

The Effective Curriculum Design Principles to Reduce the Nauseating Symptom in Training Whirling-kung

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Abstract: Sufi-whirling is a famous spiritual practice in Sufism and is adopted as a physically active meditation by people intending to promote their physical and mental health in Taiwan, where the term “whirling-kung” is used instead of Sufi-whirling to avoid the religious connotation of Sufi. In this paper the authors intend to inquire the issue of how to design appropriate and effective curriculum for training whirling-kung in order to help learners reduce the symptom of nauseating and conquer the fear of whirling. Through a process of action research, the authors draw up two cruxes of whirling: choiceless awareness and centering. The authors also summarize 10 effective curriculum design principles in whirling-kung training to help the learners reduce the nauseating symptom in whirling-kung training courses: (1) Provide training and practice on “mind-body-scan meditation” before training whirling-kung. (2) Arrange the practice of meditation immediately after whirling, which constitutes a Whirling-Meditation unit (abbr. as WM unit in this paper). (3) Increase the length of WM unit gradually. (4) Arrange several WM units in one session if needed. (5) The break between training sessions should not be too long in order to keep the warmth of training. (6) The number of training sessions should be long enough to have training effects. (7) Adjust every learner’s length of WM unit according to the overload training principle. (8) Select appropriate place for training. (9) Select appropriate music for training. (10) Try to arrange the whirling practice at least one hour after the meals.

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1. Introduction

The Sufi poet and mystic Jalalu'ddin Rumi [1] (1207 –1273) began the whirling dance and established the dervish order known as the Mevlevi. Whirling dance is widely called “Sufi whirling” (or Sufi spinning) and is still practiced by the Sufi Dervishes of the Mevlevi order. Nowadays Sufi whirling is worldwide distributed and has become a form of physically active meditation advocated by people intending to promote their physical and mental health.

In Taiwan, the term “whirling-kung” or “spinning meditation” is used instead of Sufi-whirling to avoid the religious connotation of Sufi. In this paper we use the term “whirling-kung”. The term “kung” is a short form of the term “kung-fu”, denoting the meaning of “skills” in Chinese. Therefore, “whirling-kung” emphasizes that it is a skill that can only be practiced and learned with patience and dedication through appropriately designed curriculum.

For the past few years, more and more people practice whirling-kung for the purpose of rehabilitation from illness in Taiwan. The most famous example is “Taiwan Cancer Friends New Life Association [2]” (TCFNLA). Since 2000, TCFNLA has incorporated whirling-kung training as the core of their curriculum to help cancer patients rehabilitate.

Numerous cancer patients participating the TCFNLA’s courses have witnessed and reported amazing rehabilitations from cancers after practicing whirling-kung for a period of time [2]. According to TCFNLA’s claim:

It (whirling-kung) has both physical and mental benefits. On the physical side, it can improve our metabolism, strengthen the heart function and facilitate the blood circulation. On the mental side, it will enhance our internal awareness, mental detachment, and help with emotional cleansing. As the spinning takes place, the overall effect is to balance of our body and mind and bring our physical and mental well-being into alignment.

Although whirling has been practiced by many people since ancient times, it is still not common in countries other than those in the middle-east area, compared to common activities like walking, running or swimming etc. Without appropriate and sufficient whirling training, most people would get nauseating or vomiting, which in turn cause people to be afraid of whirling or to avoid of learning whirling totally. Under this circumstance, it has become an important challenge in terms of how to help learners go through a series of effective training sessions in order to gradually learn the skill of whirling and reduce the symptom of nauseating caused by whirling.

However, we also found that no relevant article or

literature can be found in terms of how to train whirling effectively and how to reduce the symptom of nauseating caused by whirling. It is also curious enough that no other researchers have explored this issue so far. Based on this background, in this paper the authors intend to inquire the issue of how to design appropriate and effective curriculum for training whirling-kung in order to help learners reduce the symptom of nauseating and conquer the fear of whirling.

2. Research method and process

The authors employed the research method of action research to develop the appropriate curriculum for training whirling-kung gradually. The first author of this paper established two whirling-kung training groups in successive semesters by calling together volunteers from a senior high school in eastern part of Taiwan, shown as the following (Table 1).

The second author has incorporated training whirling-kung as part of his undergraduate and graduate courses in five different classes since 2009 in a National University in eastern part of Taiwan, shown as the following (Table 2).

Both authors went through a similar cycling process of “plan-action-reflection” in typical action research. Based on the reflection of the experience of a previous group or course of training whirling-kung, the authors revise the curriculum design and implement the curriculum again in the successive groups or courses. Both authors share their experience in the process of training whirling-kung in their groups or courses and provide feedback to each other. Through this process, we improve our curriculum design gradually and draw up the conclusions as presented below.

3. Research results and discussion

Based on the process of action research as described above, the authors have found the cruxes of whirling in order to avoid nauseating and the effective curriculum design principles to reduce the nauseating symptom in training whirling-kung. Due to the limitations of the paper, we present the research results in this section without presenting the process of obtaining the research results.

3.1 The fundamental methods of whirling

In this paper, whirling-kung is considered as a kind of physical and mental training and the person who practices whirling-kung is called “whirler”. The fundamental method of whirling is defined as: the whirler stands his or her feet in upright position and move the feet continuously so as to revolve the body in clockwise or counter-clockwise directions at certain speed of whirling for a certain period of time.

Summarized from the authors’ experience of training whirling-kung, there are six possible modes of whirling regarding the way of moving feet, shown as Table 3.

Moreover, based on our preliminary experience, in order to have the effects of practicing whirling-kung, the period of whirling time is at least five minutes and the speed of whirling is at least 30 turns per minute approximately. If the duration of whirling is too short or the speed of whirling is too slow, it might not be considered as practicing whirling-kung. Otherwise, the activity might be just called “walking” instead. However, it is still an issue that awaits future research to resolve in terms of how long or how fast of whirling is sufficient to have the effects of whirling-kung.

During the process of whirling, the whirler could also move his or her feet to different locations by different routes. There is also no limitation in terms of the postures or movements of both hands. However, in this research, the whirler usually whirled continuously at the same location with simple hand postures.

There are two ways of stopping whirling: (1) The whirler slows down the whirling gradually until totally standing still. (2) The whirler stops whirling and stands still instantly and waits for the surrounding revolving view gradually slows down until the view stops completely.

3.2 The cruxes of whirling to avoid nauseating

In the curriculum for training whirling-kung, besides the fundamental methods of whirling, the most important task for the teacher is to guide the learners to grasp the cruxes of whirling in order to gradually reduce the symptom of nauseating caused by whirling gradually until the nauseating symptom completely diminish. Based on the results of this research, there are two cruxes of whirling: “choiceless awareness” and “centering”, as explicated below:

3.2.1 The first crux of whirling: choiceless awareness

The first crux of whirling is “choiceless awareness”, which is a phrase adopted from a famous spiritual leader Jiddu Krishnamurti [3] to emphasize that “our mind becomes absolutely calm and relaxed and we are fully aware of the moment yet our awareness is not focused on any physical or mental image/object [4]”. In the context of whirling, “choiceless awareness” means that the whirler should not focus his or her vision on any particular objects in the surrounding and allow the sight to be flowing and blurry. If the whirler focuses his vision on any particular objects, it is more likely to cause nauseating. The whirler just needs to open up his or

her awareness in a choiceless manner and roughly pay attention to his or her own position relative to

others and the surrounding objects in order to avoid bumping.

Table 1 The whirling-kung training groups of the first author

Semester	No. of Students	The students' age level	Time spent in training whirling-kung
2010 Fall	30	Senior High School	12 weeks, 2 sessions per week, from 5 min. to 30 min. in each session
2011 Spring	12	Senior High School	8 weeks, 3 sessions per week, from 5 min. to 30 min. in each session
Total	42		

Table 2 The whirling-kung training courses of the second author

Semesters	No. of Students	Course Level	Time spent in training whirling-kung
2009 Spring	30	Undergraduate's course	14 weeks, from 5 min. to 30 min. each week
2009 Fall	29	Undergraduate's course	12 weeks, from 5 min. to 30 min. each week
2010 Spring	17	Master's course	11 weeks, from 5 min. to 30 min. each week
2010 Fall	21	Undergraduate's course	12 weeks, from 5 min. to 30 min. each week
2010 Fall	32	Master's course	11 weeks, from 5 min. to 30 min. each week
Total	129		

Table 3 The six possible modes of whirling in whirling-kung

The axis of whirling Direction of whirling	Right foot		Body
Clockwise	Use the right foot as the axis and move the left foot forward so as to create clockwise whirling.	Use the left foot as the axis and move the right foot backward so as to create clockwise whirling.	Use the body as the axis and move the left foot backward and the right foot forward at the same time so as to create clockwise whirling.
counter-clockwise	Use the right foot as the axis and move the left foot backward so as to create counter-clockwise whirling.	Use the left foot as the axis and move the right foot forward so as to create counter-clockwise whirling.	Use the body as the axis and move the left foot forward and the right foot backward at the same time so as to create counter-clockwise whirling.

If the whirler could not grasp the crux of "choiceless awareness" while whirling, she or he could also raise one hand in front of the chest and focus on viewing the palm and roughly pay attention to his or her own position relative to others and the surrounding objects in order to avoid bumping. After a certain amount of whirling experience, a whirler might begin to get used to the blurry view while whirling and could try to break away gradually from the reliance on viewing the palm.

3.2.2 The second crux of whirling: centering

The second crux of whirling is "centering", which is a key notion of many meditation techniques [5, 6] to emphasize that meditators focus their attention whole-heartedly on their own feelings,

especially the feeling of heart. In the context of whirling, "centering" means that, in the whole process of whirling, the whirler would try to focus his or her attention completely on his or her own physical or mental feelings and stays at the center of stillness within a whirlpool of various sights and body experiences. This is similar to putting oneself in a "typhoon eye" where there is no wind or rain at all. While centering oneself, a whirler might also need to stick to the crux of choiceless awareness at the same time.

In other words, the two cruxes of whirling should be combined together. A whirler should be choicelessly aware of every phenomenon happened in the body, mind and surrounding, and completely

accept all the phenomena without being influenced by them. In this manner, a whirler could stay calm in the center without caring too much about how good or bad one is doing, how good or bad others are doing, etc. This is the key to avoid the nauseating symptom. Even for someone who gets nauseating easily, by grasping both the crux of choiceless awareness and centering, a whirler could gradually conquer the nauseating problem caused by whirling.

Even if the whirler feels nauseating during the process of whirling, he or she still needs to stay calm and feel it without any rejection about the feeling. The nauseating feeling would gradually diminish and vanish eventually. Only when the nauseating feeling stay strong and consistent, the whirler is advised to sit down and meditate on the feeling by using the “body-scanning” technique as explained in the next section until the nauseating feeling diminish totally. This is the key to conquer the nauseating problem caused by whirling.

3.3 The curriculum design principles for training whirling-kung

Besides helping the learners grasp the previous two cruxes of whirling, the authors summarize a few curriculum design principles for training whirling-kung in this section based on the experience in training whirling-kung in our training groups and courses.

3.3.1 Provide training and practice on “mind-body-scan meditation” before training whirling-kung

As explicated above, in any whirling-kung training curriculum, it is the first and most important task to help the learners conquer the nauseating symptom. In order to attain this objective, the teacher had better provide the learners with a certain amount of practice on “mind-body-scan meditation”, which is a mindfulness-based meditation [7, 8, 9] and is also known as “vipassana meditation” [10] originally delivered by the Buddha and practiced by many people currently and world-widely. The procedure of “mind-body-scan meditation” is briefly described as follow:

- (1) Close the eyes and sit still or lie down in any comfortable position.
- (2) Carefully scan the body and mind to find out any physical or mental feeling.
- (3) Observe and accept any feeling found without any judgment for a while. Whenever an uncomfortable feeling (including nauseating) is found, feel it and accept it mindfully.
- (4) Continuously scan and accept any feeling throughout the body and mind in any direction or sequence.

By this manner, any uncomfortable feeling

could be diminishing gradually. The mind-body-scan meditation could be arranged at the beginning stage of the whirling-kung training curriculum at least 10 minutes a time for several times. If the learners acquire this meditation skill, they can apply it to eliminate any nauseating feeling during the process or at the end of practicing whirling-kung. By practicing whirling-kung together with the mind-body-scan meditation again and again, most of the learners would overcome the nauseating symptom gradually.

3.3.2 Arrange the practice of meditation immediately after whirling

In whirling-kung training curriculum, the teacher had better arrange certain amount of time for the practice of meditation immediately after one session of practice whirling. The combination of “whirling + meditation” is named as a “WM unit” in this paper.

Based on the findings from the authors’ whirling-kung training courses, in any WM unit, the practice of meditation is extremely important. Not only could it help the learners conquer the nauseating symptom, but also increase the depth of meditation, which is beneficial to the physical and mental health of the learners.

For any WM unit shorter than 20 minutes, the length of time for practicing whirling and meditation is approximately the same. For example, 2 minutes of whirling could be followed by 2 minutes of meditation; 5 minutes of whirling could be followed by 5 minutes of meditation, etc. For any WM unit longer than 20 minutes, 10 minutes of meditation practice is enough for every session of whirling practice. Of course, within a WM unit, the necessary length of meditation practice still depends on the amount of time available and the individual needs. Therefore, the teacher should adjust the length of meditation according to the specific situation.

3.3.3 Increase the length of WM unit gradually

According to the experience of the authors, the teacher had better increase the length of WM unit gradually in designing any whirling-kung training curriculum. In other words, at the early stage of whirling-kung training, the length of WM unit should not be too long. For example, at the beginning, one WM unit might start from 6 minutes (i.e. 3 min. whirling + 3 min. meditation). After several sessions of training, the WM unit could be increased to 8 minutes, 10 minutes, 12 minutes gradually, with an increment of 2 minutes each time. As the learners gain more and more experience in whirling, the increment of WM unit could be enlarged to 8 or 10 minutes. Of course, some learners might progress faster than others and the increment of WM unit could be larger than others. In other words, both the

length of WM unit and the increment of WM unit depend on individual learner's situation. In general, the teacher would increase the length of WM unit slowly enough so as to allow the learners adapt to the feeling of whirling gradually.

There are many possible ways of increasing the length of WM unit gradually, shown as the following Table 4 .

In the Table 4, "5W+5M" means 5 minutes of whirling and 5 minutes of meditation, and so on. The authors of this paper mainly adopted the arrangement in Ex.1, starting from 5 minutes whirling and increasing the length of whirling gradually with an increment of 5 minutes each time. For most of the learners, this kind of progress is slow enough. However, for a few learners, the progress might be too fast. In that case, the teacher might adopt the arrangement of training similar to Ex. 2 or Ex.3 in the Table 4.

3.3.4 Arrange several WM units in one session if needed

At the early stage of whirling-kung training curriculum, some learners might not be able to adapt to whirling quickly enough and feel nauseating easily. The teacher might arrange several short WM units in one session and insert some time for discussion, which allows the learners to ask questions or share their experience in whirling, as shown in the following Table 5.

In Ex.3 of the above table, in the first session of training, the teacher arranges three short WM units (with 4, 4, 6 minutes in each unit) and inserts 5 minutes discussion between two WM units. In the second session of training, the teacher arranges three WM units with 20 minutes in each unit and inserts 5 minutes discussion between two WM units. At the beginning of training course, if one WM unit is too long, it might look too intimidating to them. The major purpose of arranging training sessions in this way is to help those learners who get nauseating easily to decrease the fear of long duration of whirling and provide them with more and more confidences in whirling. The insertion of discussion between two WM units could also provide the learners with more time to take a rest and clarify their doubt or anxiety about whirling. For those who do not get nauseating in whirling, of course, it is not necessary to arrange several WM units in one session and the teacher might just arrange the training sessions as shown in Table 4.

3.3.5 The break between training sessions should not be too long in order to keep the warmth of training

In this paper, a period of time of training is called one "session". The duration of one session might be as short as 15 minutes or as long as two

hours. The break between two sessions might be as short as 10 minutes or as long as one week. For training whirling-kung, if one session is longer than one hour, it might be too long for the learners, especially for the beginners. Based on our experience in whirling-kung, the most appropriate duration of one session is one hour.

If the break between two sessions is too short, it might be too laborious for the learners and the learners' body might not be able to adapt to the whirling. If the break between two sessions is longer than two days, the learners might lose the warmth of learning. Therefore, the most appropriate break between two training sessions is about one or two days (i.e. one session every two-day).

3.3.6 The number of training sessions should be long enough to have training effects

Most learners could not learn whirling-kung through just a few sessions of training, except for those who naturally do not get nauseating from whirling. In other words, the number of training sessions should be long enough to have training effects. In this paper, a series of training sessions is called a "module". In order to have training effects, the number of training sessions of a module is at least approximately 24. If the number of sessions of a module is too short, some learners might not be able to master the skill of whirling. For example, if a module of training consists of 24 sessions, the module could be arranged as 3 sessions a week for 8 weeks (with one hour per session).

Of course, this is only an approximate and temporary conclusion based on our limited experience so far. The most appropriate number of training sessions per module and the most appropriate interval between two sessions depend on many factors. After all, an excellent curriculum design for training whirling-kung involves various factors related to the learners like the age, the condition of physical and mental health, the attitude and motivation toward whirling, etc. All of these factors await further rigorous research in the future.

3.3.7 Adjust every learner's length of WM unit according to the overload training principle

The overload training principle is a principle that says that "To make progress in bodybuilding training, you need to progressively increase the intensity of your workouts [11]." For example, if one can lift 50kgs easily, it is useless to require him to practice lifting any weight under 50kgs. He needs to practice lifting a little bit heavier than 50kgs. Our bodies are designed to adapt to new conditions or stimuli. Through repeated overload training, our physical tissues or organs could gradually adapt themselves as required in the training [12].

According to the authors' experience, the

learners' whirling capabilities at the beginning of training vary quite a lot. Therefore, the teacher should adjust every learner's length of WM unit at the starting point according to the overload training principle and the learner's capability.

In his second training group, the first author of this paper encountered a learner who was capable of whirling for more than one hour without any nauseating feeling. It was definitely unnecessary to arrange a 15-minute session of whirling practice for her.

In whirling-kung training course, the first session of training is very important for the teacher. Based on the learners' conditions of whirling practice, the teacher could appraise every student's initial whirling capability and arrange ability grouping. In the coming training sessions, the teacher could arrange different lengths of WM units and different increments of WM units for different ability groups.

Moreover, the teacher needs to make a distinction between those who do not get nauseating

while whirling and those who get nauseating while whirling but are not afraid of whirling. For the former, the length of WM unit and the increment of WM unit could be longer than the latter at the beginning of training. For the latter and those who are afraid of whirling, the teacher could start with a 4 or 6 minutes' WM unit at the beginning and increment the WM unit by 2 minutes a time. These are some examples of appropriate curriculum designs for whirling-kung training according to overload training principle.

3.3.8 Select appropriate place for training

In whirling-kung training courses, the selection of place for training is also rather important. Based on our experience, it is not appropriate to select the place with narrow space, which might give rise to the feeling of constriction and cause the beginning learners get nauseating easily. When the learners practice whirling in a narrow space, the surrounding objects might look revolving very fast relative to the

Table 4 The possible ways of increasing the length of WM unit

Session # Ex.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Ex. 1	5W+5 M	5W+5 M	10W+ 10M	10W+ 10M	15W+ 15M	15W+ 15M	20W+ 20M	20W+ 20M	25W+ 20M	25W+ 20M	...
Ex. 2	5W+5 M	5W+5 M	7W+7 M	9W+9 M	11W+ 11M	15W+ 15M	20W+ 20M	25W+ 20M	30W+ 20M	35W+ 20M	40W+ 20M
Ex. 3	5W+5 M	7W+7 M	10W+ 10M	15W+ 15M	20W+ 20M	20W+ 20M	25W+ 20M	30W+ 20M	30W+ 20M	35W+ 20M	40W+ 20M

Table 5 Way of arranging several WM units in one session

Session # Ex.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Ex. 3	2W+2M +5D+2 W+2M+ 5D+3W +3M+10 D	5W+5M +5D+5 W+5M+ 5D+5W +5M+10 D	10W+10 M+5D +10W+1 0M+5D	10W+10 M+5D +10W+1 0M+5D	25W+20 M+5D	30W+20 M+5D	35W+20 M+5D	40W+20 M

learners and the learners might be afraid of bumping to other people, objects or wall. All of these feelings and fears might increase the possibilities to cause the learners to get nauseating. Besides, the teacher had better select the place for training with as less noises or interference as possible to decrease the factors of distraction and the possibility of nauseating for the learners.

3.3.9 Select appropriate music for training

During the process of whirling, we usually select appropriate music to accompany with the practice so that the learners could enjoy the music

while whirling. Based on the authors' experience in many training courses, the music used should not sound boring or dull. The rhythm of the music should be vivid and brisk. The effects of using different music while whirling are quite different. Since whirling-kung training usually requires a series of training sessions, the teacher could vary the music used in different sessions, especially after several training sessions. At the beginning of training, it is not necessary to change the music every time so that the learners could get used to the music and focus more on the whirling. After 3 or 4 sessions of

training, the teachers could change the music every time to allow the learners obtain different experience with different music and avoid the feeling of boring.

3.3.10 Try to arrange the whirling practice at least one hour after the meals

When the first author of this paper implemented his second training group, at the first session of training, about half of the learners squat down to take a rest quickly. Some of them expressed their feeling of nauseating and vomiting to the teacher after the training session. The authors infer that the students finished their lunch at around 12:10 and started their whirling practice at around 12:40, which is only about half hour after the lunch and was not appropriate for whirling practice.

The second author of this paper always arrange the time for whirling practice at least two hours after the meals and the learners did not have similar reactions. Therefore, we strongly suggest that the teacher had better arrange the whirling practice at least one hour after the meals.

3.4 The effects of whirling-kung training

Based on the experience of the whirling-kung training courses as described above, most of the learners could gradually conquer the fear for whirling and reduce the nauseating symptom. They could master the skill of whirling eventually and enjoyed the whirling because it allows them to feel relaxed and calm. Besides providing the effects of exercise or losing weight, whirling-kung could also help the learners reduce the nauseating problem in daily lives or in situations that would easily cause motion sickness.

However, a few learners still could not overcome the nauseating symptom. Future research might be necessary to explore other effective techniques or curriculum design for this kind of learners.

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