

2012

## PROJECT: METHODOICAL CHESS LESSONS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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## **ABSTRACT**

The German Chess Foundation is a non-profit organization, dedicated to supporting the education of young pupils at primary schools.

In 2006 Matthias Dräger started looking at scientific evidence which describes the influence of chess instruction on pupils. He was invited by Victor Zaretzky, scientific supervisor of a pilot project in Satka/Russia, to visit their activities and to gain first-hand experience of the influence of methodical chess instruction on children.

As a result, the Deutsche Schachstiftung & the Russian Chess Foundation Satka was founded in January 2007. Based on the cooperation with the project Satka, on the experience with a project in St. Georgen/Tirol and our own pilot project in Lübeck/Germany we are able to emphasize the positives effects of this project.

According to the statistical evaluation of the first years of the pilot project in Satka carried out by the Pedagogical Faculty of the University of Moscow, we can state that significant progress is seen in the pupils' learning abilities, resulting in better marks in all subjects. In Satka the benefits of chess lessons resulted in better marks of 0,3 for the first year and 0,4 (with a range of 1 to 5) for the second year, in comparison with other pupils who had no contact with chess at all.

Encouraged by the experience gathered so far the German Chess Foundation with its chairman Matthias Dräger feels committed to offering the tool of methodical chess instruction to pupils in schools throughout the world. Over the forthcoming years AFRICA will be the main focus of the foundation's activities, as there are many places in this continent where children are living in underprivileged conditions who would profit from this program.

## **THE BENEFIT OF THE PROJECT**

Various projects dedicated to the study of the influence of chess on young pupils have been undertaken during the past 30 years. The scientific evaluation of these projects has given evidence that chess at school has a significant effect on the development of the learning ability of children and on their social behaviour.<sup>1</sup>

Children receiving instructions in chess learn:

- To focus their attention and to maintain a high degree of concentration
- To mentally visualize positions and sequences of moves, to create strategies
- To train their memory
- To think ahead, plan their activities in advance ("working in mind")
- To re-evaluate a situation which has changed
- To develop patience, thoughtfulness and originality
- To weigh options
- To assess the results of their actions
- To develop stamina, determination and social skills

Such attainments also improve their grade-point average in other school subjects.

## **TARGET GROUP**

The focus will be centered on pupils aged from 6 to 8. As the methodical instruction may require the ability to read, we should start with second-graders. At the present stage of investigation it seems most appropriate to let the pupils have two years of methodical chess instruction, resulting in chess lessons throughout the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

We recommend giving 45 minutes of chess instructions during the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, once a week after the other lessons have been completed. During the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade 45 minute chess lessons should be given twice a week, each lesson being held after the regular ones.

## **THE METHOD**

For the teachers and for the supervision of the pupils a method has been developed by Dr. Ernst Bönsch/Berlin. This method is designed to enable the pupils to learn how to play chess and to develop their ability to “work in mind”. Access to this method is free of charge.

## **SCIENTIFIC EVALUATION**

With respect to the high benefits methodical chess lessons can have for children, we regard it as being of vital importance that the first pilot project is monitored by a local faculty of education from Johannesburg. A first contact with the Faculty of Education at the University of Johannesburg has been made, and we are anticipating a positive response.

Scientific evaluation of the first project in Johannesburg, under the special circumstances prevailing here, will allow other schools to take part in the project later and will aid the process of introducing chess instruction into the school curricula in the future.

## **First Step**

As a first step we would like to include about 15 primary schools interested from different districts of Johannesburg.

The teachers at these schools willing to give chess lessons after the normal lessons will be given an instruction in how to teach the pupils. This training will be conducted by a trainer from the FIDE Trainer Academy and will last for 4 days. The teachers will receive a training certificate at the end. <http://www.fide-trainer-academy.com/>

This teacher training course will take place from 2<sup>nd</sup> -5<sup>th</sup> of April 2012 at the Deutsche Internationale Schule Johannesburg, 11 Sans Souci Road, Parktown, Johannesburg. After the training there will be a final evaluation by the headmasters, as to which schools may enter the program, if not all.

Every school participating in the program will be given 20 chess games for their pupils, donated by the German Chess Foundation.

Teachers in public schools giving chess instruction to children will receive a payment of 150 Rand for one lesson/week including the preparation time for the lesson. During the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the project, we expect the teachers to give two chess lessons per week.

Some schools should be part of a scientific evaluation of a nearby Faculty of Education, as for instance that of the University of Johannesburg.

## **Second Step**

After a period of about 3 years we expect a good quantity of first-hand experience gathered by the schools participating in the pilot project, also valid scientific results from the monitoring of the project by the University might be available. Based on that, attempts may be made to bring the chess instruction into the regular school curriculum of the participating schools - and other schools in and around Johannesburg, which would like to join.

## **Third Step**

In a third step we hope that methodical chess lessons will become a vital part of the curriculum of primary schools in South Africa, as a meta-subject, a key for the development of the child's mental and social abilities. This third step may take place in 20 to 30 years from now, but it might become reality much sooner.

## **SCHOOL CONFERENCE IN JOHANNESBURG, 19<sup>TH</sup> OF MARCH 2012**

We would like to invite all headmasters and teachers of primary schools interested in participating in the project to attend a conference on this subject on 19<sup>th</sup> of March at Deutsche Internationale Schule Johannesburg at 3.00 p.m. At this conference a more detailed introduction will be given by Matthias Dräger/Germany (Foundation Chairman) and Gianni Ngala/ Johannesburg (Head Representative for South Africa and DRC), with a discussion about the further manner of proceeding.

Address of the School Conference:

Deutsche Internationale Schule, 11 Sans Souci Road, Parktown (*map on page 12*)

## Time schedule

19<sup>th</sup> of March, 3 p.m.: First conference of schools interested in this project.

2<sup>nd</sup> -5<sup>th</sup> of April 2012: Teacher training course in Johannesburg, at the premises of the Deutsche Internationale Schule Johannesburg, Parktown.

1<sup>st</sup> week of December 2012: First chess tournament for pupils from schools taking part in the project (optional).

## INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN SOUTH AFRICA

As the funds of the Foundation are limited we would like to ask the Independent Schools to arrange for additional payment for teachers giving chess lessons.

All other support, especially the training of the teachers and access to the methods, will be granted free of charge.

## COSTS OF THE PROJECT 1<sup>ST</sup> YEAR, 2012

15 Schools	Week cost	Monthly cost	Annual cost
15 Teachers	R150 / one hour per week	R600	R5400
Evaluator			5 days of Training in Johannesburg R. 10.000 incl. Travel expenses
TOTAL per school			for 15 schools R 91.000 Assuming one teacher

## **TEAM AND COLLEAGUES**

### **Matthias Dräger**

Born in 1956. On graduating from university, he took over the Reichl Verlag publishing house in 1984 and has been working as a publisher since then. Convinced of the social and intellectual benefits of the game, he launched the German Chess Foundation in 2006 to introduce methodical chess instruction to primary schools. Since then, in collaboration with Victor Zaretsky, Viktor Medvedev (both Moscow) and Detlef Koch, he has been striving to establish chess as a school curriculum subject, particularly in his hometown, Lübeck/ North Germany. Since 2012 Matthias Dräger has been expanding the foundation's activities to include South Africa, working together with Ms Gianni Ngala.

### **Gianni Ngala**

Born in the republic of Congo in 1989, currently completing a bachelor degree in civil engineering. Ms Gianni Ngala is the project foundation's chief executive officer in Africa.

### **Dr. Ernst Bönsch**

A former trainer of the national chess team of Germany, author of books on chess training as well as author of a method for chess instruction for pupils.

### **Prof. Dr. Wilhelm Brinkman**

Faculty for general Pedagogics of the University of Kiel/ North Germany. Prof. Dr. Brinkman is chief evaluator of the pilot project lead by Detlef Koch/ Lübeck.

### **Prof. Victor Zaretsky**

Since 2004 coordinator and chief evaluator of the important pilot project of methodical chess instruction at primary schools in Satka/Russia and Moscow.

### **Detlef Koch**

Born in 1960. After grammar school and university, he founded and directed a NGO promoting children's welfare in India before returning to Lübeck, Germany in 2001. Detlef Koch presently teaches as Chess Educationalist at the Marli primary school in Lübeck, from 1<sup>st</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> year grades.

## **THE GERMAN CHESS FOUNDATION**

The German Chess Foundation maintains close relations to institutions and individuals who regard methodical instructions in chess by a qualified teacher as an instrument for children's holistic development. The Foundation carries out and supports several projects in Germany and other countries which show excellent promise of offering a lasting improvement in pupils' character and intellectual development.

The Foundation also develops pedagogic material for methodical chess instructions for school curricula and publishes relevant articles with the affiliated Leibniz Verlag.

The aim of the German Chess Foundation is:

- the dissemination of high-quality and methodological chess instructions for children of a suitable (psychologically developed) age.
- to call attention to the realization that chess is much more than merely a game and must become an integral part of the educational and teaching culture, and also to raise awareness of the fact that chess, if taught correctly, can truly support a value-oriented education.

What is the philosophy of the German Chess Foundation?

The philosophy of the German Chess Foundation is to unite all the positive strengths from chess and educational science, to interlink them and offer them a forum which will enable them to exert their positive effects on the education and upbringing of young people. The German Chess Foundation achieves this through the preparation and publication of relevant material and the establishing of new contacts, while also involving the relevant school authorities on a state level at home and abroad.

What does the German Chess Foundation offer and what are its plans?

The German Chess Foundation is first and foremost a service, undertaking a series of activities in order to use chess as an instrument for the holistic development of the personality.

### 1. Instruction in primary schools

At the present time, the German Chess Foundation supports chess instructions integrated into the curriculum at primary schools in Lübeck, Germany. At the Marli School in Lübeck regular chess lessons have been taking place since 2008 in the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grades. The 4<sup>th</sup> grades have a chess working group. Since summer 2010, the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade in the Marli School Lübeck has had chess lessons within the curriculum. This pilot project is monitored by the Faculty of general Pedagogics of the University of Kiel/Germany, Prof. Dr. Brinkman.

### 2. Promotion in the remedial pedagogic field (learning disabilities)

The German Chess Foundation anticipates short-term to bring chess instructions to remedial schools, tailored to the special pedagogic needs of the target group. Relevant methods are being developed.

### 3. Individual courses for pupils at elementary level

The German Chess Foundation offers private lessons in order to encourage particularly gifted pupils, as well as those children who need more help with their chess.

### 4. Training of the chess teachers

The German Chess Foundation is planning, in collaboration with training academies and/or skilled chess pedagogues, to offer certified training courses which will accommodate the particular needs of chess instruction within the framework of a curriculum. Here, the results of the experience gained in the project Satka will be taken into account.

### 5. Support of pilot projects at home and abroad

At present, the German Chess Foundation is supporting a pilot project in Satka, Russia, which in its turn is being academically sponsored by the Moscow State University of Psychology and Education (MGPPU). They offer financial assistance in the statistical evaluation of the findings.

In addition to this, the German Chess Foundation advises our Russian team on its public relations and networking with cooperation partners.

#### 6. Publications by the affiliated publishing house

The German Chess Foundation publishes academic papers on the educational effect of chess for the target group of pedagogues or for other groups who are also connected in any way with the education of the young. They also publish popular scientific writings with the goal of making the broader public aware of the high educational value of methodical chess instructions. Collaboration with the founder of the Steps Method is planned.

#### 7. Further development of instructional materials for use in schools

The German Chess Foundation is working on the consolidation of experiences from various school chess projects with the aim of developing instructional materials which will meet the requirements of developmental-psychological conditions as well as the individual learning behaviour of the children (internal differentiation). Here, the learning results anticipated on the level of ego-, social- and personal competence will have priority. In addition to the development of mental skills, chess should therefore also be an important instrument for the formation of character.

#### BECOMING A SPONSOR

The German Chess Foundation fulfils all fiscal requirements for non-profit status. Donations to the German Chess Foundation can also be earmarked for a specific purpose and will only be used for the purpose stated.

Bank account:

029474600 at the Deutsche Bank Koblenz, Bank identifier code 570 700 24

## REFERENCES

Deutsche Schachstiftung  
Auf dem Hähnchen 32,  
D-56329 St. Goar  
Tel. 0049-6741-1720  
E-mail: [post@schachstiftung.de](mailto:post@schachstiftung.de)  
<http://www.schachstiftung.de/cmw>

A detailed compilation by Chess master Jerry Meyers in:  
„The Benefits of Chess in Education“,  
<http://www.schachstiftung.de/cms/images/pdf/index.ontario-kanada.pdf>

and (1) Dr. Marion Bönsch-Kauke: Klüger durch Schach. Wissenschaftliche Forschungen zu den Werten des Schachspiels, Leibniz Verlag, St. Goar 2007, page 213-278 (German text, can be sent as pdf on request).

More information also at:

<http://www.chess-for-africa.org>

This site is under construction, it will be dedicated for up-to-date-information on the program, as well as to display the methodics for the schools participating in the program.

**How to find Deutsche Internationale Schule Johannesburg**  
(from <http://www.dsj.co.za>)

