

## **VALUE AND IMPORTANCE OF PHILOSOPHY COURSES WITHIN NON-PHILOSOPHY STUDIES: STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE**

*UDC 141:378.4 (497.11); 378.18::141*

**Zoran Dimić, Slađana Ristić Gorgiev, Milan Jovanović**

Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Serbia

**Abstract.** *Do non-philosophy university students consider philosophy to be important for their education? In this paper, we present the results of the empirical research that we have conducted in order to address this question. The study included 151 participants and was based on an online questionnaire. Our approach was focused on students' evaluation of the role and significance of the philosophical courses they have attended. The results indicate that students highly regard philosophy as valuable and beneficial not only for general but also for their professional education. We take those results to offer a strong argument against the current trend of decline and reduction of philosophical education in high schools and universities of the Republic of Serbia.*

**Key words:** *philosophy, education, curriculum, students' attitudes, Educational system in Serbia*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### **1.1. The aim and motivation**

In this paper, we present the results of the conducted empirical study concerning the university students' perception and evaluation of philosophical courses. The participants were students from the three University of Niš faculties: Faculty of Education in Vranje, Faculty of Philosophy and Faculty of Economics in Niš, whom all have had philosophical courses within their studies. The research was done through an anonymous online questionnaire.

One of the motives for our study was the concerning trend of reducing philosophical education in high schools and faculties in the Republic of Serbia. Our idea was to question the justification for that trend, from the university students' perspective. Since

---

Received October 10, 2021/Accepted December 1, 2021

**Corresponding author:** Zoran Dimić

Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Ćirila i Metodija 2, 18000 Niš, Serbia

Phone: +381 65 205 8998 • E-mail: zoran.dimic@filfak.ni.ac.rs

they are not philosophy students but instead have different vocations (pedagogy, primary or preschool teaching, economics), and also have educational and intellectual maturity, we considered their opinion and attitudes about the importance of philosophical education to be a valuable contribution to the issue surrounding the decline of philosophy in high school and university curriculums.

## 1.2. Context and relevant information

It is worth noting that those students from different faculties and departments had attended *different philosophical courses* (with different syllabi, different professors, and in a different year of their study). Hence, to put the results (presented in section 3 of this paper) into a suitable context, we will briefly describe those courses within this introduction.

### 1.2.1. Philosophy course at the Faculty of Economics

The philosophy course at the Faculty of Economics at the University of Niš is in the curriculum of different subfields, in the first or second year of study. The course is called *Philosophy of Economics* and it is taught with three weekly hours of lectures and three hours of exercises during one semester.

The course aims to acquaint students with the philosophical analysis of methodological issues encountered by Economic theories. As such, the course relies on both the philosophy of science and political philosophy. In order to be able to follow specific topics related to the philosophy of economics, students are first introduced to the general topics of philosophy and history of philosophy.

The syllabus has three parts. The first part is concerned with the introduction to philosophy (which deals with the relationship between philosophy and other sciences), philosophical disciplines and philosophical methods. The second part of the program offers a brief historical overview of the most important philosophers and philosophical movements from the ancient period to the present day, with an emphasis on political philosophy. The third part of the program is dedicated to the relationship between methodology and economics. The idea of that part of the course is to address important problems from the philosophy of science (with the focus on economics) such as induction, deduction, models in the Economic, unrealistic assumptions, Economics imperialism, dogmatism in science, etc.

The teaching was conducted through a monologue-dialogue method, meaning that the lectures were mainly based on the oral presentation of the teacher with the occasional involvement of students in dialogue on certain topics. During the exercise classes, students were analyzing and interpreting original philosophical texts from the political philosophy and philosophy of science, so the dialogical method was mostly represented in that segment. Also, it should be emphasized that in the school year 2020/21, classes were held online.

### 1.2.2. Philosophy courses at the Faculty of Education

According to the program accredited in 2014. at the Bachelor Academic Studies of Primary School Teaching and Preschool Teaching at the Faculty of Education in Vranje, there are two one-semester philosophy courses, one of which is mandatory and the other is elective. In the first semester of the year, students take *Philosophy* as a mandatory course, while *Ethics in Education* is an elective course. The *Philosophy* course is represented weekly by two hours of lectures and one hour of exercises, while *Ethics in*

*Education* is represented by only two hours of lectures. Both courses carry an identical number of ECTS credits – 3.

Both these courses have a dual character. Firstly, they are designed as introductory courses, which means that they can be followed by students who did not have any philosophy or ethics courses in their high school.<sup>1</sup> The language and terminology related to both courses are very simple and most directly relate to everyday, colloquial speech. But secondly, since future primary and preschool teachers are educated at this Faculty, the *Philosophy* course has a strong emphasis on educational topics; in other words, in this context the goal was to put philosophy in the function of a better and deeper understanding of education. The leading idea was that philosophy of education can be very useful for students of the Faculty of Education, precisely because it can shed light on the topics of education in a way that no other scientific discipline that is closely related to pedagogy does (for example, sociology, psychology, etc.). Topics of this course cover the key points in the historical development of the philosophy of education from the ancient period to the modern times, and the important figures in philosophy of education: Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Kant, Dewey, etc. The literature consists of the most educationally relevant writings of these philosophers.

*Ethics in Education* course follows a similar conception. It aims *not only* to deepen the general education of students, but also to help students to better understand their future job and the science they predominantly deal with (pedagogy). With the exception of two introductory topics, all other lessons address ethical issues relevant for education: Virtue and education, Socrates' educational ideal, Ethics of the teaching, Teacher's role in education, Contemporary ethical dilemmas and education, etc. Alongside different introductions to ethics, course literature includes prominent ethical works in the field of education.

### 1.2.3. *Philosophy courses at the Department of Pedagogy*

Bachelor Academic Studies of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš includes two one semester-long elective courses in philosophy: *Philosophy of Education* and *Ethics*. In the first semester of the first year of their study, students take the *Philosophy of Education* as an elective course, while *Ethics* is an elective course in the second year in the first semester. *Philosophy of Education* course is worth 5 ECTS credits and is being taught with two hours of lectures and one hour of exercises, while *Ethics* (4 ECTS) is delivered by only one weekly hour of lectures and one hour of exercises.

Similar to the philosophical courses at the Faculty of Education, those two courses are not designed only as a form of general education for the students, but instead are organized with the conviction that philosophy can be very useful to students of Pedagogy in order to better understand pedagogy as a science and vocation. The basic topics and literature in the course *Philosophy of Education* concern key points in the historical development of philosophical reflections on pedagogical topics, from the ancient period to modern times, and it is very similar in content to the *Philosophy course* at the Faculty of Education.

And finally, the course of *Ethics* for pedagogy students. This course is slightly different from the three previously mentioned since its most important purpose is the impact on the

---

<sup>1</sup> In the educational system of the Republic of Serbia, *Philosophy* is an obligatory subject in gymnasiums (general high schools), and in some art high schools. Recently, *Philosophy* ceased to be an obligatory subject in vocational high schools. The subject of *Ethics* is represented only in medical high schools.

students' *general education*. It covers the prominent figures and philosophical schools from the history of ethics, such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Stoicism, Epicureanism, Spinoza, Kant, Nietzsche, etc.

### 1.3. Literature review

There are some fairly recent studies relevant to the issues that we wanted to investigate. For example, Gardner's paper *Why We Should Require All Students to Take 2 Philosophy Courses* (2018) corresponds to our research interest in two important aspects: it is focused on the university students, and on those students who are not studying philosophy. The same goes for the article *Why Study Philosophy at the Faculty of Law?* (Pohoață, 2017). However, since our method is empirical, our contribution might be seen as somehow complementing these *purely theoretical* papers.

When it comes to *empirical research* relevant to our topic, there is a recently published study (Bialystok et al., 2019) that analyzes the impact of philosophy courses on high school students. This large-scale research has led to the conclusion that "philosophy is a unique, beneficial subject that teachers enjoy teaching and students greatly value, characterizing it as both difficult and rewarding". In addition, the authors emphasized that the study had also shown that "considerable differences exist in how philosophy is taught and learned" (Bialystok et al., 2019, p. 678). Bearing this in mind, and the fact that students from our sample had also been taught different philosophical courses, we have decided to analyze the relevant results of each subgroup separately, and in the context of the specific course.

In addition, in 2021. is published a group of papers (in the special issue of a journal)<sup>2</sup> presenting the empirical study of the effects that certain philosophical courses had on philosophy students' intuitions, beliefs, and attitudes.

Having all these in mind, we have undertaken our research with the idea to offer some novel perspectives and hopefully make some contribution to the topic.

### 1.4. Expectations

Our roughly defined hypotheses (or rather: expectations) that we had prior to the research were influenced by these previous theoretical and empirical work, but also by the first-hand teaching experience and involvement in the students' educational progress.

Generally speaking, both these sources were – more or less<sup>3</sup> – pushing us into the same directions: that philosophical education is important, it has a significant impact on students' beliefs, attitudes, and skills. Hence, we expected overall positive students' attitudes towards the claims in our questionnaire.

Additionally, we believed that the different courses – in accordance with their content and focus, and the environment in which they were taught – would produce different agreement patterns between the subgroups.

Finally, taking into account the importance of high school *exposure to philosophy courses* we expected such students to have even more positive attitudes towards the claims about the need for philosophy in the high school and university curriculums.

<sup>2</sup> Each paper addresses a specific course and analyzes its potential impact on students' attitudes. See (introductory paper): Ristić Gorgiev & Blagojević, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> There are some authors questioning or even strongly opposing that direction. The recent and notable examples are Sesardić, 2017; Van Norden, 2015; Schwitzgebel, 2015.

## 2. METHODS

Our research included 151 participants (138 females, 13 males), all of whom were students at the University of Niš – 77 students from the Faculty of Education in Vranje (51% of all participants), 40 students from the Department of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš (26.5%), and 34 students from Faculty of Economics in Niš (22.5%). Around 33% of the participants were students who have attended a philosophy course recently, i.e. in the year when our research was conducted, while near 67% of the participant have finished attending their philosophical courses in some of the previous years.

In order to effectively collect the data (in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic), we had used an online questionnaire platform *Google Forms*, which was also used for the basic analysis of the gathered data. For the additional analyses, we have used *MS Excel* software.

The questionnaire designed for this study consisted of 3 groups of questions. The first group contained 5 general questions: faculty, sex, the year of attending philosophy course, and finally whether or not they have had philosophy or logic courses during their high school. The second group contained 11 claims which students were asked to evaluate in accordance with the 5-valued Likert scale (Likert 1932, Cohen et al. 2008, p. 15). Those claims were designed to probe students' attitudes towards specific aspects of the philosophical courses they have attended by asking for the extent to which they agree with the given claim. The predefined values were: 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, and 5. Strongly agree. Here is the list of the claims given in that part of the questionnaire:

- I I believe that philosophical education is useful for my profession.
- II I think that philosophical education is important for my general knowledge.
- III Philosophical education has influenced my world views.
- IV Philosophical education has affected my understanding of education and upbringing in general.
- V Philosophical education has changed my view on science.
- VI Philosophical education has had an impact on my views on religion.
- VII Philosophical education has influenced my view on art.
- VIII I think the philosophical education within my studies helped me build a better understanding of society and politics.
- IX Philosophical education during my studies was important to my personal life.
- X I think that philosophical education should be part of the educational program of every faculty.
- XI I consider philosophy to be important as a discipline and hence I think it should be an obligatory subject in all high schools (including vocational high schools).

The third part of the questionnaire combines two open questions, asking students to express what competencies (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) they believe they gained through philosophy courses they had attended, and how those courses can be changed in order to be (even) more relevant, important and valuable for them. These two questions were designed for the qualitative analysis and with the idea to shed some light on the specific impact that philosophy has or could have on university students.

Eventually, we have decided to focus only on the quantitative part of the study for this occasion and, in this paper, we will present and discuss the results only from the first two parts of the inquiry.

## 3. RESULTS

This chapter is organized into 4 subsections, presenting, respectively (in accordance to the size of the subgroups): results for the whole group, results for students of the Faculty of Education in Vranje, for students of the Department of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš, and finally results for students from Faculty of Economics in Niš.

## 3.1. General results

Let us start with the results regarding all participants. Table 1 and Table 2 show the percentages of the participants that have given a certain value (following the 5-valued Likert scale) to the 11 claims (presented in chapter 2 of this paper, in the same order as in this table). In some of the tables, we have also presented the results for answers 4 and 5 jointly (“Agree” and “Strongly agree”) in order to get the relevant and important information – how much of the participants *agree with the given claim* rather than *being neutral* or *disagreeing*. In addition to this, the table contains the average value of participants’ responses to each of the claims.

Table 1 All participants – claims I-VI

Claim	I <i>profession<sup>4</sup></i>	II <i>general knowledge</i>	III <i>world views</i>	IV <i>education</i>	V <i>science</i>	VI <i>religion</i>
Average value	3.99	4.41	3.81	4.05	3.74	3.23
Value 5	36.4%	56.3%	33.8%	41.7%	26.5%	17.2%
Value 4	40.4%	34.4%	36.4%	34.4%	42.4%	25.2%
Value 4 or 5	76.8%	90.7%	70.2%	76.2%	68.9%	42.4%

Table 2 All participants – claims VII-XI

Claim	VII <i>art</i>	VIII <i>politics</i>	IX <i>personal life</i>	X <i>at all faculties</i>	XI <i>in all schools</i>
Average value	3.62	4.23	3.68	4.09	4.17
Value 5	28.5%	45%	29.8%	44.4%	50.3%
Value 4	31.1%	37.7%	32.5%	33.1%	29.1%
Value 4 or 5	59.6%	82.8%	62.3%	77.5%	79.5%

From the first part of the questionnaire, we have got that 64.2% of all the participants have had philosophy as a high school subject, and 40% of all participants have also had logic within their high school curriculum.<sup>5</sup> We were interested in whether the presence of philosophy and/or logic within a student’s high school curriculum had any effect on his/her attitude towards the *claim XI* and *claim X*. The results are presented in Table 3.

<sup>4</sup> For convenience, there is a *short remark* in the tables, below the number of the claim, with the purpose to help the reader quickly recall the given claim.

<sup>5</sup> The logic (as an obligatory subject) is a part of the curriculum only in those high schools that also include philosophy (again as an obligatory subject).

**Table 3** Claims X and XI with regards to having philosophy and logic in high school

Claim	X <i>obligatory at all faculties</i>				XI <i>obligatory in all schools</i>			
	Value 4	Value 5	Value 4 or 5	Avg. value	Value 4	Value 5	Value 4 or 5	Avg. value
<i>Students who didn't have phil. and logic</i>	22.2%	48.1%	70.3%	4.05	27.7%	42.6%	70.3%	3.98
<i>Students who had phil. but no logic</i>	36.1%	38.8%	75%	4.00	30.5%	52.7%	83.2%	4.25
<i>Students who had phil. and logic</i>	40.9%	44.2%	85.2%	4.18	29.5%	55.7%	85.2%	4.30

### 3.2. Results for the Faculty of Education students

In this section, we will present the specific results concerning the largest subgroup in our sample – students of the Faculty of Education in Vranje. Table 4 and Table 5 show (in detail) their levels of agreement with claims presented within the inquiry.

**Table 4** Faculty of Education – claims I-VI

Claim	I <i>profession</i>	II <i>general knowledge</i>	III <i>world views</i>	IV <i>education</i>	V <i>science</i>	VI <i>religion</i>
<i>Average value</i>	4.18	4.48	4.01	4.19	3.91	3.51
<i>Value 4 or 5</i>	87%	92.2%	75.3%	80.5%	77.9%	48.1%
<i>Value 5</i>	36.4%	57.1%	37.7%	49.4%	31.2%	18.2%
<i>Value 4</i>	50.6%	35.1%	37.7%	31.2%	46.8%	29.9%
<i>Value 3</i>	7.8%	6.5%	15.6%	11.7%	10.4%	39%
<i>Value 2</i>	5.2%	1.3%	6.5%	5.2%	5.2%	10.4%
<i>Value 1</i>	0%	0%	2.6%	2.6%	6.5%	2.6%

**Table 5** Faculty of Education – claims VII-XI

Claim	VII <i>art</i>	VIII <i>politics</i>	IX <i>personal life</i>	X <i>at all faculties</i>	XI <i>in all schools</i>
<i>Average value</i>	3.82	4.25	3.75	4.34	4.10
<i>Value 4 or 5</i>	70.1%	83.1%	61.0%	85.7%	76.6%
<i>Value 5</i>	28.6%	44.2%	31.2%	51.9%	45.5%
<i>Value 4</i>	41.6%	39%	29.9%	33.8%	31.2%
<i>Value 3</i>	18.2%	15.6%	27.3%	10.4%	15.6%
<i>Value 2</i>	6.5%	0%	6.5%	3.9%	3.9%
<i>Value 1</i>	5.2%	1.3%	5.2%	0%	3.9%

We also wanted to take a closer look and compare the attitudes of the students who have just recently attended a philosophical course and those who have finished that in some of the previous years. That comparison is given in Table 6 and Table 7.

**Table 6** Faculty of Education – recently attended vs. attended earlier, I-VI

Claim		I	II	III	IV	V	VI
		<i>profession</i>	<i>general knowledge</i>	<i>world views</i>	<i>education</i>	<i>science</i>	<i>religion</i>
Average value	<i>recently</i>	4.24	4.41	3.94	4.00	3.88	3.53
	<i>earlier</i>	4.17	4.50	4.03	4.25	3.92	3.50
Value 4 or 5	<i>recently</i>	82.4%	94.1%	76.5%	82.4%	70.6%	58.8%
	<i>earlier</i>	86.7%	90.0%	73.3%	80.0%	78.3%	45.0%
Value 5	<i>recently</i>	35.3%	41.2%	29.4%	35.3%	29.4%	5.90%
	<i>earlier</i>	36.7%	61.7%	40.0%	53.3%	31.7%	21.7%
Value 4	<i>recently</i>	47.1%	52.9%	47.1%	47.1%	41.2%	52.9%
	<i>earlier</i>	50.0%	28.3%	33.3%	26.7%	46.7%	23.3%

**Table 7** Faculty of Education – recently attended vs. attended earlier, VII-XI

Claim		VII	VIII	IX	X	XI
		<i>art</i>	<i>politics</i>	<i>persona l life</i>	<i>at all faculties</i>	<i>in all schools</i>
Average value	<i>recently</i>	3.53	4.35	3.29	4.18	4.00
	<i>earlier</i>	3.90	4.22	3.88	4.38	4.13
Value 4 or 5	<i>recently</i>	64.7%	88.2%	29.4%	82.4%	82.4%
	<i>earlier</i>	71.7%	81.7%	70.0%	85.0%	76.7%
Value 5	<i>recently</i>	17.6%	47.1%	17.6%	35.3%	35.3%
	<i>earlier</i>	31.7%	43.3%	35.0%	56.7%	48.3%
Value 4	<i>recently</i>	47.1%	41.2%	11.8%	47.1%	47.1%
	<i>earlier</i>	40.0%	38.3%	35.0%	28.3%	28.3%

### 3.3. Results for the pedagogy students from the Faculty of Philosophy

The results concerning the second-largest subgroup in the study sample – students of pedagogy from the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš (40 participants) – are presented in Table 8 and Table 9.

**Table 8** Department of Pedagogy – claims I-VI

Claim	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
	<i>profession</i>	<i>general knowledge</i>	<i>world views</i>	<i>education</i>	<i>science</i>	<i>religion</i>
Average value	4.28	4.55	3.88	4.13	3.6	2.85
Value 4 or 5	82.5%	95.0%	72.5%	82.5%	67.5%	30.0%
Value 5	52.5%	65.0%	37.5%	42.5%	17.5%	10.0%
Value 4	30.0%	30.0%	35.0%	40.0%	50.0%	20.0%
Value 3	12.5%	2.5%	10.0%	10.0%	12.5%	35.0%
Value 2	2.5%	0.0%	12.5%	2.5%	15.0%	15.0%
Value 1	2.5%	2.5%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%	20.0%



**Table 9** Department of Pedagogy – *claims VII-XI*

<i>Claim</i>	VII <i>art</i>	VIII <i>politics</i>	IX <i>personal life</i>	X <i>at all faculties</i>	XI <i>in all schools</i>
<i>Average value</i>	3.3	4.33	3.95	3.98	4.43
<i>Value 4 or 5</i>	45.0%	90.0%	72.5%	75.0%	90.0%
<i>Value 5</i>	22.5%	45.0%	40.0%	42.5%	62.5%
<i>Value 4</i>	22.5%	45.0%	32.5%	32.5%	27.5%
<i>Value 3</i>	30.0%	7.5%	12.5%	12.5%	2.5%
<i>Value 2</i>	12.5%	2.5%	12.5%	5.0%	5.0%
<i>Value 1</i>	12.5%	0.0%	2.5%	7.5%	2.5%

### 3.4. Results for the Faculty of Economics students

And finally, the results for the students of the Faculty of Economics in Niš that depict their levels of agreement with claims from the questionnaire are given in *Table 10* and *Table 11*.

**Table 10:** Faculty of Economics – *claims I-VI*

<i>Claim</i>	I <i>profession</i>	II <i>general knowledge</i>	III <i>world views</i>	IV <i>education</i>	V <i>science</i>	VI <i>religion</i>
<i>Average value</i>	3.24	4.09	3.29	3.62	3.5	3.03
<i>Value 4 or 5</i>	47.1%	82.3%	55.9%	58.8%	50%	44.1%
<i>Value 5</i>	17.7%	44.2%	20.6%	23.5%	26.5%	23.5%
<i>Value 4</i>	29.4%	38.1%	35.3%	35.3%	23.5%	20.6%
<i>Value 3</i>	26.5%	5.9%	11.8%	26.5%	29.4%	20.6%
<i>Value 2</i>	11.8%	5.9%	17.6%	8.8%	14.7%	5.9%
<i>Value 1</i>	14.7%	5.9%	14.7%	5.9%	5.9%	29.4%

**Table 11** Faculty of Economics – *claims VII-XI*

<i>Claim</i>	VII <i>art</i>	VIII <i>politics</i>	IX <i>personal life</i>	X <i>at all faculties</i>	XI <i>in all schools</i>
<i>Average value</i>	3.56	4.09	3.21	3.68	4.03
<i>Value 4 or 5</i>	52.9%	73.5%	52.9%	61.8%	73.5%
<i>Value 5</i>	35.3%	47.1%	14.7%	29.4%	47.1%
<i>Value 4</i>	17.6%	26.4%	38.2%	32.4%	26.4%
<i>Value 3</i>	26.5%	14.7%	14.7%	17.6%	14.7%
<i>Value 2</i>	8.8%	11.8%	17.6%	17.6%	5.9%
<i>Value 1</i>	11.8%	0.0%	14.7%	2.9%	5.9%

In the next chapter, we will offer some further analyses and insights, and look for a plausible interpretation of these results.

#### 4. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

We will start by analyzing the results concerning the students from the Faculty of Economics in Niš.

From these results, it is evident that the average extent of agreement related to almost all claims is slightly lower than the average value of general results as well as the results for the Faculty of Education students and the students of pedagogy, but still follows the general trend of positive attitudes towards investigated claims. Exceptions are *claims VI* and *VII*, where the average grade is slightly higher than the average grade given by the pedagogy students. Regarding *claim VI* (views on religion), the average grade for students of economics is 3.03 (44.1% of them agreed to some extent with the claim, i.e. rate it with 4 or 5), and for students of pedagogy the average value is 2.85 (30% rate it with 4 or 5). It is similar with the *claim VII* (views on art). Regarding this claim, the average grade for the students of economics is 3.56 (52.9% rated with 4 or 5) and for students of pedagogy is 3.3 (45% answered with 4 or 5).

The reasons for the slightly higher percentage of students with positive attitudes towards *claims VI* and *VII* at the Faculty of Economics may be the fact that philosophy is the only course in their curriculum that deals at least a little phenomenologically with topics from art and religion. While the topics of science and society are present within the content of other courses from their curriculum, the same does not hold for the topics of religion and art. However, it should be noted that even with a slightly higher percentage of positive answers in relation to students of pedagogy, the attitudes of students of economics towards *claim VI* still do not exceed 50% of affirmative answers.

It is important to notice (*Table 10* and *11*) that *claims II, VIII, and XI* have the highest average score – which is over 4. Also, it should be emphasized that regarding *claim XI* – whether philosophy is needed by all high schools, including vocational high schools – the average grade is 4.03, and the percentage of positive ratings is 73.5%.

With the exception of *claim VI* and *claim I* (the importance of philosophy for the profession), all questions have over 50% affirmative answers. These include investigated *claims II, III, IV, V, VII, VIII, IX, X, and XI*, which concern broader education, changes in their worldview, education, science, art, society, and the impact on personal life.

From the above results, it can be inferred that students of economics perceived philosophical education primarily as a form of general education (which addresses the questions of religion, art, education, science, society, politics, and personal life) and therefore highly recommend philosophy as an obligatory subject at university and in high school. It should be noted here that the percentage of recommendations for the university level is slightly lower (61.8%), than the percentage for high schools (73.5%).

What is also apparent from these results is that students of economics do not agree in a high percentage that philosophy course taught to them is important for their profession. Namely, only 47.1% of students thought that philosophy course was useful for their profession (average rating: 3.24). These results are lower than those given in the overall results of our research (which stand at 76.8% and 3.99 – for the same two categories).

The reasons for these attitudes can probably be found in the curriculum of the Faculty of Economics in Niš, as well as in the content of the *Philosophy of economics* course. Namely, general education subjects are rarely represented at this faculty, so this subject, which was inherited from the previous curriculum, in its holistic approach and critical methodology differs significantly from the other subjects and their content. On the other

hand, the content of the given philosophy course is such that more than half of the topics are dedicated to the introduction to philosophy and history of philosophy, and only a smaller part of the topics is from the philosophy of economics. This probably gave students the impression that this course does not significantly benefit their profession (in the narrow sense)<sup>6</sup>.

In what follows, we will analyze the results of research related to two subgroups of students: students of the Faculty of Education in Vranje and students of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš.

According to the results of our research, students of the Faculty of Education in Vranje and the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš highly value the importance of philosophy for their profession, as well as for their general education. Namely, 76.8% of students from all three faculties *agree* (grade 4) or *strongly agree* (grade 5) that attending a philosophy course is useful for their profession (*claim I*), with an average grade of 4.18 among students of the Faculty of Education, and 4.28 among students of pedagogy. Only 10% of students from all three faculties consider philosophy useless for their profession (i.e. rate the claim with 1 or 2). We consider this result, especially bearing in mind considering the content of these courses, to be extremely important, as it confirms our expectation that philosophy courses can be highly beneficial to non-philosophy students for better understanding of the special science they are engaged in, and additionally for better understanding of their vocation.

The results are even better for *claim II*. Namely, 90.7% of students from all three faculties mostly or completely agreed that the philosophy course was important for their wider education, with an average grade being 4.48 for students of the Faculty of Education, and 4.55 for students of pedagogy. Only 2.7% of all participants consider philosophy useless for their general education (i.e. had given the grade 1 or 2). We believe, these results undoubtedly confirm the exceptional importance of philosophy courses for the general education of students at all non-philosophy faculties and departments.

If we have in mind the content of philosophy courses at the Faculty of Education in Vranje and the Department of Pedagogy, we consider extremely important the results concerning *claim IV*. Namely, 76.2% of students from all three faculties generally or completely agree that attending the given philosophy course influenced their general understanding of education and upbringing, with the average grade being 4.19 among students at the Faculty of Education, and 4.13 among students from the Department of Pedagogy. Only 7.3% of students from all three faculties consider philosophy useless for their general understanding of education and upbringing, while 14.5% of them do not have an opinion on this issue. Similar to the answers to the first question, it is shown here that the point or the purpose of teaching philosophical subjects today should not be seen exclusively in their impact on the general education of students, but that it makes sense to adapt programs in philosophical subjects to the specific requirements of the faculty or department where these courses are being taught.

We have found an interesting effect that the *time distance* – or rather: looking back at the philosophy courses with more life experience and educational maturity – has on the students' attitudes. As evident in *Tables 6* and *7*, almost all ratings and percentages are higher for the

---

<sup>6</sup> The reason for this conception of the course is that the subject teacher thought that it would be difficult for students of economics to follow topics related to the philosophy of economy unless they get acquainted with the basics of philosophy in general.

subgroup of students who have attended given philosophical course some time ago. Apparently, with time passing, one's appreciation of the importance and impact of philosophy predominantly grows.

In the courses in question, the topic of education and upbringing is very closely related to the political nature of man and current social issues, which we expected to be relevant for the students' attitudes towards *claim VIII*. By far the most, as many as 82.8% of students from all three faculties generally or strongly agreed the philosophy course was useful for their better understanding of society and politics, with the average score being 4.25 among students of the Faculty of Education and 4.33 among students of pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy. Only 4% of students from all three faculties consider philosophy useless for their better understanding of society and politics (while 13.2% are neutral). These given results indicate the exceptional significance of philosophical education in nurturing and cultivating critical reflection on social and political topics, which is thought to be a very important dimension of modern university education since the founding of the first free university in Berlin in 1810, and which is, unfortunately, being neglected today.

In light of the above, we especially want to emphasize the students' attitudes towards *claim X*. Namely, a very high percentage of respondents, 77.5% of all students generally or strongly agree that philosophy is needed at all faculties and educational profiles (average grade: 4.09). Only 9.9% of students from all three faculties consider philosophy unnecessary at non-philosophy faculties (12.6% are neutral). The results presented here give us strong arguments to insist in the public space on a greater presence of philosophical courses at universities in Serbia.

We also consider the attitudes towards *claim XI* to be especially important for the current position of philosophy in high school education in Serbia. Namely, a significantly high percentage of respondents, 79.5% of all students, generally or strongly agree (with only 8.7% disagreeing) that philosophy courses are needed in all high schools (including vocational high schools) in Serbia, with an average grade being 4.17. The results are even better if we consider those students who have previously had high school courses in philosophy and logic. As shown in *Table 3*, the effect of high school exposure to philosophy and logic is *evident*, with even 85.2% of those students agreeing with *claim XI* (average rating 4.3). In contrast, the relevant results for students without high school philosophy (and logic) stand at: 70.3% and 3.98.

In the context of contemporary negative trends concerning the position of philosophy as a high school subject, these latest results seem particularly encouraging and give us the right to demand a stronger approach in public space in the fight for the better status of philosophy within the educational system of Serbia.

**Acknowledgement:** *The research had been conducted within the project Philosophical courses at the high school and university level of education: practical and theoretical questions (project number: 100/1-10-10-01). The project was supported and financed by the Faculty of Philosophy (University of Niš) and undertaken by the Department of philosophy during the 2020/21 academic year.*

#### REFERENCES

- Bialystok, L., Norris, T., & Pinto, L. E. (2019). Teaching and learning philosophy in Ontario high schools. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 51(5), 678-697.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2008). *Research Methods in Education* (6th ed.). Routledge.
- Gardner, H. (2018, July 9). Why We Should Require All Students to Take 2 Philosophy Courses. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/why-we-should-require-all-students-to-take-2-philosophy-courses>
- Likert, R. (1932). *A Technique for the Measurement of Attitudes*. Columbia University Press.
- Pohoatǎ, G. (2017). Why Study Philosophy at the Faculty of Law? *Euromentor Journal, Bucharest*, VII(2), 43-53.
- Ristić Gorgiev, S., & Blagojević, B. (2021). Uticaj kurseva iz filozofije na stavove studenata. *Godišnjak za filozofiju*, 3(1), 9-12.
- Schwitzgebel, E. (2015, July 14). Cheeseburger ethics. *Aeon*. <https://aeon.co/essays/how-often-do-ethics-professors-call-their-mothers>
- Sesardić, N. (2017, July 1). Study Philosophy to Improve Thinking – A Case of False Advertising? *Quillette*. <https://quillette.com/2017/07/01/study-philosophy-improve-thinking-case-false-advertising/>
- Van Norden, B. (2015, March 5). Can Studying Philosophy Make You a Better Person? *Philosophy Talk*. <https://www.philosophytalk.org/blog/can-studying-philosophy-make-you-better-person>

### VREDNOST I ZNAČAJ NASTAVE FILOZOFIJE NA NEMATIČNIM STUDIJAMA: POGLED IZ STUDENTSKE PERSPEKTIVE

*Da li studenti sa drugih fakulteta i departmana smatraju filozofiju važnom za svoje obrazovanje? U ovom tekstu izlažemo rezultate empirijskog istraživanja koje smo sproveli kako bismo odgovorili na ovo pitanje. Istraživanje je obuhvatalo 151 ispitanika i baziralo se na onlajn upitniku. Naš pristup je bio usmeren na studentsku evaluaciju uloge i značaja filozofskih kurseva koje su pohađali. Rezultati ukazuju na to da studenti visoko vrednuju filozofiju ne samo kao korisnu za svoje opšte već i profesionalno obrazovanje. Prema nama, ovi rezultati pružaju jake argumente za suprotstavljanje trendu umanjivanja i sklanjanja filozofskog obrazovanja iz srednjih škola i fakulteta u Republici Srbiji.*

Ključne reči: *filozofija, obrazovanje, studijski program, studentski stavovi, obrazovni sistem Srbije*