SCHOOL ADAPTATION, PREMISES OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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ABSTRACT: *Research in the field concentrated on the issue of school success / failure, conducted recently, has focused on studying the environment from which the child comes. The influence of the family environment on school success is very complex, exceeding the comparison between the socio-economic situation of families from different social classes. In this context, a topical challenge is the situation of children with parents working abroad and the effect exerted by the external economic migration of parents on the academic success of children left at home. Because most studies on this topic emphasize the role of the family climate in the school adaptation of the child and, obviously, in achieving his school success, this research aims to highlight, from the perspective of social actors involved, the measures needed to facilitate the school success of children with parents working abroad.*

KEY WORDS: *school adaptation, academic maladaptations, school integration, school deviance, school absenteeism, school dropout, school success.*

JEL CLASSIFICATIONS: *I20, I21*.

1. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

1.1. School adaptation/maladaptations

Adaptation is, according to Piagetian theory, the necessary condition for existence: the body, in order to survive, transforms according to the environment to maintain, on the one hand, the balance with the external environment, and, on the other hand, to maintain the balance of its internal environment. There is, therefore, a synchronization with the demands of the external environment, by changing the person's behavior according to the requirements of the social environment (accommodation), but also by changing the environmental conditions according to individual goals and needs (assimilation). These two types of actions are

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interdependent, constantly combining in order to obtain a state of balance, as stable as possible (Rudică, 2005, p.106, coord. Cosmovici).

Psychological adaptation refers to the assimilation of new knowledge and values necessary for social integration, in parallel with the renunciation of some personal attitudes and values that prove to be dysfunctional (being unacceptable by society). The maladaptation represents the opposite situation, the inability of the person to perform, in a balanced way, the two complementary processes: accommodation and assimilation (Rudică, 2005, p.106, coord. Cosmovici).

School adaptation involves achieving the congruence between the requirements of the instructional-educational objectives and the appropriate behavioral feedback of the student in connection with them. A student can be considered adapted when he achieves, on the one hand, the pedagogical or instructional adaptation (assimilation of the instructive requirements) and, on the other hand, the relational adaptation (the student's ability to relate to teachers and colleagues, to assimilate school and social accepted norms). School maladaptation can be considered a form of social maladaptation. The school maladaptation takes into account, on the one hand, the student's difficulties in fulfilling the school tasks, and on the other hand, the failure of integration in the school environment. In general, it is considered that a student is adapted when he is in good relations with other students and responds accordingly to school requirements (Rudică, 2005, p.106, coord. Cosmovici).

The evaluation of school adaptation involves following the harmony that materializes between the student and the school environment at different times, taking into account a number of indicators (Jigau, 1998, p.19), such as: the student's ability to assimilate the information transmitted and the ability to operate with it; the ability to relate to the school group; the ability to internalize school norms and socially accepted values.

School integration means a complex and long-term process through which children with special educational needs are included in mainstream schools. This approach can be considered as a continuous process of adaptation to the conditions of the school environment, characterized by a permanent transformation, the environment changing depending on the requirements of individual integration. In other words, the process of school integration of children with special educational needs must be conceived as a complex action, whose profound significance is not the mechanical, passive conformation of the student to the conditions of the school environment, but the correlation of both factors in interdependent dynamics, to create those optimal conditions so that integration means not only adaptation, but also employment.

We can conclude, therefore, that the two concepts - school adaptation and school integration - do not have the same meaning, neither they are mutually exclusive, the two semantic spheres overlapping to some extent; a good school adaptation determines a successful school integration, and conversely, the school integration presupposes a better adaptation to the school environment.

1.2. Forms of school maladaptation

From a legal perspective, adaptation means achieving concordance between social norms (rules of conduct, recognized and accepted by the community) and individual behaviors. Misconduct (deviant) behavior is considered to be that deviation from the norm that can lead to conflicts between the individual and society. Delinquency is the most serious form of deviance. Any form of deviance is based on a maladaptation to the environment. The phenomenon of school deviance represents the behavioral expression of maladaptation to the school environment (Rudică, 2005, p. 106-107, coord. Cosmovici).

School deviance is expressed through various forms of manifestation, from actions and behavioral deviations less serious from a legal point of view, to actions of crime and delinquency where criminal law is required to intervene to regulate them: lying, nonconformist attitudes, verbal and physical aggression, copying, running away from school, truancy, dropping out of school, vandalism, drug addiction, suicide (Rudică, 2005, pp. 106-107, coord. Cosmovici). In the following we will describe the concepts of school absenteeism and school dropout, concepts with which we operate in establishing the objectives and working hypotheses of this research.

School absenteeism, which is considered to be a social problem, explained by "the sociocultural characteristics of the environment of origin and appearing more frequently in urban areas and in poor families" (Neamțu, 2003, p. 193-194) must be differentiated of running away from school, which is interpreted based on emotional difficulties. The phenomenon of absenteeism has shown an impressive dynamic in recent decades, the number of students who leave school without having a good reason is constantly growing: they leave home equipped to attend classes, spend time in any location other than school (parks, bars, game rooms, etc.) and return home according to school schedule. Over time, "the student can make the transition to other activities, more enjoyable or more profitable: alcohol or drug use, theft, prostitution. Absenteeism leads to school dropout, but it is, at the same time, the most important catalyst factor for drug use, violence and crime" (Neamțu, 2003, p. 193-194).

The main causes of absenteeism have their roots both in the school environment that can develop motivation to attend school or can act in the opposite direction and in this case, increases the rate of absenteeism, but also in the family environment. The role of the family in the student's school absenteeism is more pronounced in various situations such as: parents who are indifferent or who do not value school education; the parents ask the child to leave school in order to perform household chores or to bring income to the family; parents are noi available to exercise control over the child`s attendance at school (sick parents, parents in detention or with addictive behaviours); overprotective, anxious or immature parents who, due to the protection of the child, do not allow him to attend school (Neamțu, 2003, p.197).

Absenteeism is a stage of transition to permanent evasion leading to early school leaving, before obtaining a qualification or completing the education cycle started. The dropout rate is determined by the ratio between the number of students enrolled for a school level and the number of graduates.

The etiology of school dropout phenomenon is extremely complex, also summarized by Neamțu (2003), the factors that determine the cessation of school attendance being:

- economic causes: the literature contains a series of studies that "have shown that the highest rate of violent behavior and school dropout is found in schools attended by children from disorganized families or communities characterized by social disorganization" (Ellul, 1992, p.46-48, apud Neamțu, 2003, p. 204);
- sociocultural or religious causes: belonging to social, ethnic, racial class, sex, rural / urban communities; thus, there are studies that have shown that there is a higher dropout rate for girls than for boys, that students from ethnic minority families drop out of school more than those from the majority, that those from social assisted families drop out of school faster, that the percentage of school dropout is higher in rural areas than in urban areas;
- psychological causes: labels such as "weak student", "failed", "deviant" cause the student's self-esteem to decrease, and he will try to find his value outside the school environment, even with the risk school dropout;
- pedagogical causes: these refer to the quality of academic life, „the existing records indicate that the highest dropout rates are provided by segregated schools, public vocational schools, large schools, with numerous classes and schools in which a great emphasis is placed on supervision and testing "(Dryfoos, 1990, p.89, apud Neamțu, 2003, p.205).

This form of school maladaptation places academic dropout among the most serious problems, because those who leave the education system have not completed the vocational training necessary for social integration, neither is moral and civic education sufficiently mastered to ensure their role as good parents and citizens. responsible for the community. Not being qualified, those who adopt this form of permanent evasion will be the future unemployed and will represent "in the medium and long term, a source of social difficulties and losses, which exceed the investment required by initial training" (Văideanu, 1991, apud Neamțu, 2003, p.205), and regarding the economic costs, "expensive is not the well-educated person, but the insufficiently educated one, who leaves school with a shaky formation from a moral, intellectual or aesthetic point of view." (Văideanu, 1988, p.21-23, apud Neamțu, 2003, p.205).

1.3. Family factors of social maladaptation

The family, considered the first environment of socialization, through its characteristics, "through its tone and emotional atmosphere, through its cultural dimension and its degree of social integration, is a determining educational environment. Any disagreements and tensions in the family environment will generate doubts, reluctance or maladaptive reactions in the child's consciousness." (Rudică, 2005, p. 110, coord. Cosmovici). The family environment is appropriate for the child's development if it is an emotional and secure environment, which satisfies the child as long as it meets his basic needs.

We mention, below, family factors (Hudițean, 2001), which can cause behavioral disorders and, implicitly, maladaptive school behaviors:

- deficits of family climate and family structure; the general family harmony influences the psychological balance of all its members. Parents are the essence of the family; the temporary or permanent absence of one or even both parents, death, abandonment, neglect, abuse or even overprotection (for example, in the case of an adopted or single child in the family) are just some of the situations that can lead to school maladaptation.
- educational differences between adult family members; The family environment, most of the time, consists of the nuclear group, to which are added the extended family members: grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, etc., each with certain principles and their own philosophy about life and the educational system to be applied to the child. In this situation, the child will slalom among the rules, avoiding them, and the effect is not the most favorable for adaptation and school results.
- fraternal group; the child is influenced in the family not only by adults, but also by other children in the family group (brothers, sisters, cousins), these roots depending on many aspects: the number of children, their sex, age, position in the fraternity. Influences can be beneficial (for example, in families with several children, they have more diverse human relationships, experience rivalry, competition, but also collaboration, solidarity) or unfavorable (for example, the situation of the only or youngest child, who becomes pampered family, then the little tyrant, irrational and capricious).
- disagreement between supply and demand: the need to maintain a sense of proportion in the attitude, criticism and demands on the child; the excessive demands of some parents on their children can be a source of school maladaptation, irascibility and even aggression in relation to school tasks (Hudițean, 2001, p.77-115).

1.4. Family factors involved in school success

Mass education supports the idea that competition in mainstream schools is achieved "on an equal footing in terms of chances of success and that success depends exclusively on the merits of the individual. There would be no differences between social classes in terms of school success. However, the social sciences have long highlighted the real relationship between school success and social stratification: children with equal skills, coming from different social backgrounds can achieve different school performance" (Neculau & Boncu, coord. Cosmovici & Iacob, 2005, p. 250). Studies undertaken on this topic have highlighted issues, such as: students from economically disadvantaged classes obtain poorer school results, with lower grades in almost all educational subjects, being admitted less in high school or college; these children finish school more quickly, and the dropout rate is higher among them; with low academic results, they lose interest in school activities, get bored, become more aggressive and tend to miss school more; the school aspirations of children from less economically advantaged backgrounds are low and they do not consider that school

attendance is a prerequisite for professional achievement; this causal relationship between the social environment and school success becomes more evident as the level of schooling increases; however, it should be mentioned that "the influence of class membership ceases to manifest itself in highly gifted or highly motivated students" (Neculau & Boncu, coord. Cosmovici & Iacob, 2005, p. 250).

Research in the field concentrated on the issue of school success / failure, recently focused on studying the environment from which the child comes from the theory of sociocultural disability, which states that sociocultural inequalities are the premise of inequalities in educational pathways (Solovăstru, 2004, p. 242). Although the proponents of the idea of equal opportunities in the educational environment criticize this conception, researching the school failure, there is always a causal relationship between this and the socio-economic background of the student in difficulty. The evaluation of the influences of the family environment regarding the student's school results, take into account a multitude of parameters, such as: the economic situation of the family; the socio-professional status of parents; the cultural level in the family; the family educational style; the structure of the family; the relationships between family members; the type of family cohesion; (Solovăstru, 2004, p. 242). The precarious economic situation of the family influences, in a negative sense, the school route of the student, mainly due to the fact that the family cannot financially support the schooling expenses: clothes, supplies, transport, etc. which leads to the interruption of schooling, even before the end of the primary education cycle: "In all countries there are school dropouts, only that, in developed economies, school dropouts are higher at the post-compulsory level (high school, higher education), which in poor countries the dropout rate is higher at the level of primary education" (Solovăstru, 2004, p. 242).

Teachers and instructive-educational activities in the school require the use of the developed language code, and the code based on concrete symbolism delays cultural acquisitions, which may be another explanation for the school failure of children from disadvantaged families. Regarding the parents' attitude towards the educational institution, the researches highlighted the positive attitude of those in the favored classes towards the school, appreciating its role in the formation, training and social propulsion of the student. (Bernstein, 1978, apud. Neculau & Boncu, coord. Cosmovici & Iacob, 2005, pp. 251-253). On the other hand, "those with lower socio-economic status also encourage their children to achieve school success, aware that this is the only legitimate way of social ascension for them. Unfortunately, parents in the second category have difficulty translating their general support for their children's education into specific behaviors. " (Bernstein, 1978, apud. Neculau & Boncu, coord. Cosmovici & Iacob, 2005, p. 251-253).

In accordance with the above, we join those who support the idea of major influence of the family environment on school success / failure of students, accepting the statement of the theory of sociocultural disability according to which, the inequalities of educational path are determined by socio-cultural inequalities, without totally disagreeing with supporters of the idea of equal opportunities in education, but bringing up that, where necessary, on the continuum of the school-family-community

triad, the school and the whole community must intervene to support the family in order to rebalance opportunities and ensure equity in education.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND SUBJECTS

The research on the proposed measures to facilitate school success was conducted in a larger study aimed at outlining the consequences of external economic migration of parents on children left at home, conducted between February 2015 and February 2016. The research method used was questionnaire-based survey. Because the aim was to capture the researched phenomenon from multiple perspectives, 4 structured questionnaires were made, designed for each of the social actors whose opinions we wanted to perceive: students, their legal representatives, teachers, representatives of local authorities. For the purpose of the comparative analysis of the data, the questionnaires also included common questions that addressed the same aspects of the researched topic, which we tried to capture from different angles of social reality. The subjects of the present research are people from the Jiu Valley who had the availability to participate in this study. The field stage was finished with the completion of 608 questionnaires. After the verification stage of the collected data, 582 questionnaires were validated, completed by the social actors involved as follows: 187 students from the gymnasium or high school cycle, 187 representatives of the children, 151 teachers (among which, 41 school counselors), 57 representatives of local authorities.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS

The students' opinion on the measures that could be implemented in order to facilitate their own school success is illustrated in figure 1:
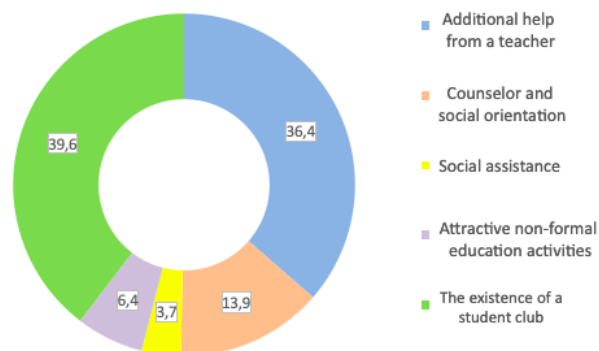

Figure 1. Measures to facilitate school success (%) (subjected students)

Responding students consider that various measures such as social assistance services (3.7%), the organization of attractive non-formal education activities (6.4%) or school counseling and guidance activities (13.9%) can facilitate their school success.

More than a third (36.4%) of the students surveyed believe that additional help from a teacher would be beneficial to consolidate the assimilated knowledge and, implicitly, to ensure their educational success, but most of them (39.6%) believe that the existence of a club of students with parents gone to work abroad to meet the needs of these children, is a measure that would facilitate their academic success.
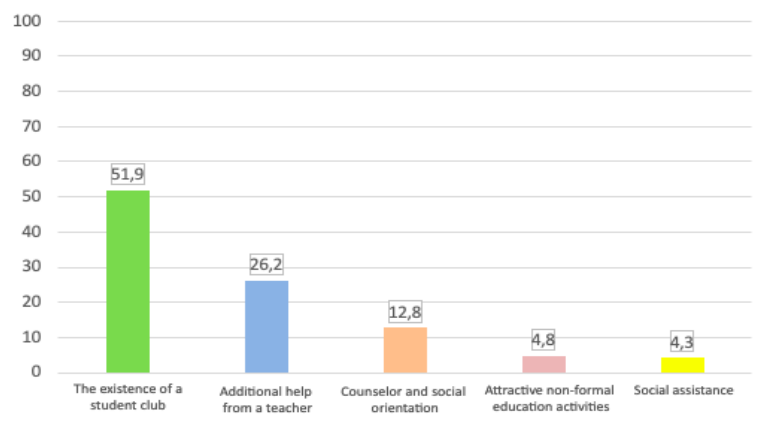

Figure 2. Measures to facilitate school success (%) (students' representatives)

Also, most of the student representatives, more than half of them (51.9%) consider that the operation in school of a club of students with parents working abroad can provide the necessary framework to facilitate the academic success of these students. children, as can be seen in figure 2. Other measures considered appropriate to facilitate the academic success of students with parents who work abroad are, in the opinion of their representatives: additional help from a teacher (26.2%); school counseling and guidance (12.8%); interactive non-formal education activities (4.8%); social assistance services (4.3%).

Regarding the opinion of teachers, referring to the measures that should be implemented to help children with parents who have gone to work abroad, in order to facilitate their academic success, the situation can be seen in Figure 3. More than half of the teachers interviewed (55.6%) opted for the establishment of clubs for students with parents working abroad, in which children participate in various activities to facilitate their school success, such as: performing homework under the guidance and supervision of teachers responsible for this educational activity within the club; practicing some skills; psycho-pedagogical counseling.

Other options chosen by the education specialists who answered the questionnaire are: additional help from a teacher (17.9%) for subjects that put students in difficulty; counseling and school guidance (15.2%) for children whose parents work outside the country; social assistance services (6.6%) provided to qualified persons within the educational institution; attractive non-formal education activities (4.6%) that create well-being and facilitate the acceptance of the situation by children affected by the economic migration of their parents.
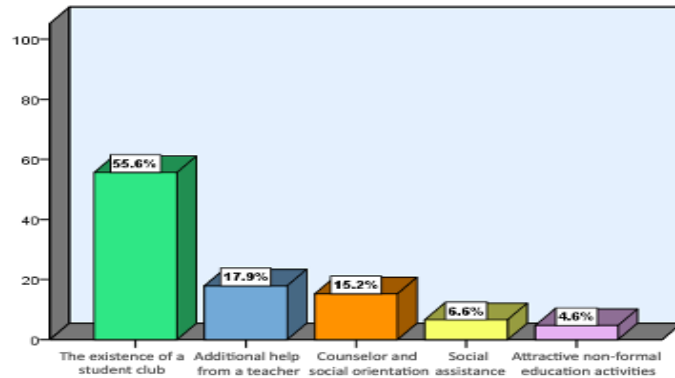
Figure 3. Measures to facilitate the school success of children with parents working abroad (teachers)

Representatives of local authorities also expressed their views on measures that would be useful to improve school results and ensure the success of children with parents who have gone to work outside the country. The situation is illustrated in figure 4. The surveyed specialists, from the town halls of Jiu Valley, chose as the first option (57.9%), the attendance by students with parents who went to work abroad, of clubs organized by local decision makers, in order to facilitate school success of children affected by the economic migration of their parents.

The next option (17.5%) is to provide social assistance services: identifying children at risk, monitoring and counseling students with migrant parents and their families, ensuring mediation between student, teacher and family.
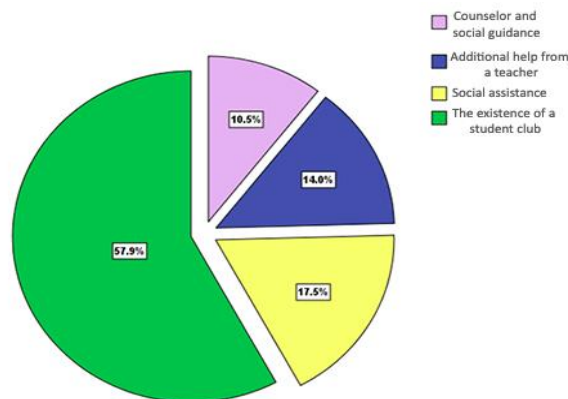

Figure 4. Measures to facilitate the school success of children with parents working abroad (representatives of local authorities)

Another measure that could be useful for achieving the school success of students with departed parents, in the opinion of 14% of representatives of local

authorities who responded to the questionnaire, is the provision of additional support for educational tasks by a teacher, depending on the difficulties that the student encounters. The school counseling and guidance services that can be offered by the specialists of the psycho-educational assistance centers that serve the school units, could represent another solution for facilitating the school success of the students who have their parents working abroad, according to 10.5% of the representatives of local authorities.

4. CONSLUSIONS

Of all the answer options of this item, the establishment of a club of students with parents working abroad obtained the highest percentages, this option being considered the best measure to facilitate the academic success of students with parents working abroad, by all social actors participating in the research, whether it was the students interviewed, their legal representatives, teachers or specialists of social assistance services.

A rather high percentage also obtains the possibility of additional help from a teacher for subjects that put students in difficulty, especially in the situation when the parent to whom the child usually appeals is gone to work abroad. It is worth noting the opinion of teachers who offer a fairly high percentage for counseling and school guidance of children affected by external economic migration of parents, while specialists in local government rely more on the role of social services. Of course, these measures are not mutually exclusive but, on the contrary, they can work together to facilitate the academic success of students with parents who have gone to work abroad.

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