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"Monitoring Teachers' Socio-Cultural Competency in a Multicultural Environment"

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INTRODUCTION

The current study's immediate goal is to develop objective criteria of teaching staff competency within a multicultural environment. Such criteria are necessary in terms of assessing teachers' work in such an environment on an institutional level, thus allowing the targeted stimulation (both in terms of bonuses and career development opportunities) of said staff (teachers, counselors, school psychologists, educators, principals and their deputies) to perform better in a multicultural school environment. In more general terms, these criteria would allow measuring the educational integration progress, in order to provide feedback on the effectiveness of educational integration policies.

In recent years, trends in the sphere of educational integration show insufficient implementation of targeted incentives for stimulating *quality* work with children and students from ethnic minorities. As a result teaching motivation of staff working in such an environment is lacking. This includes a reluctance to participate in postgraduate qualification programs, offered by institutions and NGOs alike, or when participating, to do it in an indifferent manner, without aiming to actually and effectively implement any aspects, which would increase specific competencies of educators, who are to work with minority children and students. The respective educator's motivation is mainly to receive one or the other participation certificate, not to achieve any real results.

Under the National Program for Differentiated Teaching Staff Remuneration, adopted in 2007, educators are entitled to additional remuneration for their work with children and students from ethnic minorities (Item 4 of the Card Stipulating Additional Salary of Teaching Professionals). However, no mention is being made on performance quality, resulting in a routine approach. In our opinion, maintaining such an approach creates a risk of "commercializing" teaching staff motivation in a multicultural environment, i.e. the danger that such commitments shall be undertaken only for better pay, not because there is readiness and competence to meet involved professional challenges.

In the most general terms, quality criteria for educational work could be divided into objective and subjective; i.e. criteria subject to definite objective "identification," such as success rate of students from a certain school or class, and criteria showing in the form of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of individuals heading the educational and schooling process. Several serious research studies, based on objective criteria, have been undertaken so far and are showing convincing results. A major advantage of objective indicators is that they can be measured empirically. However, that is not the case with subjective ones, and criteria for competency in a multicultural environment fall into the latter group. It would be reasonable to assume that, due to this fact, researchers and education policy analysts exhibit noticeable restraint in developing such indicators. A possible starting point for work in this direction could be the standard official job descriptions for the positions of "teacher", "primary school teacher" and "educator."

In a broader sense, development of competency criteria for teaching staff working in a multicultural environment should be based on existing education legislation, as well as relevant international directives, and in more general terms, on educational values and principles with regard to children and students from ethnic minorities at European and global level. Therefore, these subject matters have also been covered in the current study. Proceeding from a rather generalized perspective, based on researching numerous authors dealing with the issues of minority education, we have given precedence to the paradigm of intercultural education, which for various reasons has a leading role in the country. The competency criteria for teaching staff work in a multicultural environment, suggested in the current exposé are to be understood in the spirit of intercultural education discourse, a brief account on which will follow later on in the paper. We have further drawn on work studies dealing with early school leaving.

The current report is not copyrighted and is to be viewed as a reflective picture of intercultural education problems in the country.

Furthermore, the formulated hypothetical evaluation criteria were proposed by the very people whose professional work is to be assessed. These indicators were included in a survey with over 250 teachers, counselors, principals and experts who work with students from ethnic minorities, along with some more general questions dealing with the issue of intercultural education in the country. The survey questionnaire and results are presented in the current paper.

We had to take into account certain constraints in our work, arising from the specifics of the pedagogical work with students from ethnic minorities. For example, the criteria do not include some objective indicators such as success rates and the percentage of school dropouts, who indirectly, but empirically attest to the competency of teachers working with such students. We were guided by our understanding that the developed criteria should be applicable to the most difficult target groups, e.g. children from ghetto-like Roma neighborhoods. Experience shows that the success rate of students, coming from such backgrounds, rises slowly, even when the educational and schooling process quality is very good. The same applies to reducing dropout proportions. If the quality of educational work in a certain school is judged primarily on these indicators, teaching staff could be prompted to avoid engaging students who live in difficult conditions, and that would leave that category of children outside the scope of educational integration.

Analogously, we believe that parent and student surveys on educational schooling process quality should be used only when relatively reliable results could be expected. Classical empirical research methods do not work well with respondents, representative of a significant portion of the population of the districts in questions.

Consequently, we are focusing our efforts on the development of competency criteria which would allow us to determine performance in terms of knowledge, skills, values and attitude. Such indicators should be measurable and possible to be monitored, with clear time frames and sources of information (e.g. monitoring of lesson, analytic reports, programs, reports, protocols, portfolios). Assessing educational work quality through these criteria could be done through inspection, monitoring and supervision performed by the school administration, but also through reciprocal co-worker evaluation and self-evaluation (it is recommendable to apply the latter two methods simultaneously). Empirical parent and student surveys should also be undertaken, when reliable results could be expected.

ETHNIC AND CULTURAL FEATURES OF BULGARIAN SOCIETY

According to the National Statistical Institute's 2011 Census results, Bulgaria's population has the following ethnic and cultural characteristics

Ethnic Structure

The established demographic tendencies and increased emigration during the last 20 years influence the number of all ethnic groups in the country. As a result, no significant change in the ethnic structure of the population in the years between the last two voluntary censuses has occurred:

- The Bulgarian ethnic group comprises 5 664 624 persons, or 84,8% of individuals who voluntarily declared their ethnic identity.

- The Turkish ethnic group comes second, numbering 588 318 persons. This represents 8.8% of the population.

- The Roma ethnicity is traditionally the third largest, numbering 325 343 persons, with a relative share of 4.9%.

- The population of people identifying themselves as Bulgarian is significantly more urbanized in comparison to the other two ethnic groups. 77.5% of Bulgarians live in urban areas, compared to 37.7% of all Turkish citizens and 55.4% of all Roma.

- Individuals who identify themselves as of Turkish ethnicity are located in several districts – Kardzhali, Razgrad, Targovishte, Shumen, Silistra, Dobrich, Rousse, Bourgas. 63.7% of this ethnic group's population lives in those areas.

- The Roma ethnic group is spread throughout all provinces. The biggest shares of Roma people are located in the municipalities of Montana - 12.7% and Sliven - 11.8%, followed by Dobrich - 8.8% and Yambol - 8.5%, while the country total is 4.9%.

- Individuals who do not identified themselves as belonging to any given ethnic group number 53 391 - 0.8%. The share of young people, under the age of 19, among them is 51.7%.

Mother tongue

- Bulgarian is the mother tongue for 5 659 024 citizens or 85.2% of the population. Turkish is the mother tongue for 605 802 or 9.1% of the population, who voluntarily responded to the question. The Roma language is mother tongue to 281 217 individuals or 4.2% of the population.

- The correlation between ethnic self-identification and identification by mother tongue is strongly expressed. The most homogeneous ethnic group in terms of mother tongue is the Bulgarian. Among people who responded to both questions, on ethnicity and mother tongue, 5 571 049 (99.4%) indicate Bulgarian as their mother tongue, 15 959 (0.3%) - Turkish, 7 528 (0.1%) - Roma and 7 511 citizens (0.1%) said 'other.'

- Among the persons who identified themselves as belonging to the Turkish ethnic group, 564 858 or 96.6% have pointed Turkish as their mother tongue and 18 975, or 3.2% - Bulgarian.

- The Roma ethnic group is distributed as follows in terms of mother tongue: 272 710 persons, or 85.0% indicate the Roma language as their mother tongue; 24 033 persons, or 7.5% say Bulgarian; 21 440 persons, or 6.7% - Turkish; 1 837 persons, or 0.6% - Romanian.

Religion

- Religious self-determination is the question with the highest share of nonrespondents - 21.8%, whereas among those, the majority are young people and respectively, people living in the municipalities of Sofia (Capital), Plovdiv and Varna.

- Individuals who identified themselves as East-Orthodox number 4 374 135, or 76.0% of the population, who responded to the question. Catholic was indicated by 48 945 and Protestant by 64 476, or respectively 0.8% and 1.1% of respondents. 577 139 or 10% are Muslim.

Of them, Sunni Muslims number 546 004, while 27 407 are Shia. 3 727 persons pointed out just Muslim. 11 444, or 0.2% of respondents indicated they profess a different religion, 272 264 (4.7%) said they have no religion, while 409 898 respondents (7.1%) gave no indication.

Compared to Western Europe, Bulgaria's birth rate is 2 times lower. Alarming, however, is its structure – nearly 50% of births occur in social communities where children are doomed to social underdevelopment due to kinship, family, maternal and/or paternal environment, as Prof. Michael Mirchev reported during a previously held round table on "Demography of the Bulgarian Nation," organized by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and Arts. According to other data, today's classroom structure on a summarized national level is 47:53 in favor of the Roma ethnos.

As per the National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2012 – 2020):

Data from the National Statistical Institute's 2011 population and housing census show that the Roma ethnos remains the third largest ethnic group in Bulgaria. **325 343 persons,** i.e. **4.9%** of Bulgarian citizens identified themselves as belonging to the Roma ethnos.

The census shows a persistent tendency among part of the people, identified by the general population as Roma or Gipsy, to identify themselves as Bulgarians, Turks, Romanians, etc., which is possibly due to the fact that people participating in the census have the right to define their ethnic background themselves or to refrain from indicating it.

The persons from the Roma ethnic group are distributed across all regions of the country. Approximately half (55.4%) of the people who identified themselves as belonging to the Roma ethnic group reside in cities.

The age structure of the Roma population shows a distinctly manifested tendency – the relative share of the age groups decreases with the increase of age: children in the age group 0 to 9 years constitute one fifth (20.8%) of all persons who identify themselves as Roma, the groups of 10-19 year-olds and 20-29 year-olds show equal relative shares of 18.3% each, the 30-39 age group constitutes 15.2%; the 40-49 age group – 11.6%; the 50-59 age group. - 8,7%; the 60-69 age group - 4,9%; the 70-79 age group - 1.9%; the 80+ age group - 0,4%.

Among the Roma population economically inactive are three fifths of people above the age of 15 – 61.2%. The group of pensioners (the only ones who generate own income) is the smallest one – just about 23.5% (14.4% of all Roma citizens at the age of 15 or older). The main reason lies in the age structure of the community, but also in the fact that many elderly Roma citizens, who have been durably unemployed or have been employed in the informal sector, have no pension insurance and do not meet the pension requirement for a definite number of years of service. The share of students is extremely small – 7.3% of the economically inactive population, i.e. 4.4% of all Roma citizens above the age of 15. This small share of young people continuing their education after the age of 15 will determine the lower educational and qualification status of the Roma community in years to come, hence – a greater share of unemployed people and labor market dropouts in the decades to come. Housewives constitute a huge share – 36.5% of the economically inactive Roma population, i.e. 22.4% of all Roma above 15.

A prolonged dropping-out of the workforce is the strongest indicator of socio-economic exclusion in Bulgaria after 1989.

Education

Education/ years	Bulgarians %	2011	Turks %	2011	Roma %	2011
Higher	19.2	25.6	2.4	4.9	0.2	0.5
Secondary	47.6	52.3	21.9	29.7	6.5	9.0
Basic	24.9	18.0	46.9	44.5	41.8	40.8
Primary	6.9	3.4	18.6	13.4	28.3	27.9
Uncompleted primary school and illiterate/ non-attendance	1.4	0.9	10.2	7.5	23.2	21.8

Source: NSI

Observations show that improvement of the educational status of the Roma community has slowed down in the last 20 years. Another specificity of the group is that functional illiteracy is three times more frequent among Roma women than men. Women are the ones bringing up the children and their illiteracy and/or low educational level have a crucial impact on the educational aspirations and school success of their children.

The educational level among all three groups – Bulgarians, Turks and Roma - is on the rise, but this trend is notably weaker with the Roma community.

Part of Roma children do not speak the official Bulgarian language well enough when enrolled in school, neither have they acquired basic knowledge and skills needed to cope with the learning process. Socialization models in many Roma groups, particularly in neighborhoods with predominantly Roma population, create additional difficulties for the adaptation of Roma children in school, if they have not attended pre-school classes.

The patriarchal norms of excessive control over girl and women behavior in some Roma subgroups also make them early school leavers.

Despite all encountered difficulties, the period 2001 – 2011saw an increase of young Roma citizens graduating from higher education institutes in the country, or specializing and obtaining a higher degree abroad. The successes in this respect are even higher than indicated by NSI's census, because many young people do not identify themselves as Roma after completing higher education.

2011 Census data shows that despite an increasing share of young Roma people with higher education, the predominant tendency is for a great number of young Roma citizens to remain without appropriate education, drop out of school at an early stage, or fail to enroll at all. The situation varies across different Roma subgroups, settlements and regions.

THE INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION MODEL AS A PEDAGOGICAL WORK METHODOLOGY IN A MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

In the most general terms, one could distinguish between two strategies for dealing with education problems determined by ethnic, religious or racial differences. In recent decades, these have established themselves as alternative education models in the countries of North America and Western Europe. The talk is of methodologies developed in the spirit of liberalism and respectively, multiculturalism. The first one relies on downgrading cultural diversity, while the second - on its positive treatment.

From a liberal point of view, difficulties arising in the communication between teachers and students due to cultural differences are explained as resulting from the cultural backwardness of children from ethnic and religious minorities. Designations such as "ethnic students" and "students of ethnic origin" (see e.g. Stearns, Glennie, 2006 and Court, 2006) are often used (in publications by authors from the liberal movement) for the latter. The idea is for communication in school to proceed in a standardized, optimized, culturally neutral way. In other words, children with cultural attitudes, determined by their ethnicity and respectively, religion, should fight their cultural and historical particularism and one of the tasks of teachers is to help them do it.

As for group solidarity arising from cultural differences, there is no room for it in school. Division of the sort "ingroup – outgroup" must be quenched by all possible means. One such method is, for example, to give collective student tasks, whereby student groups are formed of children from the various ethnic, respectively religious communities represented in class. Competition between these ethnically diverse, respectively multi-faith groups creates *ad hoc* solidarities, which connect students beyond "demarcation lines" of cultural differences. Another pedagogical tool, showing similar results, is combating discrimination in schools - both theoretically and in practice.

The two political and educational models differ mostly on the role of collective identities in school. The principal liberal standpoint in this regard is that cultural identity should manifest only in individuals' private lives. Public life must remain culturally neutral. Therefore, municipal and state schools should not turn into an arena for the realization of cultural identities. The latter would separate children in terms of ethnos, religion, probably also race, and would set them up against each other. It would be much more preferable to bring them up in the spirit of universal values and civic loyalty to society as a whole. Solidarity among students as citizens of the same nation, regardless of ethnic, religious and other cultural characteristics, should be encouraged by all means. This is the key to dealing with school life problems arising from cultural differences.

What about things from the multicultural standpoint? First, cultural differences are appreciated as specifics of the respective community's historical development, and not as a sign of inferior civilization. Assuming such a position means that any difficulties in teacher-student communication of this nature must be overcome by developing intercultural competency on both sides. In other words – working towards a readiness for constructive interaction with the Other, learning about and from the "foreign" culture and developing communication skills, which transcend cultural "barriers."

From this perspective, group solidarity seems to be a necessary form for the realization of cultural identities. There is no reason, however, for them to necessarily act in an exclusivistic way, i.e. loyalty towards one's own group to manifest as a form of discrimination against others. Displaying intercultural competency means to be able to affirm the values of one's community without wronging others. The most appropriate multicultural pedagogical strategy of dealing with discrimination in schools is not to counteract conditioned cultural divisions in ingroups and outgroups, but to work towards a positive perception of differences.

Along with this, collective identity is regarded as a source of self-esteem. Negative attitudes towards it and even its mere neglect could have distorting effects on the self-consciousness of people belonging to a given ethnicity or religion, or respective race. Therefore, any cultural identity deserves to be treated as valuable. This is a moral obligation, known under the term

"recognition"1 in multiculturalistic discourse. It goes without saying that the so perceived collective identity could rightfully be expressed in public life; moreover – it is given its deserving place, regardless of whether it is the identity of a majority or that of any minority. In particular, minority identities should be given the opportunity to express themselves in local and state schools not only through extracurricular activities (e.g. creating folk music and dance ensembles, holding celebrations on the occasion of specific traditional festivals of ethnic and/or religious communities), but through teaching subjects within the scopes of compulsory elective courses (CEC) and voluntary elective courses (VEC), which enable children from ethnic and religious minorities to understand and affirm their identity (e.g. native language, religion, Roma folklore). Including issues related to cultural differences in the curriculum of some compulsory subjects (relevant literary works, but also studying the role different communities, which make up the present Bulgarian nation, have played in our history, etc.) is another option.

Describing the multicultural approach towards educational integration in the most general terms, one must also consider the different, more detailed interpretations of this strategy for dealing with cultural diversity. There are two major trends in the positive treatment of cultural diversity. *Pluralism* could be prioritized, whereby one seeks ways to promote minority identities in competitive terms – as a rivalry with the identity of the majority, but also with those of other minorities (an example would be the so-called "afrocentric curriculum" of social science and humanities majors in some universities in the U.S.). Another possibility, however, is the interaction of speakers of different identities through *dialogue*. Scientific literature describes the two as methodologies of multicultural and intercultural education respectively. The first approach idealizes minorities' cultural autonomy, while the second addresses educational problems of such communities through " ...interaction, reciprocity, interdependence, dialogue and mutual responsibility " (Rey, 1996).

Both these methodologies have their respective advantages and disadvantages, making each applicable under certain conditions and inappropriate in other circumstances. Recent years have seen a tendency of retreat from the multicultural pluralistic model in Western Europe, as the cultural integrity of each respective society is more or less compromised. Particularly risky in this regard is the so-called "mosaic" multiculturalism, characterized by an essentialist approach towards cultural identities, which contradicts basic democratic values. Multicultural education creates a segregation risk (including self-segregation) for minority communities.

The intercultural approach, in turn, is too complex to implement and often faces obstacles of various kinds. In order to illustrate such difficulties, we shall quote and comment briefly on the principles of intercultural education, developed at an expert meeting at UNESCO headquarters in March 2006 (see UNESCO 2006) and included in the organization's recommendations ("guidelines") on conducting this type of educational activities. A total of three principles are mentioned there. In our opinion, each of them provides both, a prescription for action in a given direction and a warning about possible negative consequences, if the action is not performed ably. In other words, it indicates what to do and what to avoid.

1.   *Intercultural education respects the cultural identity of the learner through the provision of culturally appropriate and responsive quality education for all.*

In our opinion, this principle, *inter alia*, refers also to the risk of lowering education quality due to attempts of aligning academic and educational activities with students' cultural specificity. Under the pretext that such courses offer minority students knowledge and skills that are appropriate to their cultural background and can therefore be more easily absorbed, requirements towards these children might be lowered. A different result could be that minor courses in the curriculum are given a prominent position, as students are more likely to better cope with them.

2.   *Intercultural education provides every learner with the cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to achieve active and full participation in society.*

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1 For a more detailed argumentation of the thesis that recognition of the value of another's identity is everyone's moral obligation, see C. Taylor's stufy on "The Politics of Recognition," (Taylor 1999)

We believe this reflects the temptation to "adapt" the curricula to students' cultural specificity, in terms of early enhanced learning courses that can help young people's career development in the field of material production. This occurs at the expense of hours in general subjects, in some cases to such an extent that graduates of this type of schools are deprived of the right to continue their education to a higher degree. Living conditions of people from minority communities are often quoted as justification. The argument is that continuing a child's education to secondary level, not to mention university level, is extremely unlikely in such communities; thus, the school should provide children with some basic knowledge and skills, allowing them a stable livelihood for themselves and their families. The above cited second principle of intercultural education is explicit in its differentiation from similar trends.

3.   Intercultural education provides all learners with cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills that enable them to contribute to respect, understanding and solidarity among individuals, ethnic, social, cultural and religious groups and nations.

The warning contained in this principle is clear. Intercultural education should work to promote the value of cultural minority identities in a way which does not antagonize relations between ethnic, religious and racial communities. The dialogic approach towards intercultural relationships should have a leading role.

Over the past decades, the model of intercultural education, as a strategy for educational work in a multicultural environment has become more and more popular with EU institutions and other inter-European institutions, such as the Council of Europe. At home, this model manifests via different forms of educational integration through schooling activities, aimed at ensuring access to quality education to all, conveying uniform civil values, while at the same time providing the necessary conditions for students to unfold and develop their cultural identities to the fullest extent.

INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL DOCUMENTS RELATED TO EDUCATION OF CHILDREN AND STUDENTS FROM ETHNIC MINORITIES

EU Documents

➢ European Cultural Convention

➢ The Lisbon Convention

➢ Athens Declaration by European Ministers of Education on Intercultural Education in the New European Context

➢ Committee of the Ministers Recommendations

➢ EU Projects:

➢ "New Intercultural Challenge to Education: Religious Diversity and Dialogue in Europe"

➢ " Education of Roma Children"

➢ " Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights"

The *Declaration on Intercultural Education in the New European Context* was adopted at the 21 Session of the *Standing Conference of Ministers of Education* of the 48 CE member states, held in November 2003, in Athens.

It asserts that European communities are very diverse in terms of ethnicity, culture, language, religion and education systems. Furthermore, the declaration takes into consideration potential social conflicts and disagreements that may arise from the coexistence of different value systems. It also highlights the desire to preserve European society's multicultural nature and to avoid a situation in which globalization intensifies any exclusion and marginalization processes.

The conference supported the launch of two projects, namely **"New Intercultural Challenge to Education: Religious Diversity and Dialogue in Europe,"** contributing to the overall goals of mutual understanding, respect and learning to live together, as well as the one on "Education of Roma Children," which emphasizes intercultural education principles.

The Declaration's conclusion identifies the following key tasks:

➢ "to resume conceptual research on intercultural education with a view to adapting terminology and clearly defining the content and context of intercultural education;

➢ to help to build understanding of the European dimension of education in the context of globalization, by introducing respect for human rights and diversity, foundations for managing diversity, openness to other cultures, inter-religious dialogue and "Euro-Arab dialogue";

➢ to step up efforts in the area of the content of learning methods and teaching aids, in order to provide the member states with examples of educational tools making it possible to take the intercultural dimension of curricula into account;

➢ to develop analytical instruments and identify and disseminate examples of good practice which emphasize intercultural and pluralist approaches, in school textbooks;

➢ to develop programs aimed at communication and mutual understanding, particularly through language learning and by encouraging awareness-raising for the importance of linguistic diversity in multicultural societies;

➢ to encourage the member states to introduce the intercultural dimension in their education policies, in order to enable appropriate consideration of dialogue between cultures;

➢ to encourage research focusing on social learning and co-operative learning in order to take into account the "learning to live together" and intercultural aspects in all teaching activities;

➢ to support initiatives and experiments with democratic governance in schools, particularly through partnership, youth participation and co-operation with communities, parents and civil society;

➢ to develop quality assurance instruments inspired by education for democratic citizenship, taking account of the intercultural dimension, and develop quality indicators and tools for self-evaluation and development for educational establishments;

➢ to strengthen intercultural education and management of diversity within its programme of in-service training for education staff and encourage member states to contribute to this programme by organizing seminars on topics directly linked to the aims of the present Declaration;

➢ to develop educational strategies and working methods to prepare teachers to manage the new situations arising in our schools as a result of discrimination, racism, xenophobia, sexism and marginalization, and to resolve conflicts in a non-violent way;

➢ to encourage member states to acknowledge that managing diversity is not a problem in schools alone, but concerns the whole of society, particularly with regard to policies implemented in the social, family and migration fields;

➢ to make the necessary arrangements to take intercultural education into account as an important component of our education policies; this entails appropriate measures at the levels of curricula, school governance and teacher training."

Documents of the Republic of Bulgaria

➢ Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria

➢ Draft Law on Pre-school and School Education

➢ Law on Protection Against Discrimination

➢ Denominations Act

➢ Law on Child Protection

➢ Law on Asylum and Refugees

➢ Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities – Ministry of Education and Science (MES) /2010, updated in 2012/

➢ MES Draft Strategy on Reducing Early School Leaving / 2012 – 2020г. /

➢ Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2012-2020);

➢ National Strategy for the Integration of Vulnerable Minority Groups with a Special Focus on Roma of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues with the Council of Ministers (NCCEIICM) (2011 -2015)

➢ NCCEIICM Domestic Action Plan (2012 -2015)

➢ Draft Law on Pre-school and School Education /2012/

➢ Draft Standard for Civic, Intercultural and Health Education / 2012 – MES/

The National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria (2012-2020) is a policy framework document, laying down guidelines for the implementation of the social integration policy for the Roma people.

The Strategy is in line with the National Reform Programme of the Republic of Bulgaria (2011-2015) and with the National Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 initiative.

The Strategy builds on what was achieved in the ten-year period of the Framework Program for Roma Integration in Bulgarian society and it includes the fully developed, updated and adopted by the Council of Ministers on 12 May, 2010 strategic document: Framework Program for Roma

Integration in the Bulgarian Society 2010-2020, which was the outcome of broad discussions within the Roma community, the civil sector, responsible public institutions and the academic community. The Strategy corresponds with the Framework Convention of the Council of Europe on Protection of National Minorities. It complies with the Council of Ministers' recommendation on initiating affirmative actions aimed at the Roma community, which must take place in conditions of transparency, public consent and strict observation of the democratic principles in the country.

In 2011/2012 NCCEIICM developed a national strategy on the integration of vulnerable minority groups with a special focus on Roma (for the period 2012 - 2020). This is a policy framework document, which sets out guidelines for the implementation of policies for social inclusion of Roma and other ethnic communities and groups, living in similar conditions in Bulgarian society. It further aims to coordinate actions of public authorities, regional and local authorities and civil organizations in terms of their enforcement. A national action plan, outlining "Education" as one priority, was developed based on that strategy.

Both, strategy and action plan meet the international standards on human rights and rights of persons belonging to minorities, known as **International UN instruments** tackling human rights, to which the Republic of Bulgaria is a signatory: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966 (in effect for R. Bulgaria from 1970); International Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966 (in effect for R. Bulgaria from 1970); International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1966 (in effect for R. Bulgaria 1992); The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979 (in effect for R. Bulgaria 1982); Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (in effect for R. Bulgaria 1991), etc.

The Strategy is based on the principles of the EU political framework for protection of human rights, ensuring equal opportunities for all citizens and prevention of discrimination based on various grounds, including ethnicity, such as: Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000, implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin; Council Directive 2000/78/EC, establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation; the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, etc.

This framework document fits into the context of development of European policies in the area of Roma integration, taking into account: the guidelines provided through the Communication from the European Commission (EC) of 5 April 2011 – EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 and the Council Conclusions, adopted on 19 May 2011; The 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion, adopted by the Council of EU on 8.06.2009; the recognized necessity to enhance government efforts aimed at achieving tangible results through Roma integration activities, the relevant EU political instruments and institutional mechanisms, programs and initiatives; the outcomes of the actions within the framework of the European platform for Roma inclusion; the EU summit meetings on the Roma issue; the Communication from the EC to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions – Non-discrimination and Equal Opportunities: a Renewed Commitment, Community Instruments and Policies for Roma Inclusion {SEC(2008)2172} of July 2008, Council Conclusions of 8.12.2008 on Roma Inclusion; European Parliament Resolution of 11.03.2009 on the social situation of the Roma and their improved access to the labor market in the EU (2008/2137/INI), European Parliament Resolution of 01.06.2006 on the situation of Roma women in the EU; European Parliament Resolution of 28.04.2005 on the situation of Roma in the EU, etc.

The Ministry of Education and Science outlines the following strategic objectives relating to education and integration of children and students from ethnic minorities:

Strategic Objective 1: Ensuring the right of equal access to effective and inclusive quality education to children and students from ethnic minorities through legislative measures and educational activities.

Strategic Objective 2: Preserving and developing the cultural identity of children and students from ethnic minorities and transforming ethno-cultural diversity into a source and factor for mutual knowledge, tolerance and understanding in the educational environment.

Strategic Objective 3: Creating preconditions for a successful socialization of children and young people from ethnic minorities, as well as ensuring a sutable socio-psychological environment.

Failure to consider culturological, ethno-psychological and ethno-pedagogical aspects of educational programs specifically designed for post-modern society, leads to a scenario where a majority of children and students from certain vulnerable ethnic groups are regarded as failures and dropouts from educational institutions, as well as early school leavers. /*see Annex 1*/

A strategy and consequent action plan /2012 - 2020/ were developed by experts from MES, as well as academics and NGOs specifically for these two student groups.

The strategy is subject to MES's overall strategy for educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities /updated in 2011/.

MES's strategic documents find their direct implementation, coordination and control in the **civil, intercultural, and health education draft standard**.

On a national scale and in accordance with it, the following teacher competencies have been laid down:

➢ knowledge of the political and legal context of socio-cultural diversity;

➢ understanding the different dimensions of diversity in terms of internal and external pedagogical environment;

➢ knowledge and implementation of pedagogical /general didactic, tutorial and educative, where possible also socializing / education methods designed for a multicultural and multiethnic environment;

➢ knowledge and implementation of educational diagnosis procedures for socio-cultural diversity;

➢ building a multicultural understanding on an intellectual, communicative, cooperative and personal level;

➢ changing psychological approaches determining the form of didactic and educational interaction with children and students.

Creating a favorable multicultural environment for the practical implementation of intercultural education:

• inclusion of children and students from ethnic minority groups in the learning process;

• supporting the process of technological integration of children and students from ethnic minorities, reducing the number of dropouts and early school leavers, as well as the number of children excluded from the school system;

• bringing children and students from ethnic minorities out of segregated schools in Roma neighborhoods and into so called host schools;

• supporting the integration of children and students from ethnic minorities in the host schools;

• improving the overall environment and creating modern facilities aimed at developing every child's potential, providing opportunities for physical development, intellectual and personal development, full social integration and subsequent career opportunities;

• motivating families in settlements with a multi-ethnic population to support a problem-free

technological integration process;

• creating conditions of knowledge and understanding between different ethnic groups;

• improving the preparation of teachers, educators and experts who shall work in a multicultural environment;

It is a well known fact that natural language learning is more lasting than any fast learning methodology. In this context it is important to mention a number of basics:

➢ the pedagogical team should keep in mind the language and cultural background of families, whose children they are teaching and educating;

➢ the pedagogical team should support families in their understanding of the importance of the first language as a basis for learning a second one;

➢ children, whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian, should not be perceived as outsiders, because in today's world knowing more than one language is an advantage.

Expected results:

✓ a changed public attitude towards children and students from ethnic minorities and majorities.

✓ enhanced cognitive motivation of children and students and the wish to participate in the educational process;

✓ "pedagogical expert - parent" subject-to-subject relationship;

✓ improved conditions for equal access to education for children and students from the Turkish minority, aged 4 to 8 years old;

✓ better knowledge of the Bulgarian language of children and students, whose native language is not Bulgarian;

✓ compulsory pre-school education from the age of five;

✓ improved internal and external educational environment and guaranteed favorable conditions for quality education in kindergartens and schools, aimed at keeping children and students at school;

✓ diversified and compulsory extracurricular and out-of-school forms of education;

✓ promoting cultural identity of children and students from ethnic minorities and their peers;

✓ encouraging their creative abilities in a multicultural integration environment;

✓ supporting the adaptation of children and students from ethnic minorities to the educational process and formation of a tolerant approach towards others;

✓ improved relationships between children/students, children/students and teachers, parents and children, parents and teachers; acquiring skills for better communication and thus, reducing conflicting situations; reduction of aggressive behavior and delinquency among students;

✓ specific qualifications for teaching professionals to employ pedagogical techniques in their work in a multicultural environment.

PROBLEMS FOR TEACHERS WHEN WORKING IN A MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

The quality of education strongly depends on the teacher, their qualifications and work motivation. School reality provides sufficient examples of teachers' unpreparedness to work in a multicultural classroom:

✓ lack of specific training for teachers in terms of methodology, to be applied when working with children of different ethno-cultural backgrounds, as well as in the fields of ethno-psychology, psychological anthropology and ethno-pedagogy.

✓ teachers cannot cope with students' didactic difficulties in mastering the curriculum, due to poor knowledge of the Bulgarian language (children from Turkish and Roma ethnicity) and lack of physical and social readiness to attend school in children, who have not received compulsory pre-school training.

✓ lack of official policies, promoting educational innovation in the organization and management of multicultural classrooms.

✓ training is sporadic and a result of project activities, rather than a conscious national education policy.

✓ empirical analysis of various forms of postgraduate teacher training at the national level shows:

▪ ignorance and failure to implement diverse value-oriented didactic and educative methods in the process of teacher interactions with students and parents in the context of a multicultural environment.

▪ ignorance and failure to implement cooperative reflexive forms of pedagogical interation with the help of co-educators and assistant teachers in the context of a multicultural environment.

▪ diverse and alternative models and tools for social inclusion of children and students from vulnerable ethnic communities or groups are not always part of pedagogical practice.

▪ up to the point of adoption of the draft law on pre-school and school education /2012/ there shall be uncertainties with regard to partnership relations between: educational institutions and NGOs /directly related to the pedagogical interaction/; school and parent board, as well as the new form of the public council.

Bulgarian teachers, who fulfill their mission in a group or class consisting of students coming from different cultural backgrounds, lack basic knowledge of those cultures and are not familiar with the main regulatory documents on differences. Most lacking in this respect are kindergarten and school principals, *as well as preschool and primary teachers*, who are the first to encounter cultural differences among children and feel the deficit of such knowledge, which is not part of their university education.

The undeniable presence of ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity in the country "unlocks" MES's launch of a lasting policy of balancing and harmonizing the principle of educational integration of children and students from minority groups with the principle of preserving and developing their identities /2011 - 2013/.

Impoverishment of Bulgarian teachers and their inability to take care of their own qualifications is another major reason for the existing knowledge deficit on Bulgarian ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities.

Last but not least - the lack of appropriate postgraduate qualifications and graduate programs on the issue, due to a shortage of university experts in this field, also had its negative effect on delaying the process of comprehensive implementation and application of intercultural education elements in the Bulgarian educational system and respective institutions.

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF TRAINING AND QUALIFICATION FOR CURRENT AND FUTURE EDUCATORS, WORKING IN A MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT
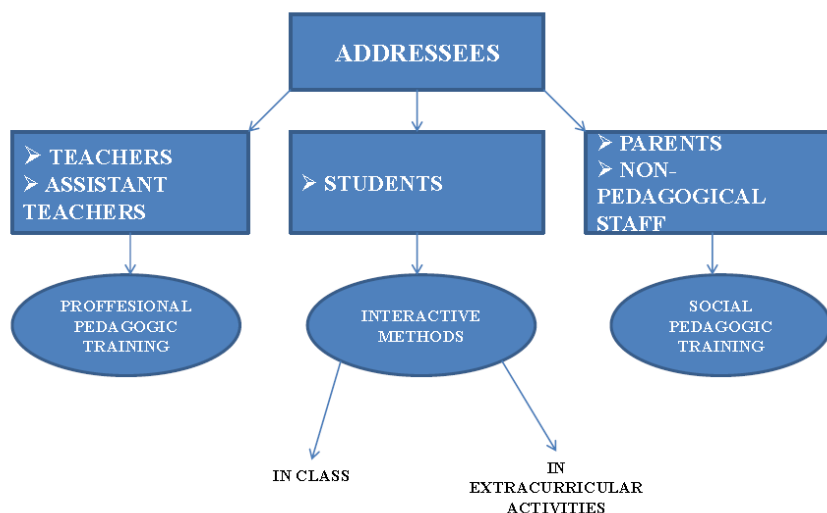
Necessary conditions:

- Creating a standard for intercultural education.

- Intercultural competency should be considered part of basic teacher competencies when working in multicultural schools.

- The curricula of pedagogical university majors should include compulsory courses preparing future teachers to work in a multicultural environment.

- The list of elective courses should include training on intercultural sensitivity and competence, education without prejudice, etc.

- Creating university centers for intercultural dialogue.

- It is necessary to legislatively correlate conditions for recruitment and career development of teachers, as well as the reward and incentives system, with increasing teachers' intercultural competency.

- Affect changes to the Ordinance on teachers' professional qualifications, linked to obtaining a master's degree.

- Development of quality standards for work in a multicultural environment as a basis for differentiated pay, legitimized as MES official policy.

- Establishing networks for sustainable and continuous qualification activities for teachers, who work in areas with a concentration of Roma and Turkish populations.

- ***Teachers, who work with children from ethnic minorities, should receive additional pay, if they hold a master's degree or qualification in intercultural education***.

- Establishment of advisory expert panels on intercultural education, aimed at providing practical, on the spot assistance in problem solving and conflict resolution arising in multicultural schools.

- Establishing a forum for best practices exchange among teachers experiencing difficulties and seeking help, etc. in their work with culturally diverse students.

- It is necessary to create an educational database with information on multiethnic schools, difficulties they are facing and implemented best practices, which could serve as models for multiplication by MES.

- Acceleration of efforts in the sphere of teaching methods and didactic means aiming to provide an educational tool-kit, which would allow the integration of an intercultural dimension to the curriculum and learning programs.

- Develop analytical tools, identify and disseminate best practices of intercultural and pluralistic approaches in textbooks.

- Develop indicators to ensure quality through education on democratic citizenship, which takes into account the intercultural dimension.

- Indication of good practices in the sphere of intercultural education and ensuring quality education in schools, etc.

In order to adapt to different learning styles of students, pedagogical teams need to establish a positive environment, providing the opportunity to obtain experience and specific knowledge. Such an environment offers more variety and enough time to study, thus meeting children's needs. Children will understand more easily what a particular situation means and they may work in small groups, allowing them to learn how to study more accurately and efficiently. In this regard, it is very important for teachers to concentrate their efforts on creating consistency

between students' learning styles, dictated by their cultural beliefs and differences, and teaching styles.

FORMS OF QUALIFICATION

ADDRESSEES

- TEACHERS
- ASSISTANT TEACHERS

- STUDENTS

- PARENTS
- NON-PEDAGOGICAL STAFF

PROFFESIONAL PEDAGOGIC TRAINING

INTERACTIVE METHODS

SOCIAL PEDAGOGIC TRAINING

IN CLASS

IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

❖ *Important questions:*

➢ What should be the correlation between educational methods in a multiethnic environment and diverse value orientations of subjects /from a different ethnic origin/, which are to receive teaching?

➢ What are the quantitative and qualitative indicators of characteristic criteria for the implementation of the intercultural education standard?

❖ *Fast solutions (on the spot)*

➢ implementing pedagogical education techniques designed for multiethnic environments in educational institutions.

➢ interactive organization of the pedagogical environment /internal and external/.

❖ *Sustainable solutions (for the country)*

➢ regulation on individual plans, backed with resources based on the type of group/grade and class: for social adaptation, cognitive motivation and social orientation ability – a "second chance."

➢ additional and sustainable teacher training on a national scale, funded by MES and linked to career advancement and differentiated pay.

PROBLEM AREAS IN BULGARIAN SCHOOLS RELATED TO INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION:

According to the conclusions of a recent national study on "Identifying social and economic consequences for teachers due to the introduction of the delegated budgets system", undertaken at the initiative of the Bulgarian Teachers' Syndicate (BTS) with the financial support of the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria (CITUB), the following is missing:

• organizational and financial incentives for teachers to continue their professional training and qualifications;

• internal institutional forms of training such as seminars, exchange of experience, partnerships with businesses, institutions of higher education, etc.

Resolving abovementioned problems requires:

• on the one hand, additional, focused research studies aiming to find the right balance of stakeholder interests in the education system and

• on the other hand, the consolidation of efforts at all government levels, among teachers and social partners, in order to improve school capacity and quality of education.

Intercultural education increases the volume of so-called "hidden" working time for teachers. Teacher working time is a floating value, because it is not limited to holding classes. Sometimes preparing for them requires much more time than what is legally recognized. The factors determining how much a teacher actually works are specifics of the subject, age of students and teachers' professional conduct. This hidden working time often triggers negative comments about teachers and the adequacy of their remuneration.

A complicated stressful interaction between teachers, the environment within which the educational process takes place and their colleagues, occurs at the working place. In addition comes the daily difficult work with a specific social group – students, who seek understanding, freedom of choice, self-affirmation and personal orientation and display a natural resistance towards adults. The teaching profession carries a high responsibility with it, as well as emotional stress, increased quality demands, a requirement for self-organizing.

Although delegated budgets and the Ordinance on differentiated remuneration provide for such options, these could be successfully realized only in large schools with big budgets. In small (rural or neighborhood) multicultural schools funds are being used for ongoing building maintenance, heating, lighting and supplies, and are simply not enough to include also wage increases, hence, negating the potential for further stimulating performing teachers.

According to abovementioned study, there is a discrepancy between principals' assessment on additional pay and that of teachers. Almost half of all teachers believe that the system for additional remuneration is either missing, or does not stimulate work results (58.3%) and professional development (44.8%). School principals on the other hand, believe that the stimulating effect is clearly there, both in terms of work results and professional development (64.6% and respectively 66.8% of all respondents support this position).

Violence in schools occurs primarily along the line "student – student" and less so between students and teachers. In most cases, teachers are witnesses to physical violence between students, but often are also involved in stopping such acts of violence. Cases of ethnic conflict are common in multicultural schools. Students from ethnic minorities (especially Roma) sometimes feel as victims of discrimination. There are, however, also more than a few cases when they themselves, being a majority, discriminate against students from other ethnic groups. Such students often express their frustration about failure in school and blame teachers for unfairly underestimating them in exam situations. Strained ethnic relations create additional tensions in the classroom and stress teachers.

Psychological violence in schools is exercised through verbal harassment, bullying and in some cases, psychological abuse. Unlike physical violence, which occurs primarily among students,

psychological abuse is increasingly being inflicted by teachers, principals or parents. Aggression in multicultural schools is a dynamic variable, directly related to students' ethnic composition and the relationships between groups to which they belong. Conflicts between different Roma subgroups are often carried inside the school realm, forcing teachers and the school administration to act as arbitrators.

Communication in the official language of education (Bulgarian) cannot always occur, because a lot of children from ethnic minorities come to kindergarten and school (if they did not attend kindergarten before that) speaking only their mother tongue. This is true especially for villages and towns with a concentration of Roma and Turkish populations.

Such children are not bilingual, although they do have the potential, if they should receive the right training.

Problems when working with ethnic minority students:

• irregular attendance, lagging behind and dropping out of school during the period of compulsory education of many Roma students;

• difficulties for Turkish and Roma students due to lack of command of the country's official language;

• problems related to refugees and immigration from the Arab world, Asia, Africa and the former Soviet republics, as well as the permanent residency of families from all over the world, carrying their own ancestral, language and ethno-cultural specificity, which necessitates the integration of their children in mainstream Bulgarian schools;

• lack of already developed learning skills among the vast majority of children from marginalized ethnic groups;

• complex and incomprehensible curriculum;

• unwillingness to overcome difficulties in the educational process;

• lack of cognitive interest;

• lack of schoolbooks and textbooks;

• serious knowledge gaps due to irregular school attendance, lack of attention and carelessness in class, as well as negligence of home study tasks;

• difficulty to socially adapt to school requirements and school culture;

• controversial relationships with other students;

• controversial relationships with teachers and other pedagogical and non-pedagogical staff;

• lack of positive support on the part of some teachers;

• staying at home due to family reasons (marriage).

All this has a negative impact on the overall school atmosphere, increases uncertainty and forces teachers to feel constantly stressed.

97% of teachers, who participated in G. Hristov's study, show affective signs of stress, which manifest in the form of unrest, inner tensions, anxiety and sleep disorders, while 20% show signs of depressive stress. [5] It is unclear how many of these teachers work in a multicultural environment, but the probable occurrence of such symptoms among them is reinforced by abovementioned factors.

Stress is a major factor in provoking the most common diseases among teachers, as results from the study on "Health, Efficiency and Teacher Safety - Evaluation, Analysis and Perspectives," undertaken at the initiative of BTS with CITUB's financial support and under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Nevena Tzacheva, Head of Department "Occupational medicine" and Vice-Dean of the Public Health Faculty at the Medical University, show.

WORK QUALITY CRITERIA FOR TEACHERS WORKING IN A MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

1.   Personality and professional criteria

The teacher:

- is familiar with the basics of intercultural education theory;

- is familiar with the relevant Bulgarian legal framework dealing with educational integration;

- is familiar with the main current international documents dealing with educational integration;

- is familiar with general theoretical and normative principles of human rights, including rights of children and minorities;

- participates in different initiatives aimed at improving their professional and pedagogical competency in terms of working in a multicultural environment.

2.   The process of teacher-student interaction

The teacher:

- recognizes and differentiates effects of various factors lowering students' cognitive motivation to participate in the educational process, e.g. cultural factors related to the student's lifestyle and attitudes, identity issues, as well as social factors such as low living standards and poor living conditions within the family environment;

- is familiar with their students' living conditions, especially when the latter have problems coping with the curriculum and/or behavior at school; this includes assessing their families' social status, the extent to which the family can provide educational support to the child, parents' expectations and demands, etc.;

- is capable of identifying differences in students' cultural attitudes, such as: power distance index, levels of individualism and collectivism respectively, degree of uncertainty, contextual behavior, etc.; the teacher further considers students' cultural characteristics in their interaction with the latter;

- is able to identify signs of ethnocentrism, prejudice and stereotypical thinking and effectively enforce counteractions;

- is able to identify rights violations, both in school and beyond the school ground, and apply this competence in their pedagogical activities;

- encourages and promotes the full participation of children from ethnic minorities in overall school/class life;

- is familiar with and applies group unity techniques on their students;

- is proficient in and implements dispute resolution techniques, including in conflicts of an intercultural nature;

- organizes the educative process in class lessons by providing knowledge and forming a positive attitude towards ethnic minority children;

- shows competency in working with parents of children from ethnic minorities.

3.   Teaching and educative process

The teacher:

o   applies their knowledge of cultural differences in identifying educational deficits in students, who have problems with their participation in the learning process;

o differentiates and individualizes the learning process according to individual needs /directly related to the process of perception, understanding and knowledge transfer/ of children from ethnic minorities in any given grade;

o organizes the overall learning process in the classroom from a perspective of necessary compensatory pedagogical activities (in relation to the level of language proficiency, development of study habits, etc.), aimed at children from ethnic minorities, who experience difficulties in mastering the curriculum;

o prepares and sets individualized, after-school self-training tasks to children from ethnic minorities, if necessary, in order to balance difficulties they face in mastering the curriculum;

o uses pedagogical techniques to develop intercultural competency in students: the cultivation of reflective attitudes and empathic abilities, ability to reverse one's perspective, identifying and overcoming intercultural misunderstandings;

o is familiar with the basic characteristics of their students' culture-bound customs and everyday life and use this knowledge in the educational process;

o is familiar with the most important aspects of the history and culture (folklore, customs, traditions) of a given ethnic minority and use this knowledge in the educational process;

o encourages positive attitudes towards children from ethnic minorities within the overall educational process at school;

o applies interactive techniques in their educational relations with students and parents;

o applies a modern ethno-pedagogical and ethno-psychological approach in their interaction with students and parents.

4. **Extracurricular (out-of-class and out-of-school) activities**

The teacher:

o initiates extracurricular activities, which provide children, also from ethnic minorities, with opportunities to express their interests, abilities and talents;

o uses resources such as cultural traditions, customs and folklore of ethnic minority children and their diverse ethnic subgroup value orientations when planning and conducting extracurricular activities;

o plans and organizes extracurricular activities in a manner that promotes cooperation and development of positive relationships between students of different ethnic identities.

5. **Pedagogical interaction with other educational entities**

The teacher:

o cooperates with pedagogical counselors, school psychologists, the school board and other educational entities in order to solve problems arising in the process of pedagogical interaction with children and students from ethnic minorities;

o collaborates with educators overseeing and working in the study hall with children from ethnic minorities, which belong to the respective teacher's class/ grade;

o interacts constructively with educational mediators and assistant teachers, as well as assistant tutors (in educational institutions employing such).

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