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Three Areas of Taekwon-do Identification and Practice

Ido Movement for Culture : journal of martial arts anthropology : theory of culture, psychophysical culture, cultural tourism, anthropology of martial arts, combat sports 14/3, 22-26

2014

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

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Submission: 27.02.2014; acceptance: 23.05.2014

Key words: taekwon-do, martial arts identification, budō practice

Abstract:

At present the traditional taekwon-do is reported to have three areas of practice including self-defence, health and sport and also education. The pragmatic training model, including sports competition among others, provides a necessary motivating element to put in more physical effort. Sports competition requires more intensive training and more engagement. It makes it possible to verify athletes' skills and abilities and also makes them respond to new more and more serious challenges. Next, the educational training model reinforces the mental and philosophical factor and significantly modifies the adolescent inadequacy displayed in juvenile delinquency. Whereas, the utilitarian training model is applied in order to enhance self-defence skills. It is mostly developed in the police and armed forces, including their special units. An ideal, thus most desired training model should comprise all those factors as a disturbance in the balance between them on a long-term basis might result in pathology. This means that taekwon-do might then lose its self-defence features and become a school for breeding aggressiveness or might open to certain movement forms, thus upsetting the general combat rule involving direct contact between opponents.

Introduction

The traditional *taekwon-do* (International Taekwon-do Federation) is defined as an art of disciplining one's mind through disciplining one's body [Choi 1995]. Choi Hong Hi, a Korean army general, developed an exercise system aiming at preparing soldiers for unarmed combat. In 1955 he proposed to call his system by the name of taekwon-do. And although the utilitarian factor was at the time of crucial importance, adding the word “do” (way, philosophy of life) to the name of the martial art being developed emphasized the special significance that was supposed to be considered in relation to ethics and educating taekwon-do practitioners.

At present three areas of its practice can be differentiated within *taekwon-do*. It is practised for self-defence, health and educational purposes. These areas are in concordance with the factors determining martial arts identity as set out in Kalina [2000].

Sports competition in taekwon-do comprises four competition events [Wąsik 2012]: formal patterns, sports combat competition, power tests and special techniques. Sports combat competition makes it possible to develop utilitarian and educational (following the competition rules)

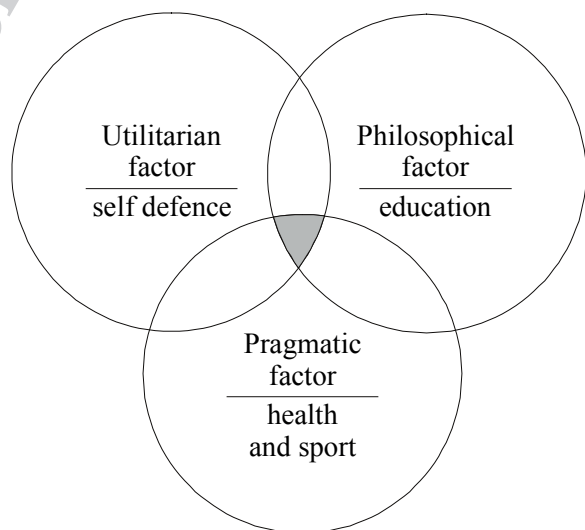


Fig. 1. Three areas of taekwon-do identification and practice

aspects of *taekwon-do*. Practising the formal patterns allows us to keep our bodies fit, which also aids spiritual development. Power tests and special techniques aid the utilitarian training and they can serve as a kind of measure of our health, fitness and agility. Within all these three areas of *taekwon-do* practice it is specific aspects of movement limited in the established set of strikes and blocks which

are a means of achieving the ultimate aim.

1. Pragmatic training model

Pragmatic training model (i.e. logical connections model) comprises exercise under the notion of “I train because I want to be fit”. In other words this particular model follows the mission of physical education whose aim in its broad sense is a need for cyclical physical activity. Such an activity stimulates all dimensions of health including somatic, psychological and social dimensions [Kalina, Barczyński 2010]. In view of generation’s responsibility this model will continuously update the knowledge of the factors which might be hazardous to health and will find ways and methods of diagnosing, developing, maintaining and rehabilitating supported by regular physical and relaxation exercise and regular habits characteristic of people’s healthy lifestyle.

An element which stimulates people to put in more effort is definitely the element of sports competition [Kalina 2001]. It requires of us to exercise more intensively and to become more engaged. It enables us to verify athletes’ abilities and lets us meet more and more difficult challenges.

An element of special significance in terms of physical activity is an ability to prevent injuries. Pieter and Lufting [1994], Pieter *et al.* [1995], Beis *et al.* [2001], Philips *et al.* [2001] showed interest in mechanisms causing injuries in taekwon-do fighting. It was established that women are more prone to injuries than men and the most frequent injuries involve lower limb, head and neck contusions resulting from having been hit.

Contemporary studies research the issue of martial arts not only in terms of self-defence, sport or spare-time activity, but also in terms of therapy [Tarabanov 2011]. It is assumed that therapy involving traditional martial arts may aid treatment of numerous medical conditions.

Martial arts may, for instance, prove helpful when monitoring behaviour of children with ADHD [Pelham *et al.* 2000; Kim 2005]. They provide less aggressive, controlled strategies and techniques than those offered by many contemporary sports disciplines [Nosanchuk, MacNeil 1989; Kim 2005]. In the traditional martial arts there is more emphasis on developing self-discipline, self-control, mental endurance and sharpness of the mind as well as relaxation and balance between the body and the mind [Columbus, Rice 1998; Kim 1990, 2005]. Here, training focuses on both physical and mental energy management. Seitz, Olson, Locke and Quam [1990] concluded that practising traditional martial arts

aids mental health. Park [1995] empirically verified how mental health was affected by *taekwon-do* training and how the training helped overcome stress.

Apart from all the abovementioned benefits of the traditional martial arts training, its psychological benefits still need to be properly emphasized as well. Twemlow *et al.* [1996] declared that a number of the traditional martial arts practitioners treat training as a means of developing self-confidence and competences related to self-discipline. Richman and Rehberg [1986] stated that self-esteem and self-evaluation of one’s competences is directly related to the time spent on training. Kim [2005] proved that acquiring new physical skills is accompanied by an increased feeling of well-being and welfare across the world. Interestingly, an increase in self-esteem and own evaluation of one’s competences are not accompanied by conceit and boosted ‘ego’ [King, Williams 1997]. As it can be assumed on the basis of many sources [Kim 1990; Konzak, Boudreau 1984; Weiser *et al.* 1995], Practising traditional martial arts is a valuable *psychological therapeutic method*. *This process is quite autonomous and makes it possible to promote one’s well-being, control aggressiveness and help with identifying problems and their resolution.*

As for health-related issues in taekwon-do training, it needs to be emphasised that it is always the human being that is always protected. Strikes do not necessarily need to be aimed at a man, but can be, for example, directed at stationary objects, which allows for improving one’s techniques in a given martial art (which actually is contradictory to the general fighting rules). In such case an individual measure of one’s health might involve the number of broken boards or the value obtained from the height of a broken board.

2. Educational training model

Educational training model reinforces the mental and philosophical factor. It identifies so called confrontation philosophy [Kalina 2000], in which fighting is an unfathomable phenomenon of the man and the natural world as well as one’s attitude to life and a reference for artistic inspirations. Combat sports belong to the domain of physical culture, yet they still follow their own philosophy. They are mainly aimed at young people as they influence their imagination and reinforce their learning potential. Young people who have acquired the technical skills of using martial arts but lack proper ethical as well as social and moral values pose a serious danger to the society. [Szyszko-Bohusz 2011]. Sports competition works here as a way of

taming aggressiveness. Practising strikes during training sessions is a means of developing self-discipline which requires practitioners to respect the etiquette of the training hall, rules of respectful fighting and the rival himself. Moreover, it makes it possible to recognize strong and weak points of one's character and personality such as bravery against cowardice, prowess against aggressiveness, pride versus vanity, etc. [Kalina 2000]. The best example of taekwon-do educational influence is the experiment carried out by Trulson [1986]. He showed that the traditional martial art training significantly reduces juvenile delinquency attitude. He contended that as a result of following such a training model the practitioners, in terms of statistics, displayed reduced aggressiveness and anxiety levels while at the same time they showed more self-confidence, responsibility, tolerance and proved to respect traditional values to a greater extent.

According to Weiser *et al.* [1995] the traditional martial arts are mainly perceived as self-defence and strategy techniques and techniques for developing competences combined with self-discipline, rather than a method of aggression. Kalina and Supiński [1993] studied using unarmed combat exercises for reducing aggressiveness. Kalina [1996] suggested combat-like physical games as a tool for diagnosing aggressiveness. The issue of application of martial arts in physical education and moral education is found in the papers written by Jaskólski [1983, 1987].

In no way can educational training model be followed without the right role of the instructor [Twemlow, Sacco 1998]. A competent instructor understands that training involves more than just physical activity and realizes the importance of including the philosophy underlying each martial art both in his teaching and in practice alike [Kim 2005]. He knows that the physical and mental balance is the ultimate product of positive training.

3. Utilitarian training model

Utilitarian training model is used for enhancing self-defence skills. It is mainly developed in the army, police and special units. All combat sports are identified by way of applying to them the general rule under which in each combat sport two competing sports persons fight directly with each other [Kalina 2000]. Under this model one strives for perfection in terms of defeating the opponent by way of using available techniques. The level of self-defence skills and their connection with prowess and self-defence techniques acquired studied by

Kalina [1997] seem to be the foundation of such a training process.

Jigoro Kano, the founder of judo, reached an interesting conclusion [Watanabe, Avakin 2001], which is called the Kano paradox. In 1886 a competition between judo and jujitsu practitioners was organized. In the competition the judo practitioners won 14 fights and they drew in 2. It turned out that less offensive techniques which were actually much better practised during training were far more efficient and effective in a real fight than those more offensive (potentially more dangerous) ones. This means that those offensive, thus more dangerous, techniques pose a certain threat to those practising a given martial art and as a result they need to be practised in ways which are far less close to real hand-to-hand fighting conditions (e.g. feigning strikes or performing techniques with limited force or speed). Hence, perfecting more offensive techniques is more time-consuming and produces poorer results than a similar training process focused on less offensive techniques.

In the literature on the subject there are a number of studies devoted to martial arts. For instance, the self-defence training based on *taekwon-do* techniques is described by Choi [1983], Choi and Bryl [1990], Bryl [1991], Lee and Uyehara [1993], and Choi [1995]. The studies presented by Oyama [1973], Kondratowicz [1978], and Miłkowski [1983] present karate training and karate technique application. Ueshiba [1974], the founder of aikido, developed a system based on joint-manipulation, dodges and throws. Jigoro Kano [1994] describes safe techniques of defeating a rival using judo. Echanis [1994] and Dobrzyjałowski [2001] presented self-defence techniques based on a combination of techniques used in different martial arts.

Conclusions

At present *taekwon-do* practitioners develop those models in various directions. In my view the best *taekwon-do* training model should comprise all the factors presented in Fig. 1 and should produce a model constituting the common part in the aforementioned figure. Disturbing the balance between those factors on a long-term basis could result in some kind of pathology. This means that *taekwon-do* might then lose its self-defence character and become a school for breeding aggressiveness or it might open to certain movement forms, thus upsetting the general combat rule involving direct contact between opponents.

My study only attempts to show possible directions in which taekwon-do might evolve and addresses only a part of the whole issue. My considerations presented herein do not constitute a comprehensive study, but they are supposed to help indicate a way for further research. I do hope that coaches with the right competence and practitioners with an enhanced awareness find them truly useful in the process of self-improvement.

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Trzy obszary identyfikacji i praktyki taekwon-do

Słowa kluczowe: taekwon-do, identyfikacja sztuk walki, praktyka *budō*

Streszczenie

Obecnie w tradycyjnej odmianie *taekwon-do* można zaobserwować trzy obszary praktyki, w których jest uprawiane tj. dla samoobrony, zdrowia i sportu, wychowania. Model treningu pragmatycznego, między innymi rywalizacja sportowa, jest elementem motywującym ludzi do większego wysiłku fizycznego. Sprawia ona, że ćwiczymy intensywniej i z większym zaangażowaniem. Pozwala zweryfikować możliwości zawodników i sprawia, że podejmujemy kolejne, coraz trudniejsze wyzwania. Model treningu wychowawczego wzmacnia czynnik filozoficzno-mentalny. Istotnie modyfikuje syndrom „młodzieńczego nieprzystosowania”. Model treningu utylitarne stosowany jest w celu podnoszenia umiejętności samoobrony. Jest on rozwijany zwłaszcza w wojsku, policji, jednostkach specjalnych. Pożądanym modelem treningu *taekwon-do* byłoby połączenie tych wszystkich czynników. Zachwianie równowagi między tymi czynnikami przez dłuższy czas może doprowadzić do patologii. Oznacza to, że *taekwon-do* może zatracić charakter samoobrony i stać się szkołą agresji, albo otworzy się na wyrazowe formy ruchu, wypaczając tym samym ogólną regułę walki polegającą na bezpośrednim starciu.