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## ***What is the purpose of teaching philosophy at other academic courses?***

### **Extended summary**

What is the role and value of philosophy courses within different university curriculums? That question has become particularly pressing with the current trend of decline and reduction of philosophical education in high schools and universities of the Republic of Serbia. In this paper, we address this question from the students' perspective. More precisely, the article presents the second part of the study on how non-philosophy students (i.e., students from different study programs) perceive the role, contribution, and value of philosophical education (the first part of the study is published in Dimić et al. (2021)). The focus of this inquiry was on two research questions: (1) what are (according to students) the main contribution and the critical competencies of philosophical education, and (2) what changes in the conception of the philosophy courses would make them more relevant and valuable for their education. The study aims to bring some new (empirically informed) arguments in the debate on the importance of philosophical education and to shed light and give more insights into a preferred (or more suitable) conception of philosophy courses for non-philosophy students. The study was conducted using an online questionnaire. It included 151 participants – all students at the University of Niš (Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Education, and Faculty of Philosophy) – who were asked two (open) questions closely tied to our research questions. The collected data were analyzed qualitatively using the thematic analysis method (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Par-

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ticipants' answers were initially coded line-by-line, then grouped into inductively formed categories. They were then presented in the results with their frequencies, conditions of occurrences, mutual relations, relations to some abstract and theoretical concepts, etc. The results strongly support the claim that students consider philosophy courses to be an essential and valuable part of their education. When asked about the main contribution philosophy courses had had in their education, participants frequently cited improvements in critical thinking, problem analyzing and problem-solving, broadening perspective, learning how to learn, improving communication skills, and so on. All these are skills among (or closely related to) internationally recognized key competencies for lifelong learning (European Commission, 2019), which must be acknowledged as a strong argument in favor of the importance of philosophical education. In addition, participants see philosophical education not only as a form of general knowledge (a widespread conception even among philosophers) but, in contrast, more often perceive it as highly relevant and valuable for their specialization and complementary to their vocational knowledge. These results are even more highlighted in the students' responses to the second question from the inquiry regarding the ways to make philosophy courses more suitable and valuable to them. Participants' responses typically group around suggestions that those courses should be more practical, engaging, closely tied to their study field, and so on. Consequently, we consider those results to be firmly in favor of philosophy courses focused on particular disciplines and closely related to the field of study they are part of. With some significant limitations that should be considered (firstly and most importantly, that our sample was not representative), this study bears some implications for future educational policy debates by offering empirically informed arguments on the value and importance of philosophical education. Similarly, it has some suggestions for organizing philosophical courses to make them even more valuable and relevant for non-philosophy students.

**Keywords:** philosophical education, critical thinking, general education, curriculum, thematic analysis

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