

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PHILOSOPHICAL COURSES SYLLABY IN MACEDONIAN AND CROATIAN HIGH SCHOOLS

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Abstract

The text, as part of a broader analysis within the University project “Theoretical and practical update of the syllabi for the philosophical subjects (philosophy, ethics, logic, aesthetics) for high-schools” by the Institute for philosophy at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje, offers a comparative study of the high school philosophical courses syllabi in Macedonia and in Croatia. The main points of focus are the didactical objectives and outlined contents of the subjects, set by the syllabi in both countries. The general data from the preliminary comparison shows similarities in the presence of courses, with certain differences in the status of the subjects and in the number of years that they get taken. The didactical goals are similar in both countries, as philosophical subjects are expected to teach students how to properly think, how to use reason and arguments, how to substantiate claims, carefully communicate, employ value-thinking, extend compassion and solidarity, and learn to position themselves in society and in the world. The major difference, although this is not amiss in the Macedonian system, is the insistence, across all three subjects in the Croatian system, on the formation of informed, engaged, active and democratic citizens, aware of their own identity and the duties and responsibilities it carries, capable of cooperation in all societal roles. The approach to the study of philosophical topics differs – the Croatian is through problems (core philosophical problems, or topics of inquiry, tackled non-chronologically), and the Macedonian is through a historical overview of emergence of issues, authors, tendencies in philosophy (except in the elective Philosophy course, where the broad outline of the course is quite close to the Croatian). The preliminary impressions of the study of both systems lead to the suggestion that it is beneficiary to have Philosophy with both a historical and a problematic approach, that Logic, due to the competencies it gives to students, should be obligatory in Macedonia, and Ethics should be taken for three or even four years, and that Aesthetics should be expanded to all art schools in Macedonia.

Key words: philosophical courses, high school, objectives, contents, comparison

Introduction

The Institute of Philosophy at Faculty of Philosophy at the University “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” – Skopje in 2018 developed the project “Theoretical and practical update of the syllabi for the philosophical subjects (philosophy, ethics, logic, aesthetics) for high-schools” under the auspices of the University’s funds for scientific research projects for the academic year 2017/2018. One of the objectives of the project is a comparative analysis of the programs of the philosophical subjects in the secondary schools in the countries of the region (Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Bulgaria), with an emphasis on the contents of the course programs, their objectives, goals, and didactic methods, in order to receive information on the ways in which the syllabi for these subjects could be upgraded in the Macedonian education system.

This paper outlines the general information about the subjects, the objectives and goals of the subjects, and the specifics of the contents in the subjects Philosophy, Ethics, Logic, and Aesthetics in the Republic of Macedonia and in the Republic of Croatia, in an attempt to provide a preliminary overview of the similarities and differences in the approaches to teaching these subjects. The program of the Republic of Croatia was selected for this review because of the positioning of the subjects within the high school curriculum, similar to the one in Macedonia (with a significant difference in the inclusion and representation of Ethics), as well as the general impression that these syllabi are most adapted to contemporary issues, and are the most context-sensitive.

General information about the subjects

The subject Philosophy in the Republic of Macedonia is taught in secondary schools as a compulsory subject in gymnasiums in the fourth year with 3 hours per week (93 hours per year)¹, and in art high schools in the fourth year with 2 hours per week (72 hours per year), as well as an elective subject in gymnasiums in the fourth year with 2 hours per week (66 hours per year). The compulsory subject follows a historical approach, and the elective subject follows a “problems-

¹ All the information below is taken from the subject programs set up as official documents on the websites of the institutions responsible for their creation and development (for the Republic of Macedonia - the Bureau for Development of Education, for the Republic of Croatia - the Ministry of Science and Education). To spare the text from too many references, the information about the relevant documents to which it is referenced is moved in the paper’s Bibliography.

based” approach. The subject Philosophy in the Republic of Croatia is taught in the fourth year as a compulsory and optional course, with at least 2 hours per week (at least 64 hours per year). It is, thus, noticeable that the total number of hours is higher in the system established in the Republic of Macedonia, and that the subject is discretely more represented (with the optional subject as distinct, and the mandatory status in the art high school education).

The subject Ethics is taught as an optional in gymnasiums in second and third year with 2 hours per week (72 hours per year) in R. Macedonia. In the Republic of Croatia the subject Ethics is taught in all high schools from the first to the fourth year, for the students who chose it (the other option is Religious education), represented by 1 hour per week. In the Republic of Croatia the students are obligated to choose between the subjects Ethics and Religious studies, and in this sense Ethics is a compulsory-elective subject. The students who choose it have one hour fewer than their Macedonian peers, who, on the other hand, have two years fewer (this would mean that there is a total difference of ten hours).

The subject Logic in the Republic of Macedonia is taught in the fourth year as an elective in gymnasiums, with 2 hours per week (66 hours per year). In the Republic of Croatia the subject Logic is part of the social-humanistic field of the curriculum, but also an integrative subject that necessarily enters into all subjects and an inter-subject topic. The subject has the status of a compulsory course in the gymnasium programs with 1 hour per week, with the possibility of electing it in some gymnasiums and economic elective modules.

The Subject Aesthetics in the Republic of Macedonia is taught as a compulsory in the fourth year of music high schools, represented with 3 hours per week (93 hours per year), and as a compulsory in the first year of vocational education (in the field of personal services, educational profile - cosmetic technician), represented with 2 hours per week (72 hours per year). In the Republic of Croatia this subject does not appear as a separate subject. However, a significant part of the subject Philosophy can be dedicated to Aesthetics, having in mind that the thematic units are organized in eight domains, three of which are compulsory, and a fourth domain is chosen between the units offered, of which one is on the topic Creation and Art.

Goals of the subjects

The goals of the subject Philosophy (as a compulsory and an elective subject) are divided into several groups: knowledge to be gained, critical thinking and argumentation to be developed, personal development and societal improvement to be achieved, and the skills that need to be acquired by studying of the subject. The goals are generally similar in both countries, although while the development of conscious and engaged citizens is important in the Macedonian program, it is obvious that in the Croatian program this is the main objective of the subject. The group of goals focused on knowledge to be gained through the subject Philosophy in the Macedonian system, show us that from the students it is expected to gain knowledge in the field of philosophical thought; knowledge of the development of human thought; knowledge about the world, worldviews, and the development of our civilization, while in the Croatian system it is expected to achieve a capability of reflection on the contents of other subjects. In the aspect of critical thinking and argumentation, the students in both systems are expected to be trained to be independent, to think creatively and develop their own independent critical thought; and to develop the ability for free dialogue based on rational arguments. The goals of personal development and improvement of society are achieved so that students get acquainted with the postulates of human freedom and the principles of the cultural development of human society; the students are also encouraged to better their consideration of the fundamental issues of man, human society and the world; and to tolerate the ideas and the lives of others, building an open, democratic civic awareness. In the Republic of Croatia it is crucial to acquire the knowledge and values necessary for the development of a conscious and responsible person and citizen who properly and freely thinks, acts and creates, by developing self-awareness, proactivity and creativity and by thinking about freedom, responsibility and duty, and thus by gaining awareness of one's own value and importance as a rational active member of the community.

The general skills that students should adopt according to the Macedonian system are the ability to analyze, synthesize, abstract and classify; to make correct conclusions; to devise and ask questions and to answer the questions in a reasoned manner; to identify and encourage a sound and tolerant dialogue; to be accurate and precise in oral and written expressions; and to be able to perform in public context; in accordance with the Croatian system, students are expected to communicate, to cooperate, and to properly use argumentation.

The goals of the subject Ethics for second and third year in the Republic of Macedonia are that the students get acquainted with the importance of morality in human life and the role of ethics in the maintenance and advancement of humanity; by acquiring great human moral values. The goal of the subject Ethics in secondary schools in the Republic Croatia is the adoption of the basic ethical knowledge needed to develop moral judgments and ethical arguments, that is, a general orientation in life. Therefore, the goals of the program *Sense and Orientation* (first year) are the nurturing and developing of creative thinking, argumentative speech and sensible action. The purpose of the program *Man within the collective* (second year) is to teach students to live and create within the community, while fully respecting the others. The main goal of program *Man in the World of Nature* (third year), is the introduction to bioethics - the current moral problems and dilemmas, and the need for creative dialogue and pluri-perspectivism. The sub-program *Morals-Ethics-History* (fourth year) aims to recapitulate the adopted ethical knowledge in order to develop a system suitable for free and responsible citizens, while the goal of the sub-program *Ethics - or for a reasoned living* is the students' acquaintance with the philosophical approach of morals, by encouraging confidence in the understanding and application of the fundamental and general ethical principles and values. In all of these programs it is again obvious that the focus is on the orientation, formation and promotion of engaged, free and reasonable citizens, aware of the importance of the individual in the society.

The goals of the subject Logic are the gaining of knowledge in the field of this discipline, the development of thinking skills, and the cultivation of intellectual virtues. Thus, from the aspect of gaining knowledge, the importance of the logical concepts, principles and procedures, and the character and structure of scientific knowledge and scientific systems are underlined; the logical aspects of the functioning of the language in the sciences and in everyday communication and the new trends in information-based communication are significant in the Republic of Macedonia; and in the Republic of Croatia, its main points are on the general criteria of valid thinking. The abilities/skills expected of students in the Republic of Macedonia are: forming an apparatus for acquiring, arranging and thinking about the plurality of individual data obtained from the study of other educational content, and in the Republic of Croatia they are: the development of the ability for autonomous judgment and decision-making, the active use of knowledge about the elements of valid opinion and critical-rational methods in structuring the knowledge and solving problems by encouraging auto-reflexivity in thinking and meta-cognitive

competences, as well as impartiality in judgments. It is important that the formation of reasonable engaged citizens is expected also from Logic - to equip the students in distinguishing the beliefs which are in line with the criteria of reason from those which are not, as a basic assumption for a thoughtful, responsible and active civic life, and for a better understanding of the scientific theories.

The goals of the subject Aesthetics for music high school education are concentrated on the need to direct students to gain knowledge about the essence, principles and meaning of art, the history of aesthetic ideas and values, the main aesthetic categories, and in general the universality of the art world and the importance of civilization values. In the aspect of skills or abilities, students are expected to analyze, synthesize, abstract and classify, and to think about the place of art in relation to other spheres of social life. Similar are the competences expected from the program *Art and creativity* within the subject Philosophy in the Republic of Croatia. The subject Aesthetics for Secondary vocational education for cosmetic technicians, besides the general goals of basic acquaintance with aesthetic categories and aesthetic values, has concrete goals for the proper application of aesthetics in practical work, and in understanding and, especially, creation of the beautiful.

Contents of the subjects

The main thematic parts of the mandatory subject Philosophy in the Republic of Macedonia are: 1. *Introductory knowledge of philosophy*, where the questions about the subject, the problems and the disciplines of philosophy are answered; 2. *Ancient Philosophy*, which encompasses the emergence of philosophy, and the systems of the early philosophers, explaining the process of the “birth of the sciences”; 3. *Renaissance Philosophy*, in which the basic settings of the monotheistic religion, the birth of Christianity, Byzantine philosophy, the Arab philosophy and the basics of scholasticism are exposed, and what is specific to this program, the influence of Byzantine philosophy on the formation of thought among the Macedonian Slavs and the significance of the Macedonian educators for the development of the world culture; 4. *Modern Philosophy*, in which the problems of Renaissance philosophy and science are addressed, as well as the basic philosophical directions in the new century (rationalism, empiricism, French enlightenment), with an emphasis on the new scientific encyclopaedic spirit and the importance of the aspirations of free thought; 5. *Contemporary Philosophy* and 6. *Philosophy of the 20th*

Century, which deal with the philosophical systems of German classic idealism, voluntarism, positivism, liberalism, Marxism, pragmatism, intuitionism, phenomenology, neo-positivism, cybernetics, philosophy of science, bioethics and ecology, postmodern philosophy, and the main intellectual streams and Macedonian thinkers in the last century.

The main thematic parts in the elective subject Philosophy are: 1. *Introduction to Philosophy*, which deals with the specifics of philosophical thinking; 2. *Essence and forms of existence (ontology)* - basic ontological categories; 3. *What and how do we know (gnoseology)* - the main questions about the sources, possibilities and limitations of knowledge; 4. *What is man (anthropology)* or the problems of the essence of man and the position of man in the world; 5. *The value of living (axiology)* - values, norms and actions; 6. *Morality and action (ethics)* - questions of morality and basic ethical positions; 7. *Man and creativity* - basic theories about art and the meaning of creation for the civilization; 8. *Philosophy and life (the conclusion)* - the significance of philosophy in designing human life.

The Croatian approach in the subject Philosophy is problem-based, represented by three compulsory domains - *Existence and the world*, in which the ontological problems, metaphysical positions, and philosophical approach to the problems are considered; *Cognition and knowledge*, where the main themes are the epistemological and logical-methodological categories and problems related to the theory of knowledge and cognition; and *Acting and orientation*, which includes issues of morality, ethics, human nature, the meaning of life, various ethical directions, and current moral problems. In addition to these, there is a fourth domain in which one of the offered topics is chosen, another choice being an extensive discussion of one of the mandatory domains (this means focusing on topics that are marked as elective within the mandatory domains, for which possible topics are given). The elective topics are: *Society and politics* (community, state, power, politics, economy, equality, social agreement, philosophical positions on the relationship between law and power, democracy and solidarity); *Creation and art* (aesthetic categories, artwork, art and beauty, etc.); *Science and explanation* (concepts and positions in philosophy of science, and generally in science discussions); *Mind and body* (philosophy of the mind, problems in the mind-body dichotomy, intentionality, artificial intelligence); *Language and meaning* (philosophical positions in discussions about the relationship between language and meaning, the origin of language skills and the relationship between language and thinking).

Regarding the approach, the similarity of the elective subject Philosophy with the Croatian Philosophy program is evident - the dedication of the main problems in philosophy, and thus of the categories and basic positions in the separate philosophical disciplines, as opposed to the chronological analysis of the philosophers and their teachings typical for the historical approach. In this sense, it can be surmised (if not outright claimed) that the stated goals focused on building free, informed citizens aware of their value and duties are more easily achieved by paying greater attention to the problems of the individual within the collective, the conception of one's own identity, freedom and responsibility, together with the subjective competence for reasoned opinion and public speaking.

The thematic units for the second year Ethics in the Republic of Macedonia are: 1. *Ethics and morality*; 2. *Man*; 3. *Life and morals*; 4. *Communication between people*; 5. *Ethical calculation*; 6. *Love*; 7. *Work ethics*; 8. *Health ethics* and 9. *Political ethics*; while the thematic units for the third year Ethics course are: 1. *Introduction to Ethics*; 2. *The value of life*; 3. *Constitutive elements of ethics*; 4. *Ethics and religion*; 5. *Modern ethical teachings*; 6. *Ethical priorities*; 7. *Bioethics*; 8. *Social ethics*; 9. *Economic ethics*, and again, 10. *Political ethics*. The main units for the subject Ethics in the first year (*Sense and orientation*) in the Republic of Croatia are: the search for identity; orientations and obstacles that arise in such a quest; the objectives of the quest; and responsibility for oneself, nature and others. Within the framework of the subject Ethics for the second year (*Man within the collective*), the units include: the placement of man in relationships with others; conflicts in relations; freedom and morality; state and society; and humanity and globalism. The third-year Ethics course (*Man in the World of Nature*), contains these teaching units: the place of man in the whole of life; bioethics as a response; ecology; biosciences, and medical bioethics. The teaching units that the sub-program *Moral-Ethics-History* in the subject Ethics for the fourth year covers are: morality and moral teachings; the pluralism of approaches to morality; peripheral positions in the history of ethics; freedom and responsibility, and the ethics and philosophy of history; the teaching units in the subprogram *Ethics - or for a reasoned living* are: morality and ethics; human experience and historical perspective; ethical judgment; ethical justification of moral action; and ethical arguments and ethical theories. An important feature in the Croatian system is the allocation of one entire year for bioethics problems, unlike the eight hours projected in the third year in the Macedonian system (and bioethics as a topic in the Philosophy of the 20th Century Philosophy),

thus achieving an appropriate orientation of the students within the contemporary society, and properly fostering bioethical sensibility and the general care for life.

The subject Logic in the Republic of Macedonia contains the following thematic units: 1. *Logic as a science* (the notions and subject matter of logic, rationality, the relation of logic to other scientific disciplines); 2. *Communication, thinking, language* (necessary prerequisites for communication, logical characteristics of thinking, thinking and language); 3. *Propositions* (sentences and propositions, types of propositions, methods for formulating propositions); 4. *Deduction and proofs of propositions* (the notion of argument, assumptions, logical consequence, truth and validity, types of arguments, logical fallacies); 5. *Logical prerequisites for the creation of a scientific system* (the notion of science, scientific knowledge, scientific systems and laws, evidence, types of proofs). In the Republic of Croatia, the subject Logic covers the following thematic units: 1. *Ordinary language and languages of logic* (Venn diagrams, a network, a scale and a pyramid of terms, translation of the statements from the ordinary language into the language of the propositional logic and the first-order predicate logic and vice versa); 2. *Thinking, world and scientific knowledge* (definition, division, hypothesis, facts, induction, analogy, valuation of a proposition with regard to a certain state of affairs, propositional logic, predicate logic, logical elements of scientific methodology); 3. *Logical properties and relations* (logical consequence, equivalence, natural deduction, modus ponens, modus tollens, hypothetical syllogism, disjunctive syllogism, De Morgan rules); and 4. *Argumentation and critical thinking* (argumentation structure, fallacies in argumentation). From the thematic units represented in the programs of both countries, it can be noted that they share the integral approach to logical issues, in the sense that in addition to the formal-logical contents they also treat the related epistemological, methodological and linguistic issues. However, it can be noticed that in the Croatian program there is a more extensive and detailed treatment of the problems of contemporary symbolic logic, especially in the thematic parts of the *Ordinary Language and the languages of logic* and *Logical properties and relations*.

The subject Aesthetics for music high school education in the Republic of Macedonia includes the following topics: *What is art?; The history of aesthetic ideas; Art as communication; Aesthetic values; Art work; The characteristics of the arts; The uniqueness of artistic genres; The role of the artist; Taste; The role of art in contemporary society*. The domain *Art and creativity* within the subject Philosophy in the Republic of Croatia, as was mentioned,

includes the following thematic units: the notion of aesthetics, aesthetic categories; artwork; definitions of the art and criteria of the beautiful; philosophical attitudes about the relationship between art and creativity, the differences between art and non-art, etc.

Conclusion

In this text the general information on the corpus of philosophical subjects in the Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Croatia were briefly outlined, the similarities and differences in the goals of the courses were noted, and a short overview of the main thematic sections of the contents was summarized.

It was shown that the subject Philosophy appears to be compulsory and optional in the fourth year in the Republic of Macedonia, and mandatory in the Republic of Croatia; the subject Ethics is an elective in the second and third year in the Republic of Macedonia and compulsory-elective in four years of secondary education in the Republic of Croatia; the subject Logic is an elective in high school education (gymnasiums) in the Republic of Macedonia, and compulsory in high school education in the Republic of Croatia; and the subject Aesthetics is compulsory in the music high school education in the Republic of Macedonia (and a variant of Applied Aesthetics in Vocational cosmetics education), and as non-existing as a separate subject in Croatia, represented only through an optional domain within the subject Philosophy.

An obvious difference between the education system in the Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Croatia in the way of studying the corpus of philosophical subjects is the dominance of the problem-based approach in the Croatian system and its insistence on the need for the formation of reasonable, responsible citizens, aware of their position in the community and in life. The aims of the subject Philosophy, as well as the subject Ethics in both countries, and of subject Logic in the Republic of Croatia, are largely directed at empowering students for reasoning, argumentative thinking and communication, and locating man in the world through the concepts of philosophy. The Croatian system insists, more than the Macedonian, on the importance of empowering active and informed, responsible, free and tolerant citizens.

In the aspect of projected contents of the subjects, the Croatian programs in Philosophy and Ethics cover more contemporary issues and problems than the Macedonian ones. The Philosophy program in the Republic of Macedonia treats topics from the twentieth century and does not get into the contemporary problems, while in the Croatian program, there is a strong insistence on locating, considering, and philosophical solving of the problems of the modern world (technology, ecology), of the society (democracy, justice, solidarity, respect for others), and of personal development (identity, belonging, responsibility, bioethical sensibility, tolerance). The elective course Philosophy in the Republic of

Macedonia shares the problem-based approach with the subject Philosophy in the Republic of Croatia, where and option to select a topic that would be elaborated during the year is available. The freedom of choice of the topic fully corresponds with the nature of the subject, but with the current context of the Macedonian educational system, allowing this possibility may cause a series of didactical and organizational issues. The presence of the subject Ethics in four years of secondary education in the Republic of Croatia allows a broad introduction of ethical issues, and to systematically and coherently develop knowledge of ethical attitudes, categories and problems, applying to contemporary human, world and life problems. The presence of Ethics with these goals and contents in R. Macedonia offers some of these achievements, which can lead to a possible increase in the number of years in which Ethics should be studied in the Republic of Macedonia.

The comparison of the programs of the subject Logic in Macedonia and Croatia has shown that they largely coincide in the attempts to systematically and coherently include the integrality of the logical field and the essential manifestations of human rationality. Both programs aim to develop and advance students' abilities for sustained, consistent, critical and responsible thinking and communication, both in an individual and in a social sense. Although in both programs the tendency to follow modern logical trends is noticeable, however, the presence of formal logic contents – regarding both propositional and predicate logic - takes a proportionally larger part in the Croatian program, requiring from the students to learn certain logical topics, which, in the Macedonian educational context, only appear on a university level. Further analyses should show the effects of such a trend and whether it leads to the expected results. In any case, due to the results achieved in Logic, and the general competences which students acquire, the subject should also be obligatory in the Republic of Macedonia.

The presence of the subject Aesthetics in the Macedonian system shows a certain advantage in comparison to the Croatian system, but there is room for improvement: this subject should be introduced also in the fine arts high school education.

In both systems of education, the essential importance of philosophy for personal growth and the building of reasonable individuals capable of analyzing and synthesizing is shown, the nourishment of individuals who can think freely and creatively, who are able to orient themselves in the domain of values, distinguishing truth and validity from untruth, and are able to position themselves as individuals in the community, in society, in the world and in life, constantly trying to achieve goodness and self-reflection. In the case of possible changes to the Macedonian programs of these subjects, the real possibilities for achieving the intended objectives through the planned contents must be taken into account. The nature of this corpus of subjects is such that it enables the setting of high cognitive, personal and social goals, but care must be taken, through well thought-out and appropriately implemented thematic units, to create a balance between the desired goals and what can truly be achieved.

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