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**SUMMARY**

**of the dissertation on:**

**Intercultural reflection and integration through  
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The dissertation is structured in an introduction, a statement in three chapters, conclusions, a conclusion, a bibliography, appendices with a total of 155 pages, of which 19 pages are appendices. The bibliography includes 191 items, of which 143 sources in Cyrillic, 21 in Latin and 27 electronic sources. The appendices include two blank questionnaires for teachers and principals, an in-depth semi-structured interview questionnaire for educational specialists and experts in the field of integration, two lists of respondents, two semi-structured and in-depth interviews with pedagogical specialists and experts, and two excel files, 29 KB in size, presenting the quantitative results of the survey. A total of 31 graphs are included in the dissertation.

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## MOTIVATION/INTRODUCTION

### Relevance and significance of the dissertation research

#### Relevance of the dissertation research

Education includes three elements: training, education and socialization process. These three elements are in inverse and essential relationship with each other in the process of development and adaptation to the present and future reality of the educational environment. There is a change in the psychological characteristics of the "subject-student" of the education process. There is also a change in the functional characteristics of the teacher - the other subject in the process of pedagogical interaction. Modern technologies / context of Artificial Intelligence / require the formation of digital competence in the teacher and student. The basis of digital competence is **reflective competence**. The digital general culture in the Bulgarian education system raises the question of current school design related to uniform standards, principles and approaches of training, education and socialization process, teaching content, teacher's values, teacher's professional and personal competences and his/her general professional development. These questions require a fundamental understanding of the phenomenon of the digitalization process. The professional competences of the teacher are developed in the direction of didactic and educational /socializing/ experience and the ability to design the relevant science / subject in digital didactic and educational resources, as well as organizational and administrative skills. Up-to-date adapted and validated cultural diagnostic methodologies for assessing students' knowledge levels are absent. The specificity of general and special abilities of students from ethnic minority backgrounds and specifically for the purposes of the dissertation research - students from Roma and Turkish backgrounds - is also not taken into account. This constitutes a process of knowledge discrimination and is purposeful for the process of educational integration of the pupil from an ethnic minority background as well as for his intercultural reflection.

The curricula are not tailored to the age and ethnopsychological characteristics of the pupil. Their updating will contribute to the student's acquisition of conscious knowledge and skills and develop his reflective and emotional competence. It is necessary to change the pedagogical approach in the selection of educational content and the application by all authors of the same approach,

corresponding to the modern stage of development of society in our country. This means taking into account the ethno-pedagogical realities not only at the strategic level /Strategic Framework for the Development of Education, Training and Learning in Bulgaria for the Period 2021-2030/, but also at the operational level.

The problems of the Bulgarian education system, apart from the content of the curriculum, are also rooted in the integration of ethnic minority students. The educational integration of ethnic minority pupils is a process that is implemented through didactic, educational and socialising forms of interaction with all the addressees of the Bulgarian education system. It is not a mechanical formal process as applied in many schools in the country. At the national level there is no understanding of the technological content of the process of educational integration. I use the term "integration through education" because in my dissertation research I focus on the choice of technology, on the applied forms of didactic, educational and socializing interaction in an intercultural educational environment /levels, goals, methods, techniques, means and results/.

### **Significance of the dissertation research.**

The Bulgarian educational system is one of the few European systems that have a state educational standard /standard - result/ on intercultural education. It is not implanted in all curricula. There is a need to implant the intercultural competences of the GCEIEE DSS in other educational standards. Updating curricula and incorporating intercultural education into them will contribute to the educational integration of ethnic minority students. Access to quality education is the right of every student, regardless of their background, religion or race.

Bulgarian teachers do not know the value orientations of the ethnic subgroup divisions of Roma students, which does not lead to quality education. Teachers must know and apply modern forms and technologies of education and training adequate to the socio-cultural situations, needs and value orientations of modern students.

Bulgarian teachers do not have the necessary training to work with students from different ethno-cultural backgrounds, nor in the field of ethnology, ethnopsychology and ethno-pedagogy. Teachers cannot cope with the didactic difficulties of students whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian, which leads to students dropping out of the education system. Bilingual textbooks and

teaching aids are didactic tools in the process of integration through education. They are neither a form nor a method.

*Intercultural reflection is a goal-setting mechanism in the process of technological content integration, through the approaches, technology of forms and methods in ethnological, ethno-pedagogical and ethnopsychological terms. Applying ethnological approaches and tools, the ethno-pedagogical and ethnopsychological knowledge realizes the semantic didactic and educational principle at the glotometric and semiometric level. This scientific fact acquires significance in the process of intercultural reflection when introducing the student to different cultures.* The semiotic principle allows the student to become aware of the reality in which he lives and helps him to interact with the people who surround him. In terms of phylogeny, many ethnic groups have developed their own universal language and mimetic symbolic repertoire. The universality of the repertoire is conveyed through gestures, facial expressions, and rituals encoded in dance or nonverbal linguistic forms. Socially and historically, these forms are subject to development over time. They are preserved in the motor memory, emotions, experiences and beliefs of generations belonging to a particular ethnic group. The understanding of the sign is impossible without the clarification of its meaning - both subject (the object signified by it), meaning (the image of the signified object) and expressive (the expression of feelings with its help, etc.) Each linguistic sign is an act of human thinking, reflecting one or another system of meaning relations in thoughts and/or an independently existing object.

Ethno-semiotics is a branch of semiotics that deals with the national /national/ uniqueness of signs. The subject of ethno-semiotics deals primarily with signs of a non-linguistic nature /kinemes, proxemic signs, mythological and religious symbols, peculiarities of dress, etc. - e.g. the kinemes for "yes" and "no" in different nations, greeting postures, body movement, distance between interlocutors, etc., but also the specific way of using language (e.g. rate of speech, degree of polysyllabicity, volume of voice, etc.).

***The semiotic principle is a didactic and socializing basis for the student's conscious construction of certain cognitive objects.*** In its semantics and purpose, it correlates with the reflexive approach in ethno-pedagogical technology, which is built through it. The famous semiotician and stylist M. Yanakiev created a comprehensive system for the implementation of the interaction "semiotics - education". He developed the science of glotometry. He builds a global view of Bulgarian

education and its semiotization. Semiotics should arm the student with "etymologizing intellect", i.e. in the process of integration through education he should learn:

1/ To search in the past for the originally demonstrable "meanings" of givens, the "meanings" of which today we cannot explain "by demonstration"

2/ To trace how these "meanings" have become undemonstrable and

3/ To seek and understand why they have become "undemonstrable".

These three steps define the enopsychological mechanism called "cross-cultural reflection".

*Semiotized dialogics in an educational context ethnologizes student thinking.*

#### **Aim of the dissertation research:**

The aim of the ethno-pedagogical research is to carry out a situational analysis of the Bulgarian national state policy for intercultural reflection and integration through education /in the period 2005-2016/, with a focus on the school education system.

#### **To achieve the goal, the following research tasks are set:**

**Task 1.** To conduct a field ethnological study on the factors of educational integration with 29 leading Bulgarian experts in the field of integration through education and intercultural education relevant to the activities of CEIDUEM - MES.

**Task 2.** To conduct a field ethnological study on the factors of educational integration with 30 teachers and principals of secondary schools in the country in the field of integration through education and intercultural education relevant to the activities of CEIDUEM - MES.

**Task 3.** To conduct an ethno-pedagogical study to identify the intercultural competence of 68 pedagogical specialists implementing a policy of educational integration in the period.

**Task 4.** To carry out a functional analysis of educational policies of the Ministry of Education - CEIDUEM in the period 2005 - 2016.

**Task 5.** To carry out a SWOT analysis of European and national strategic and policy documents in the field of secondary education in the period 2005 - 2016.



**Subject of the dissertation research:**

**The object** of the ethno-pedagogical research is the ethnological markers of intercultural reflection in the Bulgarian school education system.

**Object of the dissertation research:**

The object of the ethno-pedagogical research is the process of integration through education, implemented as a state policy in the sphere of Bulgarian school education.

**Hypothesis of the dissertation research**

Knowledge of the ethnopsychological characteristics of students and the application of ethnological methods in the process of integration through education leads to the implementation of a qualitative and successful educational policy based on intercultural reflection.

**Methodology of the dissertation research**

The methodology of ethno-pedagogical research to achieve the goal and the implementation of the research tasks.

At the level of philosophical research methodology is formed on the methods and application of the dialectical method based on the following principles:

- Principle of determinism. Determined by previous events that cause it, the causes of unqualified teaching staff in secondary education will be examined, resulting in the non-implementation of educational integration in secondary education.
- Principle of additionality. It requires an examination of contemporary educational programs related to educational integration in order to understand their nature by analyzing their content as well as the importance of their implementation in the educational system.
- Principle of compliance. It is associated with the continuity of scientific theories. The theoretical part of the research is based on the intercultural approach of J. Piaget, the concept of the reflexive approach in intercultural education (I. Koleva) and the cultural-historical approach as a specificity of educational integration (Lev Vygotsky).

General scientific approaches:

- A substantive and formal approach to the analysis of the theoretical-methodological foundations of the object of study - educational integration.
- Logico-historical approach. The process of research of modern educational programs of integration of students of ethnic groups.
- Methodological approach is a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative approach focuses on data collected and statistical analysis and the impact on educational policy is evaluated. Assessing the views of respondents in the surveys and interviews has been done through the quantitative and qualitative approach.

In terms of research fundamentals, the approaches in this dissertation research are:

- An interdisciplinary approach that reflects the ethnological markers of intercultural reflection in the Bulgarian school education system. The methodological basis of the research is based on the psychological and anthropological theories of interaction: teacher-student and on ethno-pedagogical scientific foundations of intercultural education.

At the level of specific scientific methodology

- A reflexive approach, where reflection and its application as a foundational psychological approach in intercultural education was carried out at the end of each interview.
- An ethno-pedagogical approach, revealing the importance of educational experiences in ethnic and national terms for the formation of the individual.

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTERCULTURAL REFLECTION: ETHNO-PEDAGOGICAL AND ETHNOPSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS**

This chapter of the thesis examines the reflexive approach to ethno-pedagogical knowledge. The core of the chapter includes SWOT analyses of the normative framework in Bulgaria and the wishful thinking framework in Bulgaria and Europe regarding the educational integration of ethnic minority students.

Intercultural reflection refers to the process of critically analysing and understanding one's own cultural identity, values and beliefs while considering and engaging with the cultural identity,

values and perspectives of others. Intercultural reflection involves the processes of assimilation, accommodation and decentering. Intercultural reflection helps students assimilate and adapt to new cultural knowledge. Programs focusing on intercultural reflection aim to reduce cultural egocentrism by promoting empathy and perspective taking.

The reflective approach is found in various fields such as ethnopedagogy, ethnopsychology and psychological anthropology .

In the field of education, scholars such as Paulo Freire<sup>1</sup> advocate participatory research methods in which learners actively participate in the research process. This approach emphasizes the process of self-regulation, self-assessment, and awareness of information. Today, the reflexive approach is used in European and Asian contexts across disciplines, encouraging researchers, educators and practitioners to critically examine their roles, biases and assumptions, ultimately leading to a nuanced and contextual understanding of the topics under study. It is underpinned in an educational context by competence-oriented policy.

In ethno-pedagogy, the reflexive approach targets intercultural/interethnic reflection in the process of interaction between all subjects in the educational process. This includes awareness of one's own learning practice, the teacher's and student's use of methods that stimulate self-assessment and awareness of knowledge, and awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the educational process- self-regulation.

In the time period considered in the dissertation, changes are observed whose transformations are based on the reflexive approach and the corresponding reflexive technologies of applied forms of ethno-pedagogical interaction in Bulgarian schools. The application of the reflexive approach in an interethnic educational environment contributes to the formation of the sociocultural and intercultural competence of the minority student. Attention is paid to the Lifelong Learning Strategy, which is directly related to the reflexive processes of subject-subject interaction: "teacher-student", as well as the process of teacher professional development.

The following documents are analyzed in ethno-pedagogical context:

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<sup>1</sup> Freire, P., Pedagogy of the Oppressed <https://envs.ucsc.edu/internships/internship-readings/freire-pedagogy-of-the-oppressed.pdf>

**The Lifelong Learning Programme** <sup>2</sup>, adopted on 15 November 2006, aims to support interaction in education and training systems to build capable and competitive people. This strategy develops the potential of Bulgarian society regardless of age or formal education received.

The National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Roma Integration (2012 - 2020)<sup>3</sup>. It is a strategic document reflecting the government's commitment to the policy of technological integration of Roma in the country. It gives for the first time the role and function of the ethnologist, ethno-pedagogue and ethnopsychologist in the process of educational integration - the part "Education". It also emphasizes the basic training of pedagogical specialists for intercultural reflection as a result of the process of educational integration.

**Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Pupils from Ethnic Minorities (2005 - 2015)**<sup>4</sup> It contributes to the implementation of the policy of the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) for educational integration of children and pupils from ethnic minorities. "The objectives of the strategy are to assist the MoES in the coordination between directorates, budget funds, municipalities, etc."<sup>5</sup> The strategy aims to avoid secondary segregation. The strategy is guided by international human rights documents. The strategy has several strands, in which equal access to quality education, intercultural education, socialisation and preservation of the cultural identity of the pupil from a different ethnic background compared to the Bulgarian one are expressed. The institutions that support the integration of pupils are the Regional Education Offices (REO) and the Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Pupils from Ethnic Minorities (CEIDUEM), a structure of the Ministry of Education.

The integration of children and students from ethnic minorities will be successful if the NIE /Council of Ministers/ and the TSOIDUEM /MES/ carry out constant monitoring of educational institutions in an interethnic environment. Decentralized introductory and maintenance qualification of pedagogical specialists in the field of intercultural education is necessary. It is necessary to include in the curricula of professions in the field of pedagogical sciences and social activities, both at the Bachelor's degree level and in the professional qualification levels / of

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<sup>2</sup> <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/bg/national-education-systems/bulgaria/bulgaria-bgstrategiya-za-uchene-prez-celiya-zhivot>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.strategy.bg/strategicdocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=726>

<sup>4</sup> Стратегия за образователна интеграция на деца и ученици от етническите малцинства (2005-2015)  
<https://www.strategy.bg/strategicdocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=396>

<sup>5</sup> Пак там.

students and trainees, as mandatory disciplines: ethnology, ethnopsychology and ethnopedagogy. There are ethnopsychological studies that prove that when a child is educated, raised and socialized in the conditions of kindergarten /and or in other types of preschool institutions/, then subsequently at school there is a reduction in premature leaving the educational system, as well as dropping out of it. According to the NSI in the age group 7–15 years The share of Roma enrolled in school in 2019 was 92.8%, while in 2011 it was 82.2%. In the age group 16-19, from 32.7% in 2011 to 49% in 2019. This is also the trend in the age group 7-18, where the increase was 12 pp (from 72% in 2011 to 84% in 2019)”<sup>6</sup>.

In the Bulgarian education system, there are students who leave the education system early. The reasons for this can be social, health and functional. These causes can be overcome, but require preventive measures and policies from educational and social institutions.

Strategy to reduce early school leaving (2013 - 2020) . The strategy is part of the "Strategic Framework of the National Development Programme of the Republic of Bulgaria: Bulgaria 2020" and is linked to the policies and objectives of European documents such as the "Agenda for New Skills and Jobs" and the "European Platform against Poverty".

The dissertation examines the Pre-school and School Education Act (PSEA). The objectives of the PEA relate to the development of children/students and their socialisation in society. Pupils should develop the competences necessary for successful personal development and to "continue their education throughout life; to be competitive with their peers in other countries; to be successful in the labour market; to be active citizens in the global world." The introduction of the new Pupil Education Act establishes the National Education Standards (NES) .

In accordance with **the State Educational Standard for Civic, Health, Environmental and Intercultural Education** (SGEIE., Regulation 13 of 21. 09. 2016 / "intercultural education is aimed at acquiring knowledge about different dimensions of cultural identities and about basic characteristics of intercultural relations, forming a positive attitude towards diversity in all areas of human life, as well as skills and attitudes for constructive interactions in a multicultural

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<sup>6</sup> Образование и реализация на ромската общност <https://socialachievement.org/web/files/richeditor/dokumenti/Education%20and%20Employment%20survey%20report%202020.pdf>

environment". The standard is divided into four annexes. In the dissertation, a SWOT of intercultural education in the first high school stage is carried out.

Students from ethnic minorities are at different levels of social integration, which requires the application of different methods and means of educational integration. This poses a risk to the application of the standard - process. To this end, it is necessary to update the standard and differentiate it from that of inclusive education. The process of inclusion is not tailored to the ethnopsychological characteristics of the student. The presence in our country of schools dominated by ethnic minority students is also determined by regional demographic markers. This leads to problems related to the process of social inclusion through the means of educational integration. In these schools, this process is impracticable. It is necessary to look for other forms of social integration that can be codified in the profile and development strategy of the specific school and region.

Teachers' professional competences do not include knowledge of the ethnopsychological characteristics of ethnic minority students. This is also overexpressed in the non-application and non-compliance with the ethno-cultural specificity of the applied diagnostic tools at school and national level. Cultural-educational diagnostic methods are part of the theory and practice of psychological and pedagogical diagnostics.

The GCEIEE DSS does not emphasize the process of creating an enabling environment, relative to the implementation of intercultural education in schools. This, in turn, does not create conditions for the application of forms of integration through education.

## **CHAPTER TWO:**

### **INTEGRATION THROUGH EDUCATION: MECHANISMS AND POLICIES**

This theoretical chapter is presented from a functional analysis of the education policy of the Ministry of Education, through CEIDUEM /2005-2016. The reports of CEIDUEM - MES during the mentioned period are examined.

The Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Pupils from Ethnic Minorities was established in accordance with Article 10 of the Decree No. 4 of the Council of Ministers of 11.01.2005.

The Roma Education Fund (REF) is the main partner of the CEIDUEM in the period 2007-2009 to support the financing of projects. This is the only external sponsor of the Centre. The projects are related to building social skills for students' adaptation to a "mixed ethno-cultural environment" and overcoming negative attitudes towards Roma.

Emphasis is also given to the process of improving teachers' skills for working in a multicultural environment and improving communication with parents and the community.

The education system builds professional, informational and general culture in the student on a personal level. One of the main problems in Bulgarian modern education is that most of the students receive the information, can transform it, but cannot apply it in life situations. Transference is a constitutive component of intellectual didactic reflection, which is purposive for the process of integration, through education. This is evidenced by the increasingly low scores of Bulgarian students in the PISA surveys for the period from 2006 to 2022.

Integration through education is a holistic concept that involves the alignment of education systems, policies and practices to ensure accessibility and quality in the region and the specific educational institution. It aims to improve students' opportunities, regarding the teaching and learning process, taking into account their ethnopsychological characteristics.

For educational integration to be successful, it needs to be implemented in a comprehensive manner at national, regional and school levels. Coordination mechanisms with all stakeholders /teachers - pupils - parents - local authorities and other stakeholders/ need to be applied.

In the case of ethno-pedagogical interaction with students who are not in a favourable social environment, the educational integration provides for individual learning plans or additional classes after the completion of the organised learning and education process. A process of co-pedagogical activity with special education specialists (resource teachers), educational mediators, teacher's assistants and others is necessary to improve the student's social skills and his/her level of conscious knowledge.

According to I. Koleva "The reflexive educational paradigm in an interethnic environment is significant for the construction of the technology of implementation of models of educational integration with embedded technology of models of prevention and overcoming of discriminatory factors and educational inequalities in the conditions of educational interaction in secondary

education. Reflection can be a theoretical foundation for creating technologies in the field of education with a clear integrative nature" .

Ethno-pedagogical and ethno-psychological aspects are inseparable for the implementation of the process of educational integration in the context of intercultural education.

I accept the thesis that educational integration is "an institutional process in which educational subjects, carriers of ethno-cultural specificities, interact in a unified educational environment, in the process of training and education intercultural competencies and shared civic values are formed, preserving their ethno-cultural identity and receiving equal opportunities for social realization".

### **CHAPTER THREE**

#### **ETHNO-PEDAGOGICAL REFLECTION MAP FOR INTEGRATION THROUGH EDUCATION /functional analysis for the period 2005-2016/.**

##### **3.1. Research methods**

The dissertation research was conducted in the years 2021 - 2024 with pedagogical specialists and experts in school education in the country. The ethnological and ethno-pedagogical research methods used diagnostically are:

- Questionnaire on ethno-cultural competence of pedagogical specialists working in secondary schools approved under the projects of the Center for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities (CEIDEM) in the period 2005 - 2016 / instrument - questionnaire /.
- Qualitative method - semi-structured interviews with directors of the Center for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities (CEIDEUM - Ministry of Education) in the period: 2005 - 2024.
- Semi-structured interviews with pedagogical specialists on the integration of ethnic minority students in the school education system in Bulgaria. The fieldwork was carried out in the following settlements. The fieldwork was carried out in the villages of minority ethnic groups. Sofia, Sofia, Sofia, Sofia, Sofia, Sofia, Sofia, Sofia, Sofia, Sofia.



Sofia, Sisak, Sofia, Sofia, Blagoevgrad, Sofia, Blagoevgrad. Kazanlak, town of Slava, town of Stara Zagora. Sliven, town of. Lovech, town of. Karnobat, gr. Pleven, gr. Koynare (obl. Pleven), s. Sytovo (obl. Plovdiv), s. Selanovtsi (obl. Vratsa), s. Duskotna (Burgas region). The choice of the research nests was dictated by the participants in the educational projects of CEIDUEM during the mentioned period, and it was random. The main aim was to be from schools that work in a multicultural environment and/or in a homogeneous environment with students of Roma origin. These districts were also chosen because they include teachers who work with Yerliyas and Rudar, which are a subgroup division of Roma in Bulgaria.

- Semi-structured interviews with experts in the field of education in the country and experts from the state administration from the following institutions: the Ministry of Education and Science (MES), the Ministry of Culture, the National Inspectorate of Education (NIE), the Center for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities; nationally representative NGOs working in the field of educational integration: "Association Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance "Amalipe" - gr. Veliko Tarnovo, Student Society for Development of Interethnic Dialogue (SODMD) - Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria. Sofia, National Network for Children (NNC) - Sofia The Bulgarian Community for Liberal Democracy (BOLD) - Sofia Sofia; higher education institutions. Kliment Ohridski", Shumen University "Ep. Konstantin Preslavski", Thracian University - Sofia Stara Zagora, University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski", University of National and World Economy - Sofia, University of National and World Economy - Sofia Sofia, Veliko Tarnovo University "St. Cyril and Methodius"

### **3.1. Stages of ethno-pedagogical research**

#### **3.1.1. Stage One: Adaptation of diagnostic tools**

The study used a questionnaire structured in two questionnaires for pedagogical specialists, one for teachers who work with students from ethnic minorities and the other with principals who also work with students from ethnic minorities.

The questionnaires as a means of collecting information about the process of educational integration and intercultural reflection of children and students from ethnic minorities in the period:

2005 - 2016 are original questions created in the period from May 2021 to September of the same year with the editing and guidance of my supervisor Prof. Dr. Irina Koleva.

The questionnaires consist of two blocks. The first block contains questions related to the profile of pedagogical specialists - teachers, with a total of seven closed questions, and the second block covers questions related to the educational integration of ethnic minority students, with eleven questions for this block. Out of these eleven questions, six questions are closed questions with positive or negative answers and one with a choice of one in what way they form personal and cognitive competences in the student. The other four questions are closed, but they have the opportunity to justify their answer if it is positive, and the last question is an open-ended question that gives the opportunity to share an opinion or something that is not asked in the questionnaire.

The questionnaires for the pedagogical specialists - directors contain 16 questions equally divided in 2 blocks. The first block is related to the principal's profile and contains eight questions, closed-ended, and the second block, three closed-ended questions, four closed-ended questions with the opportunity to justify their answer and the last one gives the opportunity to share an opinion or something that is not asked in the questionnaire.

The purpose of the collected information is to prepare a functional analysis of the process of educational integration in the school education system in our country.

The collected information was processed into aggregated anonymous statistics for the preparation of a functional analysis of the process of educational integration in the school education system in Bulgaria.

### 3.1.2. Second stage - defining the sample and conducting the diagnostic cut

The questionnaires were administered online between January 2023 and January 2024 through the Google Forms platform, with anonymous respondents randomly selected from across the country. It was taken into account that all participants were only secondary schools that worked on projects of the Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities (CEIDUEM - MES) in the period 2005-2016.

The questionnaires have been sent to 100 schools in the country and I have taken into account that there should be an equal number of participants from Southwestern, Northwestern, Northeastern

and Southeastern Bulgaria in the municipalities of Stolichna, Stara Zagora, Burgas, Vratsa, Sliven, Gotse Delchev, Petrich, Veliko Tarnovo, Vidin, Lukovit, Pazardzhik and Lom.

The questionnaire was completed by 57 teachers/educational specialists and 11 principals in the defined period, one part of them working in schools in an intercultural educational environment. I assume that the pedagogical specialists who worked on CEIDUEM-MES projects in the period 2005-2016 have left the education system due to retirement or have moved to other schools that did not work with CEIDUEM in the defined period. Another part of the schools no longer work with the centre and therefore refused to fill in my questionnaires. At the time of the survey there were schools that claimed that they had not worked on CEIDUEM - MES projects, even though they were on the Centre's reports.

### **3.1.3. Stage Three: Primary quantitative and primary qualitative analysis of the questionnaire results**

In this dissertation, we look first at the questionnaire of teachers and then principals working in secondary schools approved under the projects of the Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities (CEIDEM) during the period 2005-2016. Compared to the questionnaire, the teaching profession is feminized and aging. Bulgarian teachers are highly educated 80% hold a Master's degree and 4% a PhD. ,69% of the surveyed teachers have participated in Centre's projects and only 32% of them have not participated. This is due to the activities related to the projects. The amount funded in a project is not very large, therefore a large number of teachers cannot be involved in the projects won. Compared to the reports of the center, it is observed that work is done in smaller groups for their integration and retention in school to be more effective. According to 98% of the teachers, their school's strategy is in line with Regulation 13 of 21.09.2016 on civic, health, environmental and intercultural education (Official Gazette, No. 80 of 11.10.2016). Teachers work with parents and use intercultural methods in the education of their students after receiving training from the Center for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities such as "Creating a Positive Multi-Ethnic Environment", "Intercultural Tolerance between Ethnicities", etc.. The surveyed educators emphatically determined that the project activities of CEIDUEM - MES contribute to equal access to quality education for students from ethnic minorities. With CEIDUEM-MES project activities, students

adapt more easily to the school environment and the student feels more significant in the classroom. Teachers note that they observe motivation to develop intellectual abilities, but also involvement in extracurricular activities at school.

#### 3.2.4. Stage Four: Primary quantitative and primary qualitative analysis of the results of the questionnaires conducted with secondary school principals

In analysing the headteachers' questionnaires, it is again noticeable that the profession is feminised. The age group of the principals is between 50 - 60 years, 82% of them have a Master's degree. The second module of questions in the questionnaire are related to the educational integration of students from ethnic communities and groups, through projects of CEIDUEM - Ministry of Education. To the first question of module 2, all respondents answered that they had worked on CEIDUEM - MES projects. The strategy is in line with Regulation 13 of 21.09.2016 on civic, health, environmental and intercultural education. Respondents note that there is a change in the interaction: " student - teacher - parent." In the response of the principals it is seen that 85% of them give a positive answer and only 15% can not judge to what extent. In the case of teachers, there is hesitation on the same question whether there is a change in the interaction. Respondents say that after the project activities of CEIDUEM - MES contribute to equal access to quality education for ethnic minority students.

### **3.2. STAGES OF THE ETHNOLOGICAL RESEARCH**

The ethnological study was conducted between January 2022 and December 2024. This stage of the dissertation involved in-depth semi-structured interviews. These are open-ended conversations with respondents sharing their opinion on the given topic, receiving guiding questions. This method is applicable in the dissertation research because it obtains as much objective information as possible from the respondents about the problem I am addressing.

The ethnological study contains 59 in-depth interviews. Of these, 30 are of pedagogical specialists - teachers/principals who have worked on CEIDUEM - MES projects in the period 2005-2016, three experts from the MES, as follows one expert from the Directorate of Policy Formulation, Analysis and Evaluation; one expert from the Directorate of Inclusive Education and one senior expert at the Ministry of Education in the period 2009-2017, one expert at the Directorate

"International Cooperation, European Programmes and Regional Activities" at the Ministry of Culture, one expert from the National Inspectorate of Education (NIE) - Council of Ministers, ten lecturers from Bulgarian universities, four representatives from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) sector, as follows one representative of the Association Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance "Amalipe" - Amalipe, Sofia, Students' Society for the Development of Interethnic Dialogue (SODMD) Sofia, National Network for Children (NNC) - Sofia, Bulgaria. The Bulgarian Community for Liberal Democracy (BOLD) - Sofia Sofia; five directors and one expert at the Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities - Ministry of Education.

The questions are divided into two blocks, the first one is related to intercultural education in the school education system and the second one is related to educational integration of students /in the school education system/. "

The interviews conducted with the teachers/principals are examined separately from those with the university teachers, experts from the state institutions and directors of CEIDUEM - MES, and an analysis is made on the basis of the answers to an additional Block 3 with questions related to the functions and structure of CEIDUEM - MES. The questions were asked only to experts who were part of the Board of Directors of CEIDUEM and directors of CEIDUEM - MES in the studied time period.

## **FINDINGS**

After the research done on the educational policy in Bulgaria aimed at the integration of students from ethnic minorities in secondary education, I can draw the following conclusions related to intercultural education in Bulgaria and, respectively, to educational integration as a process to this type of education.

On the basis of the SWOT analysis of European and national strategic and policy documents in the field of secondary education in the period under consideration 2005-2016, there are numerous documents and strategies at the European level aimed at quality education. The period under consideration covers the so-called Decade of Roma Inclusion. As early as 1997, attention began to be paid to the Roma issue and its inclusion in education policy. There was an increase in Roma

inclusion in 2005, before Bulgaria became a member of the Union. In the defined period, there are numerous documents that directly or indirectly refer to intercultural education. All the documents have been drawn up in a context of interconnection and coordination that should build a long-term policy aimed at educational integration and the inclusion of intercultural education in the curricula. They incorporate the principles and values that are recognised as key by the institutions. The Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Pupils from Ethnic Minorities (2015-2020) lacks a coherent national strategic document for the integration of ethnic minorities. In order for educational integration to be successful, educators, regardless of the environment in which they work in the field of intercultural education, need to be qualified and study disciplines such as ethnology, ethnopedagogy and ethnopsychology in order to be prepared for their work in schools. Since the adoption of the Pre-School and School Education Act (PSEA - 2016), measures have been strongly advocated. In spite of the positive directions that have been made in the promotion of intercultural education, it is still necessary to work towards the inclusion and lasting social inclusion of every student in the educational process.

As a result of the foregoing, Chapter Two of this dissertation research draws the following conclusions on the functional analysis of the educational policy of CEIDUEM - Ministry of Education during the period examined in this dissertation. The main function of the centre is to implement the policy of the state regarding the educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities. When working with the reports of CEIDUEM - MES, it was noticed that it was established to serve primarily small kindergartens, schools that do not have the possibility to apply for large state and or European funds. Despite the project activities of CEIDUEM - MES, there is still a high percentage of dropouts and early leavers. One of the reasons for this is the lack of staff capacity for monitoring by CEIDUEM-MES after the project activities have been completed. This structure has a small staff of three education experts, with whom it is technically and physically impossible to carry out national monitoring. After 2012, the centre has included intercultural education as a top priority in all stages of education. This was the idea of its director, Dr. Lalo Kamenov. It is also his idea and realization of the status of the profession "Educational Mediator" in the secondary education system. He initiated and implemented the development of methods and methodology for this profession. There is an updated and fundamentally conceptually changed strategy for educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities / 2012 /.

The conducted ethno-pedagogical research on the factors of educational integration, through education and intercultural education, relevant to the activities of CEIDUEM - MES, was structured according to the methodology of ethnological research. From the research conducted I can conclude that:

- A part of the interviewed teachers do not know the law and regulations in the educational sphere.
- From the teachers' point of view, educational integration is not taking place because the main problem is their work with parents and then the reluctance of students to attend school regularly.
- The teacher does not know how to work in a multicultural environment and does not know the elements of intercultural competence.
- The teacher does not know the class/unit she is working with ethnically.
- Semanticisation of intercultural and inclusive education. No distinction is made between them.
- Teachers/principals and experts in the field of integration through education and intercultural education being unaware of the strategies and functions of CEIDUEM - MES.
- Insufficient financial capacities of CEIDUEM - MES allocated by the state budget for the implementation of educational integration projects. The reason for this is that in the budget of the Ministry of Education and Science the process of educational integration is not listed, but is given as a section of inclusive education, this is one of the facts of the insufficient budget.
- The Centre for Inclusive Education is dependent on the policy of the Directorate for Inclusive Education of the Ministry of Education, and the Centre has its own legal personality, which implements the three-year programme of the Council of Ministers.
- There is no single policy that works to prevent unexcused absences.

The conducted field ethnological research on the factors of educational integration with 30 teachers and principals of secondary schools in the country in the field of integration through education and intercultural education, relevant to the activities of CEIDUEM - MES, proves the multiplication of innovative ideas and the transfer of good and successful pedagogical experience. Innovative ethno-pedagogical models have been developed, which is in line with the idea of CEIDUEM - MES of

linking policy with projects of higher education teachers. The largest percentage of the educational projects are of the University of St. Kliment Ohridski" and respectively - Faculty of History, Department of Ethnology. This is a consequence of the memorandum signed between the Faculty of History in the person of the then Dean - Assoc. Prof. Todor Popnedelev, and the then Head of the Department of Ethnology - Assoc. Prof. Dr. Veselin Tepavicharov. B. Tepavicharov was the initiator of the conclusion of this memorandum and the plan for the implementation of joint activities with CEIDUEM - MES. He himself is one of the authors of the State Educational Standard on Civic, Health, Environmental and Intercultural Education in the part of intercultural education. He is a member of the Board of Directors of CEIDUEM-MES in the period 2012-2015. During this period, the Department of Ethnology implemented its first educational project under CEIDUEM - MES in the town of Etropole in partnership with secondary schools. As a result of the project a manual for parents is being developed with the title "Ethno-pedagogical model for working with parents. Training manual for pedagogical interaction with parents in an interethnic environment". This creates a new reality for the transfer of research into educational practice in an intercultural environment.

The interviewed 30 respondents - teachers, indicated the following factors for educational integration of students from ethnic minorities:

- Ignorance of adequate applicable methods to provoke in students motivation to the process of learning, education and socialization, as well as to attend school.
- Ignorance of educational regulations/ DOS.
- Need to update Ordinance 13 in the intercultural education section develop model socialization technology for teachers to work on in the multiethnic classroom.
- Need for qualified teachers working in intercultural education environments.
- Need for knowledge of subgrouping of ethnic groups in our country. In my opinion, it is necessary for all future educational professionals to undergo compulsory courses in disciplines such as ethnology, ethnopedagogy and ethnopsychology.
- knowledge of bilingual technologies and the correspondingly small number of ethnic minority teachers who are proficient in the region/ethnic group's mother tongue and/or family language.



- Overcoming, through knowledge of didactic difficulties of students. □ Implementation of ethnological methods for working with ethnic minority parents and others.

The ethnological research on the factors of educational integration conducted with 29 leading Bulgarian experts in the field of integration through education and intercultural education, relevant to the activities of CEIDUEM - MES, consisted in conducting semi-structured interviews in the field. The difficulties encountered are described in Chapter Three. For this purpose, as I have already mentioned, I developed a questionnaire ( given in Annex 7.)

The interviewed respondents are leading experts in the field of educational integration and intercultural education in the country. They are authors of state educational standards, textbooks and teaching aids on intercultural education.

The factors of educational integration that they mentioned in the period under consideration can be summarized as follows:

- A compulsory teaching internship should be introduced for student teachers in schools with students from ethnic minorities due to their unpreparedness to work in such an environment, and in this global world it will be increasingly necessary to have competencies to work in an intercultural environment.
- The education system needs to be further developed and improved so as to contribute to integration and to ensure quality education for all students without discriminatory markers.
- According to the changes in the Pre-School and School Education Act (PSEA), school strategies must contain a section on intercultural education, but it must be prepared according to the school situation and not neglected.
- In relation to the implemented policies of the CEIDUEM - Ministry of Education for integration and intercultural education in secondary schools in the country, more in-depth monitoring of the activities developed by the centre should be emphasised. It is necessary to carry out in-depth analyses after the completion of project activities and to provide expert support to schools that cannot meet the objectives they have set for themselves to implement in their projects with additional state funding.
- Establish bilingual preparatory classes in schools with a majority of pupils whose mother tongue and/or family language is not Bulgarian.

- Absence of profiled training of pedagogical specialists in school education.
- Lack of cognitive motivation and intercultural competence to participate in the educational process of teachers themselves.
- Presence of discriminatory texts in textbooks and teaching aids, etc..

On the basis of the above results and the conclusions drawn both at the theoretical and empirical level, the working hypothesis of the ethno-pedagogical and ethnological research is confirmed, namely that the knowledge of the ethnopsychological peculiarities of students and the application of ethnological methods in the process of integration through education leads to the implementation of a qualitative and successful educational policy based on intercultural reflection.

## **CONCLUSION**

According to Veselin Tepavicharov: "Education is a key concept for the realization and integration of different ethnic and religious groups in the global world and in state-forming nations. This means that they preserve their ethnic and religious identity, their culture and identity and at the same time be part of others on an equal basis. And this equal basis is precisely education. It is also the key to ethnic and religious harmony, to mutual respect and tolerance" .

The education system in Bulgaria needs updating and improvement. Bulgarian teachers need to have intercultural reflection towards the other and those different from them.

The bilingual problem in the acquisition of the official language of the country, Bulgarian, can be overcome through the means of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the role of the individual assistant for each student. The recently touted thesis of "language integration" is untenable and paradoxical from a scientific point of view. Pupils from ethnic minorities and mainly from Roma and Turkish background, whose mother tongue, father tongue and family language is not Bulgarian, do not need language integration. They possess reflexivity of speech due to the fact that interference takes place two or more languages. Due to this psychophysiological fact, they easily encode and decode signs,

which means that the leading in the process of training and education should be the symiotic principle.

There is a need to develop and test bilingual teaching aids at national level. These should be tailored to the linguistic markers of the student's particular ethnic group. Such experience existed in the Bulgarian education system in the years : 1991-1997.

There is a need to change the curricula in the direction of students' reflective competence in the following aspects:

**The first aspect** of change in Bulgarian education is the physical and psychological environment of the particular school. The artificial intelligence revolution is having an impact on the infrastructure of schools. Artificial intelligence changes the age-psychological characteristics of all subjects in the process of educational interaction, as well as the specificity of the type of relationship with the surrounding world. It is a dynamic process. In the future the student will be taught by an AI assistant. It will also be more advanced than Alexa Google Homes. Its functions could be reduced to: babysitter, teacher's assistant, tutor's assistant, governess, teacher, educational mediator, friend and counsellor. The assistant will adjust the chosen approach according to the individual student's performance and improve to maximize the educational results. This necessitates reflection on the student's assessment process, i.e. the student will have no problems in the plan - docimology. On the other hand, digital assistants will develop with the student, learning their biases, needs and interests. There is a risk of reducing the student's dependence in the context of human communication. The paradigm of pedagogical communication in the educational integration plan is also changing. AI can model student sociometric status and relationship type, but will it also be able to predict communication type? Educational decisions need to be made - which aspects of life should be reserved for human intelligence and which should be handed over to AI? And/or to human-AI cooperation.

**The second aspect** in Bulgarian education is related to the development of innovative pedagogical and psychological approaches in schools in line with societal expectations. The presence of a new technological environment also requires the teacher to apply adequate and up-to-date approaches in the process of training, education and socialisation. The problem here is with the student's social and natural orientation ability. Considering the future individual learning of each student, a change in the curricula for teacher qualification is necessary. They must be based on ethical principles for

the application of AI and take into account the change in human identity and the teacher's perception of reality at levels unknown since the dawn of modern times.

**The third aspect** refers to the requirements of society, in relation to the results of the education process and the needs of business at a certain stage of development of society. Students at risk of dropping out and leaving the education system prematurely /a significant percentage of them are children from ethnic minorities/ need to be prepared for new professions related to the application of AI. Particular attention should be paid to the professional development of teachers in the field of integration of AI in the teaching and learning process, because teachers are both the object and the subject of the changes expected in Bulgarian education.

Fourth aspect - Regarding the student's language culture, in the context of the educational integration process, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Students choose to read online texts that are short in length and are perceived effortlessly. The emphasis in the selection of texts to read is on short, quick to comprehend texts. Students prefer to avoid texts with complex subject matter.
- There is a lack of intrinsic cognitive motivation in the student to distinguish texts with reliable information from texts with unreliable information, which can provoke the emergence of prejudices and stereotypes in the process of educational integration.
- There is no clearly stated position on the role of discriminatory texts in the online space, etc.

It is necessary to develop two types of diagnostic procedures in a plan - ethnodidactometry and ethnopsychometrics for the relation or not: the "intercultural competence" and the "intercultural maturity". A student may have intercultural competence but not be interculturally mature. These are two different vectors that require a different kind of diagnosis in cognitive and personal-ethnopsychological terms.

Here is the goal-setting role of ethnology in the integral field of ethnopsychosemantics, ethnopsychology and ethnopedagogy.

## **CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE DISSERTATION RESEARCH**

### **A. Contributions of scientific - theoretical nature:**

1. A situational analysis of the Bulgarian national state policy for intercultural reflection and integration through education (in the period 2005-2016), with a focus on the school education system.
2. SWOT of strategic and directive national documents in the system of school education with a focus - educational integration of students from ethnic minorities was carried out. / period 2005 - 2016 /
3. SWOT of strategic European documents in the system of school education with focus - educational integration of students from ethnic minorities. / period 2005 - 2016 /

### **B. Contributions of research nature:**

1. 1. Ethno-pedagogical functional analysis of the intercultural competence of 68 pedagogical specialists: teachers and principals who worked on projects in the field of educational integration of CEIDUEM - MES. / period 2005 - 2016./
2. An ethnological field study was conducted with 29 national experts in the field of intercultural education, ethnology, ethnopedagogy and ethnopsychology.
3. An ethnological field study on the factors of educational integration was conducted with 30 teachers and principals of secondary schools in the country in the field of integration through education and intercultural education relevant to the activities of CEIDUEM - MES.
4. A diagnostic toolkit has been developed for the empirical study of the intercultural competence of teachers and principals of secondary schools working in intercultural/interethnic educational environments.

## **ENGLISH ABSTRACT**

The dissertation studies Intercultural reflection and integration through education/functional analysis for the period 2005– 2016. The introduction presents the significance of the research as well as the aims, objectives, subject, object, hypothesis and methodology of the dissertation. The aim of the ethno-pedagogical research is to carry out a situational analysis of the Bulgarian national policy for intercultural reflection and integration through education /in the period 2005–2016/, focusing on the school education system.

The first two chapters are the theoretical basis of the study. Chapter one of the dissertation presents a SWOT analysis of coordination and education policies in Bulgaria (2005–2016). Second chapter functional analysis of educational policies of the Ministry of Education - CEIDUEM in the period 2005–2016. Chapter three presents the empirical research of the thesis in two stages. The first stage goes through two questionnaires on intercultural education and educational integration with teachers and principals implementing educational integration policies in the mentioned period. The second stage is a field ethnological study on the factors of educational integration with 29 leading Bulgarian experts in the field of integration through education and intercultural education, relevant to the activities of CEIDUEM – MES and 30 teachers and principals of secondary schools in the country in the field of integration through education and intercultural education, relevant to the activities of CEIDUEM – MES. The topic of these interviews is “Knowledge of the ethnopsychological characteristics of students and the application of ethnological methods in the process of integration through education leads to the implementation of a qualitative and successful educational policy based on intercultural reflection”.

## **Publications on the dissertation research topic**

Димитрова, Т., (2021), Образователна интеграция и/ или интеграция чрез образование в системата на средното образование., сп. „Терени“ бр. 5/2021 стр. 96-106.

[https://www.ethnologia.bg/files/ugd/4c4c42\\_80f6b3008c75492aac15a525b995eabf.pdf](https://www.ethnologia.bg/files/ugd/4c4c42_80f6b3008c75492aac15a525b995eabf.pdf)

Григорова, Т.,(2023), Функционален анализ на образователна политика на ЦОИДУЕМ в периода 2005-2016г. – етнопедагогически аспекти., сп. „Терени“ бр.8/2023 стр. 156-164.

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Григорова, Т.,(2024), Социално – педагогическа технология като форма на педагогическо взаимодействие с родителя от ромски произход., сп. „Терени“ бр. 10/2024 стр. 57-64.

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