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INTERCULTURAL PROJECTIONS OF BULGARIAN PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

KÜLTÜRLERARASI PERSPEKTİFTE BULGARİSTAN'IN OKUL ÖNCESİ EĞİTİMİ

ABSTRACT

The paper examines the preschool intercultural education in the Republic of Bulgaria and the teacher qualification, concerning intercultural and civil education, which is a priority in Bulgarian educational policies. The study presents the results of the national survey, conducted by several experts in March 2021 implementing several questionnaires. The questionnaires are concerning the professional competencies of the kindergarten teachers and educational mediators. The survey aims to analyze teachers' knowledge and competencies, concerning their work in the intercultural educational environment.

Keywords: Intercultural educational, teachers, continuing education.

ÖZET

Makale, Bulgaristan Cumhuriyeti'ndeki okul öncesi kültürlerarası eğitimi ve Bulgar eğitim politikalarında öncelikli olan kültürlerarası ve sivil eğitime ilişkin öğretmen yeterliliğini incelemektedir. Bu çalışmada, Mart 2021'de birden fazla uzman tarafından çeşitli anketler uygulayanarak yürütülen ulusal anketin sonuçları sunulmaktadır. Anket, anaokulu öğretmenlerinin ve eğitim aracılarının mesleki yeterlilikleri ile ilgilidir. Anket, öğretmenlerin kültürlerarası eğitim ortamındaki çalışmaları ile ilgili bilgi ve yetkinliklerini analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kültürlerarası eğitim, öğretmenler, sürekli eğitim

1.   INTRODUCTION

Currently, Bulgarian state education is compulsory from the age of 5, but it is going to be lowered to the age of 4 in 2022. Till the age of 7 Bulgarian state education is implemented in kindergartens, which are preschool educational institutions. In Bulgarian legislation, an intercultural environment in state education is guaranteed by a number of international as well as state documents, such as Preschool and School Education Law (2016), followed by a subordinated act called State Educational Standard №13 of Civil, Health, Ecological and Intercultural Education (2016).

Currently, the main issues in Bulgarian preschool education are as follows:

- The inability of children to speak the official language, for whom it is not a mother tongue;

- The teacher's professional competence of pedagogical an interaction in intercultural environment (Legurska, 2012);

- Intercultural qualification and continuing qualification of teachers in intercultural education (Andreeva, 2017; Blagomilova, 2012; Bogdanov, 2016; Zarev, 2017).

According to the last conducted census in Bulgaria (2011), published by the National Statistical Institute in Bulgaria, the ethnological characteristics of the Bulgarian population are as follows:

- The Bulgarian ethnic group includes 5,664,624 or 84.8% of the population. The Turkish ethnic group comes second and includes 588,318 or 8.8% of the population. The Roma ethnic group comes third with 325,343 or 4.9% of the population.

- The censuses in Bulgaria are based on voluntary self-determination of the individuals so all percentages are relative. Moreover, there is a continuous trend of people, who local communities determine as "Roma" or "Gypsies", yet who determine themselves as part of the Bulgarian, Turkish, Romanian, and other ethnic groups. Another used option is not to specify an ethnic group at all, chosen by 53,391 people or 0.8% of the total population. About a half of the last group (51.7%) consists of people under the age of 19.

- The established demographic tendencies and strong emigration in these 10 years affect all ethnic groups in Bulgaria equally. As result, no major shifts in the ethical structure of the population occurs in the years between the last two censuses (2001-2011).

- The Bulgarian self-determinated ethnic group is more urbanistic in comparison to the other two major ethnic groups. 77.5% of the Bulgarian population lives in cities, whereas for the Turkish and Roma ethnic group the numbers are 37.7% and 55.4% respectively. The Turkish self-determinated ethnic group is concentrated in several specific provinces. 63.7% of the Turkish ethnic group lives in Kırdzhali, Razgrad, Targovishte, Shumen, Silistra, Dobrich, Ruse, Burgas (North-East and parts of South-East Bulgaria). The Roma ethnic group is represented in all provinces, with the biggest share in Montana (12.7%), Sliven (11.8%), Dobrich (8.8%), Yambol (8.5%), taking into consideration that their total part of the population is 4.9%.

2.   METHODOLOGY

The authors of the current paper are a group of scientists from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" and Burgas University "Prof. d-r Asen Zlatarov". The paper analyses a diagnostic survey that was conducted distantly with several questionnaires from 5th to 25th March 2021. The survey aims to gather empirical information concerning the needs of pedagogical and non-pedagogical specialists (e.g. educational mediators) in relation to their qualification to work in an intercultural educational environment (Zarev, 2017; Koleva, 2000, 2001, 2012). The questionnaires give an opportunity to the specialists to share their perspectives and needs with respect to the activities with students or children aiming to develop knowledge, skills, and attitude towards a positive intercultural environment. The results of the survey are analyzed and aim to form a foundation for future teacher training, concerning the work in an intercultural environment.

The questionnaire about preschool education was conducted among 52 specialists, ranging from educational mediators to teachers, senior teachers and headteachers from cities (Sofia, Burgas, Lovech), towns (Sredets, Valchedram, Lukovit, Letnitsa, Troyan, Apriltsi), and villages (Galabets, Zlatia, Dolni Tsibar, Septemvriytsi, Mokresh, Kaleytsa, Dermantsi, and Oreshak).

The questionnaire (Appendix 1) consists of 33 questions, divided into 3 segments. The first segment consists of basic questions used to create a profile of the individual: age, gender, length of service, place of employment, etc. The second segment aims to highlight specialists':

✓ personal and community attitude towards intercultural education;

✓ self-evaluation on the topic of intercultural education;

✓ knowledge of state/international legislation, concerning intercultural education.

The third segment is addressing the topic of the specialists' future teaching training and continuing qualification concerning intercultural education. In relation to these teaching training courses, the specialists are given the opportunity to share their opinion over the subject matter, organization, forms, approaches, methods, and use practices, used in their educational institution.

3.   PROFILE OF THE PEDAGOGICAL SPECIALIST/EDUCATIONAL MEDIATOR

Of the participated specialists 96% are female, 4% are male. Naturally, this reveals and confirms a known, yet not optimal tendency in the teaching profession in Bulgaria – its feminization. Concerning the age profile – most of the specialists are between the age of 40 and 50 (33%), followed by these from the 50-60 bracket (22%) and 30-40 bracket (19%). The representatives from the youngest and oldest groups (20-30 and 60+) are 17% and 9% respectively. From the given data it is clear that the teachers of middle and older ages are dominating, whereas the younger teachers are an insignificant percent. The small percentage of young teachers is most probably explained by the lack of experience in intercultural education and because of these young teachers tend to avoid schools and kindergartens with multiethnic representation.

In relation to the participants' length of service, the survey concludes that the most numerous is the group of teachers with 5 years' service or less (39%), followed by the group of 21-30 year service (24%) and the groups of 11-20 and 30+ year service, which have 15% each. The smallest is the group of teachers with 6-10 years of service – only 7%. The data leaves the impression of relatively evenly spread of the length of service, and of the other side, these results are logical in terms of the previous question about the age profile or the participants and the lack of young teachers.

Position and residence: almost 80% of the pedagogical specialist are either teachers (40%) or senior teachers (39%). Low is the percentage of the educational mediators – a single person (or 2%), yet proportion-wise it represents the reality. The headteachers are 9%, whereas other positions such as speech therapists are represented by one person each (again 2%). The representatives of towns and villages are 53%, whereas the representatives of the cities are 47%.

The data of the educational degree of the participants (Diagram №1) confirms the continuous trend of high education in degree of Bulgarian teachers – 50% have MA degree, 30% have BA degree, 16% have professional BA degree and only 4% have a high school degree.
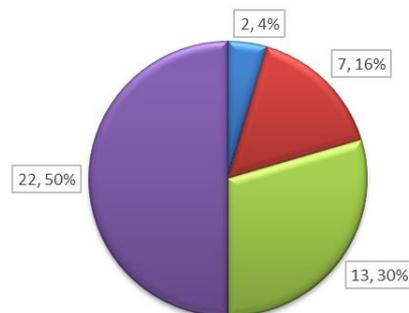

Diagram 1. Teachers' Education

The next question is concerning the Professional-Qualification Degrees (which has the Bulgarian abbreviation - PKS). This is a form of continuing qualification, which each teacher can undergo voluntarily. These degrees or stages are five altogether but move backward having V as the first stage and I as the highest possible. Each degree grants a small salary increase and the highest is a requirement for the position of the main teacher. The question is essential because it represents personal motivation and it is related to questions in the following segments. The results are showing that the biggest group belongs to the participants without any continuing qualification degree (46%). The percentage of people

with the lowest degree (V) is 15%, whereas those with second degree (IV) are 21%. The next degrees are with relatively low percentages – III has 6%, II – 8% and the highest have 4%.
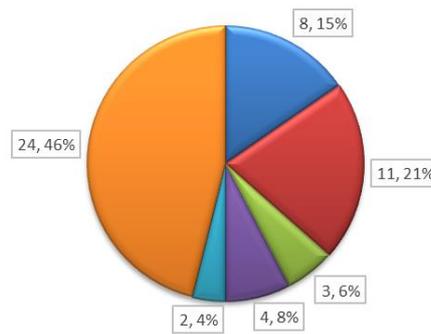

Diagram 2. Teachers' Professional-Qualification Degrees

4.   PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES IN INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN ASPECT ATTITUDES

The aim of the questions from the second segment is to collect data, which reveals the attitude of the participants towards the problems of intercultural education in kindergarten and to outline the strengths and the weaknesses, as well as the opportunities for development. The conclusions are outlined along with an analysis of the more significant results.

Conclusions from the second segment:

• Two-thirds (67%) of the participants acknowledge that intercultural education is indeed a priority in contemporary education and even more (85%) evaluate the work in the aspect of intercultural education as an important condition for positive changes in the Bulgarian educational system.

• The specialists are partially familiar with the national legislation, concerning intercultural education and de facto are not familiar with international legislation.

• The participant's order insignificance the quantity indicators in area intercultural education in the following way:

- Knowledge and application of the ethnopedagogical approaches by the kindergarten teacher in education in intercultural environment – 86%;

- Knowledge and application of legislation concerning the children rights by the teacher – 84%;

- Number of integrated children for which the mother tongue is different from the official – 84%; the number of students graduated high school – 82%;

- Teachers to know well and to work with the families of the students by involving them in collaborative work – 84%;

- Teachers' number and percentage underwent qualification and teaching courses with regard of intercultural education – 82%;

- Children's level of knowledge and abilities – 82%;

- Number of children who get additional support in kindergarten – 80%;

- Number of dropouts from the educational system – 76%;

- Knowledge of ethnopsychological specifics of the ethnic groups in Bulgaria – 76%;

- Number of the main and additional forms of pedagogical interaction in subject areas (the Bulgarian term in *educational directions*), in which the problematics of intercultural education are included. In addition to that - a new subject area – intercultural education in innovative kindergarten – 78%;

- Teachers' knowledge and application of suitable methods of education and socialization in the multiethnic environment – 78%;

- Level of prejudice against the ethnic groups and subgroups amongst teachers and parents – 77%;

- Teachers' knowledge and application of interactive forms of pedagogical interaction with parents from an ethnic minority group – 76%;

- Teachers' knowledge and application of approaches, forms and methods of bilingual education – 74;

- Number of multiethnic groups and the proportion between the children within the groups – 73%;

- Number and share of pedagogical situations, dedicated to the culture of the minorities – 72%;

- Changed provincial legislation – 71%;

- Number of representatives of ethno-cultural minorities, who work in the educational system – 63%.

• Quality indicators in area intercultural education are ordered by significance by the participants in the following order (Благомилова, 2012):

- Skills to work in the intercultural and multiethnic environment, in an integrated classroom, with close cooperation with colleagues, parents, and the local community – 88%;

- The ability to prevent the risks of dropouts of children from preschool institutions – 88%;

- The ability to educate in multicultural reflection and mutual respect, acknowledgment, and acceptance of the cultural specifics of the different children – 84%;

- Knowledge of display of discrimination, prejudice and stereotypes in kindergarten and useful practices to neutralize them – 83%;

- The ability to create a positive educational environment for a dialog between the representatives of the different ethnocultural communities in accordance with their age and intercultural competencies – 82%;

- Knowledge in the field of equal rights and equal opportunities for all children, no matter race, gender, ethnic and social background, religion, etc. – 81%;

- The ability to form self-respect towards one's own cultural identity – 81%;

- The ability to form relationships based on patience, enthusiasm, interpersonal communication, interest towards students, empathy, sense of humour – 81%;

- Behaviour oriented towards high expectations of every child's achievements- 81%;

- The ability to participate in suitable projects with the intercultural theme – 79%;

- Knowledge of the problems and conflicts on the ethnocultural ground and the ability to solve them in the educational environment – 77%;

- Knowledge of the bilingual characteristics of the students and taking their linguistic characteristics under consideration – 76%;

- Knowledge and ability to integrate and adapt children of immigrants and refugees to the educational system – 73%;

- Knowledge of models, evaluating students' needs and their styles of teaching – 73%;

- Importance of the knowledge of the history and culture of the different ethnic, religious and language minorities – 72%;

- Knowledge of interculturality – essence, cultural conflicts, factors for effective intercultural interaction – 69%.

•   The specialists define that the factors which would influence the most their way of teaching would be educational seminars, shared experience with colleagues and consultations with expects (Колева, 2012);

•   The realization of the State Educational Standard №13 (with Bulgarian abbreviation DOS) of Civil, Health, Ecological and Intercultural Education (2016)[1] in the content of the educational books

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[1] Standard №13, 21.09.2016.

and workbooks divide the specialists into two opinions – complete realization 51% and partial realization – 41%.

• The most significant difficulties, which the specialists outline, concerning the realization of the main objectives of the Standard of intercultural education are two:

- lack of parents' support;

- the educational content of the different disciplines does not provide a lot of opportunities to develop intercultural competence.

In 2018 the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science released 13 programs and preschool educational systems for kindergartens, from which only two are about intercultural education: *Neogaia – New Earth* and *I Change the World*.[2] These are systems with attachments: philosophy, teacher's book, parent's book, head teacher's book, assistant teacher's book and children's book for all 7 subject areas of the State Educational Standards of preschool education. Concerning the topic of how well familiar are the specialists with these preschool educational systems the data shows the following:

- Educational system *I Change the World* and preschool educational system *Neogaia – New* Earth is known as successful by 80% of the specialists;

- At the same time these successful systems are used during the current by a small percentage of the specialists – only 37% used the preschool educational system *I Change the World*.

Even though that the specialists know preschool educational systems which realize with greater success the State Educational, the pedagogues do not choose them. The reasons are different and of various nature. Usually, the local municipality imposes the choice over the preschool educational systems, because more often than not the kindergartens are under the jurisdiction of the local municipality. The second reason is connected with the monopoly of some publishing houses on a national level. The third reason is that municipalities do not take into consideration the qualification of the local teachers in multicultural regions with their ethnic specifics. The fourth reason is the absence of professional competencies throughout the country, both for headteachers of kindergartens and municipality employees. All municipalities have approved plans for educational integration of children of ethnic minorities, but just a few of them are developed and applied to practice (Blagomilova, 2012, Koleva, 2001).

- Most specialists do not feel competent to state whether or not there is a need of the actualization of the State Education Standard of Civil, Health, Ecological and Intercultural Education, the part of preschool education in particular. Nevertheless, for one-quarter (27%) of the participants such a change/an actualization in the Standard is desired;

- According to most teachers state and local authorities, business and non-government organizations support their work in intercultural education; Since 2005 to the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science is attached a subordinated organization – Centre for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities.[3] According to the participants in the survey it is the Ministry, the Centre, the municipalities and the European Educational Programmes are the institutions which have the largest part of improving the conditions in the multicultural educational environment.

- According to the participants, the universities and the non-government organizations do not provide enough.

Especially useful in relation to discovering the strengths and weaknesses of intercultural education are the findings from the following questions:

A dominant part of the pedagogical specialists (85%) consider that the work in aspect intercultural education is a condition for positive changes in Bulgarian education. There are 4% who do not see any positive changes as of yet, whereas the remaining participants (11%) cannot decide.

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[2] Koleva, Irina et al. (2018). *I Change the World*. Sofia: Veles; Koleva, Irina et al. (2018). *Neogaia - New Earth*. Sofia: Golden duck.
[3] For more information look here: https://coiduem.mon.bg/en/welcome-to-the-ceicsems-website/
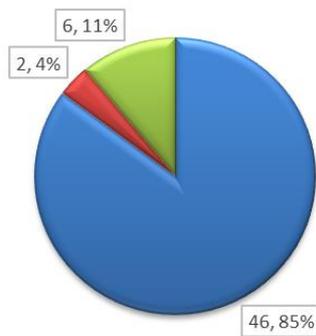
Diagram 3. Does intercultural education affect education positively?

A major weakness has been registered in the qualification and competencies of the teachers in relation to that how well are they familiar with the international and state legislation, concerning intercultural education. Findings show that almost half (44%) are not familiar with any documents. In addition, only 22% are able to give a specific name of a document – 16% mention Standard №13, while 6% mention the Preschool and School Education Law.
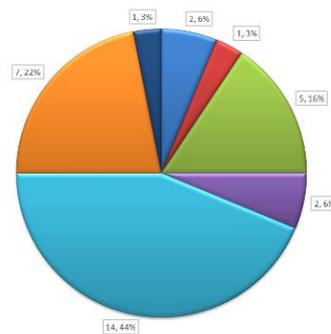
Diagram 4. Are you familiar with intercultural educational legislation?

Question №4 from the second segment has the aim to outline which quantitive indicators in aspect intercultural education, concerning the children in kindergarten with ethnic or national background, different from Bulgarian, are considered significant by the participants in the survey. This question consists of 20 sub-questions, labeled with Cyrillic letters. Each small question has 5 degrees from "not significant" to "very significant". Especially important are the following questions:

The number of integrated children, whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian – this factor has been evaluated as significant by 84% of the teachers.
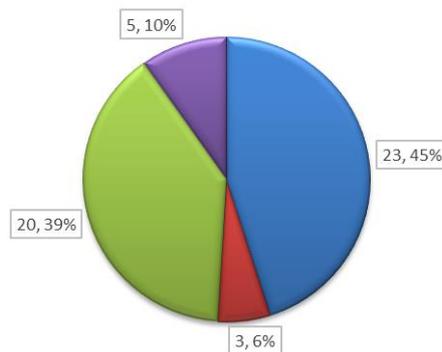

Diagram 5. Significance: number of integrated children

A number of students graduated high school – this indicator is considered significant by 82% of the specialists. Only 12% consider high school education to be insignificant in terms of intercultural education.
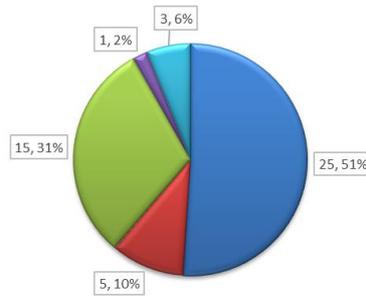
Diagram 6. Significance: number of students who graduated high school

A number of students dropped out of the school system – the next diagram (№7) shows that this indicator is important for about three-quarters of the participants (76%), while 12% believe that this indicator is of little importance. 10% of the specialists choose the neutral answer.

Diagram 7. Significance: Number of students dropped-out of school system

A number of multiethnic groups and proportion between the children within the groups – the results are given in diagram №8. Not surprisingly, again the majority of the pedagogical specialists consider this indicator as significant (73%) in the area of intercultural education. 20% are unsure, giving the neutral answer, whereas the rest of the participants – 8% have chosen the options for little or no significance.
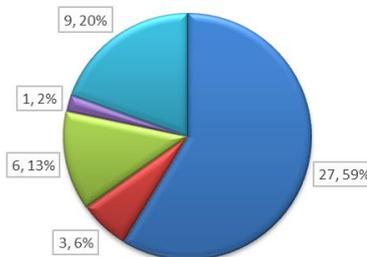

Diagram 8. Significance: number of multiethnic groups

Number and percentage of teachers, who have undergone qualifications and additional courses concerning intercultural education. 82% of the participants consider this indicator to be of significant importance, while 10% think the opposite. 8% are those who have given the neutral answer that this indicator is 'relatively significant'.
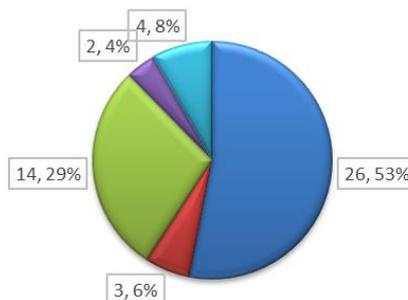

Diagram 9. Significance: Number of teachers, underwent intercultural qualification

Knowledge and appliance of the ethnological approaches for education in a multicultural environment by the kindergarten teacher – this indicator is recognized as significant by the highest 86% of the specialists. Only 8% state that it has little to no significance and 6% choose the relatively significant option.
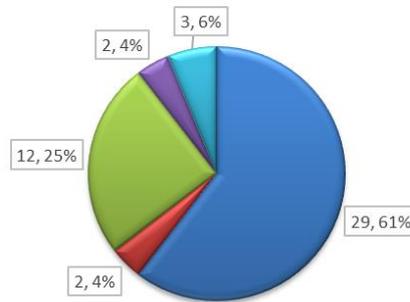

Diagram 10. Significance: Knowledge and appliance of the ethnological approaches

Knowledge and appliance by the teacher of legislation concerning the children's rights – Again relatively high percentage of the participants acknowledge this indicator as significant (84%). Respectively the little significance and the relative significances are 10% and 6%.
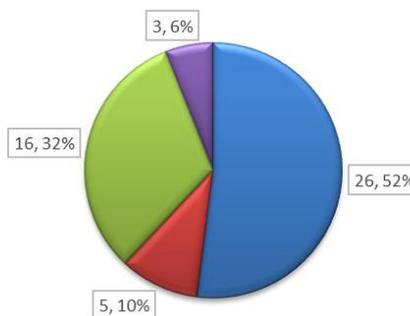

Diagram 11. Significance: Knowledge and appliance by the teacher of legislation concerning the children's rights

Knowledge and appliance by the teacher of approaches, forms, and methods for bilingual education – Bilingual education with its specific approaches, forms, and methods have significance for 74% of the participating teachers. Only 14% consider this indicator not to be a priority, whereas 12% are undecided.
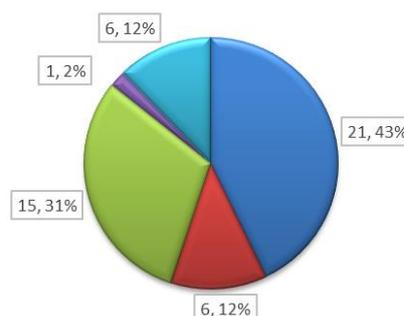

Diagram 12. Significance: Knowledge and appliance by the teacher of approaches, forms, and methods for bilingual education

After this question, concerning the quantity indicators in aspect intercultural education, the survey continues with the following question: "Which of the following [20] quality indicators in aspect intercultural education do you consider to be significant?" The question has a similar structure and 5 graded scales of evaluation as the previous one. Especially important for the purpose of the survey are the following results, presented in **diagrams №13-21.**

Knowledge of display of discrimination, prejudices and stereotypes in kindergartens and the mechanisms, applied in order to ensure their neutralization – The results in diagram №13 outline that 83% of the participants consider this quality indicator to be significant, whereas only 6% consider it to

be for little importance and 11% are undecided. None of the participants consider this indicator to be of no significance which is the lowest option possible.
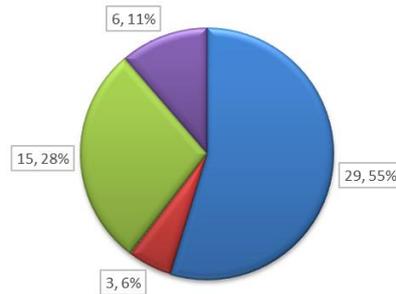

Diagram 13. Significance: Knowledge of display of discrimination, prejudices and stereotypes in kindergartens and the mechanisms, applied in order to ensure their neutralization

Knowledge in the field of equal rights and opportunities for all children, no matter of race, gender, ethnic or social background and religion - From the answers of the participants it gets clear that a relatively high percentage of the – 81%, consider the knowledge in the field of equal rights to be significant. On the opposite side are only 4% of the participants, again with no answers in the lowest category. Undecided is 15%.
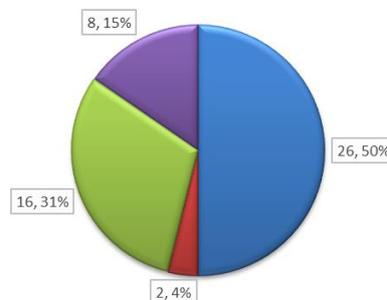

Diagram 14. Significance: Knowledge in the field of equal rights and opportunities for all children, no matter of race, gender, ethnic or social background, and religion

Knowledge of the problems and the conflicts on the ethnocultural ground and the knowledge to resolve these issues in the educational environment – This indicator is considered to be a priority by 77% of the pedagogical specialists. Just 8% consider it to be of little importance, again with no participants to think it is of no significance. 15% are undecided.
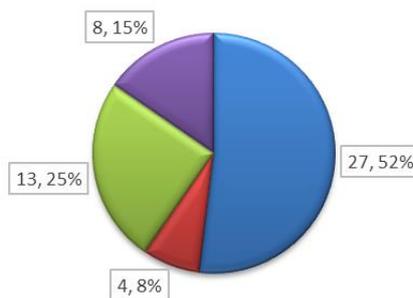

Diagram 15. Significance: Knowledge of the problems and the conflicts on the ethnocultural ground and the knowledge to resolve these issues in the educational environment

Ability to facilitate a positive educational environment that stimulates a dialogue between the representatives of the different ethnocultural communities, depending on their age and competencies – The predominant 82% of the participants in this survey consider these skills to be of great importance, where just 6% consider it to be of minor importance. 12% are undecided.
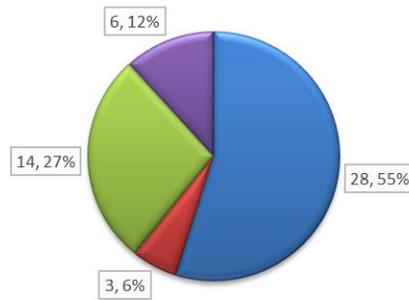
Diagram 16. Significance: Ability to facilitate a positive educational environment

Ability to teach and educate in the spirit of intercultural reflection and mutual respect, understanding and acceptance of the cultural specifics of the different children – 84% consider it to be a significant indicator whereas the opposite side and undecided have 8% each.
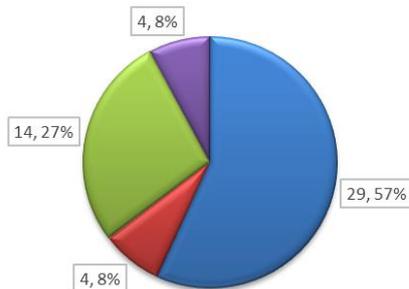

Diagram 17. Significance: Ability to teach and educate in the spirit of intercultural reflection and mutual respect

Skills to work in the intercultural and multiethnic environment, in an integrated classroom with close cooperation with colleagues, parents, and the larger community – the relatively high 88% of the participants consider this to be of utmost importance, whereas only 4% are preferring the opposite option of that it has little significance. 8% are undecided. There are no participants to consider this indicator not to be significant at all.
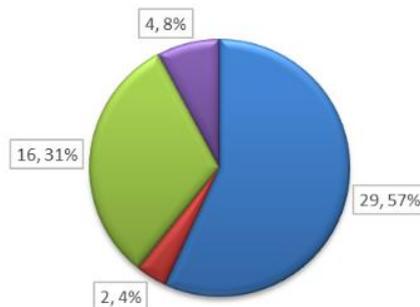

Diagram 18. Significance: Skills to work in an intercultural and multiethnic environment

Behaviour oriented towards high expectations of every child's achievements – the data shows that 81% consider this indicator to be important, whereas 6% consider it to be of little importance. 13% are undecided.
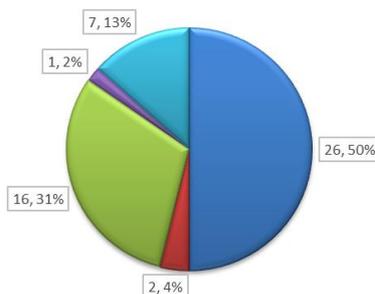

Diagram 19. Significance: Behaviour oriented towards high expectations

Whether or not an actualization of the State Educational Standard is required for intercultural education in preschool in particular – only 27% of the pedagogical specialist wish for such an actualization, yet the significant 61% consider themselves not competent enough to answer this question. Just 12% consider the current Standard to work properly and that actualization is not required as of today.
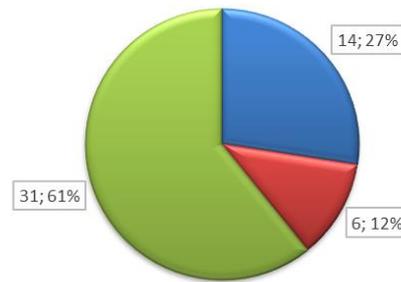

Diagram 20. Significance: Whether or not an actualization of the State Educational Standard is required

The parents' desire to participate in the organized intercultural activities – 55% of the participants think that parents rarely have the desire to participate, where 17% think that the parents have no desire whatsoever to join such activities. 28% of the specialists have the opinion that the parents are active in such events.
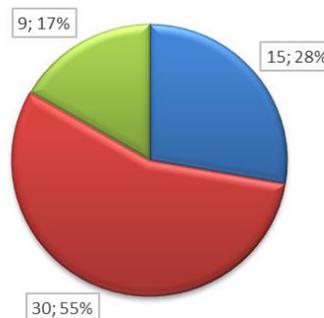

Diagram 21. Significance: The parents' desire to participate in the organized intercultural activities

The next question that deserves attention with regard to giving the recommendation to increase the effectiveness of the State Educational Standard №13 – Civil, Health, Ecological and Intercultural Education (2016). The pedagogies give various suggestions that can be grouped in the following way:

- The required changes in the Standard should be in the direction of the parents to have an obligation to participate in the teaching and educational activities in the kindergarten;

- As an addition to that obligation, more forms of interaction should be regulated. The interaction should be between the parents from one hand and the teachers, parents, municipality, non-government organizations etc. from the other;

- Seminars should take place, in which teachers should be granted prioritized didactic materials and methodical guidelines that have been proven on the national level;

- all kindergarten educational systems should attach educational books, specialized in the work with bilingual children. The aim of these educational books will be to enhance the learning process of the official language.

5.   PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES IN INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN ASPECT QUALIFICATION

The third segment is regarding the self-evaluation of the specialists concerning their professional competencies, as well as their motivation to increase their qualifications.

As fully qualified in the aspects of intercultural educational activities are self-evaluating 19% of the participants. 40% of them consider that they need continuing self-education. 12% admit their low competence in this aspect and give the reason that the situation is changing rapidly, whereas 29% consider themselves completely unqualified for such activities.
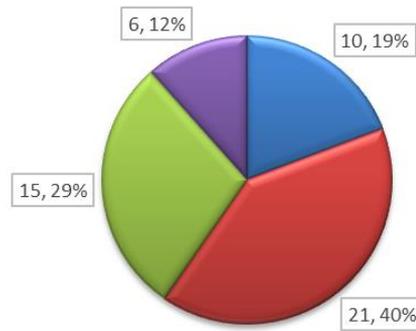
Diagram 22. Do you consider yourself competent in intercultural education?

The state of participants' motivation towards participating in continuing qualification – this topic is of particular importance to understand the established dynamic in the continuing qualification process in Bulgarian education. 42% prioritized their desire to develop their professional skills, whereas 40% prefer the exchange of good practices between colleagues. Just 9% participate in these courses because they are organized by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science and the school administration. 7% of the participants' primary motivation is that these courses increase their career prospects.
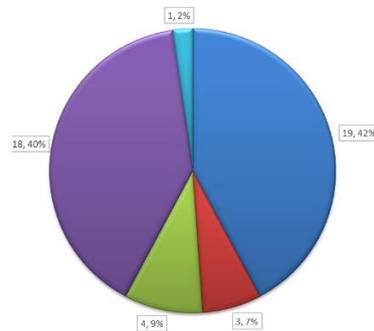

Diagram 23. The main reason for participating

Level of satisfaction with past qualifications – just half of those participants who have been on such qualifications are satisfied – exactly 50%. According to this group, the qualifications have a contribution to their skills and knowledge. Almost a quarter of the participants (23%) choose the "partially contributing" option. 17% have a problem applying the new information because it is too theoretical, whereas 10% think that these qualifications have not improved their skills in any aspect.

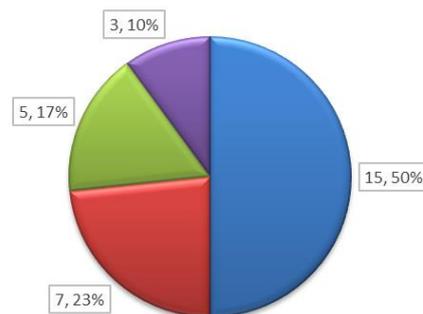**Diagram 24.** Level of satisfaction with past qualification

The next question is about participants' preference to the form of qualification in intercultural education environment – most of the specialists (77%) prefer conferences because there are lots of opportunities for personal contact and sharing good practices. 19% are undecided, where the last 4% think the conferences are not a suitable form of qualification.
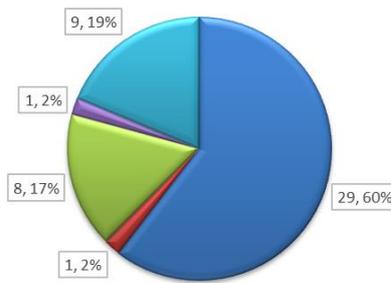
Diagram 25. Preferred type of qualification

Technologies and forms of the teaching of intercultural education are of utmost importance for 85% of the specialists. Just 4% consider that technology plays no role in intercultural education, whereas 11% are undecided.
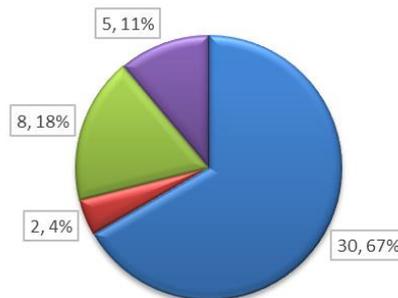

Diagram 26. The place of technology in intercultural education

The topic of pedagogical interaction with parents in an intercultural education environment is significant for 93% of the participants, with 7% undecided. There are no participants that consider this particular indicator to be insignificant.
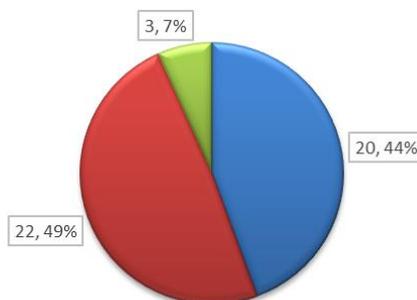
Diagram 27. Pedagogical interaction with parents

At the end of the survey, the participants have the option to choose the most suitable way for them to increase their personal qualification in aspect intercultural education. The options are:

- Personal reading of literature, documents and materials;

- Information in this aspect of education gained from internet sources;

- Participation in training and seminars;

- Consultations with specialists;

- Exchange of good pedagogical experience.

The results are that the participants prefer training and seminars, and exchange of good practices equally – 34% of the participants each. Consultations with specialists are the third preferred option with 21%, where the last two options with independent research have 11% altogether.

Diagram 28. Best way to increase teachers' qualification

The recommendations, which the participants give in relation to improving the quality of qualifications of intercultural education are as follows:

- Qualification courses should include experience exchange;

- More opportunities to exchange experience and good practices with colleagues;

- The educators should be people with experience in the field of intercultural education with skills to share;
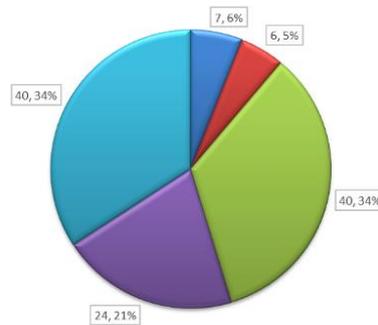
- The recommended technologies should be applied to practice;

- The pedagogical specialists and educational mediator should have ensured consultation with a specialist in the kindergarten at least once a week.

The conclusion from the third segment:

- 47% of the specialists have not participated in any type of qualification which concerns the aspect of work in an intercultural environment. Yet, two-thirds of the people from the same group think that the lack of additional training can be compensated with further reading. The main given reasons for not-participating in any intercultural training are lack of finances and difficult access;

- From those specialists who have participated in some sort of qualifications, most of them are driven by personal motives like exchanging personal experience, meeting with new colleagues, developing their professional skills, rather than because it is obligatory or because it is a career requirement. From the same group 40% conceder these types of qualifications to be partially useful and the main reason for that is that the information is hard to apply to practice;

- State institutions, such as the Ministry of Education and Science, Regional Educational Management, and the licensed by the Ministry institutions are preferred as organizers of such training and seminars. They are preferred in comparison to the ones provided by the universities and non-government institutions, specialized in teacher training. The difference between the Ministry from one hand, and the universities and NGOs from other, is significant - 20%;

- A powerful incentive for participating in qualification is the professional communities, presented with the social media as well (96%). After them, with 87% as the preferred type of education are the conferences and the seminars, which give the opportunity for personal experience exchange and contacts. 69% of the participants evaluate the state education as significant, followed by 64% who think that self-education is possible and lastly – 61% consider researching projects to be the beneficial type of training;

- Technological approach for qualification is preferred in comparison to the theoretical one;

- 75% of the participants recognize the necessity of qualification in aspect legislation;

- A theme that dominates the whole survey is the need of qualification concerning the pedagogical interaction with parents in an intercultural educational environment – 93%. It is followed by the necessity of familiarizing with ethnopsychological specifics of the ethnic groups – 91%. Third in importance is the theme of the effective project activity (82%), concerning the previous and presumes their interpretation in the context of educational reality.

6.   DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

The survey concludes that the participating specialists – kindergarten headteachers, teachers as well as educational mediators have a steady, inner motivation for a continuing qualification in the aspect of intercultural education. The preferred environment to develop their skills is educational seminars, where they can exchange good practices with colleagues and they can consult with a specialist (Andreeva, 2017; Blagomilova, 2012; Zarev, 2017; Legurska, 2012).

Required: social inclusion of all children in the education from an early age; flexible transitions between the different educational stages (Koleva, 2007, 2015a, 2015b).

The main goals of preschool education are:

✓   Identify and define the key competencies, required for being able to work and having personal realization;

✓   Support the effort on European, state, regional and local levels to encourage the development of competencies through life-wide learning.

Key competencies are defined as a combination of skills, knowledge and attitudes, which:

✓   Knowledge consists of the facts, numbers, concepts, understanding and theories, which are already approved and enhance the system of preschool education;

✓   Skills are defined as the ability of the individual to have reflection thinking in aspect self-understanding and self-regulation;

✓   Attitudes describe the predisposition and the way of thinking about an action or reaction towards ideas, people, or situations. For short, value-oriented model of attitudes of the individual.

We recommend the following model of educational policies to advance the strategy for kindergarten development (Koleva, 2009, 2015c).

•   A model to build up educational policy for kindergarten with the corresponding criteria (Appendix №2).

•   Measures and policies in the system of preschool education, as follows:

- Develop a map of the kindergarten (state, municipal and private) to help and give options to a concrete educational system (from the 13 that are already approved by the Ministry in 2018-2019). The choice has clear formal and content criteria in relation to concrete educational environmental markers (which are both inside and outside markers) in concrete communities and types of children (Blagomilova, 2012).

- Tracking conducted by the National Educational Inspectorate,[4] which is an institution which is under the ministerial cabinet directly, of the correspondence between applied educational systems and concrete kindergarten, as well as its strategy of development. Furthermore, there is an additional problem - upon choosing an expect-evaluator the consideration is only on the amount of pedagogical experience. Therefore, a paradox occurs where a teacher or a headteacher, who, according to the Preschool and School Educational Law indeed has a "pedagogical experience", but has no experience in a particular educational stage. This leads to the fact that the expert-evaluator is evaluating upon his incompetency in the specific educational stage. What should be taken into consideration should be the experience in the particular educational stage (which should be at least 5 years) and not pedagogical experience in general.

- Performing a situational, functional, and SWOT analysis of the quality of the preschool education (Andreeva, 2017; Zarev, 2017).

- Accreditation of formal and content criteria for innovative type kindergartens.

- Actualization of strategies of development of kindergartens and schools, in which there are preschool groups. Actualization and application of the educational systems of kindergartens, which considers the specifics of intercultural education in accordance with State Educational Standard №13 (Legurska, 2018).

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[4] Official website: https://nio.government.bg/

- Analyzing the condition of the target educational institutions, which includes their organizational and functional capacity and their specifics with regards to the applied strategies for development of the kindergarten, acknowledging the ethnocultural markers of the ethnic groups.

7. SUGGESTION

1. Correlation between the Strategy Development of Education and Teaching in Republic Bulgaria (2021-2030) and Priority 1 "Education and Skills" of National Development Programme: Bulgaria 2030.

1.1. Actualization of the kindergarten legislation in correspondence with the ministerial documents treating the topic of interculturality;

1.2. The kindergarten goals, mission, and vision must comply with the process of integration, through the education of children of ethnic minorities.

2. The ability to analyze the influence of ethnosocial, economic, ethnodemographic and ethnocultural factors, which have an impact while determining kindergarten educational policies.

3. The ability for strategic planning – determining the kindergarten's long-term goals and priorities for the next 4 years (in accordance with article 263, paragraph 1, section 1 of Preschool and School Education Law, 2016).

4. The ability to implement educational innovations in ethnocultural and intercultural aspects, complying with section intercultural education in preschool age of Standard №13. Introducing additional subject areas in preschool education, e.g. "Ethnoculture and interaction"; "Ethnosocial competencies"; "Intercultural competence and play interaction"; "Ethnocultural interaction"; "Sociocultural competence" etc.

5. Practical application of the strategy, in accordance with the inside and outside the intercultural educational environment. Orienteering the preschool educational systems, which are approved by the Ministry of Education and Science (2018-2019), towards the kindergarten development. Choose and application of the preschool educational systems in relation to intercultural education, using *I Change the World* (2018) and *Neogaia - New Earth* (2018).

6. Technical introduction and implementation of the strategy and the educational system on the kindergarten website.

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