

## PEDAGOGY

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# Enhancing Taekwondo Pedagogy through Multiple Intelligence Theory

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### Abstract

Background. Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory (MI) is one of the leading psychological theories taught in teacher training, yet little research has explored how it can be applied to martial arts. Public school teachers of all subjects, including Physical Education, have successfully incorporated MI into their classrooms, so there can be little doubt as to its potential for success in Taekwondo.

Problem. Successful learning of Taekwondo is not only be measured in how quickly and well students acquire the art's skills but in their ability to adhere to the art's philosophies as well. To ensure Taekwondo practice is more than just beneficial to one's physical health, instructors should make their lessons applicable to students' daily lives.

Methods. This paper examines how MI can be applied to Taekwondo's philosophy of self-cultivation. Three sample plans are provided to illustrate how instructors can teach Taekwondo physical skills and philosophy simultaneously.

Results. All teachers can maximize their students' acquisition of knowledge or skills by incorporating MI into their lesson plans. MI is an effective means for teaching Taekwondo and its philosophy of self-cultivation, because it can aid in creating dynamic and personalized learning experiences. The results of this study indicate MI can facilitate the instruction of Taekwondo philosophy.

Conclusions. Taekwondo instructors can become more effective in disseminating their art's self-cultivation philosophy by identifying students' specific intelligences to provide personal guidance. Instructors need to communicate in a way that best benefits the learner. It is evident that failing to focus on the self-cultivation ideologies of Taekwondo philosophy could lead students to believe that the art was solely for destructive purposes. Instructors only need to give students a quick incentive to explore Taekwondo's self-cultivation philosophy for themselves.

### Introduction

The diversity of learners' knowledge, skills, and learning aptitudes is a difficult obstacle for any educator to overcome. Despite the fact that the physical skills of martial arts have been taught successfully across the globe, most instructors receive little to no actual pedagogical training, which is especially true with Taekwondo [Czarnecka 2001; Johnson 2014], a Korean martial art and Olympic combat sport. This fact implies that thousands of martial art instructors lack basic pedagogical training while they teach millions of students across the globe. Instructors have the additional pressure of knowing that their ability to teach influences the vitality of their businesses, which means their very livelihood depends on their ability to

teach [Johnson 2014]. In other words, knowing how to teach Taekwondo is as essential as knowing the art itself. As martial art instruction also has the ability to transform lives [Draeger 2007: 20; Mann 2012: 84-85; Herrigel 1953: 6], it is imperative for instructors to be educated in the pedagogical skills needed to facilitate this goal.

A fundamental aspect of martial arts education that attracts students to practice is their philosophies [Donohue 2012: 2], through which students hope to acquire more than fighting skills [Choi 1985: 8, 12, 26-27]. The pursuit of martial arts and their various philosophies is a complex endeavour [Choi 1985: 2]. That does not mean the arts and their philosophies have gone undefined. Many martial arts have established “ideological charter(s)” [Donohue 2005: 11] in which guiding phil-

osophical principles are used to define practice and life outside of the training hall. For instance, Taekwondo's philosophy begins with five tenets: courtesy, integrity, perseverance, self-control, and indomitable spirit [Choi 1985: 15; Rhee 2012: 118]. Moreover, research is now revealing a link between the practice of martial arts and their philosophies [Dziwenka 2014].

Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory (MI) has been adapted for sport education purposes [Martin, Morris 2013] as well as academic studies [Mettetal *et al.* 1997]. MI is an ideal framework for teaching Taekwondo's philosophy (intellectual knowledge), which is typically derived from physical training (skill acquisition) [Mayen *et al.* 2015]. Thus, this paper illustrates how MI can be used to teach self-cultivation, an essential component of Taekwondo philosophy. Taekwondo is used as an example martial art, because of its popularity [Kazemi *et al.* 2014] and devotion to self-cultivation [Kim *et al.* 2004]. Three sample lesson plans are presented to illustrate how an MI context can facilitate self-cultivation in a Taekwondo context.

### The Martial Arts Philosophy of Self-Cultivation

Similar to Dziwenka [2014] and Mayen *et al.* [2015], Donohue claims that martial arts instruction should surpass mere pugilistic skills and provide methods for improving students' lives. He states:

Describing a martial art as a martial way implies an extension of principles learned in training into areas we would not normally expect. What this means is that the principles that create such clarity in training are somehow transferred as aids to everyday living.... [Donohue 1998: 13]

Most founders of the Asian martial arts felt this to be true, and possibly no one more so than Dr. Jigoro Kano [Kano 1989: 206], the founder of Judo as well as a trained and highly qualified educator. Masters of Taekwondo have also long stated that its practice develops the whole. General Hong-Hi Choi stated, "moral culture is uniquely tied in with Taekwon-Do, not only for the eventual attainment of the highest goals in Taekwon-Do and the promotion of power, technique, and self-confidence, but also for the cultivation of character" [Choi 1985: 61]. As a result, students should extrapolate Taekwondo's martial knowledge, or knowledge of martial art skills [Mayen *et al.* 2015], and apply it to their daily lives.

Mayen *et al.* claim Taekwondo practitioners develop "deeper insights into the purpose of a technique as well as acquire a deeper level of self-knowledge" through training and self-reflection [Mayen *et al.* 2015]. Instructors can thus encourage self-reflection after training in order for personal philosophies to emerge [Mayen *et al.* 2015]. The subjectivity of this type of education may indicate

why philosophic martial art literature is often esoteric [Webster-Doyle 2003]. This needs not be, however, since most arts have clear ideological mandates, such as Taekwondo's aforementioned tenets.

Despite possessing differing doctrines, most martial arts share the educational objectives of self-cultivation and self-reflection through training. For instance, Issai Chozan (1659-1741), the author of the highly influential fable entitled *Neko no Myojutsu (The Mysterious Skills of the Old Cat)*, wrote:

You have to consider things yourselves. This is the way things are passed down from the masters: they can teach theory only. You are the ones who have to get the truth from it.... This is not a rejection of teaching: there are just some things a teacher cannot teach.... You must educate yourself. Teaching is just pointing out what you cannot see without help. [Chozan 2010: 23-24]

Similarly, effective classroom teachers do not simply provide information; they help students find, explore, understand, and internalize it. Knowledge of pedagogical practices and theories such as MI could facilitate Taekwondo instructors' abilities to teach [Czarnecka 2001] and provide opportunities for students to derive personal philosophies from training.

### Integrated Learning and Taekwondo Pedagogy

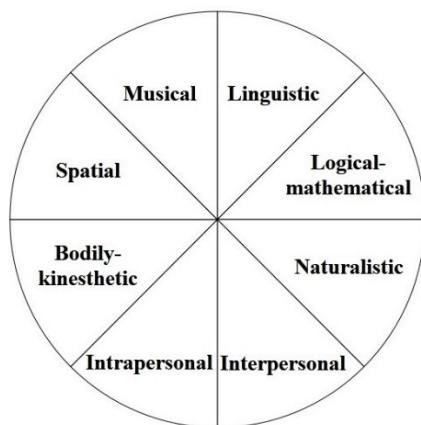
Modern education practices encourage classroom teachers to instruct in a manner beneficial to each student. This is called *integrated learning*, and its primary purpose is to make the subject matter "meaningful and practical" [Silver *et al.* 2000: 7], which are arguably the same goals as Taekwondo education. Martial art students enter schools for a myriad of reasons [Donohue 2005: 16], but they all expect to acquire something from their practice. Many martial artists are interested in the philosophical aspects of the art, and Taekwondo practitioners are no exception. Nonetheless, as in the above quote from Choi, martial artists are increasingly expected to implement the physical lessons learned from and during training into their daily lives. When students incorporate their physical training this way, Taekwondo becomes more than a physical activity: it is a means of self-improvement [Mayen *et al.* 2015].

Martial art curricula must be created to meet the unique needs of students' individual stages of mental and physical development [Pieter 2012: 33]. By understanding individual students' needs and expectations from a class as well as what motivates them for being there, instructors can alter their instruction methods to maximize a lesson's effectiveness. Taekwondo education is, in essence, skill development. Taekwondo as a martial art focuses on developing students' physical and mental abilities [Johnson, Ha 2015]. To ensure Taekwondo practice is more than just beneficial to one's physical

health (i.e., the aforesaid “meaningful and practical” [Silver *et al.* 2000: 7]), instructors should make their lessons holistically applicable to students. This would also be in line with the art’s philosophy. The current study shows how incorporating MI can facilitate the learning outcome of self-cultivation found in Taekwondo practice and philosophy.

### Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences Theory

Gardner defines intelligence as “the ability to solve problems or fashion products that are of consequence in a particular cultural setting or community” [Gardner 1993: 6]. His theory states intelligence “is made up of distinct learning proficiencies that can work individually or together” [Willis 2007: 53] and that people learn in numerous ways [Guignon 2010: 53]. As depicted in Figure 1, the first identified intelligences were: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and musical. However, naturalistic intelligence was later named [Checkley 1997]. Each person possesses these intelligences, which should be thought of as interconnected, rather than independent, thought processes [Gardner 1983: 11].



**Figure 1.** The eight intelligences thus far identified by Gardner.

Gardner introduced MI in 1983 [Gouws 2008], and parents and educators have since embraced the concept [Odeleye 2010]. Research has shown MI can be used to teach physical education not only in general, but specifically to ice skating [Zu, Wu 2009], tennis [Mitchell, Kernodle 2004], and martial arts [Berthoud 2003] as well. It is therefore no surprise that MI is one of the most influential education concepts used in classrooms today. In fact, some American schools have restructured their curricula according to MI [Mettetal *et al.* 1997].

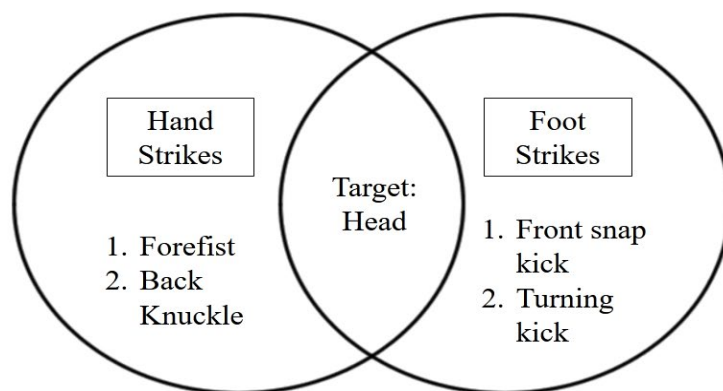
MI explains how individuals are capable of solving problems in more ways than just linguistically and mathematically, the skills that traditional IQ examinations assess [Gouws 2008; Hoekstra-de Roos 2011]. Because it does not assume all people learn in the same man-

ner, MI provides a means for framing education “in a way that complies with (learners’) particular strengths” [Gouws 2008]. For example, no one would insinuate that a talented artist is dimwitted simply due to his or her inability to perform higher mathematics. We also often describe displays of amazing athletic skills made by professional athletes as *brilliant*. MI hence explains what teachers have long suspected: not all students learn in the same way [Visser *et al.* 2006], and a vast variety of skills and talents are useful.

Classroom teachers have found they can tailor lesson plans to students’ individualities with an understanding of MI in order to increase the effectiveness of a lesson [Díaz-Lefebvre 2004]. Gouws states that “by implementing the theory of multiple intelligences...in the classroom, educators will be able to change their teaching and learning strategies and cater for the individual differences of learners” [Gouws 2008]. Complicating matters is the fact that students may respond to one type of instruction one day and a completely different methodology later [Manzo *et al.* 2009: 44]. Using MI, educators can provide instruction to a diverse group of students in a way that suits their learning needs as well as the instructor’s teaching style and educational goals [Ozdemir *et al.* 2006]. Since classroom teachers have maximized their students’ acquisition of knowledge or skills by incorporating MI into their lesson planning, MI should permit Taekwondo instructors to do the same.

Intellectual learning and the acquisition of perceptual-motor skills are linked [Rosenbaum *et al.* 2001], which may account for how MI can facilitate skill acquisition [Ericsson, Charness 1994]. Yet, only one study has shown MI’s usefulness in instructing the physical skills of Taekwondo [Yang 2011]. MI has also been employed as a framework for a Taekwondo program designed to develop organizational development [Berthoud 2003]. Overchuk additionally used MI to create a self-defense course for aviators. It was felt MI was best for this select group because of the students’ unique learning culture and since it could harness their “strong-points such as mental imagery” [Overchuk 2009]. Previous research therefore has established precedence that MI can be used in the acquisition of physical skills such as those found in Taekwondo.

Since Taekwondo has multiple levels of learning that surpass its physical skills [Johnson 2016] and little to no actual instructor training occurs, it is only right to borrow proven pedagogical practices to enhance the art’s instruction. Yet, no researcher has shown how to teach Taekwondo philosophy other than by stating it is acquired through decades of training and self-reflection [Takuan 1987: 88] and incorporating the maieutic method [Mayen *et al.* 2015]. We reject the former idea, because clearly martial arts like Taekwondo can have more immediate and positive effects on students’ lives [Taekwondo Promotion Foundation 2007]. Moreover,



**Figure 2.** Venn diagram used to teach Taekwondo fundamental techniques and target locations.

the idea of leaving students to learn by their own devices is ineffective teaching exemplified.

MI can facilitate the acquisition of Taekwondo philosophy by incorporating and adapting Mayen et al.'s two-step maieutic questioning process [Mayen *et al.* 2015]. In that process, instructors first teach a physical aspect of Taekwondo, then prompt students to reflect on how that lesson can be applied to their daily lives. Most importantly, incorporating MI can elevate Taekwondo instructors' methodologies to the same level as classroom teachers, which should be a goal for all martial art instructors [Johnson 2014]. This paper proposes then to teach Taekwondo's physical skills, and then to use the same lesson structure to guide students toward self-knowledge within an MI framework.

### Utilizing MI in Taekwondo Philosophical Instruction

#### *Taekwondo philosophy and spatial intelligence*

Gardner has defined spatial intelligence as "the ability to represent the spatial world internally in your mind—the way a sailor or airplane pilot navigates the large spatial world, or the way a chess player or sculptor represents a more circumscribed spatial world" [Checkley 1997]. The use of spatial intelligence "involves a high capacity for perceiving, creating, and re-creating pictures and images" [Silver *et al.* 2000: 8]. People high in this intelligence tend to be "photographers, artists, engineers, architects, and sculptors" [Czarnecka 2001]. Thus, artists and scientists equally use this intelligence [Checkley 1997].

A Venn diagram, the ubiquitous graphic organizer utilized in classrooms worldwide, can be integrated into a Taekwondo lesson to reinforce the art's physical training and subsequently to provide an opportunity for self-reflection. For instance, an instructor can provide students with pieces of paper with Venn diagrams on them. Then, the instructor can ask the students to write the name of a target in the overlapping section, such as *The Chest* or

*The Head*. Students should then be instructed to list as many hand and foot techniques as possible that can be used to strike that particular target as shown in Figure 2. Once students can represent the relationship between the attacking tool and the target graphically, the idea becomes corporal. The Venn diagram therefore causes theoretical knowledge to become visual and ascertainable to students with high spatial intelligence.

Later, the instructor can ask students to find a problem in their daily lives. For example, instructors can provide another Venn diagram and ask students to state a personal responsibility, such as completing homework assignments. Then, students should write the problem in the center. They should then consider two alternatives to completing the task. If it was *Homework*, they can label each circle as *With/Without a Partner*, *Studying at Home/Coffee Shop*, or *Writing by Hand/Typing on the Computer*. Finally, they can list what they believe to be the positive and/or negative aspects of completing the task in the larger circles.

Although this technique is not much more than a brainstorming alternative, it provides students with an impetus to consider their Taekwondo training metaphorically and to organize their thoughts visually. In short, the Taekwondo lesson provides a template for thinking and acting critically. Students can also perceive and reproduce their thoughts spatially, a helpful ability for individuals with high spatial intelligence. When students understand there is more than one way to accomplish a task, just as there is more than one way to strike the head, they can be encouraged and empowered to incorporate Taekwondo into their daily lives.

#### *Taekwondo philosophy and bodily-kinesthetic intelligence*

Gardner says bodily-kinesthetic intelligence is "the capacity to use your whole body or parts of your body—your hand, your fingers, your arms—to solve a problem, make something, or put on some kind of a production" [Checkley 1997]. This type of intelligence "is related to

the physical self and the manipulation of one's body," and individuals high in this intelligence "enjoy physical challenges and pursuits" and "learn best by doing, moving, and acting things out" [Silver *et al.* 2000: 8]. Many individuals with this type of intelligence gravitate toward physical activities, because they are comfortable expressing themselves through their bodies. Instructors can easily teach the Taekwondo's philosophy to these individuals, since they are already comfortable learning through their bodies.

For instance, instructors can emphasize the need to develop the Taekwondo tenet of *indomitable spirit* during a sparring session. By not giving students a break during an intense sparring session, instructors push them toward near-exhaustion. The instructor can afterwards give a short lecture on how each student just demonstrated *indomitable spirit*. The near instantaneous analysis of the sparring session would occur while students were still feeling some of the physical stress placed on their bodies. The point of the lecture is therefore not to describe what happened, but to allow students to feel in their bodies the esoteric concept of *indomitable spirit* immediately after demonstrating it.

Instructors should then state that students just proved they have already embodied that tenet, so they now have the ability to overcome other, less dangerous challenges in their daily lives. Young students may internalize that lesson as a way to overcome peer pressures or bullying, while older students may see it as a lesson of self-discovery and new-found inner strength. In either case, Taekwondo training has strengthened the students' characters in a way that improves their lives outside of the Taekwondo school.

#### *Taekwondo philosophy and intrapersonal intelligence*

Gardner states that intrapersonal intelligence "refers to having an understanding of yourself, of knowing who you are, what you can do, what you want to do, how you react to things, which things to avoid, and which things to gravitate toward" [Checkley 1997]. Individuals high in this intelligence have a well-developed sense of self-knowledge, since they have identified what they can or cannot do [Davis 2003]. They also have "the ability to gain access to (their) own feelings and emotional states" as well as a talent for believing "their self-understanding (will) guide them" [Silver *et al.* 2000: 8].

Because Taekwondo training is a very personal journey [Dziwenka 2014], students with intrapersonal intelligence should be able to incorporate the art's philosophy into their lives easily. One historical method to transmit martial art culture and knowledge is storytelling [Chu 2003: 33]. Instructors can tell stories before, during, or after class; at dinners; traveling to tournaments; or any other opportune time. Upon hearing these stories, students will most likely empathize with the story and find parallels to their own lives. They should understand their

instructors' personal stories of how Taekwondo improved their lives beyond physical fitness almost immediately, and as such they can be encouraged to find their own meanings from their personal Taekwondo experiences [Martin, Morris 2013].

If instructors only relate tales of their accomplishments or aggrandize themselves in some way through accounts of their exploits, the Taekwondo philosophical concept of self-cultivation cannot occur. Instead, students shall only see the tales as egotistical displays of physical power or self-hype. Consequently, instructors must culminate a story with a statement of how their training allowed them to grow outside of the training hall in order for it to be "meaningful and practical" [Silver *et al.* 2000: 7]. Once students hear how instructors have used training to improve their lives, instructors have successfully modeled expected Taekwondo behavior. Only then will students be more likely to emulate that behavior.

## Conclusions

To be more effective in disseminating their art's philosophy of self-cultivation and provide personal guidance to students, instructors can incorporate MI into their lesson planning. MI helps Taekwondo instructors identify students' individual "learning styles and how to make the most of them" [Kesting 2012]. Learning styles should not be confused with MI: "multiple intelligences (is) a model concerned primarily with the content or the 'what' of learning, (while learning) styles focus on the 'how' of learning" [Silver *et al.* 2000: 24]. Thus, MI is not only an effective means for teaching, but instructors can diversify their teaching practices to create a dynamic learning atmosphere beneficial to all students. It must be noted that feedback is imperative to this process [Debowski *et al.* 2001]. Students need to know from an experienced instructor whether or not they are using Taekwondo properly and effectively.

Incorporating MI into Taekwondo lesson planning allows instructors to diversify their teaching practices. The lessons herein cannot be categorized as traditional martial arts training. They are, however, supplemental to traditional training programs and as such are not intended to replace instructors' preferred training methods. Lessons based on MI are therefore adaptable to any martial art style, instructor, or training regimen. Instructors must remember that the implementation of MI into their lesson plans is dependent on the school's learning objectives [Johnson, Ha 2015]. Attention in particular to the differences in practice for Taekwondo as a martial art and sport should be at the forefront of instructors' minds. Nevertheless, martial art instruction based on MI can create dynamic and personalized learning experiences, qualities which will most likely add to the enjoyment of training as well as make it meaningful.

It is believed this is the first paper to apply MI to Taekwondo philosophy. As MI has contributed significantly to the fields of Psychology and Pedagogy, its absence in Taekwondo pedagogical practices could be stagnating students' progression in the art and life. Nevertheless, it is evident that failing to focus on the self-cultivation ideologies of Taekwondo philosophy could lead students to believe that the art was solely for destructive purposes.

#### Limitations

This study lacks quantitative data to support its suppositions. Therefore, future studies should concentrate on implementing MI-based lesson plans into Taekwondo instruction and determine the effects of their use. As the concept of self-cultivation is highly subjective and the fact that there are other aspects of Taekwondo philosophy, researchers must define what aspect of its philosophy students should acquire. Furthermore, the lessons above may appear to provide learners with too much control over their Taekwondo education. Nevertheless, self-guided learning is effective with proper goal setting [Brydger *et al.* 2009] and feedback from instructors. More importantly, the lessons presented here facilitate Taekwondo philosophy while encouraging students to improve their lives. And if Taekwondo practice does anything, it should empower practitioners to be more than what they are.

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## Poprawa jakości nauczania taekwondo dzięki Teorii Wielorakich Inteligencji

**Słowa kluczowe:** inteligencje wielorakie, nauczanie zintegrowane, pedagogika taekwondo, samorealizacja

### Abstrakt

Tłó. Nauczyciele szkół publicznych wszystkich przedmiotów, w tym wychowania fizycznego, z powodzeniem włączyli Teorię Wielorakich Inteligencji (TWI) do swoich zajęć, więc nie może być wątpliwości co jej potencjalnego sukcesu w środowisku uczenia się sztuk walki. Nauka sztuk walki powinna przekraczać zwykłe umiejętności walki wręcz oraz dostarczyć sposobów poprawy jakości życia studentów. Pomimo posiadania odmiennych doktryn, większość sztuk walki ma wspólne cele edukacyjne dotyczące samorealizacji i autorefleksji poprzez szkolenia. Teoria Wielorakich Inteligencji Gardnera jest jedną z wiodących teorii psychologicznych stosowanych w kształceniu nauczycieli, a jednak niewiele badań zostało przeprowadzonych



w celu sprawdzenia, w jaki sposób może być ona stosowana do sztuki walki *taekwondo*.

**Problem.** Konieczne jest, aby instruktorzy taekwondo kształcili umiejętności pedagogiczne, gdyż nauka sztuk walki ma zdolność do przemiany życia. Mistrzowie taekwondo dawno stwierdzili, że praktyka sztuk walki rozwija charakter. W rezultacie uczniowie powinni sami osądzić jak wykorzystać umiejętności z taekwondo do stosowania w życiu codziennym tak, aby zmaksymalizować korzyści płynące z praktyki. Jednak pytanie, jak efektywnie uczyć filozofii taekwondo nadal pozostaje bez odpowiedzi.

**Metody.** Aby upewnić się, że ćwiczenie Taekwondo przynosi nie tylko korzyści dla zdrowia fizycznego uczniów, instruktorzy powinni pokazać jak umiejętności wyniesione ze sztuk walki mogą być zastosowane w codziennym życiu. Byłoby to również zgodne z filozofią sztuki. Teoretycznie, TWI powinna ułatwiać instruktaz w zróżnicowanej grupie uczniów taekwondo. Obecne badanie pokazuje, jak włączenie TWI może ułatwić osiągnięcie pożądaných rezultatów edukacyjnych przez samego adepta sztuk walki w praktyce i filozofii taekwondo. Niniejsza praca jest analizą holistycznego zastosowania Teorii Wielorakich Inteligencji w taekwondo.

**Wyniki.** Wszyscy nauczyciele mogą zmaksymalizować nabywanie przez uczniów wiedzy i umiejętności poprzez włączenie TWI do lekcji. Korzystanie z TWI jako podstawy do tworze-

nia lekcji ponadto pozwala instruktorom utrzymać swój styl nauczania i cele edukacyjne. Artykuł przedstawia trzy przykładowe plany lekcji w celu zilustrowania, jak instruktorzy skutecznie nauczają wszystkich aspektów taekwondo. Inteligencje: przestrzenna, cielesno-kinestetyczna i intrapersonalna służą do zilustrowania sposobu, w jakim TWI może ułatwić nauczanie taekwondo w odniesieniu do filozofii samodoskonalenia, jednego z najbardziej nieuchwytnych pojęć w sztuce walki.

**Wnioski.** Instruktorzy taekwondo mogą stać się bardziej skuteczni w rozpowszechnianiu własnej filozofii sztuki walki poprzez identyfikację konkretnych inteligencji uczniów oraz zapewnienie osobistych wskazówek. Instruktorzy muszą także komunikować się z uczniami w sposób dla nich najbardziej korzystny. Aby osiągnąć oba cele, mogą brać pod uwagę TWI w czasie planowania zajęć. Ponieważ TWI ma istotny wkład w psychologii i teorii pedagogiki, jej nieobecność w praktykach pedagogicznych taekwondo może prowadzić do zatrzymania postępu uczniów. Wydaje się oczywiste, że w przypadku braku skupienia się na ideologii samodoskonalenia w filozofii taekwondo, może to prowadzić uczniów do przekonania, że sztuka walki służy wyłącznie celom destrukcyjnym. Instruktorzy potrzebują jedynie dać studentom niewielką zachętę do poszukiwania własnej filozofii samodoskonalenia się związanej z taekwondo.