The Uncertainty of School in a Time of Uncertainty: Perspectives of Different Coalitions in the Aftermath of the School Mass Shooting in Serbia

Sanja Stojiljković[*1] and Barbara Blažanin[2]

∽   On 3 May 2023, the first mass school shooting occurred in Serbia, positioning children as a particularly vulnerable group in need of further support. Subsequently, the government needed to create policies to help restore a sense of security, stability and trust in the community. The main dilemma was regarding the questions: Should we continue schooling? If so, how? Employing narrative policy analysis, we examine the interplay between education policies, policymakers, parents and teachers to discern the varied interpretations of policies and their impact on students' roles within the education system. The aim is to understand the different meanings policymakers and institutional stakeholders find in the same policy and the implications of the policy's meaning for students in the education system. The analysed documents include 16 official educational documents and 53 newspapers and blog articles featuring stakeholders' responses. The main findings indicate how different understandings of the same policy, as well as changes in the power dynamics between stakeholders, influenced subsequent decision-making of the government regarding school life. Most importantly, the study demonstrates the potential harmful effects of inconsistency in policies on student wellbeing and academic life. We conclude that the main question should not be whether schooling should stop or continue, but how to create a line of consistent and stable recommendations aligned with the created policy.

Keywords: narrative policy analysis, students, parents, teachers, school shooting

---

1   *Corresponding Author. Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia; sanja.stojiljkovic@f.bg.ac.rs.

2   Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation at the University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia.

Negotovost šole v času negotovosti: perspektive različnih koalicij po množičnem streljanju na šoli v Srbiji

Sanja Stojiljković in Barbara Blažanin

3. maja 2023 se je v Srbiji zgodilo prvo množično streljanje na šoli, ki je otroke postavilo v položaj posebej ranljive skupine, ki potrebuje dodatno podporo. Posledično je morala vlada oblikovati politike, ki bi pomagale v skupnosti obnoviti občutek varnosti, stabilnosti in zaupanja. Glavna dilema je bila povezana z vprašanji: Ali naj nadaljujemo šolanje? Če da, kako? Z uporabo narativne analize politik preučujemo medsebojno vplivanje med vzgojno-izobraževalnimi politikami, oblikovalci politik, starši in učitelji, da bi razbrali različne razlage politik in njihov vpliv na vloge učencev znotraj vzgojno-izobraževalnega sistema. Cilj je razumeti različne pomene, ki jih oblikovalci politik in institucionalni deležniki najdejo znotraj določene politike, in posledice pomena politike za učence v vzgojno-izobraževalnem sistemu. Analizirani dokumenti vključujejo 16 uradnih dokumentov ter 53 člankov, vzetih iz časopisov in blogov, z odzivi deležnikov. Glavne ugotovitve kažejo, kako so različna razumevanja posamezne politike in spremembe v dinamiki moči med deležniki vplivali na nadaljnje odločanje vlade v povezavi z življenjem na šoli. Najpomembnejše je, da študija kaže na morebitne škodljive učinke nedoslednosti politik na počutje učencev in akademsko življenje. Sklepamo, da glavno vprašanje ne bi smelo biti, ali naj se šolanje ustavi ali nadaljuje, ampak kako ustvariti linijo doslednih in stabilnih priporočil, usklajenih z ustvarjeno politiko.

Ključne besede: narativna analiza politik, učenci, starši, učitelji, streljanje v šoli

Introduction

The first mass school shooting in Serbia occurred on 3 May 2023 at the Vladislav Ribnikar Primary School. The incident took place during the first morning class, when a seventh-grade student opened fire on students and the school staff. In total, the shooter killed ten people.

This unprecedented incident left the nation in shock, confusion and disbelief. It was especially painful that the event happened in a school, an institution that should provide students with structure, familiarity, continuity and security (Dyregrov et al., 2020; Hobfoll et al., 2007). Since manmade disasters are usually unexpected, they often create an atmosphere of uncertainty, fear, acute helplessness and anxiety (Jorgensen, et al., 2015; Norris et al., 2002; Schultz et al., 2014). Such incidents foster a climate of uncertainty and anxiety, extending trauma beyond the immediate victims to the broader student community (Jorgensen et al., 2015; Norris et al., 2002; Schultz et al., 2014). It is possible to find multiple guidelines about trauma recovery from tragedies for school personnel, parents and the government (e.g., Currie & Hayes, 2021; Dyregrov, 2006; Dyregrov et al., 2020; Đerić & Gutvajn, 2023; Turunen & Punamaki, 2014) and thus mitigate the psychological vulnerability of children in the aftermath of a tragedy.

The shooting's aftermath highlighted the pressing need for clear, immediate and transparent policy interventions to rebuild the disrupted stability of school life. However, the impression was that this need was not met in the first 40 days post-shooting. The resulting set of policies changed in response to different stakeholders (policymakers, practitioners, parents), revealing a great deal of tension that, at least partially, arose from different beliefs about the role of school and schooling after the tragedy. This situation, which was characterised by the Rashomon effect – when different observers of an event have conflicting yet plausible perceptions of what occurred and its resolution (Muschert, 2007) – complicated consensus on the future role of schooling. One of the most representative examples is the decision on whether to continue schooling and, if so, in what way. Over time, the policies and the stakeholders' reactions became so intertwined that it was difficult to determine whether a given policy was adopted independently of the stakeholders' reactions or due to their reactions. The present analysis seeks to clarify the relationship between influential stakeholders and policy development. In addition, it aims to infer students' roles within the education system during crises and to offer strategies for protecting children's wellbeing after a shooting.

Vulnerability of students in a time of crisis

School shootings are often seen as arbitrary or inexplicable outbreaks of violence, with mass media coverage potentially magnifying their perceived frequency and risk, fostering fear in communities and suggesting that such incidents are widespread (Madfis, 2016; Jorgensen et al., 2015; Böhmer, 2023; Mosqueda et al., 2021; Muschert, 2007). As a result, children and students can be exposed to various interpretations of the event, which can be damaging to their mental health, hence raising their vulnerability in an already stressful situation (Madfis, 2016). In Serbia, the mass shooting received significant and detailed media attention from the outset. Despite calls for responsible journalism (e.g., Filozofski fakultet, 2023; Lankford & Madfis, 2018; UNICEF, 2023), reports often featured misinformation and lacked professionalism (Kosanović & Zemunović, 2023).

Research has extensively examined the psychological effects of trauma, both direct and indirect, highlighting the fact that first-hand victims often face a higher risk of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), symptoms of post-traumatic stress, depression, anxiety, fear and substance abuse (Böhmer, 2023; Butkus, 2020; Eifert, 2022). Eifert (2022) found sufficient support for potentially long-lasting traumatising effects of witnessing a school shooting (both directly and indirectly) if witnesses are not provided with much-needed interventions and psychological support shortly after the tragedy. Interventions that have proven to have the most positive effect are providing psychosocial support focused on connectedness with the community (Hobfoll et al., 2007), constant monitoring of students' socio-emotional states, and equipping school staff with the required psycho-social support and guidelines (Dyregrov et al., 2015; Jorgensen et al., 2015; Turunen et al., 2014). In the aftermath of a shooting, it is essential to help students formulate a coherent story of what happened. Otherwise, they tend to form narratives mostly driven by media stories, which can fuel an even greater sense of fear and anxiety (Jorgensen et al., 2015).

Children are generally more vulnerable to disasters than adults, partly because their cognitive and emotional development is not yet equipped to handle trauma effectively (Norris et al., 2002). In combination with a lack of life experience, trauma can force an increase in helplessness, depression and anxiety, even among students not directly impacted by the tragedy (Jorgensen et al., 2015; Schultz et al., 2014; Stene et al., 2019). Trauma impacts both emotional and cognitive functioning, manifesting in educational settings as difficulties in concentration and memory, which can hinder academic performance and increase absenteeism (Dyregrov et al., 2020; Stene et al., 2019; Strom et

al., 2016). Essentially, greater exposure to trauma correlates with a higher risk of cognitive, academic and socio-emotional-behavioural challenges (Perfect et al., 2016). One way to protect children in tragic events is to provide them with organised and planned support, customised to encourage their wellbeing and recovery. Ideally, official policies can serve as methods to provide children with the needed support.

Examining the policies through the lens of narrative policy analysis

The focus of the present study is not only an objective description of the implemented education policies, but also an examination of the meaning that arises from the adopted policies and the reaction to them. Our position relies on the postulates of narrative policy analysis (NPA), which posits that policies and argumentation of policy never focus solely on the stated problem: they reflect the role of power (by whom policies are created, for whom and who is left behind), motivation, values and assumptions about the problem, the solution and the different stakeholders (Martinez, 2019). Like many stories in human life, policies can also be perceived as a form of story, a narrative, with a beginning (explaining the problem), a middle (the proposed solution to the problem) and an end (what will the outcome of the proposed solution be?) (Fischer, 2004). Accordingly, detected narratives from education policies "reflect policy actors' and coalitions' understanding of problems, solutions, as filtered through their experiences and positionality" (Martinez, 2019).

NPA consists of several elements: coalitions, situated meanings, cultural models and policy storylines. Coalitions refer to groups aligned in their perspectives on a policy's problem and solution, essentially sharing identical narratives (Martinez, 2019). Situated meanings are contextual understandings that occur inside a particular conversation. Cultural models are the underlying, often implicit, ontological assumptions that inform our interpretation and articulation of policy issues (Martinez, 2019). The last element, the policy storyline, represents the motives and message the coalition is trying to send by using a specific narrative. We could ask ourselves: "What is the government trying to tell the community when it points out that the policy was adopted in consultation with the most eminent experts?" Policy storylines support people in organising their thinking, response and practices regarding specific issues, and are usually derived from cultural models and situated meanings related to narrative (Martinez, 2019). All of these elements together provide us with deeper insights into the processes behind policy change.

Purpose of the study

As Martinez (2019) points out, NPA is a useful approach in times of uncertainty, complexity and polarised opinions of community members on certain problems, such as the tragedy that happened in the Vladislav Ribnikar Primary School. By using NPA analysis, we would like to explore the perspectives of different institutional stakeholders on the questions: *Should we continue schooling? If so, how?* Specifically, we are interested in mapping situational meanings and implicit perspectives of the role of school and schooling, as well as the policy storylines created by authority representatives, parents and teachers. Furthermore, we aim to understand the potential implications for students in the education system arising from such created meanings. The following research questions were posed:

1.   How do different coalitions find meanings in the same policy?
2.   What are the implications of the policy's meaning for the position of students in the education system?

Method

Background

In the past couple of decades, the education system in Serbia has shifted towards centralisation in education, whereby the greatest responsibility lies with the ministry. Legislation and education policies are directed towards decreasing the autonomy and professional status of teachers (Pešikan & Ivić, 2021). Moreover, in the last few decades, the authority and reputation of teachers and schools have declined continuously, as reflected, inter alia, in the historically low levels of public expenditure on education (3.3% of GDP in 2021) (World Bank Group, n.d.). The education system is characterised by traditional schooling based on frontal teaching and assessments, as well as non-participative practices for students. As a result, students are mostly disengaged and unmotivated in the classroom, sometimes perceiving school as irrelevant (Čaprić & Videnović, 2024). In addition, a highly competitive climate oriented towards achievement and grades rather than learning is further diminishing the relationship between teachers, students and parents (Majska platforma, 2024).

In the last two decades, the problem of school violence has been recognised and validated in the form of several normative frameworks that define various forms of violence and different mechanisms of response to and prevention of violent acts (Majska platforma, 2024). However, recent findings

show that these policies have not led to a significant decrease in school violence (Čaprić & Videnović, 2024; Majska platforma, 2024).

Chronology of events and policies

Immediately following the shooting, the Ministry of Education initiated safety measures and offered crisis support resources and emotional aid to educators nationwide, focusing particularly on staff from the affected school. Safety regulations will not be discussed in detail in this paper, since our main concern is education policies. After the shooting, a great deal of attention was devoted to the Minister of Internal Affairs, as he shared sensitive information related to the victims and potential targets, but the only functionary to be held accountable was the Minister of Education, who resigned from his position four days post-shooting. Following the initial school shooting, another mass shooting occurred one day later, on 4 May, in Malo Orašje and Dubona, resulting in 9 fatalities and 12 injuries. Although the present paper will not focus on the further development of this tragedy, it is important to note an atmosphere of sadness, hurt, anger and uncertainty that was created in the light of these two successive mass shootings.

The first official education interventional plan for the school in question was provided on 6 May (three days post-shooting). It stated that the students would return to class in the same school building on 10 May (one week post-shooting), where the mental health professionals available to students, parents and teachers would be located. However, in the face of the public disapproval of parents, the Ministry issued a Clarification of the Intervention Plan for the Vladislav Ribnikar Primary School two days later. In this clarification, it was pointed out that traditional classes would not be held, but that the school would be open for those students who wanted to return to the school community. Parents and students were given full freedom to decide whether they would return to the school and which topics they would discuss with the mental health professionals and teachers situated in the school. Emphasising safety, the government and Ministry ensured increased police presence at the school.

News of the premature end to the school year – shortening the school year by ten days on the national level – was first leaked to the media on 29 May and officially confirmed by the Ministry on 1 June. This was the first official policy applied to schools on the national level, as previous recommendations were crafted specifically for the school of the shooting. According to this policy, schools would remain accessible to students seeking grade improvement, professional support or community engagement. This policy resulted in strong

negative reactions from the public, this time from both parents and teachers. Despite public opinion, the authorities maintained this policy with assurances that the standard graduation exams for students transitioning to high schools would proceed as planned, including additional points for students from the Vladislav Ribnikar Primary School.

Sample

The qualitative data used for this study consisted of 16 official documents regarding education policies and clarifications of proposed policies, as well as 53 newspaper and blog articles focused on reactions to policies by authority representatives, teachers and parents. When analysing the newspaper and blog articles, the focus was on quoted statements of the stakeholders. In total, 69 documents were published in the period between 3 May and 7 June 2023.

Data collection

Policy documents and clarifications were gathered from the official websites of the government and the Ministry of Education, with the selection based on two criteria: 1) publication between 3 May and 11 June, and 2) content related to policy responses to the school shooting. Statements responding to policies by different institutional stakeholders were searched for in different newspaper and blog articles published in the first 40 days after the mass school shooting occurred. The analysed articles were mainly selected from the newspaper journals *Insajder* and *Danas*, as well as from the blog *Zelena učionica*. The journals *Insajder* and *Danas* are recognised for their unbiased reporting (UNS, n.d.) and as such were found to be reliable media for this study. However, official representatives of teachers do not always speak their minds in the public media space, so it was necessary to seek alternative sources for teacher statements. The blog *Zelena učionica* is a common media space in which teachers speak their minds, so 21 blog articles from this website were included in our analysed data.

Research design

In the first phase of the analysis, a detailed reading of all of the selected documents was undertaken in order to identify policy coalitions that found different meanings in two examined policies: 1) the decision to return to the Vladislav Ribnikar Primary School, and 2) the decision to end the school year prematurely. Before further analysis, the documents were grouped according

to the policy to which they referred, as well as according to the coalition that speaks about the given policy. Thus, the narratives were analysed regarding the policy to *return to the school* from the perspective of 1) authority representatives and 2) parents. For the second policy, the *premature end of schooling*, the narratives were analysed from the perspective of 1) authority representatives, 2) teachers, 3) parents in favour of continuing schooling, and 4) parents against continuing school.

After multiple readings of the selected documents, interpretative coding of the material was undertaken regarding the positions of different coalitions and policies. Although themes referring to the position of the coalitions in general are not part of the policy narrative analysis, they were useful in identifying the main themes that would facilitate understanding of the position of each coalition. The coding scheme and overarching themes for the policies were unified as much as possible for all of the identified coalitions, as shown in Figure 1. The coding scheme was organised to reflect 1) reactions to a specific policy, and 2) reactions from a specific coalition. With further analysis, codes became more numerous and specific to the identified coalitions, which is why they are not shown in Figure 1. All of the identified codes were deduced to later determine the situated meanings, cultural models and policy storylines. In trying to determine the cultural models of the policies introduced, a need to modify the term arose: the analysed policies were introduced in a moment of crisis, and as such do not represent stable and typical states. Hence, we assume that the cultural models that emerge from specific examined education policies relate to the implicit assumptions of each coalition about the role of school and schooling after the tragedy, which does not necessarily coincide with the ontological assumptions related to school in a period of stability (e.g., in a period of stability, the main implicit assumption could be that the role of school is learning and obtaining good grades, but in a moment of crisis, the primary role of school could be to provide mental health support). The last step of the process was to identify potential implications for the position of students in the education system based on situational meanings, the role of school and schooling and policy storylines from coalitions.

Figure 1

Coding scheme for the policy to stop schooling
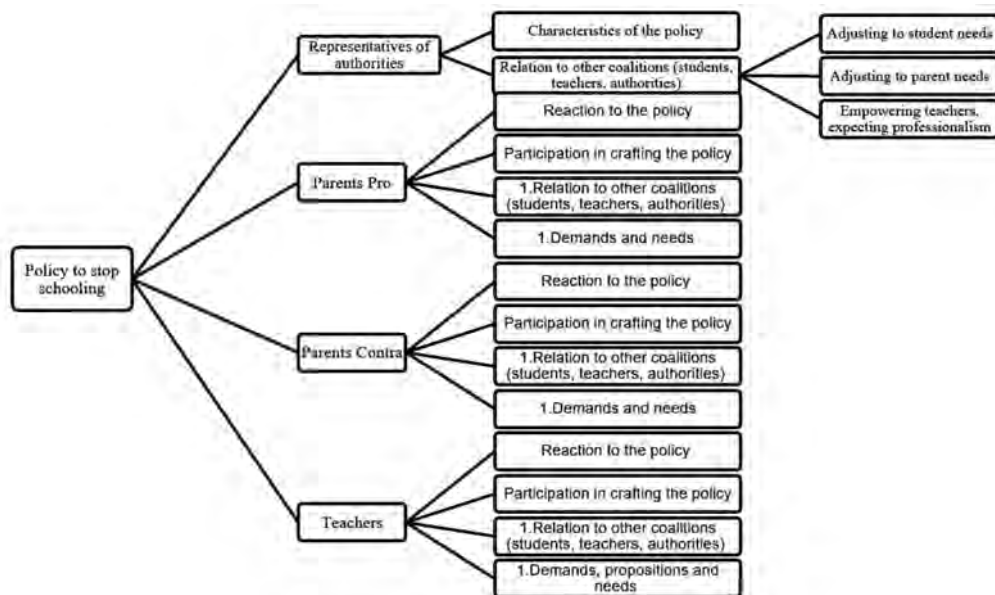
After reading the materials, 30% of the content was coded together, identifying themes that referred to the policy itself and the position of coalitions in general. The remaining two-thirds of the narratives were coded independently, relying on a previously developed coding scheme. Differences were discussed by the researchers until agreement on the interpretation of the narratives was reached. The selection of narrative excerpts and situational meanings, the role of school and schooling, the policy storylines and the implications for students were identified through collaboration.

Results

Coalitions

The relevant coalitions were, in this case, the government and the Ministry of Education as *authority representatives*, *parents who advocated stopping schooling*, *parents who advocated the continuance of schooling*, and *teachers*.

The *representatives of authorities*, who were responsible for formulating education policies, aimed to foster community trust, emphasising collaboration with relevant institutions and prioritising student mental health. Their

approach allowed flexibility, granting parents and students autonomy in deciding on school attendance. However, the initial phase of policymaking was marked by non-transparent and non-inclusive practices, lacking a clear narrative of the incident's details. This approach strained relationships with both sets of parents and educators.

The *parents* of students of the Vladislav Ribnikar Primary School represented a unified group against the policy to return to the school building, demanding a transparent and inclusive approach from the government. As their influence on policymaking grew, a division emerged based on their views on continuing education post-shooting. One group of parents was *strongly for the end of schooling*, as they saw the trauma as insurmountable. Instead, they were advocating making the entire school building into a memorial centre. However, other parent groups viewed resuming classes as part of the process of overcoming the tragedy. These groups advocated for the continuation of schooling while dedicating a section of the school to a memorial centre, rather than closing the school completely.

The coalition that was the least heard and included in the process of creating and conducting education policies comprised the official representatives of *teachers*. Over time, teachers became more encouraged to assert their rights within the education system in the aftermath of the crisis, primarily demanding their right to be informed and to be trusted to do their job. Unlike parents, teachers never requested participation in the policy-making process. This coalition consisted of official representatives of teachers on the national level and, to the best of our knowledge, none of the teachers from this coalition were employed at the Vladislav Ribnikar Primary School.

It is important to note that the roles of these coalitions in the Serbian education system and the relationship between them are deeply rooted in the historical and cultural background of Serbia's past few decades (for more, see Ivić & Pešikan, 2012; Pešikan & Ivić, 2021). Bearing this in mind, the behaviours and dynamics of these coalitions largely emerge from already known and established roles, with respect to the uniqueness of the tragedy of the school shooting.

Policy analysis

Return to the school

For the policy to return to the school one week post-shooting, the narratives of the coalition of representatives of the government and the homogeneous coalition of parents were analysed, as they are the only coalitions that spoke publicly about the policy. The review of the situated meaning, the role of school

and schooling, the policy statement and the combined implications of these factors on children in vulnerable situations is presented in Table 1.

As stated in the chronology of events, the Ministry of Education addressed this policy in two official announcements: firstly declaring the "continuance of schooling" and secondly pointing out that "the school is open". This slight difference in the phrasing (continuance against the opening of the school) was an attempt to calm the revolt of parents who expressed a strongly negative opinion on this policy. In this dynamic, it is noticeable that the representatives of the authorities did not direct the policy-making process only with regard to the opinions of experts (psychologists, pedagogists, psychiatrists, psychotherapists, etc.), but paid great attention to calming public opinion in an already extremely sensitive situation nationwide. Below is an example of the specific narrative created in the second address of the Ministry of Education:

> Given that a large number of children and parents want to come to their school and talk to their teachers, and that experts approve this, the school will be open to its students starting on Wednesday. This does not mean that regular classes will be held, but that there will be organised work and conversations with experts, all in the service of providing professional help to students, their parents and employees. Regular classes will be introduced to the school gradually, in agreement with parents and experts. (Republika Srbija Ministarstvo prosvete, 2023)

In this narrative alone, several messages on the role of schooling in times of crisis can be deduced. The school was perceived as a space that is close and familiar to children, where the healing qualities of the school community formed at school could foster recovery from trauma. Interestingly, even though teachers were mentioned through their positive relationship with students ("*children want to come and talk to their teachers*"), they were not given a specific role in the later explanation of the plan for healing. As such, the teacher's role remains unclear in the context of school and schooling in crisis. At the time of this narrative, no reconstructive policies had been undertaken, so the return to the school was organised in the building as it remained after the police finished their investigation. In the narrative of the authority, the school building itself does not have a negative symbolism, nor is it considered harmful to the students. Thus, the Ministry's main storyline is that the recovery from trauma can be established by returning to the school, with the help of experts brought in to school.

On the other hand, parents provide a different narrative:

> The parents are united in the opinion that children should return to school;

they need rhythm, they need integration with their peers and teachers, but not in that place. (RTS, 2023)

Unlike the authorities, parents perceive the school building and the school community as two different aspects of school. For this group of parents, the school building had lost a positive connotation, as it had become exclusively connected to the shooting. As such, the school building was a source of trauma, while the school community set in a different context could contribute to healing. Moreover, in their reaction to the policy, parents addressed the way it had been created. On the same occasion, the same parent said:

We requested an urgent meeting of the parent counsel to revise the decision made by the crisis headquarters (representatives of the authorities), which was brought without (participation of) parents. (RTS, 2023)

This narrative implies that parents believe they are entitled to an equal role in the policy-making process, and their main policy statement is consequently that the intervention plans and policies should be based on cooperation with them and the school community.

Several implications for students arise from these policy-meanings. The first is that establishing school routines may provide a sense of certainty and stability, which continues the role of school and schooling in the moment of crisis. The second implication is related to how this routine should be established. The healing effects of school may be limited to the school community, which leads to the conclusion that re-entering the school building, left in the same condition as it was on the day of the shooting, could re-traumatise the students and thus do more harm than good. The third implication highlights the risk of public displays of children's choices on how to deal with trauma. If the decision to return to school is left entirely up to students, then their choice could lead to their marginalisation if it does not align with the choices of others from their immediate surroundings, i.e., choosing to go to school even though your friends were shot could result in your being perceived as insensitive or emotionless, while choosing not to go to school if you are from a class not directly affected to the shooting could result in your being perceived as lacking resilience. Finally, it is possible that the most traumatised children would choose not to return to school, which could result in their being deprived of the required psychological help, as psychological support was provided exclusively in the school building.

Table 1

Review of the analysis of the policy to return to school

	Representatives of the authorities	Parents
Situated meaning	– Experts and staff of the Vladislav Ribnikar Primary School are collaborators in creating and conducting policies, while parents are collaborators in conducting policies. – Children and parents are responsible for returning to school. – Providing psychological help to students, parents and teachers is independent of the context in which it is provided. – School routines can fulfil psychological needs.	– Parents are left out of the process of creating policies. – The school building is a symbol of the tragedy and as such can cause re–traumatisation. – The school community (peers, teachers) can help overcome trauma if gathered at a different time and place.
School and schooling in times of tragedy	– School healing qualities consist of both the school space (building) and the school community, and as such they are a source of stability for children. – In a moment of crisis, teachers are needed for their presence, while the rest of their role in overcoming trauma is unclear.	– The greatest value of school is in the interaction that occurs between peers and teachers (the school community).
Policy storyline	– Experts' voices are the most important in times of tragedy. – Overcoming tragedy will be accomplished through returning to school and nurturing mental health.	– Overcoming tragedy can be accomplished by uniting with friends and teachers outside of the school premises and by consulting parents in policymaking.
Implication of the policy for children	– Establishing school routines may provide a sense of certainty and stability. – Possibility of re–traumatisation due to entering the school building, the symbol of trauma. – Possibility of being marginalised by choosing either to return or not to return to school. – Possibility of being deprived of psychosocial support by not returning to school.	

Stopping schooling

The policy to stop schooling caused reactions from all of the represented coalitions. Their narratives are summarised in Table 2. According to their official statements, the representatives of the authorities conveyed several implied messages. The underlying assumption is that regular classes and schooling do not contribute to the mental health of students, and as such are not welcome in a moment of crisis. Moreover, in the Serbian language, school is phrased as an institution of education and upbringing (Serbian: *obrazovno-vaspitna ustanova*). In the moment of crisis, the authorities set aside the educational part of schooling and, with every recommendation in the intervention plan, shifted their activities to the upbringing of children and building character (teaching about empathy, socio-emotional skills, tolerance, etc.). This extreme shift suggests that the building of character and learning are not balanced in the regular way of Serbian schooling. In creating this policy, the authorities were also led

by parents' feelings and opinions, and were torn between the groups of parents who wanted to stop schooling entirely and those who wanted schooling to continue. This schism is evident in the following quote:

> *We have had conversations on whether to stop schooling for a long time. Some parents requested stopping schooling from the beginning … Realising what a major tragedy this is, the least we can do is to concede to this minority, while still doing something in the interest of what is best for the children, since this stopping is within the lawful 5% of deviation (from the annual state plan).* (Cvjetić, 2023)

In this narrative, it is clear that the authorities were not guided strictly by experts' opinions. This inconsistency in standards regarding making decisions, as well as the changes in the policies themselves, could lead to an increase in the feeling of uncertainty and instability for children.

By this time, the parents had formed two separate coalitions based on whether they wanted to continue schooling or not. For the group of parents who wanted to stop schooling (hereinafter: parents contra), life had been irreversibly changed and the only solution was to remove the school from their own and public memory. Hence, they not only requested a stop in schooling on the state level, but also an end to this particular school's function in the future and its complete transformation into a memorial centre. From their perspective, the school has no healing value, as reflected in a quote from one representative of this group: "*... the only solution for overcoming the crisis is to stop schooling*". The second group of parents (hereinafter: parents pro) were progressing in a different direction in their recovery. From their perspective, to return to school meant to overcome the tragedy they had encountered, or even more importantly: not to lose to a shooter. This thought is represented in the following quote:

> *We won't allow a certain K. K. [the initials of the shooter] to triumph over all of us. In our opinion, any resolution other than returning to the school would be a victory of a crime against all of them and all of us.* (Savet roditelja Osnovne škole "Vladislav Ribnikar", 2023)

Based on the analysed quotes of the representatives of the authorities, it is clear that one group of parents was crucial to the introduction of this particular policy. On the other hand, teachers united in expressing a strongly negative opinion on the way and timing of its implementation. In their narrative, it is apparent that teachers had not been part of creating the policies, and had not even been consulted or informed about them. Based on their statements, we can deduce that the participation of teachers was minimised, while the participation

of certain groups of parents was maximised. This disproportion in power in the decision-making process for education policies resulted in teachers publicly evaluating the (in)competence of the leading authorities without hesitation. After this policy, teachers showed agency in attempts to be valued as a coalition that could contribute to the recovery of their students, as reflected in the following narrative:

> *The Union of Teachers has assessed that the policy to stop schooling for 'safety reasons' is unjustified, as regular schooling with the predetermined curriculum is much safer for children than extracurricular activities.* (Beta, 2023)

Even if not stated explicitly, in this narrative, teachers are fighting for the right to use their pedagogical competencies and to engage with children in familiar forms of schooling, through which they can provide emotional support. From their perspective, traditional schooling could have a positive impact on the recovery from trauma, since it enables encounters between teachers and students. It is important to note that these narratives do not imply that teachers were against stopping school, especially since their initial reaction to the shooting was a collective strike and cancellation of schooling; their statement refers to the injustice of being excluded and not consulted, and the mistake of implementing this policy in an inconsistent way and at the wrong time.

The first implication this policy could have for children was inferred from the wider perspective of first deciding to continue schooling, and then to stop it, all while the coalitions expressed opinions that were not necessarily in line with the decision of the authorities. This inconsistency in policies and ways in which everyday school life is organised can increase the sense of uncertainty of students and consequently be detrimental to the process of recovery from trauma. Another implication of this specific cultural and situational context is that children and their parents were given a greater power role in creating and conducting policies than other stakeholders of education. It is important to note the potentially harmful effect of this disproportion in power, especially if considered in light of the training each of the coalitions has in the field of education, as well as the emotional involvement of each of the coalitions and their consequent ability to base their decision in a moment of crisis on verified and rational scientific knowledge. Finally, as well as depriving children of socialising in the regular school context, students are also denied traditional schooling. For teachers, too, traditional schooling had the benefit of providing a routine and a stable aspect of their life, and as such could potentially contribute to their wellbeing and trauma recovery.

Table 2

Review of the analysis of the policy to stop schooling

	Representatives of the authorities	Teachers	Parents Pro (Schooling)	Parents Contra (Schooling)
Situated meaning	– Regular classes do not contribute to mental health and are therefore cancelled. – Students and parents are bearers of the ways in which policy will be conducted. – Academic achievement remains important in a time of tragedy. – The school exists only in its dual role of a school and a memorial centre. – The policy is granted as a concession to a minority group of parents.	– Teachers' participation in the moment of school crisis is minimised. – The government is not competent to independently create a policy in the best interest of the education system. – Traditional schooling guarantees security.	– The needs of the majority of parents are of secondary importance. – Going back to school as a way to fight the crime.	– The voices of the minority are heard in the policy–making process. – Schooling harms recovery from trauma.
School and schooling in times of tragedy	– The greatest value of traditional schooling is the academic outcome. – School needs to be a place for building character instead of traditional learning.	– The greatest value of schooling is the connection between teachers and students, which occurs in traditional schooling. – Teachers are not considered to be equal to other stakeholders regarding questions about school and schooling.	– School and schooling are a source of overcoming crisis, an act of defiance, and a way to continue life.	– School and schooling have no value in the moment of crisis and are a source of re–traumatisation.
Policy storyline	– Schooling is tailored to students' and parents' needs. – The school should focus on the upbringing of students. – We value both the opinions and needs of the opposed parent coalitions.	– Teachers must have priority in being informed about education policies. – Teachers' pedagogical competencies displayed in regular classes could enhance the recovery from tragedy.	– Participation of parents and teachers in decisions regarding schooling is imperative. – The victory of life over death: life needs to go on.	– In order to heal, school life needs to stop.
Implication of the policy for children	– Inconsistency in policies and ways in which everyday school life is organised can increase the sense of uncertainty of students. – The role of students (along with parents) in the evaluation of school performance increases in power over teachers. – The decisive voice of parents in policymaking can potentially be harmful to children. – Students who wish to continue schooling are deprived of an opportunity to attend regular school classes.			

Discussion

Return to the school

Different meanings of the policy

Reinstating classes (even optionally) at the Vladislav Ribnikar Primary School one week post-shooting engendered significant contention between coalitions of authorities and parents; although not fundamentally flawed, this decision was criticised for its timing and location. Moreover, returning to the school was contrary to recommendations provided by nations previously affected by similar tragedies (Turunen & Punamaki, 2014; Turunen et al., 2014). The core of the discord lies in the different meanings attributed to the school by the authorities and parents. The authorities perceived the school building as integral to the school community, and as a space for psychological recovery and restoring routine, which is essential for student wellbeing. Conversely, parents viewed the site as a poignant reminder of the tragedy. They advocated for avoiding the school until renovations were completed, thus distinguishing between the school building and the school's community value. Despite their different positions, both sides eventually agreed that resuming normal activities would benefit student recovery. Furthermore, the authorities temporarily shifted their perspective on education, prioritising "character building" or the development of socio-emotional skills in students over traditional academic learning, which parents supported. The approach of emphasising psychosocial support and socio-emotional skill development aligns with past interventions and is deemed crucial in the immediate aftermath of such events (Currie & Hayes, 2021; Klun et al., 2023; Turunen & Punamaki, 2014; Stene et al., 2019).

Another underlined meaning of the policy produced by the authorities is the value of the education system and staff, especially of the teacher-student relationship. With closer examination of the policy itself, however, it becomes obvious that the role of the teacher in moments of crisis remains unclear. The policy denied teachers their teaching and pedagogical roles, as their participation was limited to their mere presence in the school building. Thus, trust in teachers by authorities remained more on a declarative than practical level (Pešikan & Ivić, 2021). In their reaction to the policy, parents relied on teachers' pedagogical skills, demonstrating trust in their ability to intervene in a crisis. With later official modifications to the policy, teachers were given vague guidelines, urging them to empathise, monitor for signs of distress, and maintain positive relationships with students. Such broad directives and unclear guidelines risk overwhelming teachers, pushing them beyond their capabilities or

leading to inaction (Krek, 2020; Jokić Zorkić et al., 2021). Clear guidelines and explanations are also important because many teachers still believe that their primary role in school is to teach students and not to help develop their character (Majska platforma, 2024).

Finally, the parents' reactions reflected a lack of trust in the representatives of the authorities, as they repeatedly requested official meetings with parents included. The implicit meaning of this reaction could be that the parents' voices should be valued at least equally to those of the official representatives or experts, as meetings without them should not result in final decisions.

Implications for students

These meanings have several implications for students. Research indicates that school routines foster a sense of calmness, certainty and stability (Dyregrov et al., 2020; Schultz, et al., 2014; Turunen & Punamaki, 2014). However, resuming classes in a harmed school one week post-incident risks re-traumatisation (Hobfoll et al., 2007). Furthermore, the notion of returning to school to resume routines may mislead students, parents and teachers, as it is not about "getting back to old routines" but "establishing new ones" (Røkholt et al., 2016). Parents and teachers should receive clear instructions on gradually introducing new routines on the educational and psychosocial levels. Otherwise, it is very likely that parents and teachers will be left frustrated and in conflict with students due to uncertainties about how to put the general advice of "getting back to the routine" into action (Røkholt et al., 2016). The optional return to school could be interpreted as the government's attempt to demonstrate sensitivity and inclusiveness towards diverse student needs. While giving students the choice to return could be positive, it could also cause marginalisation if the students' decisions are in conflict with their peers' choices or societal expectations, i.e., choosing not to go to school while peers decide to go could result in a student being perceived as dramatic or lacking resilience. Furthermore, the most traumatised students are likely to avoid returning to a site associated with trauma, or to hesitate to seek help, which could result in this policy isolating those who are most in need of support (Somasundaram & van de Put, 2006). We therefore believe that a more effective strategy would be to relocate students to alternative schools until the renovation of their school is complete. After school reconstruction, we would advise gradual familiarisation with the new space, followed by a policy storyline that the traumatic incident belongs to the past and that the school building is once again a safe space (Turunen & Punamaki, 2014).

Stopping schooling

Different meanings of the policy

The government's decision to prematurely end schooling on a national level referred to cancelling regular classes, while extracurricular activities, preparatory sessions for exams, opportunities for grade improvement, professional support and school community engagement remained available. This policy directly denied teachers and students their most familiar space and activity for interaction, consequently making it harder for teachers to implement their pedagogical knowledge. Turning away from traditional teaching and learning was noticed only by teachers who felt this was not a good approach for students and their recovery. Instead of accentuating the valuable role of school and schooling, teachers felt that they were once again marginalised and that their authority was minimised, as in previous policy measures (Pešikan & Ivić, 2021). Moreover, as grades are essential in Serbian education for continuing to higher levels of schooling, by focusing on grades through this policy, the government may have been implying that it was time to move forward and think about the future. However, the lack of clear instructions on how to overcome the tragedy meant that none of the coalitions seemed ready to proceed into the future at the moment in question.

One of the most controversial meanings of introducing this policy was the deployment of power between one group of parents and the government, as it was stated that some parents became the deciding party for this policy. Both parent groups expressed their conflicting opinions in the media, which significantly impacted public opinion. Consequently, authority figures focused on appeasing parents and addressing their concerns, leading to an unusual situation where parents became highly influential in shaping education policies. A sensitive, tailored, collaborative approach to parents is important for support of vulnerable students (Plavčak, 2024); however, the newly created situation in the power dynamic of coalitions prompted a critical question: does the growing influence of parents in educational policymaking serve or undermine students' best interests?

Implications for students

As well as impacting students of the Vladislav Ribnikar Primary School, the second policy also affected students on the national level. The decision to stop schooling meant that students were denied the right to have regular (traditional) classes where they usually gain knowledge and develop cognitive competencies. Moreover, abruptly ending the school routine exposed students and teachers, including those not directly impacted by the incident, to increased

stress and uncertainty: they were compelled to conclude the academic year in just 4 working days rather than the expected 14 working days.

Regarding minimising teachers' roles, the research aligns with teachers' observations, as a significant decline was observed in students' academic performance and increased absenteeism was recorded in the first year post-incident (Stene et al., 2019; Strom et al., 2016). In our opinion, teachers were denied the possibility to use their pedagogical skills to support children's academic challenges, as students were still in a position to acquire grades, but with no support for their cognitive processes. Moreover, preventing teachers from demonstrating their competencies – as well as their personal regard, respect and integrity – could result in a diminution of much-needed trustful role-relationship between teachers and students (Jokić Zorkić et al., 2021) There is a pressing need for teachers to be equipped with effective pedagogical methods for working with traumatised students, enabling them to support students' adjustment to new routines and facilitate their recovery of stability and security.

The introduced policy could have similar implications for students from the Vladislav Ribnikar Primary School, but there is an additional potential threat: the inconsistency in policies could even increase the already high level of insecurity and uncertainty among this vulnerable group of students.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to explore how policymakers and institutional stakeholders find different meanings in the same policy, and to examine the implications of the policy's meanings for the position of students in the education system. The key findings refer to the damaging effect of inconsistency in policies on students' wellbeing and the importance of including the relevant expert parties in conducting policies. The analysis also highlighted important dynamics between different power roles in the policy-making process, revealing the unfavourable position of teachers in the decision-making process and the more influential position of different parent groups. These power roles are deeply rooted in the historical background of the Serbian education system, and to understand the dynamic of the policy-making process for the Vladislav Ribnikar Primary School it is crucial to also understand the relationship that had been built between coalitions in the two decades before the shooting.

In conclusion, we believe the main question should not be whether schooling should stop or continue, but how to create a line of consistent and stable recommendations aligned with the created policy. The greatest risk to students lies not in the specific decision about the cessation or continuation of

schooling, but in the fluctuation and uncertainty of policies, which gives rise to unease. The consistent application of either approach – stopping schooling with supportive psycho-social activities or continuing schooling in an alternate setting with gradual reintroduction – could effectively benefit students wellbeing.

It is important to note a few limits of this study. The first lies in the methodology of the analysed sample. Specifically, we relied on only a small number of news reports, some originating from a blog not obliged to follow journaling ethics. Hence, the analysed data might have been impacted by the subjective opinions of their authors. Future research should strive to rely only on selected objective materials that report further than 40 days post-tragedy, in order to gain a comprehensive perspective on the scope of the effect of the policies introduced. Secondly, in an effort to provide a focused analytical report on the policies introduced post-shooting, we overlooked the majority of policies initially brought by the government, as they did not refer directly to the education system (safety regulations, regulations of laws, etc). Although it was necessary to be selective in conducting the research, this may lead to providing only a glimpse of the big picture, i.e., neglecting the historical background of the education system in question. Finally, the third limitation of the study was the lack of data including children's perspectives on the introduced policies. Due to their young age, it is not possible to find official statements or representatives of this student group, and their parents are consequently given the role of speaking on their behalf. It is justified to believe that the opinions and perspectives of children and their parents may differ, so future research should find ways to include students as one of the coalitions for policy interpretation.

References

Beta. (2023, June 2). *Sindikat prosvetara traži od Vlade da preispita odluku o prevremenom završetku školske godine [Teachers' union requests government to reconsider decision on early termination of the school year].* Insajder.
https://insajder.net/prenosimo/sindikat-prosvetara-trazi-od-vlade-da-preispita-odluku-o-prevremenom-zavrsetku-skolske-godine

Böhmer, M. (2023). *Amok at schools – prevention, intervention and aftercare in school shootings.* Springer. https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-658-38859-1

Butkus, S. L. (2020). *Investigating school shootings from 1996 to 2019 for processes needed to prevent and respond to future school shootings: A case study.* [Doctoral dissertation, North Central University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Currie, S., & Hayes, B. (2021). *Psychological support for schools following a crisis or disaster: The journey of recovery: Report.* The British Psychological Society.

https://doi.org/10.53841/bpsrep.2022.rep150

Cvjetić, A. (2023, June 6). *Milićević: Nastava se danas završava, mislim da je to najbolja moguća odluka [Milićević: Classes end today, I think this is the best possible decision].* Zelena učionica. https://zelenaucionica.com/milicevic-nastava-se-danas-zavrsava-mislim-da-je-to-najbolja-moguca-odluka/

Čaprić, G., & Videnović, M. (2024). *PISA 2022 izveštaj za Republiku Srbiju* [PISA 2022 Report for Republic of Serbia]. Zavod za vrednovanje kvaliteta obrazovanja i vaspitanja, Beograd.

Dyregrov, A., Dyregrov, K., & Lytje, M. (2020). Loss in the family – A reflection on how schools can support their students. *Bereavement Care, 39*(3), 95–101. https://doi.org/10.1080/02682621.2020.1828722

Dyregrov, K. (2006). The important role of the school following suicide in Norway. What support do young people wish that school could provide?. *Journal of Death and Dying, 59*(2), 147–161. https://doi.org/10.2190/OM.59.2.d

Dyregrov, K., Endsjo, M., Idsoe, T., & Dyregrov, A. (2015). Suggestions for the ideal follow-up for bereaved students as seen by school personnel. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 20*(3), 289–391. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13632752.2014.955676

Đerić, I., & Gutvajn, N. (2023). *Kako postupiti u kriznim situacijama: preporuke za školsku zajednicu* [How to act in crisis situations: Recommendations for the school community]. Institut za pedagoška istraživanja. https://www.ipisr.org.rs/images/vesti/Kako-postupati-u-kriznim-situacijama.pdf

Eifert, W. L. (2022). *The effect of school mass shooting and level of exposure on adolescents and young adults: A systematic literature review.* [Doctoral dissertation, Pepperdine University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Filozofski fakultet. (2023). *Psihološke smernice za medijsko izveštavanje nakon kriznih događaja* [Psychological guidelines for media reporting after crisis events]. Filozofski fakultet, Univerzitet u Beogradu, Odeljenje za psihologiju. https://www.f.bg.ac.rs/files/PS-2023-5-9-212617.pdf

Fischer, F. (2004). Reframing public policy: Discursive politics and deliberative practices. *Policy Sciences, 37*, 89–93. https://doi.org/10.1023/B:OLIC.0000035505.23131.80

Hobfoll, S. E., Watson, P., Bell, C. C., Bryant, R. A., Brymer, M. J., Friedman, M. J., Friedman, M., Gersons, B. P. E., de Jong, J. T. V. M., Layne, C. M., Maquen, S., Neria, Y., Norwood, A. E., Pynoos, R. S., Reissman, D., Ruzek, J. I., Shalev, A. Y., Solomon, Z., Steinberg, A. M., & Ursano, R. J. (2007). Five essential elements of immediate and mid-term mass trauma intervention: Empirical evidence. *Psychiatry, 70*(4), 283–315. https://doi.org/10.1521/psyc.2007.70.4.283

Ivić, I., & Pešikan, A. (2012). Education system reforms in an unstable political situation: The case of Serbia in the first decade. *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal, 2*(2), 31–53. https://doi.org/10.26529/cepsj.383

Jokić Zorkić, T., Mićić, K., & Kovács Cerović, T. (2021). Lost trust? The experiences of teachers and students during schooling disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal, 11*(Sp. Issue), 195–218. https://doi.org/10.26529/cepsj.1150

Jorgensen, B. F., Skarstein, D., & Schultz, J. (2015). Trying to understand the extreme: School children's narratives of the mass killings in Norway July 22, 2011. *Psychology Research and Behavior Management, 8,* 51–61. https://doi.org/10.2147/PRBM.S73685

Klun, M., Frangež, D., & Ručman, B. (2023). Addressing violence against parents and peers and violence in schools through the perspective of ecological theory. *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal,* Article 1681. https://doi.org/10.26529/cepsj.1681

Kosanović, S., & Zemunović, M. (2023, May 7). *Dezinformacije o masakru u školi "Vladislav Ribnikar" [Disinformation about the massacre at the Vladislav Ribnikar Primary School].* Fake News Tragač. https://fakenews.rs/2023/05/07/dezinformacije-o-masakru-u-skoli-vladislav-ribnikar/

Krek, J. (2020). Structural reasons for school violence and education strategies. *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal, 10*(2), 145–173. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1258375.pdf

Lankford, A., & Madfis E. (2018). Don't name them, don't show them, but report everything else: A pragmatic proposal for denying mass killers the attention they seek and deterring future offenders. *American Behavioral Scientist, 62*(2), 260–279. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764217730854

Madfis, E. (2016). In search of meaning: Are school rampage shootings random and senseless violence?. *The Journal of Psychology, 151*(1), 21–35. https://doi.org/10.1080/00223980.2016.1196161

Majska platforma. (2024). *Izveštaj o uzrocima nasilja u društvu koje pogađa decu i mlade s preporukama za sistemske promene – Radna verzija* [Report on the causes of violence in society affecting children and youth with recommendations for systemic changes – working version]. https://majskaplatforma.rs/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Obrazovanje_Majska-platforma.pdf

Martinez, M. (2019). An examination of higher education policy problems using narrative policy analysis. *American Behavioral Scientist, 63*(3), 369–384. https://doi.org/10.1177/000276421882056

Mosqueda, C. M., Heath, M. A., Cutrer-Párraga, E. A., Ridge, R. D., Jackson, A. P., & Miller, E. (2021). Analysis of 48 hours of television news coverage following the Columbine High School shooting. *School Psychology Review, 52*(1), 57–71. https://doi.org/10.1080/2372966x.2020.1870410

Muschert, G. W. (2007). Research in school shootings. *Sociology Compass, 1*(1), 60–80. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2007.00008.x

Norris, F. H., Friedman, M. J., & Watson, P. J. (2002). 60,000 disaster victims speak: Part I. An empirical review of the empirical literature 1981–2001. *Psychiatry, 65*(3), 240–260. https://doi.org/10.1521/psyc.65.3.207.20173

Perfect, M., Turley, M., Carlson, J., Yohanna, J., & Saint Gilles, M. (2016). School-related outcomes of Traumatic event exposure and traumatic stress symptoms in students: A systematic review of research from 1990 to 2015. *A Multidisciplinary Research and Practice Journal, 8*(1), 7–43. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-016-9175-2

Pešikan, A., & Ivić, I. (2021). The impact of specific social factors on changes in education in Serbia. *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal, 11*(2), 59–76. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1309485.pdf

Plavčak, D. (2024). The families of special needs children from the perspective of vulnerability. *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal, 14*(2), 155–170. https://doi.org/10.26529/cepsj.1523

Republika Srbija Ministarstvo prosvete. (2023, May 8). *Pojašnjenje plana intervencije u krizi za Osnovnu školu "Vladislav Ribnikar"* [Clarification of the crisis intervention plan for the Vladislav Ribnikar Primary School]. https://prosveta.gov.rs/vesti/pojasnjenje-plana-intervencije-u-krizi-za-osnovnu-skolu-vladislav-ribnikar/

Røkholt, E. G., Schultz, J-H., & Langballe, Å. (2016). Negotiating a new day: parents' contributions to supporting students' school functioning after exposure to trauma. *Psychology Research and Behavior Management, 9,* 81–93. https://doi.org/10.2147/PRBM.S97229

RTS. (2023, May 10). *Milena Vasić: Roditelji dece iz "Ribnikara" žele da se deca vrate u školu ali ne na to mesto [Milena Vasić: Parents of children from "Ribnikar" want for their children to return to school, but not to that place].* RTS.
https://www.rts.rs/vesti/drustvo/5188424/milena-vasic-roditelji-dece-iz-ribnikara-zele-da-se-deca-vrate-u-skolu-ali-ne-na-to-mesto.html

Savet roditelja Osnovne škole "Vladislav Ribnikar" (2023, May 30). *Savet roditelja OŠ "Vladislav Ribnikar": Deca žele da idu u svoju školu, "neće da dozvole da ih jedan K. K. sve pobedi" [Parent council of the Vladislav Ribnikar Primary School: The children want to go to their school, "They won't allow a certain K. K. to defeat them all"].* Insajder.
https://insajder.net/prenosimo/savet-roditelja-os-vladislav-ribnikar-deca-zele-da-idu-u-svoju-skolu-nece-da-dozvole-da-ih-jedan-k-k-sve-pobedi

Schultz, J., Langaballe, A., & Raundalen, M. (2014). Explaining the unexplainable: Designing a national strategy on classroom communication concerning the 22 July terror attack in Norway. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology, 5,* 1–5. http://dx.doi.org/10.3402/ejpt.v5.22758

Somasundaram, D. J., & van de Put, W. A. C. M. (2006). Management of trauma in special populations after a disaster. *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry, 67,* 64–73.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/7176747_Management_of_trauma_in_special_populations_after_a_disaster

Stene, L. E., Schultz, J., & Dyb, G. (2019). Returning to school after a terror attack: A longitudinal study of school functioning and health in terror-exposed youth. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 28*(3), 319–328. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00787-018-1196-y

Strom, I. F., Schultz, J., Wentzel-Larsen, T., & Dyb, G. (2016). School performance after experiencing trauma: A longitudinal study of school functioning in survivors of the Utoya shootings in 2011. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology, 7*(1). https://doi.org/10.3402/ejpt.v7.31359

Turunen, T., Haravuori, H., Pihlajamaki, J. J., Marttunen, M., & Punamaki, R. (2014). Framework of the outreach after a school shooting and the students' perceptions of the provided support. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology, 5*(1), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.3402/ejpt.v5.23079

Turunen, T. & Punamaki, R. (2014). Psychosocial support for trauma-affected students after school shootings in Finland. *Violence and Victims, 29*(3), 476–491. http://dx.doi.org/10.1891/0886-6708.VV-D-12-00059

UNICEF. (2023). *Preporuke za izveštavanje o masovnim pucnjavama* [Recommendations for reporting on mass shootings]. UNICEF. https://www.unicef.org/serbia/media/23696/file

UNS. (n.d.). *Kodeks Novinara Srbije* [Code of Journalists of Serbia]. Retrieved February 15, 2024, from https://www.medijskapismenost.net/Kodeks-novinara-Srbije

World Bank Group. (n.d.). *Government expenditure on education, total (% of GDP) – Serbia.* Retrieved July 7, 2024, from https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.XPD.TOTL.GD.ZS?locations=RS

Biographical note

SANJA STOJILJKOVIĆ is a Junior Researcher at the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Belgrade, Serbia. Her broad research interests include educational psychology, developmental psychology and cyberpsychology. More precisely, in her research work she is mainly focused on the socio-emotional learning of youth in the digital context of social media, advocating the need to introduce digital and socio-emotional competencies into school curriculums.

BARBARA BLAŽANIN is a teaching assistant in the field of Educational Psychology in the Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation at the University of Belgrade, Serbia. Her research interests include socio-emotional learning, socio-emotional development, adolescence, academic identity and motivation in the academic context.