



EDUCATION FOR THE INTEGRATION OF REMIGRANT CHILDREN

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Abstract

This paper presents a proposal for an educational project focused on the integration of Romanian remigrant children in Romanian schools, initiated by members of the Association of Social and Educational Innovation (ASEI) Suceava. The study highlights issues related to remigration and its impact on school-age children, analyzing both academic dimensions (effects on learning outcomes) and socio-emotional aspects (challenges in social integration). The proposed educational program, titled „*Integration of Remigrant Children in Suceava Schools*”, involves specialized interventions tailored to the real needs of remigrant students. Expected outcomes from remedial programs include: academic improvements - Enhanced Romanian language communication skills and better performance in foundational subjects (e.g., mathematics, romanian language and literature), which develop core intellectual abilities; socio-emotional progress - better integration into classrooms, schools, and the broader community.

The study also outlines educational and psychological benchmarks for intervention strategies targeting remigrant students. These strategies are recommended to teaching staff and school administrators to ensure pertinent, prompt, efficient, and adequate support for remigrant children.

Keywords: *remigration, vulnerability of children, educational reintegration, school adaptation difficulties.*

The issue of remigration is increasingly prominent in Romania, bringing to light underdiscussed public challenges: socio-professional reintegration (e.g., job-seeking difficulties), cultural shock (especially among youth educated abroad), and psychological pressures stemming from reaccommodation—often accompanied by a sense of being "a stranger in one's own country."

Remigration is defined as "the process of returning to one's culture, family, and home" (International Organisation for Migration, 2019). International studies indicate that "migrants frequently express a desire to return home but also frustration with limited opportunities and systemic barriers" (Adger, 2024). Despite its significance, remigration remains understudied in Romanian academic research.

Problems arising from the remigration phenomenon affect children as well, not just adults. Children often bear the brunt of change more heavily, feeling the impact of remigration more acutely; they have high vulnerability potential and are sometimes less resilient. In fact, studies show that children feel neither fully integrated in their country of origin's culture nor in the adoptive country's culture. The feeling of frustration increases, especially when they are not fully acquainted with the local language, customs, or culture. Resentment arises toward their parents' decision to return to their home country, particularly due to the abrupt separation from the environment where they grew up and developed.

Remigration has gained considerable scale in Romania, with Suceava County standing out due to its large number of remigrant children integrated into the educational system. In this context, we proposed the project 'Integration of Remigrant Children in Suceava Schools' to address some urgent needs of these children, who face difficulties such as linguistic barriers, learning challenges, and adaptation to the school and social environment.

In Suceava County alone, 106 remigrant children were enrolled in preschool, primary, secondary, and high school education in 2024. Experienced teachers and school counselors have observed that these children exhibit low academic performance, fall behind in their subjects, and even drop out of school. Additionally, scientific studies (Luca, 2012; Luca et al, 2012; Catalano, 2015; Brebuleț, 2018) note that remigrant students often express a lack of self-confidence, difficulties with concentration, communication or relationships, and states of anxiety—all of which significantly affect their quality of life in the medium and long term.

During the initial needs analysis stage, it was found that remigrant middle and high school students consider the greatest challenges to be those arising from curricular and methodological

differences between foreign schools and Romanian schools, which have created knowledge gaps but also some redundancies. Remigrant children who studied in other education systems—such as those in Spain, Italy, Belgium, Norway, Germany, and the United Kingdom—cite the high difficulty level of the content taught in Romanian schools, the fast-paced teaching, and the lack of teacher focus on their individual needs (e.g., insufficient attention to their comprehension abilities, learning pace, etc.). They also note differences in teaching methodology: in the countries where they studied before returning to Romania, the emphasis is on project-based learning, applied activities, and solving practical problems. By contrast, Romanian teachers' requirements are centered on assimilating large volumes of information, with limited opportunities for application in practical activities.

High school students perceive the curriculum in their current schools as less flexible (not capitalizing on their diverse experiences), with feedback often reduced to grades, frequently without guidance on overcoming learning difficulties, improvement suggestions, or support for academic progress. As positive aspects upon returning to Romania, students note stronger connections with family and extended relatives who provide emotional support, and a reduced sense of marginalization and exclusion.

Children with limited Romanian language proficiency, despite fluency in a foreign language, often face marginalization risks. Their teachers observe difficulties in understanding specialized terminology (e.g., in mathematics or grammar), grasping taught content, and expressing ideas, which negatively impacts academic performance, school integration, and social adaptation.

Socio-emotionally, children experience insecurity, self-doubt, and confusion due to pressure to rapidly reintegrate into Romanian society, culture, and schools while leaving behind their foreign experiences. Many feel they "live between two worlds"—home and abroad—belonging fully to neither.

The mentioned project aims to implement remedial activities for academic catch-up and develop "learning to learn" skills, alongside psycho-pedagogical counseling. It provides educational and emotional support to remigrant children in Suceava schools, enhancing their integration. Beneficiaries are remigrant children in Suceava facing school/community integration challenges, learning difficulties, or academic delays.

Project objectives include: increasing Romanian language proficiency among remigrant children in Suceava schools, boosting academic performance through "learning to learn" skill development and remedial activities, enhancing socio-emotional competencies via psycho-

pedagogical counseling and extracurricular programs; creating informational brochures with recommendations for educators on educational and emotional support strategies for remigrant students' integration.

The proposed activities are those of diagnosing socio-emotional development, psycho-pedagogical counseling activities in order to develop socio-emotional skills, remedial activities - for recovering the subject and developing the "learning to learn" competence, with integrated approaches to the contents (Jeder, 2020) for a better understanding and reporting to the world in which they live, extracurricular activities - for developing socio-emotional skills, workshops with parents of remigrant children, evaluation activities to measure the progress recorded, the creation of support material and, as I have mentioned, the creation of a brochure with intervention strategies and work in schools with remigrant students.

Among these activities, an important role is played by workshops with parents that aim to transform parental practices into adaptation and well-being tools for remigrant children. Studies show that (Catalano et al., 2024) „the democratic parenting style correlates positively with manifestations of well-being (positive emotional state, positive perspective on the future). In contrast, the authoritarian parenting style correlates negatively with the dimensions of well-being, while the permissive parenting style does not correlate with any of the previously mentioned dimensions.” In this context, we offer some proposed techniques for cultivating a positive emotional state in the context of remigration stress:

Open communication and encouraging the expression of emotions, even negative ones (What did you find most difficult/difficult since we returned? What are the things you liked?, but what you didn't like? How did you feel? etc.), because validating emotions supports the growth of a positive emotional state.

Involving children in decision-making (e.g., choosing extracurricular activities), a practice specific to the democratic style, valorizes negotiation and supports/cultivates a positive perspective on the future.

Collaboration with the school for a better knowledge by teachers of the real needs of children and to propose individualized and personalized plans at the academic and socio-emotional level, for a better school and social integration; this type of collaboration provides the family and children alike with a sense of safety and security.

Identification and valorization of the transversal skills acquired by children in the initial school training environment (in schools abroad, where they initially learned) (e.g., foreign language

learned, intercultural communication, adaptability and flexibility, etc.); these transversal skills can be transformed into visible advantages in the context of remigration.

Maintaining ties with friends/colleagues and the culture of the emigration country through regular communication through communication networks and creating groups of remigrant children to share their experiences and build support groups.

By applying these types of support techniques, but also others, parents are taught, within the proposed workshops, how to transform remigration from a difficult experience into an opportunity for growth and resilience.

To verify the results, various tools will be used such as, for example, language skills assessment tests at the beginning, during and at the end of the project to assess the progress of students in Communication in Romanian; teachers will also propose and complete observation sheets to identify the impact that counseling sessions and extracurricular activities have on the socio-emotional development of children/students. Formative and summative assessments are proposed in order to record the academic progress of remigrant students in fundamental subjects (Romanian language and literature and mathematics). Valuable will be the sheets for obtaining feedback from students regarding the impact of extracurricular activities on their well-being, as well as the feedback questionnaires addressed to parents regarding the impact of the activities in which they participated. Feedback will also be obtained from school managers, as well as from teachers, regarding the usefulness of the proposed brochure.

In conclusion, our proposal therefore tries to respond to a pressing problem that appears at the school and society level. It is a problem with profound repercussions on the mental health of these children and can have a medium and long-term impact on their life course, but also on the level of social cohesion. We appreciate that prompt and informed interventions, carried out by specialists with expertise in child psychology and the educational environment, will support our idea of providing integrated support to remigrant children and will facilitate a harmonious school and social integration, transforming challenges into opportunities for personal development and and community.

We intend to present in detail, in another article, the concrete intervention methods and the results obtained within the proposed project, in order to provide examples of good practices, so necessary in the Romanian space, examples that can inspire teachers and school managers regarding the issue under consideration.

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