



THE ART OF LEADERSHIP

Anthony Mckenna VI Degree

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TAEKWON DO – THE ART OF LEADERSHIP

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Introduction and Summary

This thesis explores the models of leadership and examines the relationship between the style of leadership which General Choi envisaged for Grandmasters, Masters and Instructors and the “authentic” leadership model.

The authentic leadership model was born in America. It was developed as a result of public dissatisfaction and mistrust of business leaders and politicians following the financial collapse of large cooperatives such as Enron in the early 2000's. At that time, surveys showed that less than 18% of Americans trusted the ethics of business leaders and politicians. There was a view that leaders and politicians had charisma rather than character and had style rather than substance. This position was mirrored in many countries throughout the world.

My argument is that the style of leadership that General Choi demanded from Blackbelt instructors and masters was an example of authentic leadership before the concept was even thought of by academics and business leaders. I suggest that the values, ethics and philosophy behind taekwondo build authentic leaders and that the “do”, the way or road, leads to an authentic leadership style, and that General Choi used oriental philosophy as the building blocks of his leadership model, a model which was not directly articulated by General Choi in his work but which is intrinsically part of his lifelong work to promote Taekwon-do.

Leadership styles – a brief description

There are many different models of leadership, and this is a well-researched area, with over 80 years of academic and professional study.

One of the first attempts to define leadership was made by the psychologist Kurt Lewin in the 1930's. His work provides the building blocks for many of the styles developed subsequently. Lewin described three major styles.

1. Autocratic Leaders

Such leaders make decisions without consulting team members – even if their participation would help. This type of leadership is appropriate when you have to make decisions quickly, if there isn't time for team input, or if that input isn't necessary for a successful outcome. However, if this style is used continually it can be demoralising and lead to mistrust lack of support and even dislike. It is the type of leadership style used in 16th and 17th century monarchies, such as France ... before the revolution.

2. Democratic Leaders

These leaders make the final decision, but they include their team members in the process. They encourage creativity and team members are often highly engaged in projects and decisions. Consequently, team members tend to have high job satisfaction and high productivity.

3. Laissez – faire leaders

This model allows leaders to give their team members a lot of freedom in how they do their work and how they set their deadlines. They provide support but don't get directly involved. The high degree of autonomy can create job satisfaction, but this style can be ineffective if team members don't manage their time well or don't have the knowledge, skills or self-motivation to carry out their tasks.

Lewin's works has been developed and refined over the years, and there are more contemporary description of leadership models which were published in the 1970's and have been subsequently developed to make them relevant to the 21st century. It can be argued that each style can be used by the same leader in different circumstances; however, individual leaders do tend to have a predominance of one of the following styles.

STYLE

CHARACTERISTICS

Transformational leadership

- High emotional intelligence
- Strong integrity
- Good communications
- Share their vision
- Self-aware
- Humble
- Hold themselves accountable

Bureaucratic leadership

- Follow rules rigorously.
- Teams follow procedures precisely.
- A good style for work which includes serious safety risks.
- Good at managing routine tasks.
- Less effective in organisation that require creativity or innovation.

Servant leadership

- High integrity.
- Generous.
- They lead by simply meeting the needs of the team.

- Servant leaders gain power because of their values and ideals.
- Servant leaders can be left behind by others in competitive situations.
- A style that is not suited to making quick decisions or meeting tight deadlines.

Transactional leadership

- Team members agree to obey the leader when they take the job.
- The transaction normally means paying for effort and compliance.
- Leader can “punish” (by withdrawing reward) if work doesn’t meet required standard.
- People who are motivated by reward thrive.
- An Impersonal style of leadership.

Charismatic leadership

- Resembles transactional leadership.
- Inspires and motivates team members.
- Leaders who rely on charisma often focus on themselves and their own ambition.
- They feel invincible.
- Can believe that they can do no wrong.

The 2008 financial collapse was a result of too many charismatic and transactional leaders. In many countries, political corruption occurs as a result of too many charismatic politicians who claim to have integrity and morals, but do not in reality. A new form of leadership needed to be defined to describe how a leader can influence

followers' attitudes, behaviours and performance by remaining true to their own values and morals; values such as courtesy, integrity, self-control and indomitable spirit.

Authenticity has been defined by Greek philosophers as "know thyself" or "be true to thyself." Bruce Avolio defines authentic leaders as:

"Those individuals who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and other's values and moral perspective, knowledge and strengths. They are aware of the context in which they operate; and who are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient and high in moral character".

The term "authentic leadership" was first used by Bill George, Professor of Management Practice at Harvard University, in his book "Authentic Leadership. Rediscovering the secrets to create lasting value" (2004). This was at a time when huge corporate fraud created a backlash, prompting a strong wish for leaders of substance not of charisma. Authentic leaders know and live their values and win trust by being who they are and not pretending to be someone else or live up to other's expectations. This is about being straight and direct, being honest and truthful, and avoiding the use of "spin", PR terms or vague words and hollow promises.

Paying careful attention to your own character development, inner leadership or self-mastery is crucial to becoming an authentic leader. Bill George further refined this model in his book "True North: Discover your authentic leadership" (2010.), where he listed four key elements of authentic leadership.

- i) Being true to yourself in the way your work
- ii) Being motivated by a higher purpose (not by your ego)

- iii) Being prepared to make decisions that feel right, that fit your values and not decisions that are merely politically astute or designed to make you popular.
- iv) Concentrating on achieving long term sustainable results.

Authentic leaders stimulate trust in their followers. This is examined by General Choi in “Sajeji Do” – the student instructor relationship. Authentic leaders stimulate personal identification with their followers as an instructor does with their students by becoming a role model. Authentic leaders exert influence on their followers’ attitudes and behaviours, both inside and outside of work – as an instructor does with their students. The TKD Kids programme is an excellent example of this influence at a very simple level, where children are encouraged to display the discipline and courtesy required in the dojang in school and at home.

“Authentic” leaders have a close relationship with the theory of “Ethical Leadership”. And ethical leaders also have close relationship with oriental philosophies – particularly Buddhism. There are 5 key principles to Ethical leadership; interestingly there are five tenets of Taekwon-do, and Sun Tzu frequently has five rules or five values in his text also.

The key principles of Ethical leadership are as follows

Respect for Others

Ethical leaders treat others with dignity and respect. This means that they treat people as ends in themselves rather than as means to their own ends. This form of respect recognizes that followers have goals and ambitions and confirms followers as human beings who have worth and value to the organization. In addition, it leads to empathy, active listening, and tolerance for conflicting viewpoints.

Service to Others

Ethical leaders serve others. They behave in an altruistic fashion. These leaders put followers first—their prime reason for being is to support and nurture subordinates.

Service to others is exemplified through behaviours such as mentoring, building teams, and empowerment.

Justice for Others

Ethical leaders ensure that justice and fairness are central parts of their decision making. This means treating all subordinates in very similar ways, except when there is a very clear need for differential treatment and there is transparency about why this need exists. In addition to being transparent, the logic for differential treatment should be morally sound and reasonable.

Honesty toward Others

Ethical leadership requires honesty. Dishonesty destroys trust—a critical characteristic of any leader–follower relationship. On the other hand, honesty increases trust and builds the leader–follower relationship. Honesty means to be open with others by expressing our thinking and our reality as fully as we can. This means balancing openness with disclosing only what is appropriate in a given scenario.

The argument is that leaders need to ensure that what they believe, what they think, what they say, and what they do are internally consistent. This internal consistency, along with openness, will build trust among followers toward the leader.

Building Community with Others

Ethical leaders build community with others. This is crucial because leadership is about influencing others to achieve a communal goal – such as spreading Taekwon-do around the world as General Choi and the International Taekwon-do federation have done, or of spreading Taekwon-do in your own local community. This means that leaders develop organizational or team goals that are appropriate for the leader and his or her followers. These goals need to excite as many people as possible and ethical leaders achieve this by including the thoughts needs and aspirations of their followers in setting these goals – such as running well organised and fair world championships, or by helping spread Taekwon-do into impoverished African countries.

These principles are based on Western ethics of which there are three broad categories

- Virtues such as justice, charity and generosity benefit the person and the person's society. (Largely based on Aristotle's ideas.)
- Ethics are central to morality - a human duty - based on rational people's respect for other rational people. (Notably supported by Kant.)
- The guiding principle is based on conduct which produces the greatest happiness or benefit to the greatest number of people. (Referred to as utilitarianism - this might be also be considered 'the greater good' concept.)

General Choi frequently referred to the works of Confucius in his moral code book. Confucius (sometimes referred to as K'ung fu T'zu – note the use of “Kung Fu” and its relationship with martial arts and the “do” or “way”) developed his “Five Cardinal Virtues” over 2000 years ago. These virtues are the building blocks of oriental ethics, and married with the western ethics give us the perfect recipe for the complete authentic leader.

Ren

The virtue of benevolence, charity, and humanity;

Yi

The virtue of honesty and uprightness;

(Yi may be broken down into Zhong - doing one's best, conscientiousness, loyalty; and shù, reciprocity, altruism, consideration for others, and Confucius' early version of the Golden Rule, “what you don't want yourself, don't do to others.”)

Zhi

The virtue of knowledge;

Xin

The virtue of faithfulness and integrity

Li

The virtue of correct behaviour, or propriety, good manners, politeness, ceremony, worship

Again, note how there are five virtues and five tenets of Taekwon-do

To explore the leadership models in Taekwon do, we have to go back as far as 2500 years to understand how General Choi used eastern philosophy to build his leadership model for Taekwon-do instructors, Masters and Grandmasters. General Choi was a devotee of Sun T'zu, the Chinese General who wrote "The Art of War". This seminal textbook was used by Winston Churchill as he set out strategy for World War 2, and is a classic textbook for Chief Executive Officers, business leaders and politicians throughout the world. Winston Churchill, the great British Prime minister was a key figure in World War 2 as he helped lead the allied resistance to the Nazis and Japan. His core values were freedom, democracy and the rule of law.

Sun T'zu describes the characteristic of a general.

"It is the business of a general to be serene and inscrutable, impartial and self-controlled. If serene he is not vexed; if inscrutable, unfathomable; if upright, not improper; if self-controlled, not confused".

Sun T'zu goes on to list the qualities of a general, which are:

- Wisdom
- Sincerity
- Humanity
- Courage
- Strictness

Five qualities, five virtues of Confucianism, five tenets of Taekwon-do.

Sun T'zu's text examines these qualities in more detail. If wise, a commander is able to recognise changing circumstances and to act quickly. If sincere, his men will have no doubt of the certainty of rewards and punishments. If humane, he loves mankind, sympathises with others and appreciates their industry and toil. If courageous he gains victory by seizing opportunity. If strict his troops are disciplined.

Sun Tzu's description of an ideal commander is therefore directly relevant to the 21st century description of an authentic leader.

When developing the 24 patterns, General Choi chose inspirational characters from Korean history to name the patterns - characters who displayed the 5 tenets of Taekwon Do. The Hwarangdo were a clear example of this, and they lived by 5 rules which eventually became the rules of secular life in Korea in the 7th century. These rules were:

- Loyalty to one's Lord
- Love and respect our parents and teachers
- Trust among friends
- Never retreat in battle
- Never take a life without just cause

Five Rules of Hwarang do, Five virtues of Confucianism, Five qualities of a general, Five tenets of Taekwon do. I have attempted to find the philosophical significance of the number five on the Orient, but with no success. Perhaps Grandmaster Lan can help me!

Again, the similarity between these rules and the characteristics of an authentic leader are obvious, particularly developing trust amongst friends.

General Choi sets out the standards he expects from instructors – A dedicated and sincere instructor is an absolute necessity for any dojang, and the dojang cannot grow and mature without a body of equally dedicated and sincere students. The encyclopaedia of Taekwon Do states that:

- An instructor must always set a good example for his students and never attempt to defraud them.

- The development of students should take precedence over commercialism. Once an instructor becomes concerned with materialism, he will lose the respect of his students.
- It is the responsibility of the instructor to develop students outside of the dojang.
- An instructor should not exploit his students. The only purpose of an instructor is to produce both mentally and technically excellent students
- Always be honest with student and never break a trust.

General Choi goes on to describe the ideal instructor, emphasising that the spirit and the technique of Taekwon do must be taught together. The best instructors have strong moral and ethical standards, have a clear outlook and philosophy in life and have unshakable integrity in political and financial dealings. An ideal instructor gains confidence from his seniors, is trusted by his fellow instructors and is respected by his juniors.

It is quite simple to see a direct correlation between the qualities expected in leaders in Taekwon do – blackbelts, instructors, masters, senior masters and grandmasters, and the qualities in the authentic leadership model. The following table describes the relationship.

QUALITIES OF AN AUTHENTIC LEADER

- Aware of how they behave
- Have morals and principles
- Hopeful
- Optimistic
- Resilient
- Strong character
- Trustworthy
- Cultivate authentic followers (people who have similar values)
- Practise what is right and fair
- Lead from the front
- Focus on the development of their followers
- Identify their weaknesses
- Reflect on themselves
- Generate positive emotions
- Are inspirational

QUALITIES OF A TAEKWON DO INSTRUCTOR (FROM THE ENCYCLOPEADIA OF TAEKWON DO)

- Instructors should have strong moral and ethical standards
- The instructor should have a clear outlook and philosophy in life
- Never tire of teaching
- The instructor should have unshakeable integrity in political and financial dealings
- Always be honest with students; never break a trust
- An instructor who gains confidence from his seniors, is trusted by fellow instructors and respected by juniors
- Strong moral and ethical standards
- Never tire of teaching
- An instructor should be keen for students to surpass him/her
- Meditate often
- There must be a degree of love and understanding in the student/instructor relationship
- An instructor must always set a good example to his students

Leadership reflected in General Choi's calligraphy

General Choi was a renowned calligrapher and it is perhaps in his calligraphy that he expressed his inner feelings and ambitions for Taekwon do – as a way of developing excellent citizens of both physical and moral strength, who were capable of defending themselves and others. An analysis of some of General Choi's calligraphy reveals the relationship between his thoughts on leadership and the values of authentic leaders.

Broad and deep Ki (Spirit)



Broad and deep Ki (spirit)

My thoughts are that unless you have inner strength and spirit, a strong personality and confidence, then it is difficult to expect your followers or students to have these characteristics themselves. Broad and deep ki represents your Martial strength as well as the strength of your personality; Your ability to deal with your weaknesses and adapt your Taekwon-do accordingly; it can be manifested in your physical strength as well as it takes inner spirit to go through the pain to achieve the best fitness you can achieve according to your age and ability. People who have broad

and deep ki have a “presence”. You know they are in the room before they have spoken and when they do speak they command your attention. I recall some of my schoolteachers and priests at my school who had broad and deep Ki in my early years. Most of the people who I have met who have had Broad and Deep Ki in my adult life have been in the world of Taekwon-do.

Educate the young to produce heroic leaders



Educate the Young
to produce heroic
leaders

Could this be any clearer? For “heroic” substitute “authentic”. In this calligraphy, General Choi is promoting the use of education to enable young people to become the heroic, brave or authentic leaders of tomorrow. General Choi was a military General – therefore he was a strategist who had a long term view, and used his resources – the martial art of Taekwon do- to produce change in the world, just as other generals use their resources – the weapons at their disposal – to produce change in their theatre of war.

Way is right in front of you



Way is right in front of you.

In his book “True North”, Bill George suggests that authentic leaders follow a moral compass that leads them to make the right decision in the interests of their followers. In this calligraphy General Choi is suggesting that if you follow the tenets of Taekwon do, your path, way or “do” is in front of you and is an obvious course to follow.

Following the five tenets of Taekwon do, the Five rules of the Hwarang do, the five virtues of Confucianism, and the five qualities of a General described by Sun T’zu will lead you to follow the way that is right in front of you – for senior belts this way is the promotion of Taekwon-do and the pursuit of personal excellence in Taekwon-do.

Absolute sincerity moves the heavens



Absolute sincerity moves the heavens

Sincerity, integrity and a strong moral character are invincible weapons. Leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi who led worldwide change based his style of leadership on being true to himself – his quote “strength does not come from physical capacity – it comes from an indomitable will” is similar to the ideas that General Choi promotes in this calligraphy.

Man should attempt to dwell in the largest mansion in the world



Man should attempt to dwell in the largest mansion in the world, stand on the correct place and walk on the broadest street.

(Man's most comfortable and secure dwelling is his own virtuous mind. He should always stand on the side of justice and live honestly and fairly).

In this calligraphy, General Choi speaks of personal integrity, and that man is most comfortable when he has developed a sense of what is right and what is wrong, knows how to deal with people fairly and recognises the need for justice.

This is question of balancing the yin with the yang in oriental philosophy. This Calligraphy has its roots in the second cardinal virtue of Confucius, that of Yi - honesty and uprightness.

In Conclusion

General Choi included calligraphy in his encyclopaedia which reads:

“Respect the King, Teacher and Father equally”.



Respect the King, teacher
and father equally.

General Choi was of course the supreme leader of Taekwon do. But he knew he had to leave a legacy – not just our beloved martial art, but a legacy of sasuns, sayuns and sabums who would cherish Taekwon do , develop it and spread it further. He also left us a task. General Choi had connected “Tae” with “Kwon”. That is he has completed the physical development of Taekwon Do. Our task as authentic leaders is to develop the “do”, and to do this we have to have a deep consideration of our martial art and high levels of confidence and courage to

organise, teach, train and recruit new students. Having high levels of courage and consideration is part of Steven Covey's "The seven habits of highly successful people". Habit number 4 is "Think win/win". Covey argues that having a strong character is the foundation of the win/win habit, and that the foundation of strong character is having maturity and integrity.

General Choi's ideal instructor has dedication to spread the art of Taekwon Do, is physically fit, and technically up to date with Taekwon Do techniques. They have knowledge of the body and its vital spots. However, it takes a strong moral compass, strong personal values and ethics, and a philosophy to use Taekwon Do for the greater good of mankind, Taekwon Do should encourage authentic followers, so that students believe in our Taekwon Do leaders and ultimately become leaders themselves.

I have attempted in this thesis to show the relationship between ancient oriental philosophies, the development of Korean philosophy through to the development of 21st century leadership theories, and link them all to General Choi's views on how Taekwon Do should be lead. My conclusion is that Taekwon Do is a marital art, a way of life, but also the ultimate art of leadership.

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