gladly it was not my last time there, so I decided to pay it another visit but that time I went for training session.

During and after the practise session everything was so weird knowing I was training Taekwondo, so I keep on going more regularly and train with the senior Instructor Sabum-Nim Chase Watkins. As I was wearing a different Dobok than them, it was obvious we were into different style of Taekwondo.

As Sabum-Nim Chase practised Taekwondo WT on his youth, he could easily understand my style; though I could not adapt to his. Here are few challenges faced:

- Sine wave
- Breath control
- Different movements such as; fast motion, slow motion, connected motion and continuous motion
- Fundamental motions
- Tuls
- Matsogi
- Fighting gear



Although that new style of Taekwon-Do was weird to me, I kept on practising it until I met Sahyun Jaren Philips who was the Senior Chief Instructor at that time he was Sabum-Nim (VI Dan). I enjoyed more training with Sabum-Nim Chase because he was more into fighting style, kicking than learning Tuls and fundamental motion which were more complicated for me.

It was during one technical seminar with Sahyun Jaren Philips, I have showed up by his invitation although he did not believe I had come due to my lack of interest to switch completely into ITF Taekwon-Do.

Something was taking me back to that dojang without knowing it, so I kept on training on and off there. Nonetheless, I was keen on learn ITF Taekwon-Do by the encouragement of Sahyun Jaren Philips even though he seemed to convince me into switch or convert to ITF Taekwon-Do. The thoughts of switching unto ITF was not penetrating unto my inner spirit because of lack of confidence and knowledge of the true, authentic martial art.

Then I started to learn few patterns during Sabum-Nim Chase hour's with other senior students. The respect and consideration, given to me at GI-BAEK TAEKWON-DO had reflected a true discipline, and tenets of Taekwon-Do; courtesy.

## **My Interest into ITF TAEKWON-DO**

My willingness to learn grew as I trained more. I was very enthusiastic about my sense of place and inclusion in that style as I was most of the time advised and encouraged by Sahyun-Nim Jaren Philips and Sabum-Nim Chase.

I often were invited to technical seminars, black belt association trainings, grading and so forth. Those events played a tremendous part unto developing in me the love for ITF Taekwon-Do. And I still held my position not to fully commit nor totally switch into. The exact reason was I was afraid to be a lower black belt dan than I was; just I remember Sahyn-Nim encouraged me take up a 1<sup>st</sup> Dan in ITF Taekwon-Do for switch, which I deeply spent years to comprehend that drop of 3<sup>rd</sup> Dan WT to 1<sup>st</sup> Dan ITF.

In 2017, Grand Master Hwang Ho Yong had to conduct a technical seminar in Johannesburg in what I had an interest on partaking, but I could not due to my proper switch did not occurred yet. Therefore I kept on missing a lot of opportunities passing by every year. Although the same year, I received the proper ITF Taekwon-Do doboks from Sabum-Nim Chase Watkins as gift.

I took part of several events of Taekwon-Do ITF, I could not still comprehend the sine wave purposes, nor its origin. Until it was given to me in order to maximise the power in each technique often by maximising body mass and kinetic energy. Also it permit great control over the body movements enabling smoother changes in direction and transition from one movement to another.



I also learnt the 5 different motions that are performed during tuls; called

- Normal motion (Potonguro)
- Continuous motion (Iojin tongjak)
- Connecting motion (Yon gyol tongjak)
- Fast motion (Balli)
- Slow motion (Chonchonhi)

That all these different motions are performed at its own time, to its own rhythm and speed either combining with one breath control or timing breathe. Some have pause between techniques, other split second pause between the ends of one movement using all sine waves.

Taekwon-do is most likely one of the best-documented martial arts. The founder left the students with a 15-volume Encyclopedia in which he depicted his philosophy and vision of Taekwon-do as well as a detailed physical program aiming at progressively improving strength and fitness. Therefore, even weaker people can benefit from the physical benefits of Taekwon-Do.

The practice of Taekwon-Do ITF teaches me a lot about myself, it constantly gives me new challenges for my growth and forces me to leave the comfort zone and raises self-confidence. In short, TKD helps me get through my day and gives me happiness at the highest level.

## End of practice of Martial arts

As it said to certain proverbs "During a storm, we may find the toughest Warriors". It came with the saddest and toughest decision of my life, I had chosen to stop practising any form of martial arts (Taekwon-Do ITF, Taekwondo WT, Haidong-



Gumdo). I had took up an employment as Head Chef into a fine dining restaurant in Cape Town in March 2018.

I decided to be more committed to my family, my religion affairs, so I had to break up with martial arts as I thought it was holding or keeping me back. So I had to resign to certain federations I was affiliated to in order to be free from any activities with them. As I remembered few of my fellow martial art colleagues from Russia, Belgium, Congo and South Africa called me trying to advise me on that heavy decision taken.

At that time, I completely forgotten what the Founder of Taekwon-Do General CHOI-HONG HI said about Taekwon-Do; is not only a martial art, but also "a Way of life"

I finally thought that decision could ease my sufferings, agony and pains. So I started rather playing cricket as a sport. Which I saw myself committed to it with passion. Sadly the family I thought been committed to, I separated with my wife, child the year 2019. Living a separated life, no more committed to my religion and embraced a very tough journey until the Covid pandemic came to wrap me around to a sour path.

At the end of lockdown and Covid restrictions, I was back playing cricket even more although Master Jaren Philips and Sabum-Nim Chase would talk me out of my challenges.

I finally broke through by going back practising again martial art in mid-2021, not at the same level or status as before. But that was an association of martial artist with different style such as: Karate-Shotokan, Kyokushin, Ju-jitsu, Taekwondo WT and Taekwon-Do ITF. We had only one day of training per week and we will choose one style of training that day. I could remember this was only to keep me less active with martial art stuff.

And each time I would go train with Master Jaren at his dojang DOMAC CENTRE, he would convince still to prepare for an ITF black belt switch but I had always find a sad excuse do not do so.

## **A return home with ITF TAEKWON-DO**

The decision of returning home in DR Congo came across at the world economic crisis due to Covid pandemic that emerged worldwide. Although the situation I faced on the night of March 9<sup>th</sup> 2022 at Belhar area in Cape Town, made me realized my journey and path in South Africa was over. As I was working as an E-hailing taxi driver that night and took a gangster client to drop off somewhere in the area.

What saved me that night from not been killed, nor be robbed my vehicle, was definitely the knowledge of practising Taekwon-Do ITF; learning self-control and

honsinsul. As the robber, took my phone already from where it was, he pushed me out of the vehicle and set to drive off.

It came many times we were doing one to one honsinsul with Master Jaren and Sabum-Nim Chase during ITF Taekwon-Do training session that I could over power the attacker that and finally took possession of my car and fled.

- A. So I finally made my return in my home country DR Congo at Kinshasa its capital city, with one mission: to develop a true martial art and authentic ITF TAEKWON-DO with same philosophy of its Founder General CHOI HONG HI.
- B. To create solid, stable dojangs and NGB for more practitioners and youth.
- C. To be affiliated to the Original ITF TAEKWON-DO federation of Vienna.

Arriving back home, I had already found a based ITF Taekwon-Do federation of Congo affiliated with Grand Master Choi Jung Hwa son of our late ITF TAEKWON-DO founder General CHOI HONG HI. Which I could not over looked at it as it was already ad big challenge to me after 12 years out of the country, I did not know what to tell them, nor where to start as they had already a foundation, belief to their affiliation and practice.

I was invited twice to partake at their training session and met with their officials whom invited me to join their federation.

General CHOI HONG HI quoted: [“A true martial artist is not the one who fears or avoids challenges but the one who confronts them with indomitable spirit, perseverance, and an unwavering pursuit of self-improvement”](#).

[The way to become the greatest is to win every contest before it takes place](#), another quote from the Founder of ITF TAEKWON-DO that made realized the way of Life in Taekwon-Do so I decided not to join the federation but to follow another path of Integrity...

Practising a martial art at home is a quite common activity as there is many practitioners willing to learn, partake to physical routine on a daily basis although the lack of proper sport facilities and equipment makes the challenge to its core. The saddest part is looking around today as many students of martial arts do not have respect for their teachers. All they want to learn is punching and kicking. This not martial arts, it is only fighting.

I had to start practising sometimes alone or with Tang So Do practitioners in order to keep up. I was somehow considered as an expert from my fellow colleagues, just because I had a better and approved ITF Dobok (DAEDOO) and shoe. Also I had all my practise photos from South Africa, where they could see me practising with other real ITF practitioners.



All these external aspect for them was an evident to fear, or distance them from me or even to feel insecure into their own mind-set. Although I was as humble as the true ITF Taekwon-Do teaches us "Courtesy" as I was trying or attempting to practice the following elements of courtesy by building a noble character in training in orderly manner as well; being polite to others, to encourage the sense of justice and humanity, to handle matters with fairness and sincerity.

Learning Resilience and a Strong Spirit in relation to tenacity and their humbling experiences, students will slowly but surely foster the spirit of not giving up. They will be able to cognize that in reality, they will not always be the best nor always in their best every time. What is more important is that they accept such humbling experiences which do not mean the end for them, but the beginning of their transformation to be stronger, wiser, and better.

Self-confidence and self-esteem

Through the different social skills and emotional functions mentioned above, a martial artist will be able to develop self-confidence and self-esteem.

## THE CULTURE OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT IN TAEKWON-DO

*"Refrain from reckless and thoughtless actions.*

*Be as calm and judicious as a mountain."*

*- General Choi Hong Hi,*

*Founder of Taekwon-Do*

One is not a martial artist if one does not have any high sense of morality and good character. Without the two, one is just a dangerous person because he can overpower others through his skills. One of the greatest distinctions between any sport and Taekwon-Do is that the latter gives much weight on the application of a particular oath for all practitioners and a certain set of precepts to guide the practitioner to one's optimal practice of the art which is called the 5 Tenets of Taekwon-Do.

These 5 tenets, which was written in the Encyclopedia of Taekwon-Do by general Choi, will be discussed here, together with some essential points from the long chapter dedicated on Moral Culture in Taekwon-Do, which are of value to cultivate children's personalities and principles.

### I. the Student's Oath

I shall observe the tenets of Taekwon-Do.

I shall respect my instructors and seniors.

I shall never misuse Taekwon-Do.

I shall be a champion of freedom and justice.

I shall build a more peaceful world.



This is recited by all Taekwon-Do practitioners before they begin their training proper, raising their right hand as they speak every word in the oath intently. It is such a powerful tool to teach kids about being responsible martial artists. As this is

done in the very start before the kicking and other training programs, they are reminded that it is the perfection of moral behaviour comes first more than the perfection of physical skills. As a teacher of this martial art, I must see to it first that I prioritize moulding students' good will and discipline for the self, which will reflect on how they will use and apply Taekwon-Do throughout their lives. Taekwon-Do can be treated as a weapon.

A person of good character knows well not to boast or flaunt his power or capability, but that in times of danger, as a practitioner one must defend himself and others. A person of no good character, on the other hand, may be the one who causes danger to others by instilling fear on the weak with the use of one's skills and even exploit people in doing him favors under his control. A person can easily be an abuser, a bully, an exploiter, because he knows he has the upper hand compared to the others. It is one of our duties as instructors to make sure that our students do not go astray to a dark path with such dangerous skill. We must be accountable and responsible to lead students in the right way.

In order to secure this development, instructors, in any of their own righteous way, shall implement an atmosphere where the five main virtues mentioned by the Encyclopedia of Taekwon-Do are practiced.

#### **A. Five Human Qualities**

1. Humanity (IN) - With humanity, people will learn how to value other people just as how they feel compassion and empathy their loved ones and themselves.

"The heaven provides four seasons while the earth has the power to produce all living things. This privilege is not reserved for any specific person but for all human beings... Therefore, humanity lies in the idea of sharing the fruits of nature with all people."

2. Righteousness (UI) – When one is righteous, one knows that it is highly important to do one's duty for the society and to avoid any unlawful acts that taint one's dignity and which causes disruption to others.

"For the ordinary person, life and death are the most important in the life. However, for the virtuous person to live and die for righteousness is far more important than life and death themselves."

– Mencius

3. Propriety (YE) – This is the virtue of being well-mannered polite and well-spoken to others.

"Propriety must be practiced for the proper development of personality, and whoever lacks sincerity in his words, cannot be considered a gentleman."

– Confucius

4. Wisdom (JI) – This is the virtue that enables the individual to recognize what is

right and wrong and to choose to pursue what is right.

“No matter how small it is you should not do what you realize is wrong. On the other hand, you must do what is right no matter how small it may seem.”

5. Trust (SHIN) - One must protect the trust of others by keeping one’s promises and to avoid acts of lying, betrayal, nor cheating.

“Your word is your honour...”

-Joyce Meyer

## **B. Five Tenets of Taekwon-Do**

Following recitation of the Student’s Oath, students continue to recite the following:

- Courtesy
- Integrity
- Perseverance
- Self-control
- Indomitable spirit

After every start of the class with the Student’s Oath and the Tenets of Taekwon-Do, there must also a reinforcement before classes end. Every after class, I also give time to remind my students that the skills they learn in the dojang should not be used for their benefit, such as when quarrelling with siblings, or when there are some disagreements with a classmate in school and never bully others with it. That not in every uncomfortable situation or threatening time they should directly use their skills. Their skills can be a strong weapon which they should be responsible and wise to know better when the right time to use it is. This is my way to emphasize to them that Taekwon-do is not about being a physically strong person, but it is about being strong in good will and spirit.



## TAEKWON-DO is more than just a self-defence

"Your spirit is the true shield."

-Morihei Ueshiba

Martial artists should be a protector of the society, not a power holder. When I asked parents what their main reason were for enrolling their kids in Taekwon-Do, they all shared a common answer. Self-defense. However, there is much more than that as parents differ in their other secondary reasons such as to keep their kids away from too much gadget use and to be more active, to keep their bodies more toned and physically able, and to help their kids with low socialization skills to be more interactive with others. We had a few times having children with much hyperactivity and much aggressive behaviors and their parents' reason for enrolling their kids is to be disciplined, and for their children to have something where they can put all their energy to. But later on, they'll see that their kids will be gaining much more than that. That in this martial art, one may unlock a better person of self-discipline, resilience, and confidence.



I realized that I had been missing this before. When I was in the sports-related Taekwon-do, it was all about training to be a better player. Surely there was moral culture such as having sportsmanship, indomitable spirit and etiquette and about reaching the goal of a gold medal. But it is only when I had been in the ITF Style Taekwon-Do did I invest much time and effort into cultivating the moral culture to myself as this that it is not only about being a better player, but a better individual with a healthy body and mind and soul, and reaching the ultimate goal of discovering

the self, as well as sharing oneself for the good of the many. I encountered this beautiful statement from the Encyclopedia of Taekwon-Do which says, “Every one of us, as a social being, desires to live in a free and peaceful society. At the same time, it is our obligation to build such society for the people.” Martial artists do not serve mainly by eradicating the bad apples in the society through their fighting skills, but that through their model of behaviors and great character, they shall be the good apple that influences others to be also one.

The question is, how to be that good apple? One may find out through a journey towards building character in Taekwon-do. A journey towards actualizing oneself. A very long journey but a worthwhile one.

## Conclusion

As of today my very long journey has paid me off so far, I am representing my country Democratic Republic of Congo to ITF TAEKWON-DO Vienna and affiliated my dojang and NGB to an international level. Pursuing on a daily the development of ITF TAEKWON-DO to the youth and other level age. I kept focus and learn all these important quotes.



“The secret of change is to focus all your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new”



As the other federation of ITF Taekwon-Do affiliated to Grand Master Choi Jung Hwa wanted me to join them or elsewhere they fight me with all they have in order for me do not be legally recognized as an independent NGB within the country.

“In matters of conscience, the law of majority has no place; it is the moral duty of individuals to uphold what is right, despite social norms”

-Aristotle

Through what “Perseverance” in Taekwon-Do teaches us there is always this old oriental saying; Patience leads to virtue or merit. To achieve something, whether it is a high degree or the perfection of a technique, one must set the goal, then always persevere.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“Imagine if every child learned the respect, courtesy, and discipline that Martial arts teach. The world would be a different place.”

I would like to express my gratitude to first and foremost, my God Almighty Jesus Christ, for giving me the strength, wisdom and energy to finish this thesis. I would like to extend my gratefulness to my Taekwon-Do family in South Africa Cape Town for their unceasing support on my passion for the martial art, to Master Jaren Philips patience and understanding by walking the path with me even when the road is not easy. I am thankful for the assistance of my daughter for helping me with her additional practice with me at my dojang and who’s preparing her 8<sup>th</sup> gup test soon. I am also very thankful of our ITFSA Taekwon-Do President, Master Jaren Philips, VII Dan, for motivating me to pursue this grading test and believing in me.

I am grateful for his guidance not only in preparing for this but also helping do the right choice by first switching into ITF Taekwon-Do in his continuous encouragement for our Team here in DrCongo to grow and keep on. I would also like to thank our ITF TFA Vice-President, Mr. Nadir Ait Makhroub from Morocco, V Dan, for his encouragement as well.

I am also thankful to my fellow instructors around the country for their utmost efforts keeping the spirit of Taekwon-Do alive especially after hardships caused many discouragements for other local federations.

They also inspired me more to be steadfast in my purpose to keep my dojang going even after such trying times. I am also thankful to Mrs Romy Philips spouse to Master Jaren Philips for her kindness, courtesy toward me during my stay in Cape Town by upholding the values and principles of Taekwon-Do.

I am also grateful to Sabum-nim Chase Watkins Jones for all his time spent with me in Cape Town and opening up his door to me. I had so much challenge putting up this

thesis yet so much fun in flashing back my roots and internalizing all the things I have learned before.

Even though everything I have written here were all things I have seen before, writing this paper made me look at them in new light. I am hoping that I can pass this coming 3rd Dan to 4th Dan grading test, in God's will. My ultimate dream is to spread ITF Style Taekwon-Do in the DR Congo to make our ITF organization's reach wider, to touch more lives and shape future martial artists that will be our new heroes. I shall keep my fire burning and help the young blood, the future instructors and ITF Taekwon-Do ambassadors, start and keep their own fire in this martial art until such our light combined may illuminate the path of the youth.