

PHD thesis abstract “The adaptation of emigrants to a new educational context”

Key words: migration, theories of migration, migration factors, migrant’s adaptation.

The PHD thesis “The adaptation of emigrants to a new educational context” begins by analyzing the phenomenon of migration, then deals with the theories, approaches and explanations of migration, and once these topics have been discussed, it focuses on the issue of emigrants’ adaptation to a new educational context, and this adaptation is approached along four main lines, namely linguistic adaptation, adaptation in school, social adaptation and the relationship between pupils and teachers. The thesis is organized in 5 chapters, followed by the final conclusions, bibliography and a set of appendixes.

The first chapter, *The emergence and evolution of the migration phenomenon*, is a theoretical overview of the existing literature on the topic of migration, reviewing various authors in this field of study and their major contributions. First, we defined the concepts of migration and mobility. The following step was to identify and describe the stages in the act of migration and its forms. Specifically, these stages are: making the decision, the migration itself, followed by the migrant’s decision either to stay in the host country or go back to their home country. In this first chapter, we also looked at the other forms that migration can take, namely emigration and remigration. Emigration is a phenomenon that normally affects only the population surplus in the area of departure and does not significantly alter the demographic pyramid, and we can talk about a demographic outflow when a population larger than the demographic surplus is involved in the migration process, thus altering the age pyramid and the natural balance, while immigration is the process of entering and permanently settling onto a country’s territory, other than the country of origin or of previous adoption. These delimitations and observations are important because, in order to be able to approach the issue of Romanian pupils’ adaptation to a new educational context, we first need to understand and define the concept of migration in all its forms. In examining, through this paper, the issue of Romanians’ migration, we found that it was necessary to do an analysis of the migration phenomenon over periods of several years in our country. As consequences of migration, we identified both positive and negative effects.

The paper's second chapter, *Approaches, models, theories and explanatory factors of migration* focused on analyzing theories on migration and the factors that trigger this phenomenon. To begin, we discussed some theoretical approaches that analyze the emergence of migration. According to neoclassical economic theory at a macro level, the geographical differences between workforce supply and demand between the countries of origin and of destination determine the flows of migrants and the neoclassical economic theory at a micro level postulates that rational individuals tend to migrate after taking into account a cost – benefit analysis. The new economy of migration emphasizes the fact that the decisions on migration are not made individually and in an isolated manner, but at a family level, where people act collectively not only to maximize their income, but also to minimize risks and eliminate the constraints associated with various market failures. Dependency theory explains the failure of non-industrialized countries to develop from an economic point of view, in spite of the investments brought by industrialized countries. As for the theoretical approaches that analyze the evolution of migration, we also identified several theories. The institutional theory was focused on studying the institutions that appear and develop as a result of migration flows, and this theory's central idea is that the development of a flow's institutional aspect, combined with the existence of migrants' networks make the process independent from the environment it takes place in, being the fundamental elements that its self-sustaining characteristic is based on. We also identified theories that did not fit into the previous classifications. The internationalist model defines the concept of migration as a positive exchange of human and fiscal capital in a contemporary global workforce market. Through the theory of relative deprivation we understood that the negative role of a household's or individual's income is an important factor in international migration. The systemic approach underlines the fact that certain forces that operate at various levels lead to a permanence level for international flows and, in time, led to the creation of stable migration systems. The theory of transnational social spaces accepts the existence of various cross-border relationships between individuals, thus explaining the phenomenon of network migration, return migration, the perpetuation of migration processes and the saturation of population flows at a certain level.

Another essential stage in this chapter was the analysis of factors that explain migration. We identified a series of factors that explain migration from different perspectives. There are economic factors, and here we emphasize the existence of two important economic factors: the

first is determined by the real wages gained in the country of origin and the real wages gained in the country of destination, while the second important economic factor is dependent on the probability that a migrant will be successful in finding a job in the destination country. The educational, cultural and political factors are also important when analyzing the phenomenon of migration. Destination countries' educational policies can strongly encourage migration, as can cultural factors, which are very important. In this category we would include religion, language, traditions, customs, new communication and information technologies that contribute to suggesting the idea of migration. Relational factors and the globalization of migration are also highly important, the internationalization of education, changes in production, the expansion of world trade and the spread of multinational companies have contributed to the rise of workforce demand. Relational factors refer to the resources that become available as a result of developing more or less tight relationships with people that are part of communities, organizations and/or networks that facilitate international migration. The rejection and attraction factors refer to the fact that, when an individual decides to migrate, he/she is, in fact, rejecting the unfavorable conditions in his/her country of origin and is attracted to the favorable conditions in the country of destination.

In this paper's third chapter, *The adaptation of emigrants to a new educational context*, we focused on the detailed aspects of the emigrant pupil's adaptation/familiarization process in the host country's school. We defined adaptation as knowing the host country's language, access to the educational system and access to the labor market in that country, the possibility of increasing the level of professional mobility by raising the education level and personal qualification, equality before the law, cultural and religious freedom, the respect for the laws and traditions of the host country. An important role in the process of emigrant's adaptation to their new society/school is played by the national policies of each country. All countries must pay special attention to the standards for national policies of migrants' integration. The second part of this chapter relied on a rigorous research of the scholarly literature on the topic of emigrant pupils' integration in the host country's school. Through these studies/scholarly research, we discerned the fact that the emigrant pupil's adaptation is based on three dimensions/aspects, namely: linguistic adaptation, school adaptation and social adaptation, these three points being closely related. Each dimension of adaptation is very important on its own, since it would be very difficult for any of the three to exist without the others, without a good degree of linguistic

adaptation there cannot be a good degree of school and social adaptation. Linguistic adaptation is the first step in the Romanian emigrant pupil's adaptation to his/her new educational context, since language is the basis of social relations and, also, a good knowledge of the language has a positive impact on success in school. As we see in this chapter, foreign schools have special programs for emigrant children, which allow them to learn the host country's language. From this point of view we can say that emigrant children enjoy the support of educational institutions in learning the language. For the school, the integration of emigrant pupils is a real challenge and since the school is mainly responsible for emigrant pupils' social adaptation as well, its duty is to help these pupils become integrated through intercultural activities that enable all the pupils to understand diversity and accept it. Also, in this chapter we approached the relationship between pupils and teachers. The teachers are an emigrant pupil's main support in the process of adapting to the host country's school. For this reason, they must be trained to be able to adequately deal with emigrant pupils, who are different from a linguistic, cultural and educational point of view from the host countries' pupils and the teachers themselves. We also underlined the importance that must be given by the host countries' schools to the emigrant pupil's adaptation process, since the school is the fundamental institution where intercultural exchanges take place. It is important that the school invest in the teachers' training, in an intercultural curriculum, in a close relationship with the parents and the community and, at the same time, to acknowledge the complicated process of teaching and learning that emigrant pupils go through.

Starting with the fourth chapter, *The adaptation of emigrant Romanian pupils to a new educational context. The teachers' perspective*, we deal with the issue of Romanian emigrant pupils' adaptation through the research we conducted. In this chapter we presented the first study we conducted for this paper, a study that aimed to ascertain the degree of linguistic, school and social adaptation of emigrant Romanian pupils, from the point of view of teachers at the Romanian Language Institute, who teach these pupils the "Romanian language, culture and civilization" class. In the first part of the study we analyzed the teachers' answers to closed-ended questions and in the second part of the study we did a thematic analysis of the teachers' answers to the open-ended questions.

The chapter describes the research objectives, the research variables, the research hypotheses, the methodology employed, the subject group, followed by an analysis of the results. These results

show that Romanian emigrant pupils have a satisfactory level of linguistic and school adaptation, but a less satisfactory level of social adaptation. In the second part of the first study we wanted to find out whether there are any relationships between the research variables, and to see this we used the correlations between the composite scores for each of the four dimensions of adaptation and then, by using Spearman correlations between the answers' distributions we analyzed the correlations between items. This way, we obtained significant correlations between linguistic adaptation and the pupil – teacher relationship, between school adaptation and the pupil – teacher relationship, between social adaptation and the pupil – teacher relationship and between social adaptation and school adaptation. In the third part of this study we analyzed the differences between countries through the independent samples t test. Thus, we noticed that there are differences between Italy and Spain. In Italy's case, we see that the emigrant Romanian pupils who take private language lessons have a higher degree of linguistic adaptation than the emigrant Romanian pupils who only learn the host country's language in school and that Romanian emigrant pupils have more trouble with school integration than emigrant pupils of other nationalities. For Spain, we notice a better linguistic adaptation of emigrant Romanian pupils, a better school adaptation and the fact that the pupils receive support from their teachers for various problems they might be having with school adaptation. We could thus conclude that the Romanian pupils in Spain were better adapted from a linguistic and school point of view than the pupils in Italy.

The qualitative analysis of the teachers' answers to our questions was the second part of the study we conducted in this research. Through this method we were able to identify specific adaptation problems that the emigrant Romanian pupils face. We identified the following specific school adaptation problems: linguistic problems, new school system, ethnic reluctances, emotional problems. The teachers also offered solutions for the Romanian emigrant pupils' school adaptation problems, specifically: support in learning the language, collaboration of all the parties involved in order to support the pupils in the process of school adaptation, psychological support, the school's support in the process of Romanian emigrant pupils' integration. The teachers' answers helped us to identify what the strategies and policies are in the host countries' schools for the integration of emigrants. The teachers spoke about: support for the learning of the language, intercultural activities, support offered by the school for the integration of emigrants. The teachers also emphasized the most important social adaptation problems for

Romanian emigrant pupils. In this category we find linguistic problems, prejudice, school problems. As for our wish to find out whether Romanian emigrant pupils have different social adaptation problems depending on their age, the teachers indicated that, for young pupils, the problems are more related to linguistic barriers and for older pupils, they are more related to social fears and reluctances. We also wanted to find out whether boys and girls had different social adaptation problems. The teachers pointed out that girls face more linguistic and relational problems, while boys exhibit more behavioral and relational problems. Once we identified the social adaptation problems that Romanian emigrant pupils face, we turned our attention to pinpointing the causes of these problems. The main cause of the social problems identified by the Romanian emigrant teachers is the family. This includes a lack of involvement from the parents, a lack of interest on their part concerning their children's problems, a wrong approach of the pupils' problems by their parents. As solutions for these problems, the teachers listed: the family's involvement, intercultural activities, offering psychological support. The thematic analysis was very helpful because it allowed us to find the relationships between the variables.

The last chapter in this paper, *Romanian emigrant pupils' adaptation in foreign schools along the dimensions of linguistic, school and social adaptation and the pupil – teacher relationship* deals with the Romanian emigrant pupils' adaptation/familiarization to the host country's school from the point of view of these pupils. This chapter presents the research objectives, the research variables, the research hypotheses, the methodology used, the subject group, followed by an analysis of the results. Based on the results we got, we noticed that Romanian emigrant pupils have a satisfactory level of linguistic and school adaptation, but a less satisfactory level of social adaptation. In the research phase where we analyzed the correlations between the composite scores for all the four dimensions of Romanian emigrant pupils' adaptation (linguistic adaptation, school adaptation, social adaptation, pupil – teacher relationship) by calculating the average for the answers to items that make up the dimensions of adaptation we obtained correlations between the linguistic adaptation variable and the school adaptation variable, correlations between the linguistic adaptation variable and the pupil – teacher relationship variable, correlations between the school adaptation variable and the social adaptation variable, correlations between the school adaptation variable and the pupil – teacher relationship variable, correlations between the social adaptation variable and the pupil – teacher relationship variable. In the research stage where we wanted to see whether there are any

correlations between the Romanian emigrant pupils' age and the four dimensions of adaptation, we only found one positive correlation between the pupils' age and item 2 – “I knew the host country's language before I emigrated” – item which focuses on an aspect of Romanian emigrant pupils' linguistic adaptation. As for the analysis of the differences between the two countries (Italy and Spain) where we got the most answers to the questionnaire administered with the *t test for independent samples* we only obtained one difference for the linguistic adaptation variable, as the Romanian emigrant pupils in Spain had a higher level of linguistic adaptation than the Romanian emigrant pupils in Italy.

This paper ends with a comparison between the two studies. For the linguistic adaptation variable we noticed that more teachers (86.1%) than Romanian emigrant pupils (76.5%) estimated that the latter adapted quickly from a linguistic point of view in the host country's school. For the school adaptation variable more teachers (94.4%) than Romanian emigrant pupils (50%) estimated that the latter adapted quickly to the school system in the host country. For the social adaptation variable, 38.9% of the teachers did not agree that the Romanian emigrant pupils adapted quickly in school, from a social standpoint, while 29.4% of the students did not agree that they made friends quickly at school. As for the relationships between the variables, both in the first study and in the second one, we made the correlations between the composite scores for each of the four dimensions of Romanian emigrant pupils' adaptation (linguistic adaptation, school adaptation, social adaptation and the pupil – teacher relationship) by calculating the averages for the participants' answers to the items that make up each of the four dimensions of adaptation. Thus, both in the first study and in the second study we obtained the following common correlations between: correlations between the pupil – teacher relationship variable and the school adaptation variable, linguistic adaptation and social adaptation and correlations between the school adaptation variable and the social adaptation variable. We did not obtain, either in the first study or in the second one, any gender differences for the four dimensions of adaptation. The only exception is that for the second study we got one gender difference by analyzing the correlations for each individual item. This gender difference concerns the school adaptation dimension, represented in item 9 – “I like it more in school here than in Romania” – the difference being that boys like it more at school in the host country than in Romania. As for differences between the two countries (Italy and Spain), the only common difference between these two countries was on the linguistic adaptation dimension: more teachers in Spain than in

Italy estimated that the Romanian emigrant pupils adapted quickly from a linguistic point of view to the host country's school and the Romanian emigrant pupils in Spain have a higher level of linguistic adaptation than the Romanian emigrant pupils in Italy. What is interesting is that both studies show that Romanian emigrant pupils in Spain have a higher level of linguistic adaptation than Romanian emigrant pupils in Italy.

This thesis ends with a presentation of the general conclusions, the bibliography and the appendixes used.