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Renata Burai, PhD, Assistant Professor

University of Zagreb

Academy of Fine Arts

renata.burai@alu.unizg.hr

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5634-2996>

Ivan Burić, PhD, Associate Professor

University of Zagreb

Faculty of Croatian Studies

iburic@fhs.unizg.hr

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8539-6013>

EXPECTATIONS OF THE DIASPORA FROM CROATIAN TEACHING ABROAD

Abstract: *This paper presents the results of a survey of the satisfaction and attitudes of emigrant parents whose children attend Croatian classes abroad, about Croatian teaching abroad. The research was carried out via an online survey on a convenience sample of emigrant parents in a large number of European countries, and it included 261 parents with 341 children. The results of the research indicate that parents are highly satisfied with Croatian teaching abroad. They consider the teaching of the Croatian language somewhat more important than the teaching of Croatian heritage. Among the two separate dimensions of the Curriculum, the educational-teaching dimension of teaching proved to be somewhat more significant than the national-integrative dimension. As the most important goals of teaching the Croatian language and culture, the parents emphasised communication in the Croatian language and becoming familiar with Croatian customs and traditions. Their expectations from classes were met, while opinions about the need to increase the number of teaching hours for teaching Croatian language and literature and Croatian historical, cultural and natural heritage were divided. The paper emphasises the importance of Croatian teaching abroad and provides guidelines for the development of the new curriculum and the direction of the Republic of Croatia's public policies towards the diaspora.*

Keywords: *diaspora, Croatian identity, Curriculum of Croatian Teaching Abroad, public policies of the Republic of Croatia towards emigration.*

INTRODUCTION

Since the onset of the economic crisis of 2009–2013, estimates suggest that between 300,000 and 400,000 Croatian citizens emigrated to European Union countries (Jurić, 2017, 2018a, 2018b; Pokos, 2020; Burić, 2024). According to the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, most emigrants moved to Germany¹, followed by Austria, Switzerland, Italy, and Ireland. Emigration from Slavonia and other less-developed regions, such as Sisak-Moslavina, Virovitica-Podravina, and Bjelovar-Bilogora counties, was particularly intense. Although precise demographic estimates of emigrants are not fully available, some authors (Burić, 2024, p. 75) suggest that the new emigrant population includes an equal number of men and women, primarily of younger and middle-aged groups, with secondary school education being the most common level of attainment. Consequently, this emigrant cohort predominantly comprises individuals of childbearing age, many of whom have already established families (Jurić, 2018a). One distinctive feature of the latest wave of emigration from Croatia is the significant proportion of minor children within emigrant families, indicating that entire families are relocating (Jurić, 2017, p. 348; Župarić-Iljić, 2016, p. 9). Additionally, this latest wave of emigration differs from earlier ones in several ways. Unlike past emigration waves, this one appears less standardized due to the absence of administrative barriers, improved transport connectivity, relatively low travel costs, and easy access to job market information in destination countries. As a result, there is greater uncertainty regarding plans for permanent residence in new environments, the depth of integration into new sociocultural settings, intentions to return, career development, and children's education and future.

The care for Croatian citizens abroad is governed by the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia. According to this document, the Act on Relations of the Republic of Croatia with Croats Abroad (Official Gazette 124/11, 16/12, Article 7) stipulates that Croatia aims to preserve and strengthen the position and identity of Croats living abroad through language learning, cultural promotion, education, and science. These individuals are entitled to all rights and obligations prescribed by specific laws related to schooling, employment, scholarships, and more. Furthermore, the Act on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools (Official Gazette 125/2012, Article 47) emphasises the importance of additional education for Croatian children abroad by organizing

¹ For example, in 2009, 46.7% of the total number of Croatian emigrants to EU member states settled in Germany, and by 2016, this had increased to 71.2% (Pokos, 2017, p. 17). Before Croatia's entry into the European Union, minimal numbers of Croatian emigrants were recorded in Ireland, although the 2011 Irish census found 980 residents born in Croatia. The April 2016 Irish census recorded 5,202 residents born in Croatia, representing an increase of 430.8% compared to 2011 (Pokos, 2017, p. 19).

Croatian language and culture lessons based on the Curriculum for Croatian Teaching Abroad (hereinafter: the Curriculum) (Official Gazette 194/2003), under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Science, Education, and Sports. The Curriculum² is designed for children of Croatian citizens who temporarily or permanently live in other countries or for those whose family language is Croatian (Curriculum, 2003, p. 1). The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Croatia (Official Gazette 73/2017), under Section IV, lists the protection, strengthening, and promotion of constitutional values and Croatian national identity as one of its strategic goals. The preservation and enhancement of Croatian national identity abroad are achieved through the educational content outlined in the Curriculum. The principles of the Curriculum, which represent its foundational values³ (Curriculum, 2003, p. 4), aim to achieve educational goals across various contexts. Emphasis is placed on educational achievements, and both general and operational goals are specified, focusing on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes students are expected to acquire.

The Curriculum is integrative, covering Croatian language and literature, as well as knowledge of Croatia's historical, cultural, and natural heritage through geography, history, music, and visual arts.

The general goals of the Curriculum include the following:

- Learning the Croatian language and literature and effectively using it in formal and informal contexts (family, school, work, leisure, etc.).
- Understanding Croatia's historical and cultural heritage and the main characteristics of modern Croatian society.
- Acquiring knowledge of Croatia's geographical features.
- Developing a positive attitude toward Croatian language, literature, and Croatia's cultural and natural heritage as the students' country of origin and a key element of their national identity.
- Motivating students to learn and preserve the Croatian language, literature, and heritage.
- Equipping students with the skills, knowledge, and values needed to pursue further education in Croatian.
- Encouraging students to shape their identity by comparing Croatian culture with that of the host country and successfully adapting to a multicultural social context.
- Promoting multilingualism and interculturalism as a way of life in modern society (Curriculum for Croatian Teaching Abroad, 2003, p. 14).

² The Curriculum is a written document that encompasses all aspects of the educational process: goals, tasks, content, outcomes, organization, methods, and evaluation.

³ The principles of the Curriculum are as follows: balance, coherence and continuity, openness, flexibility, interculturality, inclusiveness, and a student-centred approach (Curriculum, 2003, p. 5–6).

These eight general educational goals are further elaborated through operational objectives within thematic units (e.g., personal identity, learning-work-leisure, people in space and time, continuity and change, culture and society, contemporary society, global interconnectedness, and interdependence). For the Croatian language and literature, operational goals emphasise communicative competence, linguistic proficiency (in pronunciation, spelling, grammar, and vocabulary), and literary appreciation to foster a positive attitude toward the Croatian language and literature, encourage a reading culture, and promote aesthetic appreciation (Curriculum, 2003, p. 25).

For Croatian historical, cultural, and natural heritage, operational goals include fostering interest in visual and musical expressions, understanding Croatia's natural, social, and economic characteristics, and learning about key historical processes related to Croatia as the students' country of origin. The cultural dimension plays a critical role in identity preservation, emphasising national and regional uniqueness while encouraging shared cultural values.

Given the varied prior knowledge of students in Croatian teaching abroad, the goals are structured across three levels:

1. Grades 1–4 of primary school (lower primary level).
2. Grades 5–8/9 (upper primary level).
3. Four grades of secondary school (9/10–12).

The Curriculum also outlines the knowledge, skills, and values to be acquired, along with recommended literature, teaching resources, didactic-methodological guidelines, and evaluation criteria. The Ministry of Science, Education, and Sports currently implements Croatian teaching abroad in 24 countries (Bušljeta Kardum et al., 2022). Classes are conducted in rented facilities after students' regular school hours or on Friday/Saturday afternoons. In some countries, Croatian language classes are integrated into the local education system, while others use a combined approach (Bošnjak, 2024, pp. 200–201). Classes are held for two hours weekly in heterogeneous groups based on age and prior knowledge (70 hours per subject annually).

To implement the Curriculum, the Ministry selects primary school teachers, Croatian language teachers, or history teachers according to the Act on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools.⁴ Teachers must possess comprehensive knowledge of Croatia's cultural and natural heritage, its literature, and arts, along with professional competencies and a commitment to continuous professional development (Curriculum, 2003, p. 96). Before starting work abroad, the Ministry organizes one- or two-day seminars to prepare teachers for the specific pedagogical, didactic, and methodological requirements of teaching Croatian abroad.

⁴ Regulation on the Conditions and Procedure for the Selection of Teachers for Work in Croatian Teaching Abroad, Official Gazette 87/08.

According to the current Curriculum (Official Gazette 194/2003), Croatian teaching abroad has been in place for two decades. During this period, significant changes in education and technological advancements have occurred. Pedagogical standards have improved, and sustainable development strategies – such as education for environmental awareness, human rights, and social justice – are increasingly integrated into new curricula. Recognizing the need to adapt education policies, Croatia's National Development Plan for Education until 2027 aims to update the Curriculum and develop appropriate educational materials. This research focuses on analysing the satisfaction, expectations, and perspectives of the Croatian diaspora regarding the current Curriculum and education abroad.

Since Croatian teaching abroad links Croatian emigrant children and youth with their language and culture, and Croatian schools serve as hubs for community activities (Bušljeta Kardum et al., 2022, p. 88), the primary goal of this study is to form effective public policies for emigrants, particularly regarding education and identity preservation. This research aims to explore emigrant parents' expectations, opinions, and plans regarding the education of their children, as provided by the Republic of Croatia through Croatian teaching abroad.

METHODOLOGY

Research objectives

This study aims to explore the expectations and attitudes of parents whose children attend Croatian language classes abroad regarding the future of their children's education organized by the Republic of Croatia through Croatian teaching abroad, as well as their satisfaction with certain aspects of Croatian teaching abroad (achieving objectives and familiarity with the Curriculum of Croatian Teaching Abroad) and the national component in education and upbringing. This serves as the general goal of the research.

Based on this, the following four specific research objectives were defined:

1. To determine the extent to which parents assess the achievement of specific general and operational objectives of the Curriculum.
2. To determine the importance of the educational-teaching and national-integrative components of the Curriculum for parents' satisfaction with Croatian teaching abroad.
3. To assess parents' satisfaction and attitudes towards specific features of the Croatian language and literature education, as well as Croatian natural, historical, and cultural heritage education.
4. To determine the importance of specific operational objectives in the Croatian language and literature teaching and Croatian historical, cultural,

and natural heritage education (geography, history, music, and visual arts), conducted through the Curriculum.

Research method and measurement instrument

Data for the research were collected via the survey method, specifically through online survey techniques. The survey was created and distributed to participants via the Lime Survey tool via Facebook groups for Croatian emigrants and through the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (MZOM) to coordinators and teachers of Croatian teaching abroad, who then forwarded the survey to parents of students across Europe. The link to the survey, along with an invitation to participate, was sent twice through MZOM to coordinators and teachers of Croatian language education abroad (Europe) on 30 April and 27 May 2024. During the same period, the survey was also promoted in 57 Facebook groups for Croats in Europe.

The aim of this study was to assess the satisfaction of Croatian emigrant parents with the current Croatian language education abroad, based on specific general and operational objectives of the Croatian Curriculum of Teaching Abroad. Given the specifics of the Curriculum, particularly its integrative nature, which includes teaching the Croatian language and literature as well as acquiring knowledge about Croatia's historical, cultural, and natural heritage through subjects such as geography, history, music, and visual arts, the creation of the questionnaire began with the general and operational goals of the educational process in the Croatian language and literature and Croatian historical, cultural, and natural heritage. Consequently, the questionnaire included two main groups of questions.

The first group contained questions evaluating participants' satisfaction with the general objectives of the Curriculum. Three questions assessed parents' familiarity with and satisfaction with the current Curriculum, while twelve statements assessed the realization of specific educational objectives of the Curriculum.⁵

The second group of questions aimed to assess participants' familiarity with the content of the Croatian language and literature Curriculum as well as the Croatian historical, cultural, and natural heritage Curriculum. It also included questions in which parents evaluated the importance of specific operational objectives related to Croatian language and literature (7 items) and Croatian historical, cultural, and natural heritage (9 items).⁶

⁵ Each particle is assigned a scale ranging from 1 (the specified curriculum goal is not achieved at all) to 5 (the specified curriculum goal is fully achieved).

⁶ Importance was assessed on a scale ranging from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (extremely important). A list of all the particles used can be found in the Appendix.

Additionally, the questionnaire included nine demographic questions and inquiries about parents' views on children's interest in attending classes, as well as whether there was a need to increase teaching hours in both areas – Croatian language and literature, and Croatian historical, cultural, and natural heritage.

Sample

The survey-based research was conducted on a non-probabilistic convenience sample of the diaspora residing in Europe. Although these samples do not allow for complete valid generalization of the research results, they provide basic exploratory insights into the issue being studied, thus fulfilling the primary purpose of the research. The sample included 261 parents abroad with 341 children attending, or having attended, Croatian language schools abroad: 1st – 4th grade: 195 students, 5th – 9th grade: 121 students, and high school: 25 students. Most participants were representatives of the first and second levels of Croatian Teaching Abroad. The average age of the participants was 43 years. The study included participants from Germany: 54.3%, Austria and Slovenia: 5.4%, Switzerland: 17.1%, Ireland and England: 10.8%, Benelux countries: 4.4%, Italy and Spain: 4.6%, and other countries: 3.4%.

Statistical procedures

In the data processing phase, in addition to descriptive analysis of the frequencies and percentages of responses, bivariate and multivariate statistical procedures were used. Among the bivariate statistical procedures, the Chi-square test, paired t-test, and Z-test for proportions were applied. The Chi-square test was used to test the statistical significance of differences between different demographic categories of respondents, regarding their knowledge of the Curriculum and whether their expectations of Croatian teaching abroad were met. The paired t-test was applied to test the statistical significance of differences in the assessment of the importance of the educational-teaching and national-integrative components of the Curriculum, as well as the statistical significance of differences in the assessment of the importance of operational objectives in the Croatian language and literature education and operational objectives in Croatian heritage education. The Z-test for proportions was used to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference in parents' assessment of children's interest in the Croatian language and literature education compared with their interest in Croatian historical, cultural, and natural heritage education. Among the multivariate statistical methods, exploratory factor analysis and multiple regression analysis were applied. Exploratory factor analysis was used to gain insight into the structure of the latent space defined by the items used to assess parents' opinions on the realization of specific objectives of the Curriculum. Multiple regression analysis was employed to indirectly assess

the importance of the specific content of the Curriculum for parents' overall satisfaction with Croatian teaching abroad.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To determine the extent to which parents assess the achievement of individual objectives of the Curriculum, three variables were used: parents' familiarity with the Curriculum, the fulfilment of their expectations from Croatian teaching abroad, and parents' assessment of the realization of individual objectives of the Curriculum.

To measure parents' familiarity with the Curriculum, a scale ranging from 1 to 5 was used, where 1 meant not familiar at all, and 5 meant very familiar. The collected data indicate that more than half of the surveyed parents (55.9%) consider themselves fairly familiar with the Curriculum, whereas 44.1% are slightly or moderately familiar. These data suggest that parents are active participants in the educational activities at the Croatian school and are interested in the programme their children attend. Given that parents play a primary role in the upbringing of their children, this indicates that they are monitoring the quality of the Croatian teaching programme. These findings also suggest that they are interested in how teachers convey Croatian national values and identity through various content and topics. When these data are interpreted, it should be noted that the children of the participants mostly attend lower-grade levels of primary school, meaning that they are involved in the first level of Croatian teaching abroad. Specifically, 75% of parents have children attending the first level of education, and 46% have children attending the second level (grades 5–8/9 of primary school). The smallest number of research participants (9.6%) have children attending the third level of education (secondary school).⁷ Therefore, the responses from emigrant parents mainly reflect their views and involvement with Croatian education at the first and second levels abroad. The decline in interest in attending Croatian teaching abroad at higher education levels can be identified as one of the observed problems in Croatian teaching abroad. The reasons for this can be speculated, but at a lower education level, parents have a stronger influence on encouraging children to attend Croatian education. Another reason may be the increased obligations of students at higher levels of education. In this sense, to retain students and encourage them to continue their education in Croatian, a particular focus should be placed on the intrinsic motivation of children.

Regarding parents' expectations from Croatian teaching abroad, most participants (75.4%) mentioned that their expectations were met, while one-quarter of them felt that their expectations were either unmet or partially met.

⁷ The total is greater than 100% because parents may have children at all three levels of education.

Expectations from Croatian teaching abroad may include all the elements defined by the Curriculum, from the achievement of goals, tasks, and content, to material-technical conditions, organization, teaching methods used by teachers, and the teachers themselves. Considering all the factors of this dimension, it can be concluded that a large number of surveyed parents are satisfied with Croatian teaching abroad.

Differences between the demographic categories of parents (gender, generation, and education) in terms of their knowledge of the Curriculum and the fulfilment of their expectations from Croatian teaching abroad were analysed. A difference was found only in the case of generational affiliation, specifically in the variable measuring the fulfilment of expectations from Croatian teaching abroad. Younger participants, members of Generation Y (up to 43 years old), were more likely than members of Generation X (43 years old and older) were to report that their expectations from Croatian education had been fulfilled.

Table 1

Fulfilment of expectations from Croatian teaching abroad by Age

	Expectations were not/mostly not fulfilled	Expectations were mostly fulfilled	Expectations were completely fulfilled
Generation Y	17.9%	47%	35%
Generation X and older	28.1%	56.3%	15.6%

$\chi^2(2) = 10.866, p=0.004$

To assess parents' views on the realization of specific objectives of the Curriculum, twelve items were used, with an associated scale ranging from 1 (this objective is not achieved at all) to 5 (this objective is fully achieved). The following table shows the average values for each item.

Table 2*Parents' assessment of the realization of specific objectives of the Curriculum*

	Mean	Standard Error	SD
Promotes multilingualism and interculturalism	4.20	0.057	0.888
Develops a sense of national pride in children	4.17	0.059	0.931
Motivates children to learn Croatian and use it successfully in everyday situations	4.12	0.054	0.860
Creates opportunities for children to make friends with peers in the Croatian community in the area where we live	4.10	0.059	0.926
Introduces children to the natural and geographical features of Croatia	4.04	0.058	0.912
Croatian teaching abroad helps children understand the historical and cultural heritage of Croatia	4.03	0.058	0.908
Provides better integration for children into the Croatian community in the area where we live	3.94	0.065	1.002
Children acquire skills in creative writing in Croatian	3.93	0.060	0.921
Children develop the ability to find information in Croatian	3.91	0.061	0.948
Children are introduced to the basic processes of the historical development of Croatian society, the state, and culture	3.84	0.058	0.900
Children develop a sense of visual, artistic, and musical creation in Croatia	3.68	0.065	0.990
Children are encouraged to continue their education in Croatian	3.66	0.064	0.987

The means presented in the previous table suggest that parents believe that all the tested objectives of Croatian teaching abroad are achieved, as they are above the theoretical mean of the scale (value 3). However, according to the surveyed parents, the objectives most successfully achieved by Croatian teaching abroad are those focused on multilingualism, interculturalism, fostering national pride in children, and motivating them to speak Croatian in everyday situations. The highest-ranked dimension, focusing on multilingualism and interculturalism, confirms the promotion of multilingualism and interculturalism as an objective emphasised by many authors in the design of modern curricula (Jajić Novogradec, 2017; Petravić, 2014; Sablić, 2014; Sablić, Migles, Rajić, 2021).

Intercultural competence implies establishing and maintaining relationships, respect, patience, flexibility, openness, and curiosity (Hrvatić & Piršl, 2005, p. 258). It is also one of the principles of the Curriculum, respecting the multicultural structure of Croatian society and the society in which the students live, i.e., biculturalism as a way of life for students. Multilingualism and multiculturalism are distinctive features of the experiences of Croatian students teaching abroad.

The next most important value is the development of national pride in children. National pride can be seen as an individual feeling of respect and pride for one's own nation. Motivating students to learn the Croatian language, mastering basic language skills, and enabling students to communicate successfully and use the Croatian standard language in everyday situations is the third most important goal parents believe is achieved by the Curriculum. Language is the key medium through which a nation's cultural and historical heritage is transmitted and preserved. Language is one of the determinants of national identity, and in the Curriculum for teaching Croatian language and literature, it is implemented in the category of communication competence (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) at all levels of education. In contrast, regarding the objectives that parents believe are achieved to a slightly lesser extent by the Curriculum⁸, one that stands out is stimulating interest in continuing education in Croatian and returning to Croatia.

Although this objective is not clearly defined in any part of the Curriculum, it is evident that it could be key in encouraging young people to consider continuing their education in Croatian and returning to Croatia. In other words, encouraging young people to continue their education in Croatia should be more clearly articulated within the Curriculum itself. Additionally, the development of a sense of artistic, visual, and musical creativity in Croatia has been recognized as a goal achieved to a somewhat lesser extent. The reasons for this could be twofold. Croatian language and culture education is often conducted by Croatian language teachers, followed by elementary school teachers and history teachers (unpublished data from the author's research on the pedagogical competencies and needs of teachers in Croatian teaching abroad, 2022). These teachers could not have acquired visual, artistic, and musical creativity to the extent required by the specific nature of Croatian teaching abroad. Slightly more than others, during their studies in the field of arts, elementary school teachers have some formal education in these areas. Competencies in these fields are transferred to teachers through professional development provided by the relevant Ministry, or they attempt to acquire

⁸ The Republic of Croatia encourages studying in Croatia through various projects, such as scholarships, accommodation in student dormitories, and special quotas for university programmes.

them independently through further education. Considering this opinion and the results of the study by Burai et al. (2023), which suggests adding to the Regulation on the Conditions and Procedure for the Selection of Teachers for Work in Croatian Teaching Abroad (Official Gazette 41/2009) the possibility for geography, music, and visual arts teachers to work in Croatian teaching abroad, considering the integrative concept of the Curriculum, the development of an appreciation for visual, artistic, and musical creativity in Croatia could be more fully developed in children attending Croatian teaching abroad. For interested teachers of these subjects, additional education could be organized, either as a specialist study or a modular course at the graduate level, which would prepare them to implement all the subject content of the Curriculum and to work in Croatian teaching abroad. This would offer higher-quality teaching in the diaspora and the achievement of goals aimed at fostering an appreciation for visual, artistic, and musical creativity in Croatia in general.

The second goal of this research was to determine the importance of individual components of the Curriculum for parents' satisfaction with Croatian teaching abroad. To gain insight into the structure of the latent space, measured with the twelve items used (Table 2), and to construct the necessary measures for easier execution of other planned analyses, an exploratory factor analysis⁹ was conducted. Using the Guttman-Kaiser criterion for stopping factor extraction and oblique (oblimin) rotation, two latent dimensions were extracted.¹⁰ The first dimension describes the educational-teaching component, and the second describes the national-integrative component of the Curriculum. The educational-teaching function is described by nine items indicating the achievement of various educational goals such as the acquisition of the skills necessary for creation in the Croatian language, interest in continuing education in Croatian, and the development of an appreciation for visual, artistic, and musical creativity, and so on. Three items describe the national-integrative function of the Curriculum, relating to the integration of children into the Croatian community and fostering national pride.

⁹ Bartlett's test was used to assess the significance of the correlation matrix, while the suitability of the correlation matrix for factorization was tested using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test of sampling adequacy. The Bartlett's test of the significance of the correlation matrix was found to be satisfactory ($p < 0.05$). Additionally, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin index was above the reference value (0.6), indicating that the correlation matrices of the variables are suitable for factorization. This suggests that the data structure is robust enough for further analysis and can provide meaningful insights.

¹⁰ The conducted factor analysis explained a total of 65% of the variance. The extracted factor structure fully meets the requirements for convergent validity (the items have satisfactory loadings on only one factor) and discriminant validity (the items have low factor loadings on the other factors). This indicates that the factor structure is both reliable and distinct, supporting the validity of the results.

Table 3*Factor pattern matrix*

	Educational-Teaching Component of the Curriculum	National-Integrative Component of the Curriculum
Children develop the ability to find information in Croatian.	0.892	-0.100
Children acquire skills for creating in Croatian.	0.890	-0.010
Children become familiar with the natural and geographical features of Croatia.	0.843	-0.022
Croatian teaching abroad enables children to understand Croatia's historical and cultural heritage.	0.786	0.065
Multilingualism and interculturalism are promoted.	0.777	-0.044
Children's interest in continuing their education in Croatian is stimulated.	0.775	-0.032
Children are motivated to learn Croatian and successfully use it in everyday situations.	0.736	0.005
Children are introduced to the basic processes of historical development of Croatian society, state, and culture.	0.681	0.190
Children develop an appreciation for visual, artistic, and musical creativity in Croatia.	0.538	0.251
Conditions are created for children to form friendships with peers in the Croatian community where they live.	-0.085	0.927
Children are enabled better integration into the Croatian community where they live.	0.039	0.883
Children develop a sense of national pride.	0.282	0.550

By averaging the values of the retained items, two composite variables were constructed: the educational-teaching and national-integrative components of the Curriculum.¹¹ The mean of the educational-teaching component scale is 3.9 (SD = 0.74), while the mean of the national-integrative component is 4.1 (SD

¹¹ In this manner, the range of each of the used scales/variables was from 1 (expectations from the course were not met) to 5 (expectations from the course were fully met). The internal consistency of both scales is satisfactory. The value of Cronbach's α coefficient for the educational-teaching component of the Curriculum is 0.93, and for the national-integrative component, it is 0.81.

= 0.81). Although this difference is statistically significant ($t = 2.8$, $p = 0.006$), it can be indirectly concluded that parents are slightly more satisfied with the achievement of the national-integrative component of the Curriculum, but this difference cannot be interpreted as substantial. In general, parents are satisfied with the achievement of both components of the Curriculum. However, since the implementation of the educational-teaching component is more strongly associated with parents' overall satisfaction with Croatian teaching abroad¹² ($r = 0.72$), it can be indirectly concluded that the realization of this component is more important to parents than the realization of the national-integrating component¹³. In other words, the educational-teaching component of the Curriculum is more important for parents' satisfaction with Croatian teaching abroad.

To determine which specific contents (educational goals) of these two dimensions of the Curriculum are statistically significant predictors of parents' overall satisfaction with Croatian teaching abroad, two multiple regression analyses were conducted. In the first one, the predictor set consisted of nine variables describing the content of the educational-teaching component of the Curriculum. In the second multiple regression analysis, the predictor set consisted of three variables describing the content of the national-integrative component of the Curriculum. In this manner, the goal was to indirectly determine the importance of the realization of specific educational goals of the Curriculum for parents' satisfaction with Croatian teaching abroad. The results of the multiple regression analyses are presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4

Statistically significant predictors of the educational-teaching component of the Curriculum for parents' satisfaction with Croatian teaching abroad

R=0.642 R²=0.41	B	Beta	t	p
Children are motivated to learn Croatian and use it successfully in everyday situations.	0.158	0.187	2.687	0.008
Croatian teaching abroad enables children to understand Croatia's historical and cultural heritage.	0.170	0.202	2.662	0.008
Multilingualism and interculturalism are promoted.	0.222	0.256	3.668	0.000
Children develop an appreciation for visual, artistic, and musical creativity in Croatia.	0.135	0.169	2.563	0.011

¹² Overall satisfaction of parents with Croatian teaching abroad was assessed by means of the question: "Have your general expectations of Croatian teaching abroad been met?" The response options ranged from 1 – not met at all, to 5 – fully met.

¹³ The value of the Pearson correlation coefficient between the national-integrative component of the Curriculum and the fulfilment of parents' expectations of Croatian teaching abroad is 0.58.

As seen in Table 4, motivating children to learn Croatian and use it successfully in everyday situations, understanding Croatian cultural and historical heritage, promoting multilingualism and interculturalism, and developing an appreciation for visual, artistic, and musical creativity in Croatia are the components of the educational-teaching Curriculum whose implementation generates satisfaction among parents of Croatian teaching abroad. These variables explain 41% of the variance in parents' satisfaction with Croatian teaching abroad. The other five contents that make up the educational-teaching component of the Curriculum are not statistically significant; therefore, they cannot be indirectly treated as those whose implementation contributes to parents' satisfaction.

In contrast, all three components of the national-integrative Curriculum were statistically significant predictors of parents' satisfaction. However, it is worth noting that their contribution to overall satisfaction is smaller. Unlike the statistically significant contents of the educational-teaching component, which explain 41% of the variance in parents' satisfaction, these three national-integrative components explain 27% of the variance in the criterion variable (Table 5).

Table 5

Statistically significant predictors of the national-integrative component of the Curriculum for parents' satisfaction with Croatian teaching abroad

R=0.53 R²=0.27	B	Beta	t	p
Conditions are created for children to form friendships with peers in the Croatian community where they live	0.223	0.266	3.366	0.001
Children are enabled better integration into the Croatian community where they live.	0.137	0.173	2.026	0.044
Children develop a sense of national pride.	0.149	0.186	2.719	0.007

A study on Croatian national identity in the context of educational activities abroad (Bušljeta Kardum et al., 2021) concluded that the Curriculum aims, through learning outcomes related to the content of Croatian language and literature as well as content related to Croatia's historical, cultural, and natural heritage, to encourage students to build and preserve Croatian national identity. Through an analysis of the Curriculum outcomes, it was concluded that there are insufficient learning outcomes in the Curriculum that foster the development of Croatian national identity. The results of this study also indicate that the national-integrative content of the Curriculum is considered significant by emigrant parents for their overall satisfaction with Croatian teaching abroad, and that the national component is an extremely important factor in Croatian

teaching. Therefore, these insights should be considered when creating a new Curriculum, and more content should be included that would help develop positive feelings toward Croatia in children.

The third goal of the research was to examine parents' satisfaction and their attitudes toward specific features of the Croatian language and literature teaching and Croatian historical, cultural, and natural heritage teaching. Approximately half of the surveyed parents stated that they were quite well or very well informed about the content of Croatian language teaching, as well as about the content of Croatian natural, historical, and cultural heritage teaching (hereinafter: Croatian heritage). Exactly 50% considered themselves well-informed about the content of Croatian language teaching, and 43% felt the same about their awareness of heritage teaching content.¹⁴ Additionally, many participants in the study believe that their children are for the most part or fully interested in the content of Croatian teaching abroad. However, more parents assessed that their children's interest in Croatian language teaching was greater than their interest in Croatian heritage teaching. Specifically, 73% of participants stated that their children were for the most part or fully interested in Croatian language and literature lessons, while 65% of parents assessed their children's interest in Croatian heritage lessons in a similar manner.

Given the results indicating that parents assess children's interest in Croatian heritage teaching as slightly lower, despite the immense interest the subject offers, teaching methods should be adapted to modern pedagogical standards and strategies. The use of research, project-based learning, dramatization, simulation, and gamification in lessons would certainly contribute to the attractiveness and increase interest in Croatian heritage teaching. Encouraging connections with schools and friends in Croatia, as well as joint projects about Croatian heritage, should be included as specific goals in the new Curriculum. New digital technologies, which proved to be essential during the COVID-19 pandemic, should also be used as a supplement in teaching, especially through educational video content.

Parents rated the fulfilment of their expectations from the Croatian language and literature teaching (Table 6) for the most part as "mostly fulfilled" (57.1%) or "fully fulfilled" (25.8%). In total, a vast majority of parents (83%) reported that their expectations for the Croatian language and literature teaching were met. A similar percentage of parents reported that their expectations for heritage teaching were mostly or fully fulfilled (78%) (the difference was not statistically significant, $z=1.3$, $p=0.17$). Only 7% of the surveyed parents reported that their expectations for Croatian teaching abroad were unmet, whereas 5% reported that their expectations for the heritage teaching were the same. These findings

¹⁴ The difference is not statistically significant.

suggest that most parents are satisfied with the quality of Croatian teaching abroad.

The data also suggest that parents are divided, almost evenly, in terms of whether the number of teaching hours in Croatian teaching abroad should be increased, for both components – Croatian language and literature and Croatian heritage.

Table 6

Parents' satisfaction and their attitudes towards specific features of the Croatian language and heritage teaching

	Familiarity with content	Children's interest in attending lessons	Fulfilment of expectations from teaching	Support for increasing teaching hours
Croatian language and literature	50%	73%	83%	57%
Croatian historical, cultural, and natural heritage	34%	65%	78%	50%

The fourth goal of the research was to gain insight into the importance of specific operational goals in the Croatian language and literature teaching and Croatian historical, cultural, and natural heritage teaching (geography, history, music, and visual culture) as implemented through the Curriculum. Parents' assessments of the importance of various goals in the Croatian language and literature teaching (Table 7) reveal that the most important goals for parents are those related to the ability to communicate in Croatian in everyday life situations (M 4.80; SD 0.443). To achieve this function, it is necessary to encourage and motivate children to speak Croatian whenever possible (M 4.74; SD 0.518). The most appropriate way to achieve this goal would be through formal and informal meetings, celebrations, performances, sports and other competitions, or religious ceremonies, where children and parents could socialize and integrate into the Croatian community. These are opportunities to speak the native language, practice communication in Croatian, and interact without fear of making mistakes.

The goals that are not highly prioritized by the parents surveyed about the Croatian language and literature teaching include the study of literature and literary periods in Croatian literature. These goals are not essential for establishing basic communication in the Croatian language and are taught in more detail at higher levels of education in Croatian schools abroad.

Table 7

Importance of specific operational goals in the Croatian language and literature teaching

	Mean	Standard Error	Standard Deviation
Learn Croatian to use it in various life situations (family, school, work, leisure)	4.80	0.028	0.443
Motivate children to speak Croatian whenever possible	4.74	0.033	0.518
Develop grammatical and orthographic literacy	4.49	0.045	0.695
Encourage children to read literary works in Croatian	4.32	0.053	0.830
Gain the ability to translate different texts into Croatian	4.21	0.059	0.922
Develop a positive attitude toward Croatian literature	4.05	0.060	0.944
Introduce children to major works of Croatian literature	4.02	0.059	0.924
Introduce the most significant Croatian authors and their works	3.78	0.062	0.968
Acquire basic knowledge of different periods in Croatian literature	3.58	0.070	1.087
Average importance of all operational goals in Croatian language teaching	4.23	0.038	0.58

Through eight items (Table 8), the importance of the selected goals in Croatian historical, cultural, and natural heritage teaching was explored. Similar to the case in Croatian language teaching, where primary goals have higher values, the same holds true for Croatian heritage teaching. Parents consider it most important for children to acquire Croatian customs and traditions, followed by learning the symbols of the Republic of Croatia. They deem learning about Croatia's economic features or the structure of government less important.

Thus, parents consider language, customs, and traditions the most significant factors of Croatian identity in educating their children through Croatian teaching abroad. Additionally, it is important that Croatian education motivates children to learn Croatian and use it in everyday situations.

Table 8

Importance of specific operational goals in teaching historical, cultural, and natural heritage

	Mean	Standard Error	Standard Deviation
Adopt Croatian traditions (customs, holidays)	4.59	0.042	0.633
Learn the basic symbols of the Republic of Croatia	4.49	0.049	0.735
Explain similarities and differences between Croatian cultural heritage and that of the country of residence	3.96	0.060	0.911
Recognize the economic activities prevalent in the area from which the parents/ancestors emigrated	3.90	0.067	1.010
Introduce children to basic processes of Croatian societal, state, and cultural development	3.84	0.064	0.960
Compare basic features of life in Croatia in the past and in the present	3.67	0.065	0.981
Introduce children to the economic features of contemporary Croatian society	3.61	0.066	0.990
Describe the structure of government in the Republic of Croatia	3.16	0.072	1.093
Average importance of all operational goals in heritage teaching	3.91	0.046	0.69

As shown in Tables 7 and 8, the average importance of all operational goals in the Croatian language and literature teaching (4.23) is greater than the average importance of all operational goals in Croatian heritage teaching (3.91). Since the difference is statistically significant ($t = 8.22$ (221), $p < 0.001$), the parents find the goals of the Croatian language and literature teaching more important than those of Croatian heritage teaching.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings presented in this paper should be considered within the context of the inability to realize probabilistic samples of emigrants. Due to numerous unknowns about the emigrant population and the impossibility of random sampling, researchers studying the phenomenon of Croatian emigration can only conduct empirical studies on convenience or quota samples. Additionally, due to the unknown demographic structure of the emigrant population, it is not

possible to create appropriate weights to adjust for the sample profile during data processing. Therefore, reliable generalizations from such studies are currently not possible, and the results should only be used for exploratory purposes. This means that the results of this study should be treated as potential indicators of parents' attitudes toward Croatian teaching abroad, serving as hypotheses that need to be verified in future empirical studies on this topic.

CONCLUSION

In order to gain comprehensive insight into the satisfaction of emigrant parents with education as part of Croatian teaching abroad, their satisfaction with specific aspects of the current Curriculum was examined. The research results suggest a high level of parent satisfaction with the quality of Croatian teaching abroad, as well as their active involvement in the operation of Croatian schools at the primary and secondary education levels. The research results indicate that it is most important for parents that their children adopt Croatian customs, traditions, and symbols of the Republic of Croatia, which fall under the goals of the primary level of education, attended by the largest number of children among the respondents. If students continue attending Croatian teaching at higher levels, particularly at the tertiary level, they will have the opportunity to adopt other significant goals of the Curriculum, which were identified as less well adopted in the study, such as becoming familiar with the economic characteristics of contemporary Croatian society or the structure of government. One of the assumptions for continuing Croatian teaching at higher levels is the connection with schools and friends in the local environment. Since intrinsic motivation is based on individual perceptions, psychological processes, and individual needs, students should be guided to activities that develop preferences, interests, attitudes, and values that bring internal satisfaction and happiness. Therefore, teaching content should be adapted to their interests by introducing diversity and encouraging participation in extracurricular activities in order to develop a sense of personal satisfaction and value in the school environment and community through collaborative learning, modern teaching strategies, methods, and media, as well as appropriate tasks tailored to children's individual abilities and interests.

As a measure to improve the development of an appreciation for artistic, visual, and musical creativity, the need highlighted in the research by Burai et al. (2022) is confirmed. It is again suggested to amend the Regulation on the selection of teachers for work in Croatian teaching abroad, i.e., that all teachers of subjects conducted within the integrative Curriculum should be allowed to work in Croatian teaching abroad after completing advanced studies, or modular courses at the graduate level, utilizing which they would acquire all the necessary competencies to work in Croatian teaching abroad.

The research results indicate that parents consider the Croatian language and literature classes more important than the Croatian historical, cultural, and natural heritage classes. To ensure that students adopt the same value for all content in Croatian teaching abroad, the use of correlation methods in teaching is recommended, as it successfully integrates content from various subjects, i.e., connects, unites, and harmonizes them in instruction.

The inclusion of educational video clips and gamification methods in teaching is another possibility that could increase children's interest in Croatian historical, cultural, and natural heritage lessons.

Parents also emphasise the need for stronger connections between children and local Croatian communities abroad, where children can build friendships and develop a sense of belonging. Activities and content aimed at achieving this goal can be achieved through contemporary pedagogical methods and strategies in the classroom and beyond. Therefore, interactive learning, research, and projects, as well as collaborative learning in formal and extracurricular activities, can achieve the stated objectives. This approach contributes to connecting and integrating children into the Croatian community abroad, creating bonds and friendships with fellow compatriots.

The results also point to the need for better alignment of the strategic goals of the Republic of Croatia with those of the diaspora, with a special focus on encouraging young people to study and return to Croatia. Starting from intrinsic motivation for continuing to learn the Croatian language, to the decision to attend Croatian teaching at the secondary and tertiary levels, this should form the basis for stimulating interest in continuing education in the Croatian language in the Republic of Croatia. From the beginning of Croatian teaching abroad, students should be informed about the possibilities of studying in Croatia, including incentives and scholarships. Organizing visits by employees from institutions important to the diaspora and exchanging experiences with those who have already studied in Croatia could further motivate students.

In conclusion, we hope that the results of this research will contribute to shaping public policies in the Republic of Croatia towards the diaspora, so that Croatian teaching abroad remains relevant, inclusive, and adaptable to students and their families who wish to preserve and develop their cultural and linguistic heritage in the modern world.

APPENDIX

1. List of analysed particles

Particles of educational goals of the Curriculum

Multilingualism and interculturalism are encouraged.
A sense of national pride is developed in children.

Children are motivated to learn the Croatian language and to use it successfully in everyday situations.

Conditions are created for children to form friendships with peers in the Croatian community where they live.

Children are introduced to the natural and geographical characteristics of Croatia.

Croatian teaching abroad enables children to understand the historical and cultural heritage of Croatia.

Children are enabled better integration into the Croatian community where they live.

Children acquire skills in creating in the Croatian language.

Children develop the ability to find information in the Croatian language.

Children are introduced to the basic processes of the historical development of Croatian society, the state, and culture.

A sense of artistic, visual, and musical creativity in Croatia is developed in children.

Children's interest in continuing their education in the Croatian language is stimulated.

Particles of operational goals of the current Curriculum for Croatian language and literature

Learn Croatian so that the child can use it in various life situations (family, school, work, free time).

Motivate children to speak Croatian whenever possible.

Develop grammatical and orthographic literacy.

Encourage children to read literary works in Croatian.

Acquire the ability to translate various texts into Croatian.

Develop a positive attitude towards Croatian literature in children.

Introduce children to the main works of Croatian literature.

Introduce the most significant Croatian writers and their most famous works.

Acquire basic knowledge of the characteristics of individual periods in Croatian literature.

Particles of operational goals of the current Curriculum for Croatian historical, cultural, and natural heritage

Adopt Croatian traditional customs (traditions, holidays).

Learn the basic symbols of the Republic of Croatia.

Explain the similarities and differences in the cultural heritage of Croatia and the country of residence.

Recognize the economic activities prevalent in the area from which the parents/ancestors emigrated.

Introduce children to the basic processes of the development of Croatian society, state, and culture.

Compare the main features of life in Croatia in the past and present.

Introduce children to the economic characteristics of contemporary Croatian society.

Describe the structure of government in Croatia.

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