



## SHADOW TEACHERS OPINIONS ABOUT THEIR JOB RESPONSIBILITIES MIŠLJENJA LIČNIH PRATILACA O NJIHOVIM ODGOVORNOSTIMA NA POSLU

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### ABSTRACT

Parents of children with disabilities are eligible to apply for additional services to aid their child in the education process. Parents frequently use the service of shadow teachers, but they often end up unsatisfied with the service and change shadow teachers repeatedly. The aim of this research is to a) examine shadow teachers' beliefs about their obligations; b) determine what are their obligations; c) determine what they believe is their level of proficiency in different areas of shadow teaching position and d) determine the discrepancy between what shadow teachers believe their job should be and what job obligations they were expected to do while shadowing a child.

The instrument used was the survey distributed by Manansala & Dizon (2008), it was translated into Serbian language and modified. The sample consisted of 36 students of Faculty for Special education who currently work or have worked in the past as a shadow teacher.

Since the sample consisted of shadow teachers who are also students of special education, it is expected that most of the sample believe that they are very proficient in all job areas. There was a huge discrepancy between what they believe is their job obligation and what their job responsibilities are in all five areas. Future research implications and study limitations were discussed.

**Key words:** shadow teachers, inclusion, school, disability.

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## SAŽETAK

Roditelji dece sa ometenošću se mogu prijaviti za dodatne usluge, koje bi olakšale njihovoj deci edukativni proces. Roditelji često koriste usluge ličnih pratioca, međutim dešava se da nisu zadovoljni uslugama, pa otuda često menjaju lične pratiocice. Cilj ovog istraživanja je da a) proceni uverenja ličnih pratilaca o tome šta su njihove obaveze; b) ispita šta su njihove obaveze na poslu; c) proceni njihova uverenja o stepenu stručnosti u različitim oblastima posla i d) proceni stepen diskrepance između onoga što lični pratioci misle da je njihovo zaduženje i očekivanja koja su bila postavljena pred njih od strane roditelja.

Korišćena je modifikovana skala konstruisana od strane Manansale i Dizona (Manansala & Dizon, 2008), koja je prevedena na srpski jezik. Uzorak se sastojao od 36 studenata Fakulteta za specijalnu edukaciju koja su trenutno zaposlena ili su radili na poziciji ličnih pratilaca.

S obzirom da se uzorak sastoji od ličnih pratilaca koji su ujedno i studenti specijalne edukacije, očekivano je da većina uzorka veruje da je veoma stručna u svim oblastima posla. Međutim, primećena je velika diskrepanca između onoga što lični pratioci misle da su njihove obaveze na poslu i očekivanja od roditelja. U zaključnom delu diskutovane su preporuke za implementaciju budućih istraživanja, kao i ograničenja studije.

**Ključne riječi:** lični pratioci, inkluzija, škola, ometenost.

## INTRODUCTION

The change of social paradigm about the socially inclusive model of disability made the civil sector the main entity in providing services to people with disabilities, with the aim of improving their quality of life, removing barriers and creating opportunities of living as a equal part of society (Social services law of Republic of Serbia, 2011, according to Babić, 2018). In the last decade in the Republic of Serbia, the inclusion practice started implementing and it refers to placement of students with special needs in regular classrooms, while adapting the curriculum (Flem & Keller, 2000), or having children with special needs spent majority of their school time in regular classrooms, while still having some classes separately (Dixon, 2005), although it should refer to including all students in age appropriate classes, regardless of their abilities (Begeny & Martens, 2007). Even though inclusion is a regular practice in Serbia in the last decade, research implies that regular school teachers are against it (Bacon & Schultz, 1991) and a half of them believes that they are obligated to do it against their will (Fulk & Hirth, 1994). This is concerning, knowing that people who have the most contact with a child in school are teachers and their shadow teachers.

Placement in the regular school system implies using alternative techniques in regular classroom instruction by simplifying study methods to increase the child's concentration, lessen frustration, improve his/her patience and memory (Lazear, 1991). Also, this placement allows the parents to apply for additional services that would assist the child in overcoming different educational barriers (Vlaović-Vasiljević et al., 2016), such as shadow teachers' services (Dizon, 2001) and this is a support measure that is applicable in the Republic of Serbia since 2012 (Damjanović & Đorđić, 2014).

Even though every child with diagnosis qualifies for shadow teachers services, according to Social services law of Republic of Serbia (2011), a previous research conducted in this country shows that only 12% of children with special educational needs have this type of service (Krsmanović et al., 2017), which is unfortunately not enough and there should be more services and organizations that can allow the children and their families to obtain the support they need (Vlaović-Vasiljević et al., 2016).

The families that obtained the shadow teacher services, often end up unsatisfied with the service and consequently change shadow teachers very frequently. This is because the job obligations of shadow teachers are not clear and parents often expect more than shadow teachers must do. Therefore, the aim of this research is to examine shadow teachers' beliefs about shadow teachers obligations in general, to determine what their obligations are/were on their shadow teaching job, to determine what they believe their level of proficiency is in different areas of shadow teaching position, as well to determine the discrepancy between what shadow teachers believe their job should be and what job obligations they were expected to do while shadowing a child.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

### **Sample**

The sample consisted of 36 students of Faculty for Special education who also currently work or have worked in the past on a shadow teaching position. The sample consisted of four male (11.1%) and 32 female (88.9%) students. The sample variation in terms of gender is expected, since there is a majority of female students who attend Faculty for Special education and rehabilitation (Republic Bureau of Statistics, 2014, according to Arsić et al., 2021).

All students were between 21 and 37 years old and one attends second year of studies (2.8%), one attends fourth year of studies (2.8%), 12 (33.3%) attend super senior year, 20 (55.6%) are Masters level students and two (5.6%) attend Doctorate level studies. Twenty one students (58.3%) have experience in shadow teaching with only one child and 15 (41.7%) have experience with multiple children. On the question regarding age group of child or children they worked with, six students (16.7%) stated they worked with children who comprise the 0-6 age group, 22 (61.1%) worked with children from the 7-10 age group, six (16.7%) with 10-14 age group, one (2.8%) with 15-20 age group and also one with 20 and above age group. On the question regarding their average salary on the shadow teaching job, four (11.1%) students stated they had salary that was below 20.000 dinars, 17 (47.2%) had the salary between 20.000 and 30.000 dinars, seven (19.4%) had the salary between 30.000 and 40.000 dinars and eight (22.2%) had salary between 40.000 and 50.000 dinars. Even though we included questions regarding higher than mentioned average salary, none of the respondents stated they received more than 50.000 dinars on their shadow teaching job.

## **Method of conducting research**

The survey was distributed to students of Faculty for Special education and rehabilitation through their email addresses collected by their professors and teaching assistants, as well as through their Facebook groups. The description of the survey stated that the survey is exclusively for students who currently work or have worked in the past as shadow teachers. The survey description provided information about the questionnaire, stating that their involvement is anonymous and voluntary. The survey was distributed to them in June 2021 and after a month had passed, the complete set of submissions was exported into a software package SPSS IBM for further data analysis.

## **Measuring instruments**

The instrument used was a modified version of the survey distributed by Manansala & Dizon (2008), also translated into Serbian language. The original instrument consisted of five parts (curriculum planning, instruction, behavior management, social skills management and team working ability) with each part including seven responsibilities and measuring the respondents beliefs of their proficiency in mentioned obligations on a four-step Likert type scale, with 1 being not proficient, 2 being slightly proficient, 3 being proficient and 4 being very proficient.

We modified the instrument in a way that we had three parts of the instrument. The first part consisted of a list of responsibilities where respondents should select what they believe are the responsibilities of shadow teachers and had all the mentioned responsibilities. The second part of the instrument consisted of the same responsibilities and they selected which one they performed as a shadow teacher on their current or past job. And the third and final part of the instrument was the original instrument, where the respondents stated their beliefs of their proficiency in mentioned areas, by using the mentioned four-step Likert scale. Since respondents could select any of the answers, therefore the total is not 100%.

Besides this instrument, we used self-constructed questionnaire that included questions regarding the respondent characteristics, such as sex, age, year of studies, the highest obtained education level, average salary on their shadow teacher position and if they worked with only one child or more children as a shadow teacher. We also had some questions regarding the characteristics of the children shadow teachers worked with, such as the child's age and diagnosis.

## **Data processing methods**

We extracted the data into the SPSS IBM statistics software package and we used qualitative analysis methods.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Shadow teacher's beliefs about their job responsibilities

Most of the sample believes that none of the mentioned responsibilities regarding curriculum planning refers to them and their job (44.4%). Over a third of the sample believes that their obligations are simplifying the curricular contents (36.1%), as well as requesting from the regular teachers the lessons and topics in advance at least a week ahead (33.3%). Only 13.9% of the sample believes that their responsibility is differentiating test formats depending on the child's needs (Table 1).

Table 1. Shadow teacher's beliefs about their responsibilities regarding curriculum planning

Curriculum planning	N	%
Choosing functional, relevant and meaningful skills related to the lessons and based on the assessment report	11	30.6%
Requesting from the regular teachers the lessons and topics in advance at least a week ahead	12	33.3%
Simplifying the curricular contents	13	36.1%
Organizing and task analyzing skills for mastery learning	11	30.6%
Programming the lessons depending on the child's needs	7	19.4%
Preparing helpful activity sheets in implementing contents	10	27.8%
Differentiating test formats depending on the child's needs	5	13.9%
Nothing from the above	16	44.4%

Teaching the child to answer activity sheets independently is the response that the majority of the sample (80.6%) believes to be their job responsibility as a shadow teacher. More than half of the sample believes that their job is to assist the child to take notes or copy board work (66.7%), explain the lessons further when needed (63.9%), work with a child in a non-attention getting manner (61.1%), provide drills during lesson free time (61.1%) and use appropriate instructional materials (52.8%). Only 38.9% of the sample believes that their responsibility is to intersperse light or reward activities into difficult ones during lessons (Table 2).

Table 2 - Shadow teacher's beliefs about their responsibilities regarding instruction

Instruction	N	%
Working with the students in a non-attention getting manner	22	61.1%
Explaining the lessons further whenever needed	23	63.9%
Using appropriate instructional materials	19	52.8%
Assisting in teaching the child to take notes or copy board work	24	66.7%
Teaching the child to answer activity sheets independently	29	80.6%
Interspersing light or reward activities into difficult ones during lessons	14	38.9%
Providing drills during lesson free time	22	61.1%
Nothing from the above	2	5.6%

Assisting in teaching the child to put things in their proper places is the response that the majority of the sample believes to be their responsibility as a shadow teacher (72.2%), while only 36.1% believes they should assist in teaching the child to comprehend and follow school rules (Table 3). For almost all of the following responsibilities regarding behavior management, over half of the sample believes it is their job.

Table 3 - Shadow teacher's beliefs about their responsibilities regarding behavior management

Behavior management	N	%
Directing the child's attention to the classroom teacher	27	75%
Assisting in teaching the child to comprehend and follow school rules	13	36.1%
Assisting in teaching the child to complete a task before moving on to another one	24	66.7%
Pulling out the child for more focused skill building	17	47.2%
Pulling out the child to cool him or her off in times of tantrums	22	61.1%
Physically or verbally prompting the child to perform in circle time, recitations and other group activities	24	66.7%
Assisting in teaching the child to put things in their proper places	26	72.2%
Nothing from the above	2	5.6%

Similar to behavior management, when it comes to social skills management, the majority of the sample believes it is their job responsibility to perform social skills acquisition programs with a child, while the most of the sample believes that physically or verbally prompting the child to join in play (86.1%) is their biggest responsibility (Table 4).

Table 4 - Shadow teacher's beliefs about their responsibilities regarding social skills management

Social skills management	N	%
Teaching the child social greetings and using simple polite terms	26	72.2%
Prompting the child to participate in class recitations	20	55.6%
Physically or verbally prompting the child to play appropriately with other children	27	75%
Physically or verbally prompting the child to join in play	31	86.1%
Assisting the teacher in socializing the child in group activities	20	55.6%
Using appropriate reinforcers in shaping positive social skills	22	61.1%
Guiding the child in participating actively in programs and school organizations	23	63.9%
Nothing from the above	2	5.6%

From the responsibilities that are related to team working, majority of the sample believes that reporting to the family about the child's school performance and progress is their responsibility (75%), while the least of them believes that it is their job to seek suggestions from teachers regarding the child's behavior (22.2%) (Table 5).

Table 5 - Shadow teacher's beliefs about their responsibilities regarding team working

Team working	N	%
Attending meetings with teachers, parents and other professionals to discuss and plan the child's' improvement	14	38.9%
Providing the regular teacher helpful information about the child	24	66.7%
Seeking suggestions from teachers and other professionals regarding the child's behavior	8	22.2%
Reporting to the family about the child's school performance and progress	27	75%
Coordinating and collaborating with the family and other home members regarding important concerns about the child	24	66.7%
Discussing with the regular teacher about curricular modifications	20	55.6%
Nothing from the above	4	11.1%

### Results regarding what were shadow teachers obligations on their job

On their shadow teaching job, the majority of the sample performed simplification of the curricular contents (80.6%) and just about less than a half of the sample performed differentiation of test formats (47.2%) and requested from the teacher lessons in advance (44.4%) (Table 6).

Table 6 - Shadow teachers job obligations regarding curriculum planning

Curriculum planning	N	%
Choosing functional, relevant and meaningful skills related to the lessons and based on the assessment report	24	66.7%
Requesting from the regular teachers the lessons and topics in advance at least a week ahead	16	44.4%
Simplifying the curricular contents	29	80.6%
Organizing and task analyzing skills for mastery learning	25	69.4%
Programming the lessons depending on the child's needs	24	66.7%
Preparing helpful activity sheets in implementing contents	21	58.3%
Differentiating test formats depending on the child's needs	17	47.2%
Nothing from the above	6	16.7%

Out of the instruction part of the job, over half of the sample performed all of the mentioned job duties, with the most performed job obligation being explaining the lessons further (88.9%) and teaching the child to answer activity sheets independently (83.3%) (Table 7).

Table 7 - Shadow teachers job obligations regarding instruction

Instruction	N	%
Working with the students in a non-attention getting manner	22	61.1%
Explaining the lessons further whenever needed	32	88.9%
Using appropriate instructional materials	27	75%
Assisting in teaching the child to take notes or copy board work	25	69.4%
Teaching the child to answer activity sheets independently	30	83.3%
Interspersing light or reward activities into difficult ones during lessons	21	61.1%
Providing drills during lesson free time	25	69.4%
Nothing from the above	2	5.6%

In the behavior management part of the job, also over half of the sample performed almost all of the mentioned duties, except pulling out the child for more focused skill building, which was performed by only 42.2% of the sample (*Table 8*).

Table 8 - Shadow teachers job obligations regarding instruction

Behavior management	N	%
Directing the child's attention to the classroom teacher	24	66.7%
Assisting in teaching the child to comprehend and follow school rules	24	66.7%
Assisting in teaching the child to complete a task before moving on to another one	31	86.1%
Pulling out the child for more focused skill building	17	42.2%
Pulling out the child to cool him or her off in times of tantrums	21	58.3%
Physically or verbally prompting the child to perform in circle time, recitations and other group activities	29	80.6%
Assisting in teaching the child to put things in their proper places	26	72.2%
Nothing from the above	2	5.6%

Regarding social skills management, also the majority of the sample performed on their shadow teaching job almost all of the mentioned obligations, with teaching the child social greetings (83.3%) and prompting the child to join in play (83.3%) being the most commonly performed, while prompting the child to participate in class recitations was the obligation that was least performed (66.7%), but still with high frequency (*Table 9*).



Table 9 - Shadow teachers job obligations regarding social skills management

Social skills management	N	%
Teaching the child social greetings and using simple polite terms	30	83.3%
Prompting the child to participate in class recitations	24	66.7%
Physically or verbally prompting the child to play appropriately with other children	27	75%
Physically or verbally prompting the child to join in play	30	83.3%
Assisting the teacher in socializing the child in group activities	26	72.2%
Using appropriate reinforcers in shaping positive social skills	27	75%
Guiding the child in participating actively in programs and school organizations	25	69.4%
Nothing from the above	1	2.8%

Team working was the area which shadow teachers did on their job the least, with only 22.2% of the sample seeking suggestions from teachers and other professionals regarding the child's behavior, but almost everyone from the sample (91.7%) reported to the family about the child's school performance and progress (*Table 10*).

Table 10 - Shadow teachers job obligations regarding team working

Team working	N	%
Attending meetings with teachers, parents and other professionals to discuss and plan the child's' improvement	17	47.2%
Providing the regular teacher helpful information about the child	28	77.8%
Seeking suggestions from teachers and other professionals regarding the child's behavior	8	22.2%
Reporting to the family about the child's school performance and progress	33	91.7%
Conferring with regular teachers, parents and other professionals about the child's progress	31	86.1%
Discussing with the regular teacher about curricular modifications	23	63.9%
Coordinating and collaborating with the family and other home members regarding important concerns about the child	20	55.6%
Nothing from the above	2	5.6%

### ***Self-perceived level of proficiency***

Table 11 represents the students perceived level of proficiency in five different areas of the shadow teaching job. Shadow teachers believe they are the most proficient in the area of social skills management (n=3.57), than in the area of behavior instruction (n=3.51), followed by instruction (n=3.48), than team working and the sample believed to be the least proficient in the area of curriculum planning (n=3.34).

Table 11 - Shadow teachers self-perceived level of proficiency in different areas

Variable	Composite mean	Rank
Curriculum planning	3.34	5
Instruction	3.48	3
Behavior instruction	3.51	2
Social skills management	3.57	1

### Comparison between beliefs about their responsibilities and obligations on the job

Table 12 represents the mean percentage of all obligations enlisted in all five areas of shadow teachers job obligations, as well as their beliefs of what their job responsibilities should include. As shown in *Table 12*, in all of the five mentioned areas, the sample believes that they should be doing less of the job obligations than they are actually doing on their jobs. The biggest mean difference refers to curriculum planning tasks, with only 27.3% of obligations being what shadow teachers believe they should be doing and 61.9% of them performing them while working with children.

Table 12 - Comparison between beliefs about their responsibilities and obligations on the job

Variable	Shadow teachers beliefs about their job responsibilities	RankShadow teachers obligations on their job
Curriculum planning	27.3%	61.9%
Instruction	60.7%	72.6%
Behavior instruction	60.7%	67.5%
Social skills management	56.7%	74.9%
Team working	54.1%	63.5%

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Since the shadow teachers are the ones sitting next to the child in the classroom and directly attend it and they are partially responsible for the child's success in school, it is important to examine their beliefs of their responsibilities towards the child they are shadowing.

Over two thirds of the sample believe their obligation on the job are prompting the child to join in play (86.1%), teaching the child to answer independently (80.6%), directing the child's attention to the classroom teacher (75%), prompting the child to play with other children (75%) and reporting to the family about child's school performance and progress (75%). We believe it is of crucial value for them to know their job responsibilities in advance and to know more precisely what are the expectations of parents and teachers, in order to provide better services.

The most commonly performed activities by shadow teachers on their shadow teaching jobs consisted of them reporting to the family about the child's school performance and progress (91.7%), explaining the lessons further (88.9%), conferring with regular teachers, parents and other professionals about the child's progress (86.1%), assisting the child to complete a task

before moving on to another one (86.1%), teaching the child social greetings and giving independent answers (83.3%) and prompting the child to join in play (83.3%).

Since the sample consisted of shadow teachers who are also students of Faculty of Special education and rehabilitation, it is expected that the majority of the sample believes that they are very proficient in all of the mentioned areas of their job, with the composite mean between  $n=3.34$  and  $n=3.57$ , out of four. Still it is concerning that they do not perform all mentioned duties in their job, even though they believe they are very proficient in performing them. Following researches should address the relationship between income amount and willingness to perform more duties on their job, because perhaps that is the one of the reasons for lack of delivery.

There was a huge discrepancy between what shadow teachers believe their job obligation is and what their job responsibilities are in all five areas of their job (*Table 12*), therefore it is of crucial value to determine what they believe who should perform those responsibilities, as well as to determine if teachers believe shadow teachers should perform it or they should. We believe that shadow teacher job responsibilities should be clearer, to them and to the parents, therefore there is no conflict between what parents expect of them and what they are willing and not willing to do. Also, it seems it is rather important to determine parents' beliefs regarding shadow teachers' responsibilities during their work with children, in order to learn if their opinions differ from reality and to highlight the nature of those distinctions. Parents are often not content with shadow teachers' efforts, which can be prevented if they are better informed about shadow teachers' actual obligations.

The biggest study limitation is the small sample size and also the fact that participants included in the sample are students of Faculty for special education and rehabilitation. Future research might focus on shadow teachers of different primary professions.

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