

# Educational actions for the teaching of Chess from Cuban heroes

## *Abstract*

*Despite its tradition in Cuba, the complexity of Chess as a strategy sport and other cultural and contextual factors affect that in children's ages it does not always reach the motivation of other sports disciplines. The objective of the research was to propose educational actions based on the approach to relevant personalities of the Cuban revolutionary process to improve the motivation of children for this game. A pre-experimental investigation of an interdisciplinary nature was carried out, linking the learning of chess with the History of Cuba in infants who are beginning to practice the sport of Chess. Theoretical level methods were used such as: analysis and synthesis, historical logic and induction deduction. At an empirical level, the observation of performance, as well as an initial test based on a survey questionnaire and another final one to evaluate the modification of their behavior regarding Chess and the History of Cuba. The participation of the practitioners in the school under study was increased and they achieve greater motivation in their practices.*

**Keywords:** *Children's chess, sports initiation, interdisciplinarity, history*

## **Introduction**

Chess in Cuba has a recognized tradition for its practice throughout the country's history. It treasures the legendary figure of José Raúl Capablanca y Graupera world champion (1921-1927) (Sánchez, 2017) and a presence in multiple high-level competitions in both sexes, after chess became a sport for all from 1959. However, in the last decade, despite various strategies for its massification, the number of players at an early age and their sports results have decreased. Special creativity is needed to reach the motivation that other sports disciplines have in these age groups. This problem is present in the locality where this study is carried out.

To address this problem, the study starts from ideas to promote Chess in its playful sense (Miló, 2018) and in the school environment (Bueno, et al, 2017), this also as actions that

contribute to a strategic change in Chess national (Ramón et al., 2022). In turn, in the case of the teaching of the History of Cuba in primary education, relevant figures of the wars of independence in Cuba are shown in their approaches to Chess (García et al. 2010) and (Negri, 2022) and in the revolutionary stage (González Bayolo, 2022).

It agrees with Fernández (2020) that when you learn to play Chess and people delve into its secrets as a game of options and variants, attitudes are modified to face the problems posed by daily life, but also how to solve those complex situations that demand flexible and creative thinking.

The work focuses on the link between this sport and strategic board game, with relevant figures of the Cuban libertarian deeds of the 19th and 20th centuries. The objective is to propose educational actions based on the approach to relevant personalities of the Cuban revolutionary process to improve the motivation of children for this game.

## **Materials and methods**

The research was pre-experimental of an interdisciplinary nature, linking the learning of Chess with the History of Cuba. The sample is intentional because it constitutes the school group of infants who are beginning to practice this sport. Theoretical level methods were used such as: analysis and synthesis, historical logic and induction deduction. At an empirical level, the observation of performance, as well as an initial test based on a survey questionnaire and another final one to evaluate the modification of their behavior regarding Chess and the History of Cuba.

It was carried out at the José Smith Comas Elementary School in the San Miguel del Padrón municipality of the capital, from March 2021 to September 2022. The population corresponded to 5th grade infants. The intentional sample corresponded to 15 infants of 10 and 11 years of age, who work the first moments of the history of the Homeland and already received the subject. The world in which we live in 4th grade, where they met historical personalities.

A pre-test is carried out to inquire about the previous knowledge that the infants had about the Cuban heroes and their links with Chess. In the same way, three teachers from the school who work in the grade groups are surveyed, to find out their knowledge about Chess and the Cuban heroes in the colonial, neocolonial and revolutionary stages.

Educational actions are proposed to address the object of inquiry, which is validated by 5 specialists, who meet the conditions of being licensed in Physical Culture or Education.

Be Chess teachers with more than 3 years of teaching experience, have worked with the children's category and have basic knowledge of Cuban History.

### **Stages for the implementation of educational actions**

- Creation and preparation of a coordinating group to prepare and implement the action plan.
- Diagnosis or initial test on the Chess-History of Cuba link.
- Design of the action plan and its application schedule.
- Evaluation and feedback of the educational actions carried out.

At the end, a post test is carried out to assess the modification that has occurred in the sample under study, after the actions implemented to modify the investigated scenario.

## **Results and Discussion**

The different moments of the implementation of the system of actions are revealed below as an expression of the main results, to attend to the object of inquiry:

- 1) The creation of the coordinating group. The group included the Chess coach, two History teachers, the Physical Education teacher, the librarian, who designed the educational actions and proposed the different moments for their implementation.
- 2) Development of the initial test. The initial or diagnostic test explored the knowledge of the link of the History of Cuba with Chess applied to the sample investigated revealed the following results. See table 1

**Table 1 Initial test**

<b>child ren</b>	<b>origins</b>	<b>introduce d in Cuba</b>	<b>Cuban patriots who played</b>	<b>Know Chess</b>	<b>Chess books</b>
1	does not know	does not know	1	does not know	1
2	does not know	does not know	2	does not know	1

3	does not know	does not know	0	does not know	0
4	does not know	does not know	0	does not know	0
5	does not know	does not know	0	does not know	0
6	does not know	does not know	2	does not know	0
7	does not know	does not know	0	does not know	0
8	does not know	does not know	0	little	0
9	does not know	does not know	0	does not know	0
10	does not know	does not know	0	does not know	0
11	does not know	Spanish	0	little	0

12	does not know	does not know	0	does not know	0
13	does not know	does not know	2	does not know	0
14	does not know	does not know	0	does not know	0
15	does not know	does not know	2	does not know	0

Table 1 shows that none of the children know the origins of Chess (0%), only one knows that the Spanish introduced it (6.66%), five (33.33%) know of patriots who practiced it, Che and Fidel being the most cited. Only one cites Céspedes, ignoring figures such as - Martí, Perucho Figueredo, Enrique José Varona, Francisco Vicente Aguilera among others. Note that only two children (13.33%) knew something about Chess and only two (13.33%) identified a Chess book.

Then the following Action Plan was proposed to improve the teaching of Chess in primary school. See Table 2

**Table 2 Actions to improve the teaching of Chess**

No	Of shares	Participate	Responsible	Time
1	Preparation of the teams for the general plan (15 children are divided into three groups of five members:	Coordinating group, selected students	chess coach	One week

	two female and three male) Actions from the plan are adapted in each team			
<b>2</b>	Student consultation with key informants (Physical Education teachers from the community, coaches, librarian and the History teacher)	teachers and students	chess coach	Tuesday or Thursday .2pm
<b>3</b>	Participation in circle of interest	teachers and students	chess coach	6 weeks
<b>4</b>	Consult Chess experts to enrich the topic	teachers and students	chess coach	1 week
<b>5</b>	Control and evaluation of the actions carried out and feedback	Coordinating group	chess coach	2 weeks
<b>6</b>	Visit to the ISLA Study Center at the University of Physical Culture and Sports Sciences	teachers and students	chess coach	Thursday 2 pm

3) As an essential part of the design of the Educational Action Plan, the topics of the Chess Circle of Interest are proposed:

- Topic 1 Brief review of the emergence of Chess and its arrival in Cuba. Objective: to familiarize children with the emergence of the sport and its introduction in Cuba of Chess
- Topic 2 Céspedes and Martí, their links with the science game. Objective: to show children stories about Carlos Manuel de Céspedes and José Martí (Father of the Nation

and National Hero, respectively) with Chess to strengthen the motivation for this game in students.

- Topic 3 José Raúl Capablanca y Graupera, a genius child and pride of Cuba. Objective: to encourage chess practicing children based on the talent and values of the Cuban world champion José Raúl Capablanca-, in his childhood years.
- Topic 4 Ernesto Che Guevara and Fidel Castro Ruz, promoters of Chess after 1959. Objective: to deepen in children their approach to Chess and the history of Cuba, based on Che and Fidel's actions to promote the game.

basic bibliography

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The results are presented below, combining the different methods used. The observation revealed that the infants showed amazement and interest in how Chess arises and arrives in Cuba, knowing relevant figures of History and their relationship with this science game. They tried to learn about these and other patriots who also had a similar inclination. In the discussions it was confirmed that they searched for bibliographical material, and that consulting with experts was very valuable and enriching. In this environment other infants, about eight (8) were inclined to Chess, the History of Cuba and the research carried out.

The result of the final survey is shown in the following table 3

Table 3

<b>child</b>					
<b>ren</b>	<b>origins</b>			<b>Know Chess</b>	<b>Chess books</b>

		<b>Introduced in Cuba</b>	<b>Cuban patriots who played</b>		
1	Indian	Spanish	6	yes	3
2	Indian	Spanish	7	yes	4
3	Indian	Spanish	6	yes	5
4	Indian	Spanish	5	yes	2
5	Indian	Spanish	6	yes	4
6	Indian	Spanish	6	yes	3
7	Indian	Spanish	6	yes	3
8	Indian	Spanish	6	yes	3
9	Indian	Spanish	7	yes	4
10	Indian	Spanish	6	yes	4
11	Indian	Spanish	7	yes	3
12	Indian	Spanish	5	yes	4
13	Indian	Spanish	7	yes	4
14	Indian	Spanish	6	yes	5
15	Indian	Spanish	5	yes	3

Table 3 shows the fundamental modifications produced in the research object. The infants, in their entirety, already know the origins of Chess, its arrival in Cuba. They also identify several patriots linked to Chess, in addition to knowing more about the game and having knowledge of books on this discipline.

All this in contrast to table 1, which revealed the ignorance of all about the origins of Chess (0%), only one knows that it was introduced by the Spanish (6.66%), five (33.33%)



know of patriots being Che and Fidel the most cited, since only one mentions Céspedes, ignoring figures such as - Martí, Perucho Figueredo, Enrique José Varona, Francisco Vicente Aguilera among others. Note that only two children (13.33%) know something about Chess and only two (13.33%) know a Chess book.

Progress is appreciated in a before and after. Other works deal with issues related to patriots who played Chess, but not precisely linking the History of Cuba with Chess to encourage the incorporation of infants into this sport, as well as motivate them for this important subject for the development of their identity History of Cuba . That is its novelty. These results are confirmed in Negri, S (2022) and Santiago, O. (2022). It is especially recommended for the depth of historical research regarding sport and its link with the stages of history from the biographical in Capablanca to Sánchez, MA (2017).

As dissatisfactions, it is expressed that it is still a small sample. It must be extended to other schools, neighborhoods, communities, municipalities and also incorporate the gender and social inclusion approach in vulnerable neighborhoods.

Chess has passed until these days by the hand of relevant figures in the History of Cuba from all fields of knowledge, but above all by historical leaders and sharing this historical legacy is very beneficial for primary school children, since On the one hand, it motivates them and makes the study of this part of history more fluent by awakening their curiosity, at the same time that it encourages them to learn about this game and it is undeniable that it is precisely at an early age that interest in Chess should born, because on the one hand it is more feasible to pave the way step by step looking for a new Capablanca.

According to (Ramón et al., 2022) this strategic line of work for the development of school Chess is strengthened, for the sake of its double educational role and for the selection of high-level chess players in the period 2022-2028. Therefore, this research also provides a step on the path of dissemination and massification of Chess through its link with the history of the Homeland, in a sustainable project due to its few resources. The incorporation of new local actors such as other students, including high school students, is also invited.

## **Conclusions**

The preceding bibliographical review revealed that there is little research history that links chess with the study of History at school ages, which is confirmed by the initial surveys, since the figures of Che and Fidel are barely known.

The infants showed solid knowledge about patriots who played this game. They are highly encouraged to learn more about it by studying and they find it interesting to link historical figures with this sport.

The proposal was valued by the group of specialists as positive, satisfactory and easy to apply in other contexts due to its satisfactory results.

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Figure 1 Che and Fidel examples of Cuban heroes and leaders who promote the game of Chess

