



## Commission on Chess In Schools

### Conclusions

#### Chess in Schools and the cognitive capacities

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Turin, 26.02.2009

Dear chess colleges:

in late 2000, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), brought together some 200 world leaders, to draft and sign, the so-called Millennium Declaration. In that document the participants formally committed “to free all men, women and children from the deplorable and inhumane conditions .of extreme poverty on which the planet lives” before the year 2015.

To try to reach those goals, UNESCO drew up a document which appeared in number of eight the so-called, Millennium Development Goals. They cover various aspects such as promotion of primary education, eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, improving maternal health, fight against HIV / AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability and promote a world association for development.

For example, regarding the objective: to achieve universal primary education, the target is to “ensure that by 2015, children everywhere complete a full course of elementary schooling.”

Among the indicators are: **1.** Net enrolment rate in primary school, **2.** Proportion of pupils starting first grade and the ones who reach last grade of elementary school, and **3.** Literacy rate for people between 15 and 24 years, women and men.

UNESCO believes that: ... *“Education gives people choices regarding the kind of life they wish to have, allowing them to express confidence in their personal relationships, community and at work as well. However; there are over 115 million children of primary school who, unable to go to it, are deprived of this human right. The majority are children from poor households, whose mothers have not often received formal education.”*

Due to the above mentioned, we consider our obligation to support strongly - all - literacy campaign and all movement in favour to update education that is intentionally designed to form and train personnel for this purpose.

We must remember that in the late 70s of last century, it began to develop in different countries (Canada, USA, England, Japan and Venezuela), projects that underlie many theories of learning, of the intelligence and cognitive development, which had in common the search for new methods that contribute to the development of thinking skills among our students.

And later, in the mid-80s and early 90s, also started new projects of educational innovation, such as school chess in Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Kalmykia, Spain, Turkey, USA and Venezuela, among others. However, most projects have been more focused on training high performance players, that by implementing some elements of chess as a strategy for learning.

But why we are interested in developing projects of chess in schools? What is our interest in proposing specific aspects of chess as a teaching tool? Why we are interested in promoting improvements in procedures for learning to think, using chess as a teaching strategy?.

Basically, we think that to provide strategies for optimizing the thinking of our students involves, the improvement of two groups of fundamental skills in the development of the individual at an early age: the verbal ability (mother tongue) and numeracy skills (management of numbers, serials. etc..).

Educational research suggests that learning to think, learn how to speak and learn to reason, are processes that are closely related. In fact, nowadays no one doubts that one of the fundamental goals of education is to teach people to think and that in order to stimulate thinking and improve it in the classroom, it is necessary to promote the implementation of strategies to facilitate language and mathematical reasoning.

In this sense, when verbal ability is stimulated, enhances the knowledge and the comprehension of language. Then the ability of discourse, understanding the different meanings increase dramatically.

On the other hand, we recognize that chess has a mathematical basis. Mathematics is the language of the method and orderly thinking, mathematics and language are the instruments of science.

In this sense, proposals such as the inclusion of chess in schools, with children from an early age, has come to help us. But based on which criteria do we say that chess could effectively participate in this process?

Blanco (1996), in his book **Chess Instructional System**, says that the incorporation of programs of organized chess in schools is:

1. An alternative for the development of important skills of thinking.
2. A pedagogical tool identified with the principle of "learning to learn."
3. A game that encourages the recognition and the acquisition of ethical values.
4. One way to achieve educational excellence
5. One way to train better citizens

The principle of "*learning to think*" is related to all those skills and strategies used by the individual to consciously organize and transform the information received.

The principle of "*learning to learn*" is manifested by a more qualitative learning, hence the individual may take possession of the structures and processes necessary for his growth in a context in which they express "the emotion and the desire to know".

Moreover, chess, for its playful nature-based on recreational, strict rules and principles, has a lot to give to the school as element contributing to the generation of fundamental values such as: study, truth, discipline and dignity, among others.

Some research suggests that chess school is a means by which virtuous habits and patterns of personality, facilitates insertion of the pupil in the public sphere of adult life. An opportunity for the development of his character, understanding character, as "*a set of values of moral action.*"

Based on the above we suggest that chess be incorporated as a subject, into the curriculum of elementary school, because its study and systematic practice, stimulate the development of:

1. Cognitive abilities such as :attention, memory, logical thinking, self-control, self-esteem and so on. Skills that are essential for the further development of the individual.
2. Creativity through problem solving, demonstrations of study, analysis of positions and game plans. The problems presented in different positions, allow the application of general principles, whose solution is not necessarily unique and can be approached in multiple ways.
3. Critical thinking. When considering, for example, a number of variants derived from a particular opening, assessing their strengths and weaknesses, making decisions that relate more to their character or which may harass or cause the greatest difficulties to his opponent, in the establishment of value judgments about punctual situations. Judgments, that might be argued later, before the evidence and practical demonstration on the board.
4. Ethical sense. Being chess a game of rules, that establishes values, criteria and standards for the technical development of the game, and for the players attitude and behavior, such activity gives an universal sense of ethic.

Likewise, departing from the implementation of specific aspects of chess, we can apply them to everyday situations. That is, the chess allows applications in various fields of human knowledge (mathematics, history, geography, psychology, computers, etc.).

That is why organizations like the *Chess in Schools Commission* of the International Chess Federation (FIDE), as governing body of world chess proposals, has begun to firmly establish- in the eyes of an increasingly critical and demanding society- a new policy, oriented towards the development and optimization of highly sensitive areas, such as training teachers to teach chess, developing new methodologies, the search of talent, the training and research of chess in the world.

Therefore, regarding the fundamental policies that FIDE is willing to set, let us make the following proposals:

1. To create an universal project making chess popular to the schools as well as to organized communities.
2. Emphasize on the intrinsic values of chess and its importance in the development of the personality of its participants, because chess is a game that: encourages the appreciation and acquisition of values for life. It is an intellectual sport, easy to learn and inexpensive. A teaching strategy, an alternative for the development of skills and processes of thinking, a means by which we built habits and patterns of our personality. A tool that facilitates the insertion of the pupil in the public sphere to adulthood, especially in the integration to the working world; a way to achieve educational excellence and a cultural right.
3. Create an international training program, updating teachers aspiring to become chess instructors.
4. Propose to design a project to encourage the research that links education, cognitive science, neuroscience with chess.
5. Encouraging the cultivation of talent for chess at early ages.
6. Provide the financial resources logistic and necessary technology for a better development of the policies proposed.

To conclude, note that the identification of strategies for the development of thinking can have many sources, including from an ancient source called Chess.

1. Teachers who participate in such projects such as the "National Strategic Project of Chess in School" in Venezuela are facilitators, intermediaries or mediators between knowledge and their students., they must be adequately prepared to manage the strategy and technique needed to ensure the best results in treating many of the complex problems that plague the planet.

2. Educational research that suggests that the systematic study of chess in schools contributes to think rationally, to make decisions and implement them in time and appropriate conditions. In this regard, we have redefined the term chess as: ... a continuous development, proposal and problem solving, decision making and the generation of critical and creative thinking in situations of uncertainty (Blanco, 1992).
3. To stimulate thinking in our students, from sources such as chess, music, creative reading and the Internet, is directly related to the development of skills related to language and mathematics.
4. That the increase in reading and numerical skills, have direct influence on the capacity for reasoning and decision making in individuals at an early age.
5. That application-at large scale - projects masificacion chess, it is in facilitating the educational quality of these regions and, by extension, the quality of life for its residents.
6. That development projects and school chess programs contribute to the achievement of some of the goals to facilitate the promotion of those scientists, engineers, thinkers and decision-makers face, with greater chances of success, the challenges of the S. XXI.
7. Chess is a useful educational resource for the development of our society. Therefore, chess is important because it is a conquest of the human spirit in the service of the survival of our civilization.

Chess colleagues, I appeal to ail active and to join this noble cause, the Universal Cause of Chess in Schools and strongly support-for-work of the Millennium Declaration Goals agreed by our leaders within the UNESCO.

Thanks vou very much.

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