

## **POST-GRADUATE QUALIFICATION OF TEACHERS IN INTERCULTURAL EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT**

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**Abstract.** The article analyses the results of a project, which was realized with a leading team of lecturers from Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridsky” and another seven Bulgarian higher schools.

The text contains methodology and technology of professional-pedagogical training of 4500 Bulgarian teachers at national level. Teachers are from the primary education system.

It presents also a developed training package of: a teacher’s handbook/ handbook, a teacher’s manual, basic and additional instructional materials on intercultural education. The training is conducted in two modules: attendance and distance. The results of the 227 trainings conducted in all regions of the Republic of Bulgaria are discussed.

It analyses how these results influence the new law in the Republic of Bulgaria on pre-school and school education and the accompanying state educational standards.

**Keywords:** anthropology of education; postgraduate qualification; teachers; intercultural education; reflexive approach

### **Introduction**

The Republic of Bulgaria is a multiethnic and multicultural society, places it in an equivalent position, in terms of the development and promotion of ethno-pedagogical and ethno-psychological models, into intercultural education within the European community. It is necessary to refine all the markers for the development of the educational subject, namely: ethnic, socio-cultural, ecological, age, legal, linguistic etc (Kotseva, 2017).

The Bulgarian educational system offers reliable pedagogical technologies for the development of students in an intercultural and inter-ethnic environment. They are in line with European educational requirements, in countries with long-standing traditions in this respect, as well as with the EU Strategy on “Lifelong Learning”, the “National Strategy for Lifelong Learning” (2016 – 2020), the National Strategy

for Social Inclusion of Vulnerable ethnic communities and groups (2012 – 2010) of NSAEI (National Student Association for European Integration) on policies and practices for teaching socio-culture diversity, National strategy of the Ministry of Defense, educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities (2016) and other desirable and directive-documents.

**The role of higher education is**

- to improve the acquired knowledge, skills and relations in terms of: professional and personal competencies of the student and future teachers of civic education and the subjects of the historical and philosophical cycle in the system of school education;
- to provide the required skilled labor force for the needs of a national (and global) economy by shaping competitive professionals, including staff for the educational system;
- to support the process of continuing qualification of labor market personnel;
- to support the development of science and to integrate scientific achievements in the educational and research process as a result of increasing the coefficients for professional fields for high quality subjects as well as the additional resources for the priority areas and the “protected specialties” (2016). Priorities are all specialties with a cipher: “Pedagogy of education in history and philosophy as well as ethnologists, receiving teaching licenses.”<sup>1</sup>

The quality assurance system for the training of the academic staff includes:

- internal evaluation systems
- studying the students’ opinions at least once an academic year
- institutional and program accreditation of the higher education institution and the specialty, carried out by the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (NEAA) at the Council of Ministers (CM)
- National qualifications framework (NQF) passed by CM with Edition № 96 / 2.02.2012

Step four of the process was accomplished by the adoption of a national qualifications framework:

- step 5 – national consultations;
- step 6 – change in legislation;
- step 7 – allocation of responsibilities between educational institutions, quality control agencies and other structures;
- step 8 – updating curricula in line with the national qualifications framework;
- step 9 – Including Qualifications into the National Qualification Framework and
- step 10 – self-certification of the national qualifications framework in terms of compatibility with the European Qualifications Framework.

External pedagogical conditions require restructuring of the curricula – integration of basic, special general scientific and particular scientific disciplines in the relevant proportion by educational level: 50/30/20 – for bachelor’s degree; 20/30/50 – for master’s degree; 10/20/70 – for the Doctorate’s degree.

The curriculum in the Higher School needs to be aligned with the key competencies that are being sought on the labor market, by enhancing the scientific activity in higher education institutions in a plan of integrated and global research.

There is a need of establishing a link with the economy and the labor market (career guidance during the course of study, accumulation of real experience with the aim of self-profiling, accumulation of entrepreneurial experience in the field of ethno-cultural diversity in a real professional environment) (Koleva, Simov, 2016).

The fact that there is high youth unemployment, though employers have difficulties finding qualified personnel, leads to the conclusion that there is discrepancy between the preparation

provided by the higher schools and the requirements of the labor market.

**Key objectives and priorities in Bulgarian higher education for the period between 2018 and 2020 are related to:**

- increased number of 30 – 34-year-old Bulgarian citizens with higher education, with knowledge, skills and competencies consistent with the requirements of the global labor market.

Increasing of the effectiveness of higher education by:

- improving the quality of the academic and practical professional training of the students prior to their entering the labor market (adequacy and quality of the programs, the technology of teaching based on the reflexive position, traineeships) practices to the requirements of the global labor market and in support of the development of the national economy);

- developing the system for linking the funding of the higher educational institutions with the results of the student's learning process (the "product" of higher education). Emphasis on the process of teaching in the context of an entity - the subjective organizational approach. Application of didactic methods stimulating the reflexive thinking of the student and the manifestation of all aspects of reflection: communicative, cooperative, intellectual and personal;

- developing the lifelong learning system;

- approving the links science - business in the higher education system at national and supra-national level (including active development of scientific activities in higher schools, doctoral and post-doctoral programs with applied effect).

A solution to the minority's educational problems can be sought both by minorities and by the majority. Approaches to this are different depending on the points of view: on social aspects, human rights, multiculturalism, interculturalism and nationality.

**The social approach** addresses minority groups and, in particular, the Roma population as marginalized social groups. From this point of view education is a condition for success in the labor market. (Koleva, 2012; Koleva, 2015)

When the issue is approached from the point of view on human rights, the focus is on equality and equal chances. According to this interpretation, the most serious reason for the failure of education among minority subjects is discrimination.

**Intercultural approach** considers the problem as a consequence of interethnic relations and focuses on its cultural and socio-psychological aspects. The implementation of a strategy for social inclusion of vulnerable ethnic communities and groups is subject to the implementation and development of pedagogical technologies structurally subordinated to the reflexive approach as psychological (Koleva, 2012; Koleva, 2014; Koleva, 2013b, Koleva, 2015, Tepavicharov, 2013b).

One of the measures on the national plan for this approach is: “Improving the quality of education through the qualification of pedagogical specialists for interaction in a multicultural educational environment and for intercultural competence”. In connection with this measure the University of Sofia has conducted a scientific and educational project for the implementation of the activity “Providing conditions for increasing the qualification of teachers and pedagogical specialists”: ‘Teacher training for the development of knowledge, skills and competences for working in intercultural environment’ under project “Qualification of pedagogical specialists” under the Operational Program “Development of human resources” (Tepavicharov, 2013; Koleva, 2013; Koleva, 2013a; Tepavicharov, 2013b)<sup>1)</sup>.

Strategic objective of the activity was to form personal and professional competencies in teachers’ knowledge of technology to work in an intercultural educational environment in a project about standards in intercultural education as well as to overcome existing ethnic stereotypes and prejudices (Kotseva, 2017).

#### **Operational objectives**

1. Knowledge and application of interactive technologies of curricular and extracurricular forms of pedagogical interaction in the conditions of a teaching center and protected school.
2. Knowledge and application of interactive technologies of forms of pedagogical interaction with parents in the conditions of a multiethnic environment.
3. Knowledge of directives and optional documents for socio-cultural diversity, intercultural education and minority educational integration;
4. Knowledge and implementation of a project for a state educational standard on civic, health, environmental and intercultural education, with an emphasis on intercultural education.

#### **Scope of training**

Total number of trainees – 4500 teachers from teaching centers and protected schools, as well as other schools in the country that educate and socialize the following groups of students: ethnic communities, ethnic groups, migrant children, refugee children, children of migrants. A team of three teachers or other pedagogical specialists were trained from each teaching center and protected school. From each of the other schools – one pedagogical specialist. These acted as multipliers after the training.

The training was targeting all schools, taking into account, the specific markers for the region, the settlement and the teachers as well as other pedagogical specialists from 28 regions of the Republic of Bulgaria.

The activities were led by a student at the Faculty of History of University of Sofia. These included the development and testing of a curriculum and a program which is an integral part of the curriculum. The curriculum included modules on socio – cultural competencies of teachers and students. The curriculum also included interactive methods for stimulating the personal and professional competencies which the teacher would acquire as a result of the training. In formal terms of the curriculum was presented by: annotation, prerequisites learner competencies, technical support of the training process, thematic content of the learning module, literature, electronic trajectories and didactic materials and tools;

The content plan has been developed and approved: methodology for realization of the curriculum, methodology for conducting the training of trainers, methodology for providing the teachers with the corresponding profiles of the schools didactic materials and tools;

Key parameters for the curriculum and teacher training plan are presented through: concept, methodology, priorities, methodology for teacher training, methodology for conducting students' education, didactic materials, feedback from the training, functions used didactic materials: diagnostic parameters of educational content, level of knowledge of each learner (Koleva, 2014; Koleva, 2016; Koleva, Shashaeva, 2013; Koleva, Andreeva, 2015; Koleva, Zarev, 2015).

**Teachers were trained in the attendance form on the following topics**

- Socio-cultural competence of the teacher.
- Ethno-pedagogical models for education in intercultural environment. (Koleva, 2007; Koleva, 2008; Kotseva, 2015).
- Ethno-psychological models of education in intercultural environment. (Koleva, Bogdanov, 2015).
- Pedagogical and specifically didactical technologies (with priority of bilingual forms of interaction with the student in intercultural environment).
- Ethno-pedagogical models of interaction: “family – educational institution”.

Forms of training – attendance and distance learning;

Duration of training – up to 32 hours in the present form and 32 hours of individual remote consulting for each participant for the purpose of elaboration of a practical oriented product. The counseling was conducted on the partner's remote learning platform: <http://sido.niod.bg>

The course ended with the presentation of a practical development by each participant with interactive orientation, certification – obtaining a certificate for participation in the cycle of the attendance training and evaluation for solving the interactive practical task for applying the acquired knowledge in the pedagogical practice corresponding with the specifics of the class and the grade as well as with the specifics of the school the teacher works with.

The control and evaluation of the training results consisted of: monitoring and evaluation as well as remote monitoring and evaluation, diagnostic toolbox (Koleva, Makariev, 2014).

### **Conclusion**

The result was related to: changed attitudes by teachers to work in intercultural environment, changed attitudes of the parents, multiplied teacher training - multipliers for educational integration, implementation of pedagogical and private didactic technologies for education in multiethnic environment, the ultimate success of students in cultural and educational areas, their real self-esteem in the learning process, reducing the number of dropouts from the education system, successful reintegration of dropouts from the education system, and increasing the professional qualification of teachers.

The question of human resources in the education system is usually related to the topic of quality.

***The teacher plays a key role*** not only to ensure the quality of this education process, but also to the continuing the education of the students.

The National education priorities need to make the pre-school and school education law (2016) and the law on higher education passable. Area of intersection here is the introduction into the system of school education of a subject as - ***civic education***. It is also necessary to introduce courses of ***inclusive education*** into higher education system.

In 2011/2012 the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration at the Council of Ministers developed a national strategy for the integration of vulnerable ethnic communities and groups with a focus on the Roma (for the 2012 – 2020 period). This strategy is a political framework document setting guidelines for the implementation for the policy of social inclusion of Roma and other ethnic communities and groups living in a similar situation in the Bulgarian society and to coordinate activities of the state authorities, regional and local authorities and civil organizations to bring it into effect. A national action plan was developed for it with a priority area – “Education”.

The strategy is guided by the principles of the European Union’s policy framework for the protection of human rights, respect for the principle of ensuring equal opportunities for all citizens and non-discrimination based on various characteristics, including ethnic origin such as: Directive 2000/43/EC from June 29<sup>th</sup> 2000 about implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, Directive 2000/78/EU about establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation etc.

The basis of its concepts is the following understanding of the process of social inclusion:

Bilateral activity by the majority and minority aimed at:

– the break-up of the dominant model of an ethnic base person;

- guaranty the right of any person not to be discriminated against;
- overcome ethnic stereotypes and prejudices through positive representation of minority groups, in order to achieve sustainable change in intergroup relations and change current attitudes and values;

- overcome ethnically conditioned inequality in the ability of individuals to education, job, housing, health and participation in civil structures and political life.

Teacher in the field of ethno-pedagogical and ethnological knowledge needs:

- to know the political and legal context of socio- cultural diversity;
- to have reflection of the various dimensions of the many images about the external and internal pedagogical environment;

- to know and apply ethno- pedagogical (general didactic, specifically didactic and educational as well as where possible, socializing) technologies for education in a multicultural and multiethnic environment;

- to know and apply didactometric procedures for socio-cultural diversity;
- to stimulate and build on the student's multicultural reflection in an intellectual, communicative, cooperative and personal way.

The philosophy of a concept for the development of Bulgarian higher education is determined by:

- the student's development according to his/her individual status and specific educational needs;

- pedagogical approach, which determines the choice of basic and additional forms and methods of educational interaction within the educational institution, faculty and department]

- the pedagogical approach defining the selection and structuring of didactometric content on subjects studied with a value-oriented educational paradigm;

- psychological approach which determines the development and application of a particular pedagogical technology in the taught field of science.

Deploying of **reflexive and ethno – cultural, value-oriented approaches** is determined by our understanding of technological social including of the students.

Lifelong learning integrates all activities (formal and informal) that develop the personality of the individual in order to stimulate his or her knowledge and competencies. In a market economy, the macro environment of the student's development changes substantially. ***This requires each specialty (Faculty) to strive to impose its image, its specific system of education and striving to introduce the latest psychological approaches.***

***Post-modernist concepts in the plan of education call for stimulating intercultural reflection in the European educational space.***

The criteria for identification of national education are devoted to the European indicators for socio-culturally diversity. The following are target defining:

- publicity – as *an open system* for all educational entities and community groups who are carriers of national and European traditions in education;



- continuity – as a synthesis of national positive experience of our historical past and present in the educational space, but using the prospect of European integration and interchange of innovative educational technologies;
- cross-cultural reflection – as a process of awareness, self-esteem and self-regulation of the student, considering markers of language, demographic, geographic, ethnic, environmental and other types of diversity.

## NOTES

1. Providing conditions for improving the qualification of pedagogical and pedagogical specialists: Teacher training for knowledge, skills and competences for working in intercultural environment under project BG 051 PO 001-3.1.03-0001, Operational Program “Development of human resources” – position of the authors of the report:  
Assoc. Prof. Veselin Tepavicharov, DSc. – President of the consortium of 6 universities and 43 non - governmental organizations;  
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