

Study on the Choice of the Optional Subject "Chess Education" in The School Year 2021-2022

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Abstract: *The purpose of the study was to identify the share of educational units in Romania, urban and rural, in which the optional subject "Chess Education" was implemented in the 2021-2022 school year, with the involvement of their management, taking into account the provisions of the Order 3249/31.03.2014. The research was carried out in the 2022-2023 school year and was carried out in collaboration with school inspectors for the discipline of physical education and sport in 40 counties of the country. In carrying it out, I used the questionnaire survey to collect information and the statistical-mathematical calculations for quantitative analysis.*

The research's results show that only 31 educational institutions in Romania implemented this optional discipline, although chess has major impact on students' personal development. Of these, 23 educational units (74.2%) are located in rural areas and only 8 educational units (25.8%) are in urban areas. It was observed that in only 18 counties (42.86% of the number of counties) there were pre-university education institutions where classes studied this optional discipline. It was found that 28 classes of middle school, 21 classes of primary and 4 classes of high school studied this optional subject.

We believe that the small number of educational units in which the optional discipline "Education through chess" was implemented is determined by the lack of skills of specialists in physical education and sports regarding the teaching of chess, the discipline Theory and practice of chess being introduced in the curriculum of university education from 2019.

Keywords: *SDC, education, optional discipline, chess.*

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Introduction

Long before there were scientific concerns about the benefits of playing chess. Nicolae Iorga said about chess that "it is the most wonderful means of disciplining the thinking, ordering the fields of knowledge and recreation of the spirit. It is a universe compressed into 64 squares (Gheorghiu, 2008).

Order no. 3249/31.03.2014 was based on conclusions expressed in a series of studies and researches from around the world, which highlighted the benefits of practicing this sport (Christiaen, 1975; De Groot, 1994; Liptrap, 1998).

Research has continued and the views of the authors are relevant. Thus, Dumitrescu (2012, p.12) appreciates that "Practicing the game of chess is a gymnastics of the intellect that has the ability to stimulate and maintain the mental capacities of anyone, of any age, profession and social condition" and Garate-Quispe et al., (2020) that chess develops mathematical skills, the ability to concentrate. The conclusions of other studies confirm the opinions expressed by them and add other benefits of playing chess in children (Scholz et al., 2008; Sala et al., 2015; Trincherro & Sala, 2016; Güneş & Tuğrul, 2017; Sala & Gobet, 2017; Shahar & Avital, 2020).

It is believed that chess, as an educational discipline, offers a number of opportunities in the personal development of children (Jevtić & Milošević, 2022). "The popularity it enjoys among followers from all social and professional backgrounds, starting from a fairly young age (Pongračić & Marinac, 2022), gives chess the role of a learning tool and an important educational factor in the personal development of those who practice it" (OMEN 3249/31.03.2014).

In the framework plan for secondary education, the optional subject "Education through chess" is among the examples of optionals currently promoted at the national level. The Minister of National Education approved the School Programs for this discipline, the first and second year of study, in the School Decision Curriculum (SDC). These programs have been applied since the 2014-2015 school year.

It was considered that "The program of the optional discipline Education through Chess has the role of facilitating the transition from approaching chess as a game (Ghindă, 1994), to approaching it as a science, with the help of its own methodology, based on observation, information gathering, exercise, problematization, prediction, planning . Going through the stages of learning chess, children accumulate and value skills useful for life and integration into school life (OMEN 3249/31.03.2014; Onea, 2019).

The minister's order stipulates that, in the classes where the optional discipline "Education through chess" is implemented, respecting the school curriculum, the teaching staff must follow the implementation of a personalized teaching approach, which ensures the training of the skills provided for in the program (Mitrea, 2022). The learning contents are made up of all the acquisitions necessary for students to familiarize themselves with the basic elements of chess. The fields that the students will cover in this discipline are grouped as follows: the board and chess pieces; basics of chess; opening principles and special moves; tactical procedures addressed during the middle game; basic principles in the end.

Materials and methods

To carry out this study, we used the following research methods and tools:

- the survey method by questionnaire; I created a questionnaire form with the help of the google forms application that I used in order to identify the share of educational units at the national level, which in the 2021-2022 school year, in the SDC, opted for the "Chess Education" discipline. Through a protocol between the University of Pitesti, the Doctoral School in the field of Sport Science and Physical Education and the Gorj County School Inspectorate, the form was distributed to all school inspectors for the discipline of physical education and sport in the country, via e-mail addresses or the application Whatsapp.

The applied questionnaire had the following content:

❖ County:

.....

❖ In the 2021-2022 school year, was the optional subject Chess Education implemented?

- YES
- NO

❖ The school where the Chess Education optional was implemented:

.....

❖ The class where the Chess Education optional was implemented:

.....

❖ The person who completed the form:

.....

(<https://forms.gle/VF8k4pdfhxofS95FA>).

- the statistical-mathematical method was used for the quantitative analysis of the collected information, by calculating some usual indicators.

Results, discussion

Out of the total of 42 school inspectors, 40 responded to the applied form.

After recording the answers to the questionnaires, we found that, in the 2021-2022 school year, the optional discipline "Education through chess" was studied in a number of 53 classes in 31 school units, located in 18 counties of the country, as are presented in the following table.

Table 1 – The educational units where the optional discipline was chosen "Education through chess"

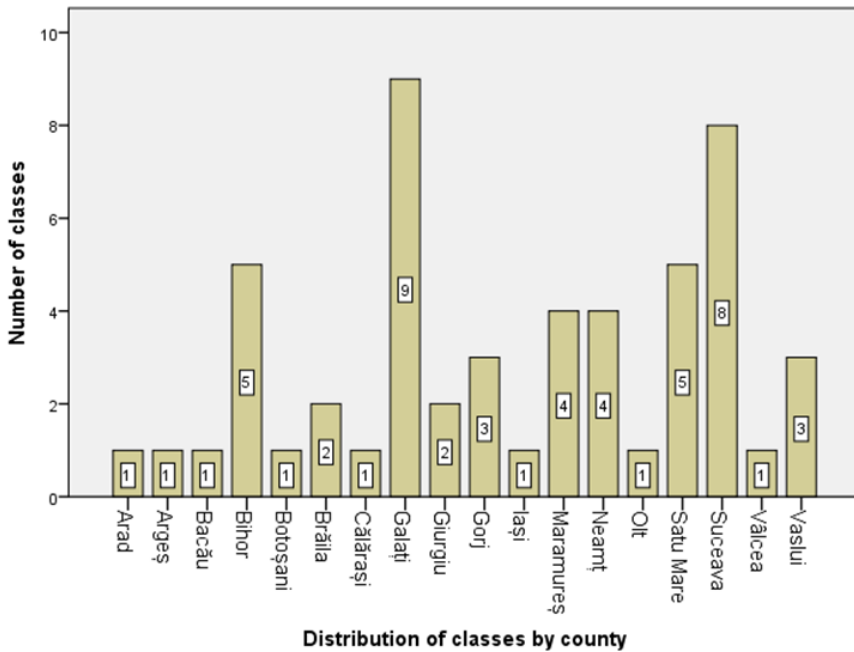
County	School	Grade	Area	Observations
Arad	"Sava Brâncovici" Technological High School	VIII th	Urban	
Argeş	Topoloveni Technological High School	VIII th	Urban	
Bacău	"Ciprian Porumbescu" Secondary School Comănești	VI th	Urban	
Bihor	The American-Romanian School	CPth, Ist, IIInd, IIIrd and IVth	Urban	
Botoşani	Secondary School No. 1 Adaseni	VIIth	Rural	
Brăila	Secondary School "Toma Tâmpeanu" Galbenu	IIIrd and IVth	Rural	
Călăraşi	Secondary School No. 1 Razvani	IVth	Rural	
Galaţi	Secondary School No. 1 Barcea	Vth	Rural	
Galaţi	Secondary School No. 1 Fartanesti	IIIrd and IVth	Rural	
Galaţi	Secondary School No. 2 Fartanesti	a VIII-a	Rural	
Galaţi	Secondary School No. 1 Frumusita	Ist	Rural	
Galaţi	Secondary School "Alexei Matevici" Movileni	VIIth	Rural	
Galaţi	Secondary School No. 1 Namoloasa	IIInd	Rural	
Galaţi	Professional School "Hortensia Papadat	Vth and VIth	Rural	

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	Bengescu" Ivesti			
Giurgiu	Secondary School No. 1 Malu Spart	IVth	Rural	
Giurgiu	Sfântu Gheorghe High School	VIth	Rural	
Gorj	Hurezani Secondary School	Vth	Rural	
Gorj	Țicleni High School	VIIth and VIIIth	Urban	
Iași	"Mihai Eminescu" Lespezi Secondary School	VIIIth	Rural	
Maramureș	Theoretical High School "Bogdan Vodă" Vișeu de Sus	IXth, Xth, XIth, XIIth	Urban	
Neamț	CV Gheorghiu High School, Războieni	IIIrd	Rural	
Neamț	Poienari Secondary School	IVth, Vth and VIth	Rural	
Olt	Secondary School "Gheorghe Magheru" Caracal	IVth	Urban	
Satu Mare	Sports High School	CPth, Ist, IInd, IIIrd and IVth	Urban	
Suceava	Technological High School "Mihai Eminescu" Dumbrăveni	VIIth D and VIIth E	Rural	
Suceava	Secondary School No. 3 "Iulian Vesper", Horodnic de Sus	VIIIth	Rural	
Suceava	Valea Moldovai Secondary School	VIth	Rural	
Suceava	Secondary School "Dr. Simion and Metzia Hîj" Volovăț	VIth A, VIth C, VIIth A and VIIth C	Rural	
Vaslui	"Ștefan Ciobotărașu Lipovăț Secondary School, Chițoc structure	Vth-VIth and VIIth-VIIIth	Rural	Simultaneous
Vaslui	Secondary School "Nicolae Milescu Spătaru" Ferești	VIth	Rural	
Vâlcea	Muereasca de Sus High School	VIIth	Rural	

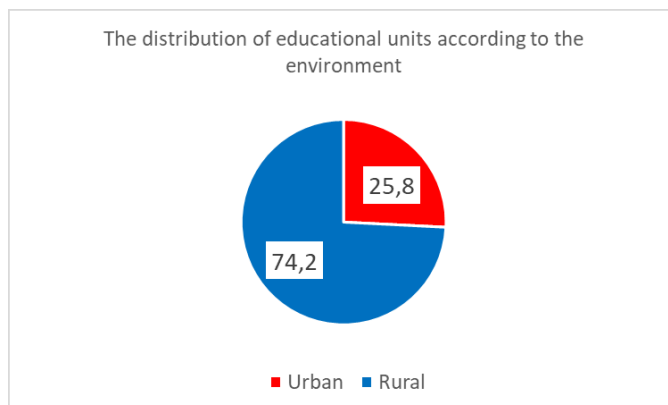
In order to analyze the data collected from our collaborators, the specialized school inspectors, we achieved:

- the total number of classes per county;



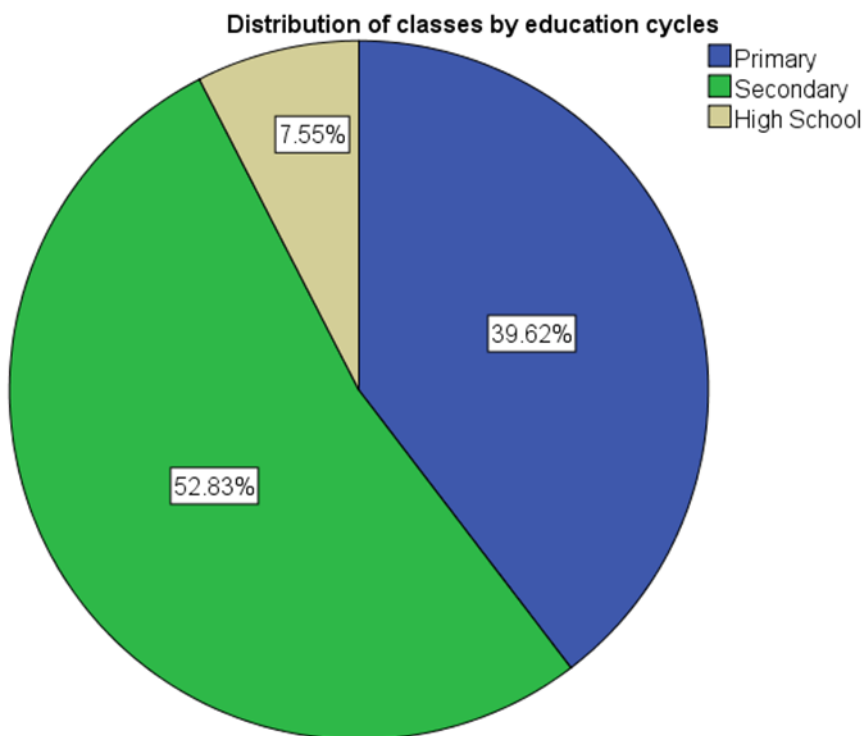
As we can see, the most classes that studied the optional discipline "Education through chess" are from Galaţi county (9 classes), followed by Suceava county (8 classes) and Bihor and Satu Mare counties (5 classes).

- share of educational institutions in the urban and rural environment;



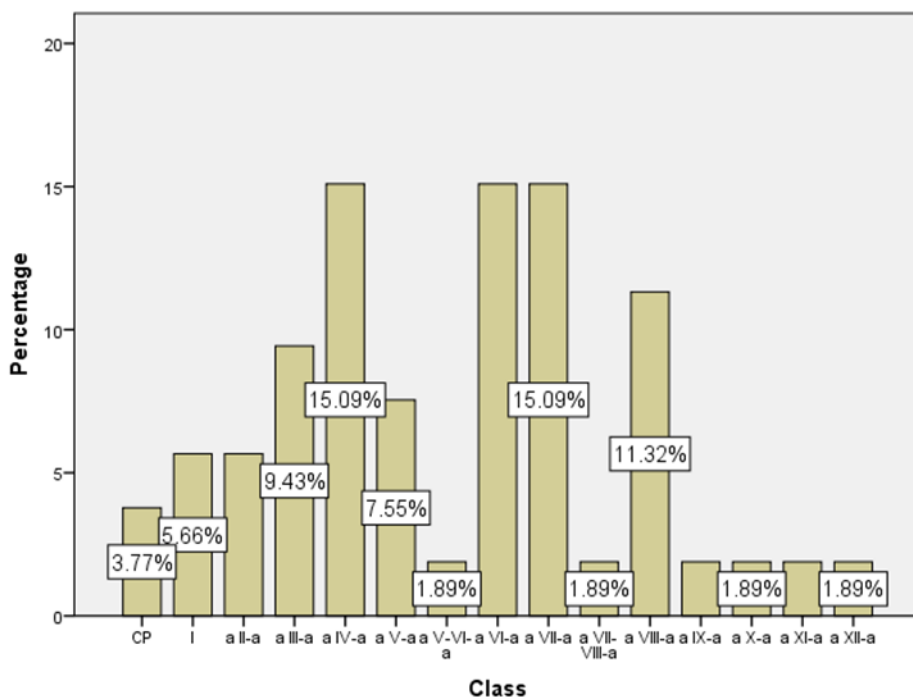
From the answers to the questionnaire, it was found that, of the 31 educational units, most, 23 units (74.2%) are in rural areas and only 8 units (25.8%) are in urban areas.

- the share of pre-university education cycles



It was found that out of the total of 53 classes chosen in CDȘ for the discipline "Education through chess", 28 classes are part of the secondary school cycle, representing a percentage of 52.83%, 21 of them, 39.62%, they are from the primary cycle, and the other 4 classes are part of the high school cycle, which represents 7.55% of the total classes

- weight per class



As far as can be seen, the IVth, VIth and VIIth grades (15.09%) recorded the highest percentage regarding the study of the discipline "Education through Chess" in the 2021-2022 school year.

Discussions, conclusions

The research highlights the fact that, in the 2021-2022 school year, seven years after the issuance of Order no. 3249/31.03.2014, although the valences of chess in the education of children, in their intellectual development, are known, only in 18 counties was the optional subject "Education through chess" studied, representing a percentage of 42.86% of all counties.

The number of educational units in which this discipline was chosen, from the 18 counties, is very small, only 31 educational units, representing a percentage of 0.44% of the total units in Romania. We believe that the small number of educational units in which this discipline has been chosen is caused by poor management, by the fact that the disciplines chosen in the CDS are proposed, most of the time, depending on the material base of the school, the available human resources, by the traditions of the educational

units, as well as according to the need of the teachers regarding the provision of the didactic norm.

Regarding the number of education classes that chose this discipline and their distribution by cycles, we found that there were 28 classes in the gymnasium cycle, 21 classes in the primary cycle and 4 classes in the high school cycle. We believe that the distribution by classes is also chaotic, without respecting the principles of accessibility and continuity.

The study highlights that, of the 31 educational units where certain classes were chosen for this optional, 74.2% are in rural areas. We believe that one of the reasons why this discipline was chosen more in the rural environment than in the urban environment is the fact that the educational units in the rural environment have a more precarious material base, thus imposing the choice of the optional discipline "Education through Chess", the practice of which is not conditioned by the existence of a complete sports base.

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