Dear Colleagues

**People who master techniques of rifle shooting**

**The Problem**

It has often been speculated that certain types of people tend to become leading rifle shooters. Individuals have often been described as naturals, because they master the skills so easily. Many others who try out rifle shooting find that the techniques are not easily understood, much less mastered. Otherwise, rifle shooting has for many been so absorbing that it provides a lifelong interest.

The writer has speculated that people with a sense of exactness, such as engineers, scientists, physicists, machinists, nurses and those with a mechanical sense, tend to become skilled rifle shooters. Percy Pavey for example, was trained as a cabinet-maker, a very exacting profession. In the 19th century those who volunteered to accept Queen Victoria’s challenge to the British Empire included leading physicists (such as James Clerk Maxwell, 1831-1879), medical practitioners (such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, 1859-1930), engineers, writers and professional soldiers. Today, the Manly Rifle Club includes police and two forensic scientists, who have worked for decades in chemical and pathology laboratories.

Many leading shooters began their interest in rifle shooting as a result of being taught by skilled coaches, i.e. teachers of rifle shooting. When teaching school students to shoot, the writer and colleagues have observed a high proportion who master the fundamentals faster than adults. Within three months, many students acquire levels of skill ahead of adult shooters. When a colleague, Sandy Peden of the Dominion of Canada Rifle Association (DCRA), taught rifle shooting to young police and military shooters of Malaysia, he found the same rapid progress. Upon learning for 18 months, some of his new rifle shooters travelled to compete at Bisley. This led in 2008 to HM The Queen’s Prize being won by Zainal Abidin Md Zain, a young member of the Royal Malaysia Police.

However, rifle clubs across Australia continue the century-old practice of recruiting new members and teaching them from the general skills available among club members. These are the shooters of whom Jim Sweet estimated in 1948 only 1 in 6 remain in the sport. Teaching appears to be important because it can lead shooters to take up rifle shooting seriously.

This article describes the teaching of rifle shooters so they may attain a high level of skill and become leading shooters.

**Discussion**

It is clear that there exists a situation where the teaching of the vast majority of medium-skilled shooters has been inadequate. New shooters in particular, are not adequately assisted to acquire even the most basic skills, causing many to encounter technique difficulties for which no solution appears to be available. The writer and colleagues are presently occupied in teaching the skills which medium-level shooters will need if they are to attain a high-level of performance.

From the 1950s to the 1990s academic research indicated the need for a systematic approach when teaching educational subjects to school students. As a result of the writer putting this approach into practice, teaching both education students and learners in rifle shooting, it was concluded that learning may occur more successfully than was being experienced by the vast majority, whether school student or rifle shooter. The key finding of the decades of research was that self-esteem needed to be enhanced in a learner. Yet, throughout this time, hundreds of thousands of mediocre school teachers (in the UK, China, Australia, the USA and other countries), were being supported by their unions to reject such an approach to learning, primarily because of the amount of work required. Such teachers like to keep their teaching work at school and within school hours. This has for the past century led 90 percent of school students to wrongly believe that university study and a professional career are not for them. The impact this has had upon national economics and standards of living has been astronomical. Likewise, indigenous students have made little progress through such teaching. It has been confirmed from the writer’s success in teaching physics to 450 pre-university students (at the rate of 90 students per year) and to hundreds of learners of rifle shooting, that teaching can be highly successful when self-esteem is enhanced, i.e. simultaneously while mastering educational subjects and the techniques of shooting.

This approach involving the simultaneous enhancement of learners’ self-esteem is practised in other sporting activities, e.g. tennis, golf, athletics and gymnastics. Rifle shooters also have been taught in this way, gaining the ability to compete at high-level as a result of their enhanced self-esteem. A shooter may in this approach also be taught the skills of a successful teams’ match shooter. The key description of this state of the art approach to teaching, through enhancing self-esteem, may be read from a search in Google for: Dr John V Shindler (Department of Curriculum and Instruction, California State University at Los Angeles), Creating a Psychology of Success in the Classroom: Enhancing Academic Achievement by Systematically Promoting Student Self-Esteem.

**Practice**

Since 2015, rifle clubs located far from major capital cities have been teaching members to master techniques of rifle shooting.

Their approach to teaching has been as described by a world educational authority, Dr John V. Shindler. The writer demonstrated the success of these techniques from 2006 to 2010, while teaching physics to Chinese students, enabling them to sit for Australian Year 12 examinations under the supervision of the Australian Consul-General in Shanghai. Each year at Changzhou in Jiangsu Province, 60 to 80 percent of 90 students obtained an ATAR score of 90 or more. Schools in Sydney would be very pleased to achieve these ATAR results. Note that the students who studied and sat for their examinations in physics (also chemistry, mathematics and English), were no further advanced in this language than Australian students who study French from years 7 to 10. If NSW students were required to study for their HSC in Mandarin, there would be a mutiny!

Rifle shooters taught using these principles attended their rifle range (in NT, Qld, NSW, WA) each weekend to shoot two ranges. The group from each shoot was available from a Kongsberg or Hexa electronic record, which enabled the writer to immediately recognise a technique difficulty being experienced. As a result, each shooter received a few lines of suggestions on how to cure each difficulty, mainly through the correct performance of the technique. This process enabled each shooter to build self-esteem, i.e. in the same way as classroom students studying a subject at school. As a result, some of these rifle shooters were able within a few months to produce a group of 1 MOA (TR) and 0.5 MOA (F Class) from 300m to 800m (at some rifle ranges, 900m and 1000m). Having been taught in this way none of the shooters are presently considering giving the game away.

**Conclusion**

It is concluded that the type of people who most successfully learn about rifle shooting and rise to become leading shooters, are those who have been taught using a teaching approach which enhances the self-esteem of each shooter. This is a prerequisite for becoming a leading shooter or a successful first-year university student.

Best regards

Geoff