

# I don't need qualifications

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I have been teaching since 1974, and still continue to study for my personal development today. There was a point where it was suggested I needed qualifications and as I stated at the time, I don't need them I've been teaching for many years.

This thought of having to prove myself was a real irritation and I couldn't see the point, and seriously argued against any qualifications in martial arts with exception to the black belt, which in my mindset was the benchmark standard.

Having presented a good case that experience and the black belt was the standard I really had some doubts weather I was right at that time. I considered a couple of clubs in my area, which were run by very suspect black belts who used dangerous training practices. This was a concern and I attempted to do something about it and contacted the local authorities that seemed to be quite powerless.

The reason that the local authorities were powerless is that there are so many styles and martial arts with different grade systems they were unable to make any sense of it. The two things this highlighted is the real value of the black belt and it was a reference to a styles syllabus and not a qualification of any kind.

In all the time I've been training I have met thousands of martial artists and black belts and I know from experience some do not seem worthy of wearing it. I questioned myself at this point, am I playing politics? Or are there any sour grapes? Realistically it was simply the truth that the skills didn't seem fitting for a black belt grade. Some who I have spoken to seem to have a good knowledge of their system and I could debate that they were worth their black belt because they did understand their system in great detail.

A puzzle in itself and the real answer is that each of the martial arts styles and systems are different subject matters like metal work or woodwork. Things that are similar don't mean they are the same. The issue now was to separate my personal development from system or style development, for me I didn't need the constraints of a syllabus.

Martial arts seems such a sham with schools, academies and club springing up some were good some were bad. The same as the black belts who run them some good and some bad, it seemed some of the bad instructors had hundreds of students. Even though as an experienced instructor I could see this I was helpless to do anything about it and I had answered my own questions by stating that I don't need qualifications, because I have a black belt.

My black belt is so important to me I have aspired to it most of my life, and it represents a lot including my own standards and training. The trouble is that there is no standard for a black belt, to a point it's a joke as a grade of

personal skill. It seems to make more sense as a subject reference and syllabus and its important to yourself and that's why you wear it. It represents your knowledge of your syllabus but its unimportant to everyone else with the exception of your students.

With reference to qualifications the black belt isn't one and is degraded by thinking it is one. If you believe a black belt is a qualification you are licensing cowboys to threaten the survival of martial arts. The black belt is so widely misunderstood and abused it can be worn by a complete amateur who can claim anything he likes and start academies and no one can do diddlysquat.

Cowboys in martial arts will obviously lie and do what ever it takes to coin in the money. If they are unscrupulous, they will be greedy and rip people off for as much as they can. Who pays for this? We do the real martial artists, with the loss of students to cowboy clubs and bad press. Anyone who lies about grade is bound to be unscrupulous to. Authorities cannot check grades because each style and martial arts has more than one body and that is in addition to the different martial arts and systems.

So what are the question and answers?

1. If we want to get rid of the unqualified people shafting the public we do need a UNIVERSAL Qualification for teaching in addition to the black belt/subject matter.

2. If you have been teaching for years can you provide traceable evidence?
3. If you have been teaching for many years how do you know you are teaching correctly and safely?
4. What evidence would be required to prove your teaching ability?
5. Old practices can cause injury and how do we know we would be liable if someone was injured? Ignorance is no defence, as responsible instructors we should offer the best, this includes safe training methods especially as 80% market are kids.

Ideally we need a method of separating a black belt from being an instructor, as they don't automatically go together. The subject matter should be part of the Coaching, Teaching or Instructing Qualification in that martial art. The teaching qualification should be:

1. Coaching
2. Health & Safety
3. First Aid
4. Child Protection
5. Subject Matter (Martial Arts Black Belt or 2/3 years Training)

Certification should have contact details of the issuing body and any national standards and benchmark they adhere to. Any qualification that doesn't show the modulated content probably isn't worth having and is unlikely to be recognised by any official body.

As an organisation's Chief Executive Officer it is important I reflect my responsibilities and commitment to developing martial arts safely. I take my obligations seriously and I see those obligations as:

1. Making martial arts safer.
2. Improving the quality of teaching.
3. Help stop the unqualified teach unauthorised schools, clubs and academies.
4. Stemming bad press.
5. Setting fair benchmark standards to provide evidence for martial artists.
6. Ensuring martial arts fits in with the demands of modern communities.
7. Keeping the freedom to expand martial arts without the monopolisation of styles and disciplines.
8. Making sure all martial arts new or old are accessible to all communities through active networking.

There are many good responsible martial artists who want to make a difference. The best way is to look for National Training Programmes that support you and the standards in your country and locality.

In the UK there are already established teaching qualifications from many RECOGNISED BODIES. I am sure these exist on a worldwide basis in many other countries. The BNMAA have used 5 modules to provide a unique basis for teachers in any or all martial arts through a training provider MASTARR.

MASTARR is willing to work with any group worldwide to set up a professional independently accredited international training programme for any martial art group. To contact MASTARR write to MASTARR, Suite 501 International House, 223 Regent Street, London, W1B 2QD.