

## High School Philosophy Teachers' Use of Textbooks: Critical Thinking or Teaching to the Text?

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### Abstract

Ontario is the only North American, English-speaking jurisdiction to include philosophy in secondary schools. In this first study to examine Ontario high school philosophy courses, we investigated what sorts of textbooks teachers used, how they used them, and the reasons for their pedagogical choices when using textbooks. Despite claims that philosophy promotes critical thinking, an online survey of 53 high school philosophy teachers and personal interviews with a subset of 14 revealed their use of textbooks did not match this ideal. Teachers cited insecurities with knowledge, a lack of pedagogical training, their own perception that students were incapable of challenging texts, and pressure to meet provincial curriculum policy demands as factors that contributed to their pedagogical choices.

Ontario is the only North American jurisdiction to include philosophy as part of its secondary school curriculum. Since no empirical investigation of the content and structure of Ontario high school philosophy courses had yet been conducted, we engaged in research to investigate high school philosophy teachers' use of textbooks: what sorts of textbooks they used, how they used them, and why they selected various approaches to textbook use. As a discipline, philosophy is thought to be unique in its emphasis on critical thinking (Ayim, 1980; Ministry of Education, 2000), so our focus in this research was to explore whether widespread use of textbooks supported or mitigated that aim. Moreover, despite pervasive textbook use in schools across subject disciplines, little empirical investigation on how they are used exists. Our research provides insight into these gaps by offering a descriptive account of Ontario high school philosophy teachers' textbook practices and a base for further investigation into textbook use in general.

Ontario's two philosophy courses, *Philosophy: Questions and Theories* in Grade 12 and *Philosophy: The Big Questions* in Grade 11 are guided by Ministry of Education

policy documents which outline learner outcomes. If it is the case that “Philosophy trains students in critical and logical thinking” (Ministry of Education, 2000, p. 111), we would expect that a high school philosophy teacher would encourage students to engage in critical inquiry when interacting with textbooks, contributing to the cultivation of habits of mind consistent with philosophical thought and practice. However, Blair’s (2009) analysis of the high school philosophy curriculum policy concluded that the courses “certainly aim to convey some of the elements of critical thinking abilities, but they are too narrow” (p. 270) to fully ensure critical thinking is taught if teachers are to follow the policy. In this article, we present findings specifically related to high school philosophy teachers’ textbook use. Through online survey responses and semi-structured interviews with teachers, our research analyzes teachers’ accounts of their textbook use in the classroom, and describes individual and systemic factors that affect the ways in which our sample uses textbooks.

### Conceptual Framework

In order to situate our understanding of how high school philosophy teachers use textbooks, we apply Apple and Christian-Smith’s (1991) framework to describe the nature of the interaction between the reader and the text. This framework identifies three ways that readers interact with texts: *dominated*, *negotiated*, and *oppositional*. Though these three approaches are applicable to any text, here we consider them specifically as they relate to textbooks. Applying this framework to our analysis offers a means to situate teachers’ approaches to textbook use within a continuum, and thus adds richness to our analysis of data on the pedagogical methods (not course content) teachers employ.

In the *dominated* approach, the readers accept the message at face value. In a classroom, this involves positioning information in the text as “fact” and not seeking alternate perspectives nor questioning its content or its underlying assumptions within the selective tradition that guides the textbook. This reduces students’ readings of texts to knowledge acquisition and comprehension. In the *negotiated* approach, the readers may dispute portions of the text, but accept the overall interpretations presented as valid or true, with the focus remaining on knowledge and comprehension rather than thinking and inquiry. Finally, in the *oppositional* approach, the readers reposition themselves in relation to the text, and challenge its content, interpretation or the perspective(s) it employs or presupposes. In a classroom, this involves questioning, or encouraging students to question, overt and hidden messages in the text, and seeking out alternative conceptions and information (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991).

Within this framework, we suggest that the oppositional approach is the most ideal because it is congruent with disciplined philosophical habit and the cultivation of critical thinking. Many education scholars have eloquently and thoroughly addressed justifications for critical thinking as an educational ideal (Fisher & Scriven, 1997; Hare,

1998; Siegel, 1988). Hare (1998) summarized three justifications for critical thinking as a central aim of education. The ethical justification demands that the student be “treated with the respect due to someone capable of growing into an autonomous adult with a distinctive point of view” (Hare, 1998, p. 47). The pragmatic justification requires that critical thinking be central in order to prepare students for other capacities (e.g., further education). Finally, the intellectual justification requires that teachers “wean students away from the mere acceptance of beliefs which others tell them are true, and encourage them to try and assess the credentials of those who present themselves as experts” (Hare, 1998, p. 48). By engaging in an oppositional reading of an official textbook, students apply and cultivate critical thinking skills and dispositions through questioning and analyzing. Thus, an oppositional approach to textbooks would engage students in the sort of inquiry consistent with critical thinking ideals.

### **Literature Review: Practice in Philosophy Classrooms**

Despite numerous and often strong claims about the benefits of studying philosophy, very little empirical study has been conducted to describe pedagogies in philosophy courses. An extensive literature review revealed that philosophy at the high school level has not been researched or reported. The reason for this may be that Ontario is the only major Anglophone political jurisdiction to offer philosophy courses for credit at the high school level. By contrast, at the university level we might expect to find studies about philosophy in the curriculum, since it has historically played such a central role in the conception of liberal arts programs (Altman, 2004). However, only two studies examined philosophical education—one published 28 years ago (Annis & Annis, 1979) and the other only in the very limited sense of training in symbolic logic (Leighton, 2006). Given the very common belief that philosophy is an area of study best reserved for adults, promoted historically most strongly by Plato himself in *The Republic*, (Plato, trans. 1906) it is somewhat ironic that, in comparison to the lack of attention received at the high school and university levels, there has been considerable research on teaching philosophy to young children. This seems due almost exclusively to the worldwide “Philosophy for Children” movement started and actively promoted by Matthew Lipman and his colleagues since the early 1970s (García-Moriyón, Rebollo, & Colom, 2005). In addition to this research which confirms the ability of students to engage in philosophical inquiry, developmental psychologists see intellectual growth in adolescence in terms of qualitative changes in the direction of “advanced forms and levels of thinking, reasoning and rationality” (Moshman, 2005, p. 1). In fact, three prominent psychologists (Moshman, 2005; Stanovich, 2001; Sternberg, 2001) explicitly linked their domain of study to mainstream philosophical conceptions. This evidence suggests that adolescent students are indeed capable of oppositional reading as a component of higher-order cognition, albeit with the guidance and encouragement of their teachers.

Similarly, the literature on ways in which textbooks are used in classrooms is scant, with the exception of a few studies about the frequency of their use (Dove, 1998; Moulton, 1994; Schug, Weston, & Enochs, 1997; Zahorik, 1991), and some content analysis (Penney, Norris, Phillips, & Clark, 2003; Weinstein & Broda, 2005). Textbooks have been identified as “the primary means of communicating information and instruction to students” (Dove, 1998, p. 24) across subject areas, including philosophy. The literature cited above suggests that between 60% and 95% of classroom instruction and activity is textbook-driven.

Insight into teachers’ use of textbooks is of utmost importance because, in a classroom context, both teachers and students are readers of texts. More importantly, teachers play a role in guiding students’ reading of texts. In doing so, teachers have the opportunity to engage students in the sorts of critical inquiry consistent with philosophical practice through oppositional approaches to textbook reading. Our concern in this research is pedagogical methods used to read textbooks – not with textbook content itself. This is because:

We cannot assume that what is “in” the text is actually taught. Nor can we assume that what is taught is actually learned. Teachers have a long history of mediating and transforming text material when they employ it in classrooms. Students bring their own classed, raced, and gendered biographies with them as well. They, too, accept, reinterpret, and reject what counts as legitimate knowledge selectively. (Apple & Bascom, 1992, p. 10)

As such, textbooks are open to multiple readings, depending upon the teacher, reader, and approach to making sense of the content. This is particularly salient to high school philosophy course aims, and especially since, according to Ontario’s Ministry of Education (2000, p. 111), “Philosophy trains students in critical and logical thinking.” If this is the case, we would expect that a high school philosophy teacher would encourage students to engage in critical inquiry when interacting with textbooks.

If we accept critical thinking as a valuable and valid educational aim, central to philosophical practice, then a failure to implement an oppositional approach in handling texts may defeat that goal, transforming teaching into a kind of indoctrination that is inconsistent with critical thinking. Teaching can amount to indoctrination if it results in a certain kind of product or outcome (Lammi, 1997). When the product is closed-mindedness, then the process of teaching (through action or inaction) amounts to indoctrination (Pinto, 2007). The dominated approach may be considered indoctrinative because it takes information contained in texts at face value. Without critical inquiry into the validity of claims, values, and information, this results in blind acceptance of content. Similarly, the negotiated approach, which represents the middle ground of interaction with texts, also lends itself to indoctrination, because portions of the text are taken at face value and not questioned or approached critically. If students simply accept

information and concepts without “actively inquiring into their rational status” (Siegel, 1988, p. 89) – a necessary but not sufficient condition for indoctrination – as they will if they take a dominated or possibly negotiated approach to the text, they are reading without considering whether that content is accurate or not. This is problematic for two reasons. First, readers may be misinformed about issues which are misrepresented or not fully explored in texts. Though misinformation by itself does not equal indoctrination, inducing students to accept such information uncritically does at least border on indoctrination. Second, and most importantly, sustained interaction with textbooks in this fashion will likely lead students to carry on dominated and negotiated approaches beyond their schooling, resulting in, at worst, closed-minded graduates, and, at best, misinformed individuals (Lammi, 1997).

Thus, even if a textbook makes every effort to be inclusive and complete, and even if we assume it to be a fine textbook, it still remains that the textbook ought to be scrutinized using the oppositional approach to reading. As such, our concern is with the pedagogical methods teachers coordinate with their use of textbooks – not with textbook content itself. An oppositional analysis of texts encourages the critical spirit (Siegel, 1988) and cultivates important critical thinking skills and dispositions.

An oppositional reading of a textbook is characterized by several features in philosophy or any other classrooms. First, oppositional readers view a textbook as a whole, identifying whose or which perspectives are included and excluded. Second, readers unpack underlying assumptions implicit in the textbook. Third, readers investigate if competing conceptions of textbook topics exist, and if so what those competing conceptions are. Readers assess both sets of conceptions for their applicability, validity, and bias, and make informed decisions about which positions they agree or disagree, thereby applying criteria to their analysis and inquiring into their rational status. Each of these features is consistent with critical thinking practices and ideals. By contrast, an absence of such oppositional pedagogical approaches runs a risk of simply reproducing content delivery to knowledge and comprehension (rather than thinking and inquiry), and failing to consider or displaying an ignorance of pedagogies suited to critical thinking. In our view, this oppositional approach is congruent with learning to think and not limited to memorizing how others think; an approach which is analogous to the difference between getting students to memorize historical events and narratives on the one hand, and getting them to think historically (i.e., interpreting and evaluating accounts and sources) on the other.

Despite ample theoretical work in the literature about teaching critical thinking, though largely focused on post-secondary study, research indicates that the general population of teachers lack the preparation and resources to effectively teach for critical thinking (Blair, 2009; Case, 2009; Paul, Elder, & Bartell, 1997). This appears to be exacerbated by an environment in which high-stakes testing and teacher accountability result in a focus on skills and knowledge for test preparation at the expense of critical



thinking (Pithers & Soden, 2000). Many contemporary high-stakes standardized tests and teacher accountability models tend to focus on regurgitation of facts over meaning, with narrow conceptions of “correct” answers as evidence of student learning (Caputo-Pearl, 2001; Noddings, 2004; Vinson, Gibson, & Ross, 2001). Indeed, research has suggested that teachers who follow “guidelines in curriculum documents do not seem to teach thinking well” (Pithers & Soden, 2000, p. 247). Our research investigated the extent to which high school philosophy teachers use textbooks, with particular attention to the degree to which they incorporated critical thinking into students’ use of text-based resources.

## **Method**

The data presented here are part of a broader study into the methods, materials, and pedagogies of Ontario high school philosophy teachers. Since no empirical investigation of the content and structure of Ontario high school philosophy courses existed, we sought to find out how these teachers structure courses and engage students. We utilized a mixed-method approach combining an online survey in the first phase and in-depth semi-structured interviews in the second. Our interviews sought greater detail about teachers’ practices and perspectives. The interview protocol drew upon Apple and Christian-Smith’s (1991) framework for questions about textbook use.

## **Context**

After a significant lobbying effort on the part of a group supported by the Canadian Philosophical Association (Jopling, 2000), a philosophy course was introduced into the Ontario secondary school system in 1995, making Ontario the only North American jurisdiction to include philosophy in its official curriculum. The two philosophy courses were offered in approximately 300 schools between 1998 and 2005, with enrollments of approximately 29,000 and steady increases since their introduction. Though offered in the public school system for over a decade, philosophy was only recognized as a teachable qualification in 2008. Thus, those who taught philosophy prior to 2008 were certified in other subject areas.

## **Participants – Online Survey**

In the first phase of our research, we invited high school philosophy teachers to complete an online survey. Potential respondents were contacted in several ways, as no comprehensive list or directory of high school philosophy teachers existed. First, we invited previous research participants from a 2005 survey of the Ontario Philosophy Teachers’ Association (OPTA) who had expressed interest in participating in future research, and we encouraged them to forward the invitation to colleagues. Second, we sent direct invitations to our colleagues who teach philosophy in the high school system, encouraging them to forward the invitation to their professional colleagues. Third, we

directly contacted Ontario school board curriculum coordinators, requesting that they pass along the invitation to any teachers within their school boards. Finally, an invitation to participate was made at the 2006 OPTA conference plenary session.

A total of 53 high school philosophy teachers completed the online survey. While the actual number of philosophy teachers in Ontario is unknown, philosophy is offered in approximately 300 schools, suggesting a population of 300 or more teachers who may teach one or more sections of philosophy per year. We estimate that our respondents likely represented between 14% and 18% of the population at the time. The demographic profile of online survey respondents was:

- 39 (74%) were male.
- 28 (53%) taught at a public school, 20 (38%) taught at a Catholic school, 5 (9%) taught in private schools.
- The largest proportion ( $n = 24$ , 45%) taught in the greater Toronto area.
- The second largest proportion ( $n = 21$ , 40%) taught in Southern/South-western Ontario.
- The majority ( $n = 32$ , 60%) had taken university courses in philosophy, though it was not their major.
- Ten respondents (19%) reported having majored in philosophy during their undergraduate education.
- Most respondents ( $n = 37$ , 70%) reported that they were certified to teach subjects in the Humanities and Social Sciences (e.g., history, geography, individual and society, politics), the disciplinary category in which philosophy is situated in Ontario's curriculum policy documents.

## Participants – Interviews

Once we received the online survey responses, we contacted respondents who had expressed a desire to take part in a follow-up interview. We interviewed 14 high school philosophy teachers. Table 1 is a summary of interview participants' characteristics. The teachers interviewed provide a balance of teaching experience ranging from 2 to 18 years. Their formal schooling in philosophy ranged from self-taught to graduate degrees in philosophy. Their experience teaching high school philosophy was also varied, ranging from a teacher who taught only one section of Grade Eleven philosophy to those who taught multiple sections over many years.

Table 1

### *Interview Participant Profiles*

<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Years teaching</i>	<i>Teachable qualification</i>	<i>Philosophy schooling</i>	<b><i>Experience teaching high school philosophy</i></b>
David	1-10	English, math, social studies	Philosophy major	1 to 5 courses
Steven	1-10	English, history	Some undergraduate courses	1 to 5 courses
Philip	1-10	Physical education and Religion	Philosophy Minor	1 to 5 courses
Darius	1-10	Business, social sciences	Graduate degree in philosophy	1 to 5 courses
Veronica	1-10	English and French	Some undergraduate courses	1 to 5 courses
Henry	1-10	English	Philosophy major	1 to 5 courses
Hannah	1-10	Science	Some graduate courses	1 to 5 courses
Sharon	1-10	History, Individual and Society	Philosophy minor	1 to 5 courses
Theresa	1-10	English	Philosophy major	More than 5 courses
Karl	11-20	Social science	None	More than 5 courses
Alan	11-20	English and dramatic arts	Some undergraduate courses	More than 5 courses
Benjamin	11-20	Music	None	More than 5 courses
Jeremy	11-20	Social science, history	Some undergraduate courses	More than 5 courses
Joseph	> 20	English	Some undergraduate courses	More than 5 courses

### **Instruments**

Because the data for this article were collected for a larger study, both the online survey and interview protocol included questions well beyond the scope of this article.



The online survey contained 72 questions organized into three sections: background/demographics, textbook use, and pedagogical and instructional strategies (see Appendix A for the first two sections of the survey). For this article, we focused on results of the textbook use section.

The research team developed the survey based on a preliminary survey which had been conducted as a pilot in 2005. The online survey used in the study was first piloted on a small scale ( $n = 10$ ) and then revised as necessary by the research team. Only data from the final survey were used for this article.

The research team developed a separate interview protocol consisting of 17 questions. In addition to background data about participants, the questions addressed a number of themes: aims in teaching philosophy; textbook use; the role of conflict and controversy in philosophy courses; and the role of beliefs in teaching philosophy. This protocol was developed by the research team through an iterative process, reviewed by colleagues in the Department of Theory and Policy Studies, and revised. Research team members were then trained in its use.

## **Data Collection**

We utilized a mixed-method approach which combined an online survey in the first phase of data collection and in-depth semi-structured interviews in the second phase. The interviews identified teachers' practices and perspectives with greater detail. Our interview protocol drew upon Apple and Christian-Smith's (1991) framework for questions about teachers' textbook use. Our concern, therefore, was whether the teaching methods used are philosophically valid—and appropriate to thinking, rather than receiving and memorizing outcomes—in concert with a view that philosophy is a tradition of critique and inquiry and consistent with Apple and Christian-Smith's (1991) oppositional approach. Regardless of textbook content, an oppositional approach, as we argue above, is necessary to foster the sort of critical thinking necessary for philosophy.

**Online survey data collection.** Participants accessed the online survey through the High School Philosophy Project website. The website explained the terms of participation, and respondents clicked on a link to the survey if they wished to participate. Once the survey was completed, all responses were sent to a secure server which housed the data. Participants had the option of submitting their names separately if they wished to take part in a follow-up interview, and this information was sent to a separate database to ensure anonymity of responses.

**Interview data collection.** To conduct the 14 interviews, two members of the research team met with each teacher (usually at his or her workplace) for a session approximately one hour in length. Researchers took field notes during interviews, and

all interviews were recorded with explicit consent. Once completed, interviews were transcribed and shared with the research team.

## **Data Analysis**

**Online survey.** We analyzed survey data using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). First, frequencies were tabulated and cross-tabulations were conducted to determine the overall responses and to identify general differences among group responses. Chi-square tests and Kruskal-Wallis analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were performed to identify any differences across demographic groups (gender, type of school, number of years teaching philosophy course, highest level of philosophy education, and geographical region) for all other variables, including those pertaining to textbook use. Across all variables, we found only two significant differences, which are discussed in the Findings.

**Interviews.** Interview data analysis occurred simultaneously with data collection for the research as a whole (that is, not limited to the topic of this article). All members of the research team participated in inductive analysis as described by Bogdan and Biklen (2006), which included process coding, where codes reflected both common and various emergent themes. Individual themes were compared and discussed among the group, and revised to reflect consensus. This form of data analysis is what Tesch (1990) characterized as "de-contextualization" in order to identify themes and coding categories and "re-contextualization" to present a unified and coherent picture. At the end of this process, a number of themes and categories were identified.

A second phase of analysis relied on a deductive approach to analyzing transcripts. Because this research was concerned with understanding how high school philosophy teachers use textbooks within the Apple and Christian-Smith (1991) framework, teachers' accounts of their textbook use were isolated from transcripts, and coded based on which approaches to textbook use (dominated, negotiated, or oppositional) they best reflected. Next, we identified reasons behind the approach to textbook use by identifying themes in individual transcripts. We then worked across transcripts and identified the predominant themes.

## Findings

### Frequency of Textbook Use

Our data revealed that high school philosophy teachers tended to use textbooks frequently, and they relied on secondary sources as opposed to primary philosophy texts. The survey responses suggested that textbooks were widely used (92%). Approximately two-thirds of respondents used textbooks weekly or more frequently. Six percent reported that they followed the sequence of primary textbooks, while 77% reported that they used their own sequence and selected portions of the textbook to read. Thirty-nine percent reported that they reviewed and selected the textbooks used themselves, while 35% used what was already available in the school. Respondents reported using teachers' guides relatively infrequently (nearly half "never" used them). All but one interview participant (Alan) used one or more textbooks in their philosophy courses.

### Approach to Textbook Use

A principal concern of our research was to determine how teachers used textbooks in high school philosophy courses. We relied on both survey and interview data to establish the approaches used within Apple and Christian-Smith's (1991) framework. As a whole, the survey and interview data suggested that dominated and negotiated approaches were predominantly used.

To describe teachers' use of textbooks, we first examined the extent to which teachers provided students with points-of-view that contradict those in the textbook used. The survey data inquired about a rough but important initial indication textbook use by asking how frequently teachers "consciously incorporate[d] materials that conflict with, contradict, or present an alternative point-of-view to the text." An oppositional approach would encourage students to question content, which could be achieved by presenting contradictory readings. Survey responses suggested that 23% of respondents did so daily or almost every class, suggesting a consistently oppositional approach. Half of respondents did this weekly or less frequently (suggesting a negotiated approach), while 11% never engaged in this practice (suggesting a dominated approach). Thus, even a preliminary item concerning content corroborated the claim that the more frequently conflicting or contradictory materials are provided, the more oppositional the approach can be inferred.

Next, we found that approximately three-quarters of teachers surveyed relied on dominated and negotiated approaches based on the frequency with which they asked students to identify perspectives included and excluded from textbooks, asking them how often they "discuss[ed] the inclusion/exclusion of diverse perspectives in textbook readings." The more they asked students to identify included and excluded perspectives

and discussed issues around diverse perspectives, the more we inferred an oppositional approach. Twenty-eight percent asked students to identify perspectives included and excluded from texts daily or every class, 38% did this weekly or less frequently, and 19% did not do this at all (see Table 2). Similarly, 27% reported that they “discuss[ed] the inclusion/exclusion of diverse perspectives in textbook readings” daily or almost every class, 45% did this weekly or less frequently, and 15% did not do this at all (see Table 2). Together, these responses suggested that approximately one-quarter interacted with the textbook in oppositional ways on a regular basis, while the remaining teachers favored negotiated or dominated approaches.

Table 2

*Responses about inclusion and exclusion of perspectives*

How often do you:	Daily/ every class		Almost every class		Weekly or less		Never	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Ask students to identify which/whose perspectives are represented or missing from readings in a text?	15	28%	8	15%	20	38%	10	19%
Discuss the inclusion/exclusion of diverse perspectives in textbook readings with students?	15	28%	6	11%	24	45%	8	15%

Interviews confirmed the predominance of dominated and negotiated use of textbooks while offering greater insight into individuals’ practices. Among all interviews, only passages from two teachers seemed to reflect an oppositional use of textbooks:

And I think that that was the only way that they challenged it, and it’s because I forced it on them. And that was actually at a point where I was having some... you know, internal... I was having an internal dilemma about how far can I push the class... So if I didn’t bring the challenge, it’s the textbook, they’re still... you’re in high school, you still think that what’s in print is the only thing that exists. That’s the only thing that’s real, and it’s right, and that’s what you have to believe. So, on their own, I don’t think they would challenge it very much. (Theresa)

... as you kind of expand your repertoire [over time], the textbook is there, but you begin to use in a more critical way, you kind of encourage more critical literacy by revealing to the students that this is just one text, one interpretation of something, and there are lots of different texts over there... So it was interesting to see that, and I think when you point things out to them, they realize the process of how the text is written and how they're made and processed. It helps them to kind of do that on their own. Or at least to ask questions about it (Jeremy)

The remainder of interview participants reported using textbooks with methods classified as dominated and negotiated. Most interviews contained examples of both of these – suggesting that teachers' pedagogical methods varied between dominated and negotiated readings depending on the topic and the class. Statements reflecting dominated readings included:

I've basically taken its chapters, and broken each one of them down into a one page series of points. And that I'll make into an overhead, and teach the lesson that day...the book didn't come with any questions, and so I make the content, appropriate questions, they do the question sheet, and then I create from that again quizzes and unit tests, etc. (Benjamin)

Either, depending on the day and the subject matter, like if something's not overly important for university, I might just say, "Okay we'll cover this today, read it and answer the questions." But the way I like to do it is make sure the students read it beforehand...Yah, what we do make them do for each test is they have to memorize all these green words, like the terminology, and that's always part A on every test. (Philip)

Several teachers explained that they incorporated primary readings that were not in opposition to the textbook. Rather, they used primary sources to expose their students to the actual readings to which the textbook referred. Most responses coded as negotiated suggested that teachers disputed small items within the book (e.g., term, argument, strategy) rather than a broader position within the textbook or a perspective that was missing. For example:

I've also told them I think textbook is wrong about some things... just talking about different understandings of terms and... you know, that's a part of what we do when we talk about definitions need[ing] to be critical... ok, so what's the definition that we're working with and just understanding where that person's perspective is coming from, and that's fine. (Sharon)

I encourage – that's a major goal of mine – that they would be able to look at the text and find holes in that text, find, you know, some wonky

argument or strategy, that type of thing. That's a major goal of the course, I would say, that they read the text and challenge and question it. (Henry)

While Henry talked explicitly about his desire for students to “challenge and question” textbooks, we coded this as a negotiated response since the types of challenge he described were not substantive when the transcript was viewed in its entirety. Rather, he encouraged students to challenge smaller points, such as logic of a particular line of reasoning, not larger issues about inclusion or perspectives.

Some teachers who incorporated negotiated methods described challenges they faced when introducing students to ways of questioning or disputing textbook content. Some felt that students lacked practice in learning to ask the right kinds of questions since they were not exposed to this approach in their previous educational experiences. Those who raised this issue suggested also that it took time for them to learn to do this. For example, Veronica stated, “I think I overestimated their initial capability there...I think they're trained to accept what they read, and so it takes a lot to kind of dislodge that idea.”

Both survey and interview responses suggested that teachers who employed oppositional approaches to textbook use in philosophy classrooms were the minority. Given teachers' relatively favorable opinions of existing textbooks which arose out of our survey, this is not entirely surprising. However, regardless of the perceived or actual quality of any textbook, the ideal approach is oppositional reading as we argued earlier in this article.

### **Reasons behind Teachers' Approaches to Textbook Use**

We established that high school philosophy teachers relied on textbooks frequently, and that they tended to approach textbooks using a dominant and sometimes negotiated approach. Why did such a large proportion of these teachers avoid engaging students in our conception of an oppositional reading of textbooks? Certainly, opportunities existed for teachers to encourage different approaches to student reading. However, the data suggested that Ontario's philosophy teachers may not be in a position, for many reasons, to encourage students to interact with texts in a critical way. Interviews pointed to a number of factors that contributed to teachers' reliance on dominated and negotiated approaches. In this section, we explore the four predominant themes that emerged.

**Lack of knowledge about or training in philosophy as a content area.** When teachers reported being unsure of specific content, they appeared to feel greater need to rely on a textbook. Survey responses suggested that only a small proportion of high school philosophy teachers had formal training in philosophy. Significance testing revealed an important difference with respect to training and level of comfort teaching



philosophy. When asked, “How would you rate your knowledge of philosophy as it relates to your comfort level in teaching high school philosophy courses?”, respondents who studied philosophy at the university level reported a higher level of comfort with the course ( $F[5, 47] = 7.56, p < 0.001$ ) than those with no formal training. The only other statistically significant difference noted was that teachers in Southwestern Ontario and in the Greater Toronto Area tended to be more likely to view student skills as a challenge to their teaching ( $F[4, 47] = 6.41, p < 0.001$ ). At this stage any possible unique geographical significance this finding might suggest, problematic as such an inference would be without a different set of data, is overshadowed by an apparent realization among teachers that they found themselves in a novel professional situation where pedagogical authority must be based upon something besides a mastery of subject matter, especially mastery of the kind that qualifies their administrative authority in the classroom simply by virtue of an intellectual superiority over students. Within these two regional cohorts, there was certainly the suggestion that philosophical subject matter and thinking presented a challenge to school structures that have traditionally relied on sharp intellectual and social distinctions between teachers and students for their everyday operations.

Interviews revealed that some teachers reported feeling uncomfortable taking a critical or oppositional approach simply because they had not acquired sufficient subject-matter knowledge, and so they relied heavily on the textbook’s format as a professional crutch and its content as an intellectual support. For example, when asked why he felt the need to conform closely to the textbook, Philip replied, “Well it’s basically because of my inexperience, I guess you could say, like, if I was probably more confident with the subject matter and the curriculum.” As Philip’s testimony illustrates, a lack of confidence with philosophical subject matter may affect a teacher’s willingness to take a more creative approach and method beyond what appears in the textbook. Challenging or encouraging students to dispute textbook content without strong background knowledge becomes difficult for the teacher who is unfamiliar with the subject matter.

**Lack of pedagogical training or sophistication in critical thinking pedagogies as method.** Teachers may not be aware of nor trained to facilitate the critical inquiry among students that would be consistent with oppositional reading. Indeed, expertise in teaching critical thinking is a challenge, particularly because materials for teachers are based on a conception of critical thinking that is only vaguely related to the subject (Fisher & Scriven, 1997). Not all teachers have been exposed to literature, pedagogical supports, or professional development which might contribute to a strong understanding of critical thinking. If philosophy is truly unique in challenging the status quo, then it not only has to resist the normalizing factors established by the dominance of other subjects in the school, but it also has to resist the internal pressure to look like these subjects and patterned teacher behavior that tends to reduce teaching and learning relationships to content delivery. Some teachers interviewed had not

considered the possibility of challenging the text with oppositional readings. For instance, when asked if he incorporated readings that challenge textbook content, Darius said he was “not sure how you would.”

Teachers evolve in their pedagogical styles and practices as they gain experience and new knowledge. Theresa told the story of moving away from “teaching to the final exam” in her philosophy course. She described her early experience: “I wanted them to memorize [things from the textbook]...And then I hated myself for doing that.” She then moved to a more negotiated approach of textbook use in an attempt to mirror what she describes as pedagogies used in university courses.

**Belief that students are not capable of oppositional thinking and learning.**

Some of the teachers interviewed expressed the perception that few, if any, students in high school are capable of challenging textbooks and readings in an oppositional way. For instance, Karl stated, “Unless you are an expert or a fourth-year philosophy student, you wouldn’t know to take issues with what the textbook says.” Despite this perception, two interviewees described practices that are consistent with oppositional reading, suggesting that it is indeed possible to be successful in promoting an oppositional form of critical inquiry among high school students enrolled in philosophy courses.

**Pressure to meet policy expectations.** Despite teachers’ highest levels of dispositional and rhetorical commitment to critical thinking, teaching methods have a way of drifting towards a state of passive reception of ideas, particularly in an education environment where content-laden policy documents encourage the postponement of critical reflection (Passmore, 1967). The increasing pressure on Ontario’s teachers to be accountable for meeting provincially imposed curricular expectations can be addressed by using a textbook that is deemed a “100% match” to the policy expectations. The shortcoming of narrow, accountability-driven educational practice “has led to a demand that we know what is being achieved; to know, we have to be able to document, which in turn requires that we can measure” (Hare, 2000, p. 105).

Four of the teachers interviewed (Philip, Darius, Veronica, and Joseph) expressed perceived pressure to address all mandated curriculum policy expectations. Some positively commented on the textbooks’ ability to ensure this:

I’d say that textbook resource that we have like if you put it side to side with the curriculum document, yah, that’s in the textbook here, that’s in the textbook here, and I could just go through the curriculum probably write this section like 6.4, 6.4, yah that’s covered in 6.4, I’d say it’s almost down right to a tee the textbook we use, that we cover the curriculum. (Philip)

I liked it so much because it follows the curriculum so you don't feel like you have to balance between the textbook and then the curriculum, so it kind of does it for you. (Veronica)

Our research suggested that feelings of pressure to adhere to curriculum policy expectations was not related to years of teaching experience; the experience among these teachers ranged between two and twenty-five years. Only one teacher interviewed, Jeremy, talked explicitly about his resistance to curriculum policy conformity as he gained more experience teaching the course:

I resisted the pressure to cover everything the way I had in the beginning, so that I could tailor the course more to the students' interests and needs. (Jeremy)

These statements illustrate that teachers' perceived need to follow curriculum policy expectations varied. While some teachers (e.g., Philip, Veronica) may have been more concerned with teaching for content as defined in curriculum policy, others resisted policy, modifying their courses to address students' interests, and emphasizing depth of understanding over breadth of knowledge.

### **Discussion: Exploring the Absence of Oppositional Use**

Our data analysis described what types of textbooks Ontario high school philosophy teachers used, what approaches teachers took to their use, and their reasons behind those approaches. First, our findings about the predominance of textbook use among high school philosophy teachers who participated in this research was consistent with the literature on significant textbook use described earlier. As others have found, high school philosophy teachers in Ontario relied on textbooks frequently, particularly with respect to the use of secondary sources as opposed to primary readings.

Second, despite claims about the uniqueness of philosophy as a discipline which relies on critical inquiry (Ayim, 1980), we observed an absence of oppositional approaches to textbook use which would be consistent with those ideals. A high school philosophy program:

might have the advantage of helping students to continue asking significant questions, keeping open the road to inquiry and to alternatives, investing less in infallible answers than in a rigorous method, and analyzing and evaluating their own decisions in a world that has never been in greater need of rethinking in such matters. (Ayim, 1980, p. 21)

Despite these ideals, the approaches to textbook use identified by teachers were somewhat disappointing. We might hope that critical thinking and intellectual challenges would have been exemplified in an oppositional approach to textbook use. If, as our data suggested, most teachers did not engage in oppositional approaches, students may not have had opportunities to develop and refine critical thinking skills and dispositions central to philosophical thought when engaging in core readings. Moreover, depending on how students interact with the textbook and the content of it, we risk a situation of unintentional indoctrination as described in the literature review (Lammi, 1997). However, this situation does not imply that students have no opportunities for critical thinking. Indeed, many other ways in which teachers might engage students' critical thought exist which do not involve textbooks. Further investigation into teachers' pedagogical practices will shed greater light on the role of critical thinking in Ontario's high school philosophy courses.

Finally, the study identified four perceived barriers to the use of oppositional textbook readings with students. First, we found that teachers with little training or a perceived lack of knowledge about philosophy tended to rely more heavily on textbooks. These teachers used textbooks to compensate for a perceived lack of philosophical knowledge or training. This lack of comfort and preparedness is consistent with similar findings by Smith and Desimone (2005), who reported that higher levels of formal mathematics education led to stronger content knowledge and teachers' self-perception of preparedness to teach math.

Related to this first barrier, our data also revealed a lack of knowledge about how to facilitate critical inquiry consistent with an oppositional approach to textbook use. Blair (2009) and Case (2009) argued that teachers in general are neither provided with the tools or pedagogies to effectively teach critical thinking. "Such tasks will require a sustained, multi-year commitment by those well-positioned to bring about change in our educational systems (both in schools and faculties of education)" (Blair, 2009, p. 278). Additional training, emerging now that philosophy is recognized as a teachable qualification in Ontario, may address these two barriers and lead to changes in how teachers approach the use of textbooks in philosophy courses. As well, teachers' confidence in challenging publicly what they themselves are only just learning may be low for fear of undermining their classroom authority (Nuthall, 2004). In this way, these teachers may, at least temporarily, be reduced to maintaining classroom order as a survival mechanism (Fischler, 1999; Marton, 1994; Nuthall, 2004): a finding which raises questions for further research.

A third barrier to the oppositional approach to textbook use was a perception among some teachers that students may not be capable of this type of thought. Contrary to this belief, evidence suggests that adolescent students are indeed capable of oppositional reading, albeit with the guidance and encouragement of their teachers (Moshman, 2005; Stanovich, 2001; Sternberg, 2001). Moreover, the success of

teachers interviewed in taking an oppositional approach with students – coupled with the extensive work of the Philosophy for Children movement – further confirms that presuppositions of students' inability to engage in oppositional reading are false.

The fourth barrier, which was teachers' adherence to Ministry curriculum policy expectations at the expense of an oppositional approach, is consistent with previous arguments in the literature (Caputo-Pearl, 2001; Noddings, 2004; Pithers & Soden, 2000; Vinson et al., 2001). Revisions to Ontario's Ministry of Education curriculum policy documents in light of Blair's (2009) critique might address this particular reason for the absence of an oppositional approach to textbook use.

We recognize several limitations to our research. First, since the precise population size and characteristics of philosophy teachers are unknown, and the sample size was relatively small, we cannot generalize our findings with confidence. Despite this, we feel the findings are nonetheless important and worthy of analysis as a contribution to the understanding of high school philosophy courses, as well as a contribution to the literature on textbook use Apple and Bascom (1992) call for. Second, some respondents may have attempted to make their responses appear more progressive, rather than being honest about their perceptions or practices (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). We expect that triangulation between qualitative and quantitative data overcomes this limitation for our data set as a whole, but there may be instances within interviews that remain less honest. Finally, analysis of philosophy textbook content is beyond the scope of our research. We relied solely on participants' perceptions of textbook content, not analytic investigation of the textbooks themselves. We believe this to be an important future research direction.

Our findings may provide insight for practicing philosophy teachers about ways in which they can reflect upon their own practice, with a focus on greater incorporation of the skills and dispositions associated with critical thinking when they are using textbooks. These findings are also important for teacher education, with the recent recognition of philosophy as a teachable qualification in Ontario. As the first to provide information about current practices in high school philosophy classes, this research is beneficial to those earning their philosophy qualification through inquiry into the use of textbooks as part of their own pedagogical development. This might be achieved through professional development, professional learning communities, and ongoing teacher education. An example of an approach to encourage teachers to engage in such inquiry might include engaging in the process of lesson remodeling with an eye to critical thinking (Pinto, Spares, & Driscoll, 2012). In addition to providing them with an overview of the practices of their peers, examining this study with an oppositional reading approach encourages new teachers to engage in reflective practice and use a critical perspective to the selection of their own textbooks and learning materials.



While our research has focused on Ontario's high school philosophy teachers' use of textbooks, we know that teachers in almost all subject areas also rely on textbooks. When they do, they face the very same sorts of challenges that our participants faced; they must negotiate space for critical thinking within an environment increasingly dominated by standardization and high-stakes testing. Regardless of grade or subject area, teachers can look to our research findings as a place to begin self-reflection on the ways in which they use textbooks, and on how they might increase students' opportunities for critical thinking by adopting an oppositional approach. We hope our discussion of the possibilities outlined in our conceptual framework, as well as other teachers' personal experiences revealed in the interviews, can offer insights for teachers across all subject areas who want to cultivate critical thinking while using textbooks in their classrooms.

### **Conclusion**

Ontario has pioneered English-language philosophy courses available at the high school level, though to date little information exists about the nature of these courses and how they are taught. This study contributes to understanding Ontario high school philosophy teachers' use of textbooks in their classrooms. We presented findings from survey responses and interviews to describe approaches to textbook use. Within our analytical framework, the oppositional approach to interacting with textbooks is desirable largely for its ability to foster critical thinking and co-construction of meanings in classrooms. As such, we are disappointed to learn that the dominated approach to textbook use was so frequently relied upon by teachers. Our findings provide relevant insight for practicing philosophy teachers and teacher educators about ways in which they can reflect upon their own practice, and for policy-makers and textbook authors who have an interest in promoting critical and philosophical thought.

The focus of our research was the teacher and his or her methods. Students' perspectives on textbooks and their use in high school philosophy classrooms would provide a richer understanding of how teachers and students interact with texts, and the degree to which teacher direction affects students' readings. Finally, further research is necessary to better understand the content of frequently-used textbooks.

As a relatively new area of inquiry, our exploratory empirical study also raises new questions about high school philosophy courses that warrant future investigation. Some areas recommended for future research include:

- Content analysis of frequently-used and provincially-approved philosophy textbooks, with an investigation into whether researchers' analyses correspond to teachers' perceptions of those textbooks. Since teachers surveyed reported that the current textbooks are relatively balanced and promote critical thinking, these features ought to be the foci of content analysis.



- Analysis of topics addressed in high school philosophy courses, with particular attention to diverse perspectives and strands of philosophy covered.
- How students experience their studies in high school philosophy, with attention to their perceptions about critical thinking and use of textbooks.
- How faculties of education prepare prospective philosophy teachers in both initial and continuing teacher education programs given the introduction of philosophy as a teachable qualification in 2008.

Only through continued investigation of high school philosophy will we gain a better understanding of how these courses are unique, and what methods of teaching and learning best cultivate students' critical thinking and philosophical inquiry. We expect that further research will not only enhance philosophy teachers' practice, but also offer insight into how to integrate critical thinking into other subject areas.

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## Appendix A

### Online Survey Questions Relevant To This Article

Contact the corresponding author to see full survey.

#### Background/Demographics: Who is teaching philosophy in Ontario?

1. How long have you been teaching philosophy at the high school level?
  - I have never taught philosophy
  - This is my first year
  - 1-2 years
  - 3-5 years
  - More than 5 years
  
2. What is your sex?
  - Male
  - Female
  
3. Which of the following best describes your school?
  - Public school
  - Catholic school
  - Private school – religious
  - Private school – secular
  
4. What is your race/ethnic/cultural background?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Which of the following best describes your highest level of formal education with respect to philosophy?
  - I am self-taught
  - I have taken professional development workshops (not university courses) only
  - I have taken university courses in philosophy, but it was not my major
  - I majored in philosophy in my undergraduate degree
  - I have a master's degree in philosophy
  - I have a doctoral degree in philosophy
  
6. Please specify approximately how many courses you took in the following categories.

	Number of Courses
(a) Introductory (Survey Course)	_____
(b) Moral or political philosophy	_____



- (c) Logic \_\_\_\_\_
- (d) Epistemology \_\_\_\_\_
- (e) Ancients \_\_\_\_\_
- (f) Critical theory/ post-modern theory \_\_\_\_\_
- (g) Other \_\_\_\_\_
- (h) Other \_\_\_\_\_

7. How would you rate your knowledge of philosophy as it relates to your comfort level in teaching high school philosophy courses?
- I consider myself an “expert” in philosophy, and my knowledge exceeds what is required to teach the course
  - I am reasonably comfortable with philosophy, and know enough to teach the course with ease
  - I know enough to get by teaching this course
  - I do not know enough to teach the course comfortably
8. Which of the following best describes the way that you began teaching philosophy at the high school level? (Please select one only)
- I made a case to start offering philosophy courses at my school, and began the program myself
  - I volunteered to teach philosophy, which the school offered or was going to offer
  - I was asked by my principal or department head, but hadn’t really thought about it before that
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
9. How long have you been a secondary school teacher?
- This is my first year
  - 1-2 years
  - 3-5 years
  - 6-10 years
  - More than 10 years
10. In what subject areas are you certified to teach? (Select as many as necessary)
- The Arts
  - Business studies
  - Cooperative education
  - English
  - Mathematics
  - Guidance
  - Humanities and social sciences
  - Religious studies

- Sciences
- Technological studies or trades
- Special education
- Physical education

11. How many sections of philosophy are currently taught in your school per school YEAR?

Grade 11	Grade 12
<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 0
<input type="checkbox"/> 1-2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-2
<input type="checkbox"/> 3-5	<input type="checkbox"/> 3-5
<input type="checkbox"/> More than 5	<input type="checkbox"/> More than 5

12. I would say that enrolment in philosophy courses at my school is:

- On the rise
- On the decline
- Steady

13. Which statement best describes your professional views on implementing curriculum policy expectations?

- I make sure that my philosophy course meets all learning expectations prescribed in the Ontario curriculum policy document
- I consult the Ontario curriculum policy document, and probably cover most of the expectations in it
- I do not worry about the curriculum policy document

To what extent to you perceive each of the following to affect your philosophy class?	Support or benefit to my teaching	Somewhat of a challenge	Very much of a challenge
14. Support from the administration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Support from parents/community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Student enrolment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Student motivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Student skills (e.g., literacy, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. Dealing with controversial issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. Addressing issues of faith or religion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

To what extent do you perceive each of the following to as they relate to difficulty for your philosophy course(s)?	Easy	Neither difficult nor easy	Difficult
21. Finding appropriate resources for my class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. Finding engaging instructional strategies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. Keeping on top of the subject and/or enhancing my own knowledge of philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. Covering all topics and/or curriculum expectations within a semester	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Research Question #2: How is philosophy taught in Ontario high schools?

### Part A: Textbook Use

25. What, if any, student textbooks do you currently use in your philosophy courses?  
 Please provide title(s) and author(s).

- Grade 11 \_\_\_\_\_
- Grade 12 \_\_\_\_\_

26. Please select the statement that best describes how you use the primary textbook for your philosophy course:

- I do not use a textbook
- I follow the sequence in the book, and ask my class to read all or most of the content
- I have my own sequence, and I select which parts of the book the class reads and when

How frequently do you....	Daily /every class	Almost every class	Weekly (approximately every 5 <sup>th</sup> class)	Less than weekly (or less than approx. every 5 <sup>th</sup> class)	Never
27. Assign readings from textbooks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28. Assign questions or activities from a textbook teachers' guide?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29. Use lessons from a teachers' guide associated with a textbook as they appear in the teachers' guide?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How frequently do you....	Daily /every class	Almost every class	Weekly (approximately every 5 <sup>th</sup> class)	Less than weekly (or less than approx. every 5 <sup>th</sup> class)	Never
30. Adapt lessons from a teachers' guide associated with a textbook?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31. Consciously incorporate materials that conflict with, contradict, or present an alternative point-of-view from the text?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
32. Ask students to look for "hidden" messages in an overall reading in a textbook?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
33. Ask students to identify which/whose perspectives are represented or missing from readings in a text?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
34. Discuss the inclusion/exclusion of diverse perspectives in textbook readings with students?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
35. Incorporate internet-based philosophy resources or readings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
36. Incorporate film or television resource?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
37. Incorporate novels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
38. Incorporate articles from magazines, journals or newspapers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

39. How did you select the textbook(s) you use? (check all that apply)

- Used what is available in my department or school (e.g., inherited from a previous teacher)
- My school/department requires me to use a particular book
- Recommended by a university professor
- Recommended by OPTA
- Publisher advertisements (catalogues or conferences)
- Asked other teachers what they recommend and made choice accordingly
- Obtained copies of textbooks available to review and made choice accordingly
- Attended a workshop or presentation about the book
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- I do not use a textbook

40. In general, the textbooks(s) that I use for my philosophy course(s) are:

*For each statement, check the box that best reflects your opinion for each pair of descriptors*

	-2	-1	0	1	2	
<b>Biased/Inaccurate</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Unbiased/Accurate</b>
Lacking sufficient points-of-view	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sufficient points of view
Too easy for students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	To difficult for students
Superficial content	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Information-rich and deep content
Do(es) not encourage critical thinking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Encourage(s) critical thinking
Similar to my views on the subject	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dissimilar to my views on the subject
Necessary to teach the course	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unnecessary to teach the course
Relevant to the course curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Irrelevant to the course curriculum
Reflect the position(s) I wish to convey	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does not include the perspective(s) I wish to convey
Employs a historical approach to philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Employs a problem-based approach to philosophy

## **Appendix B**

### **Interview Protocol Questions**

#### **Background Questions**

Before we get into the more substantive questions, I'd like to ask you a few questions about your background. (Remind them to be brief.)

- For how long have you been teaching?
- What do you see as your primary subject area?
- Which philosophy courses are you teaching or have you taught (grade 11, grade 12)?
- How many times have taught philosophy? For how long?
- Tell me a bit about your background in terms of preparation for teaching philosophy. For example, have you taken philosophy courses in university? Primarily, what areas of philosophy have you studied?
- Have you attended OPTA conferences? Are you an OPTA member?

#### **Substantive Interview Questions**

1. What do you hope to accomplish with teaching philosophy? Why do you think it's important?  
Prompts:
  - a. If necessary, ask whether this is their "ideal."
  - a. Ask for an explanation of their understanding of that aim.
  - b. Are there any more aims that you would like to mention?
2. If you think back over what you mentioned, what is most important and why?
3. How has this view of aims changed, if at all, since you started teaching philosophy? Why?
4. How successful do you think you have been in achieving these aims?
5. There's a lot of talk that in schools there is pressure to conform to certain assessment methods and curriculum delivery. To what extent does this affect how you achieve your aims in teaching philosophy?
6. There's also a lot of talk about the role of the high school in preparing students for future careers. To what extent does this affect how you achieve your aims in teaching philosophy?



7. What do you think students' opinions of the philosophy courses are? (You may wish to comment on students currently enrolled, as well as students who don't enroll.)  
Prompts:
  - a. What do you think your student's aims are in taking a philosophy course?
  - b. How do you think they perceive the difficulty level?
  - c. How do you think they feel about the quantity of material?
8. If we focus now less on aims and more on teaching, could you imagine for me your view of ideal methods (or best ways) to teach high school philosophy?  
Prompt:
  - a. How does evaluation fit into this picture?
9. How does your ideal compare with what you are able to do most of the time in your philosophy teaching? Why?  
Follow-up:
  - a. What factors contribute most to this match or mismatch? Why?
10. Do you think your teaching methods in philosophy class differ in any way from your approach in other subjects you teach? (Why/Why not? If yes, How?)  
Follow-up:
  - a. Do you think students perceive a difference?
  - b. How about evaluation? Does that differ in any way in your philosophy teaching compared to other subjects?
11. To what extent do you find a philosophy a difficult subject to teach? Why?
12. What are your opinions of the curriculum policy documents for teaching philosophy?  
Follow-up:
  - a. How closely do you follow the documents? Why/why not?Prompts:
  - a. Any problems with flexibility?
  - b. Any problems with biases?
13. Now I'd like you to describe how you use textbooks in the course..  
Prompts:
  - a. Which primary textbook do you use?
  - b. How did you select it?
  - c. How would you evaluate it?
  - d. Could you please describe how you use the primary textbook for your course?

- (i.) To what extent do you expect students to learn or recall “facts” from the textbook?
  - (ii) Do you ever incorporate other readings that contradict the textbook?
  - (iii.) To what extent do your students question or challenge the material in the textbook? How do you handle this?
- e. What are your student’s opinions of the textbook you use?
14. Some people say that philosophy promotes a disposition to critically explore all kinds of issues, however controversial. Would you agree with this description?  
Prompts:
- a. If not, why not?
  - b. If so, how do you handle situations in which this approach might expose students to views and questions that are contrary to their deeply held beliefs?
15. Do you think there are areas of belief in which this kind of conflict might be more likely to happen? If so, what are they and why do you think this is the case?  
Follow-up:
- a. In your experience, is religion an area that is vulnerable to this concern? If so, does it present any special kind of problem?
16. It’s not uncommon for a teacher to have strong beliefs about some of the questions that can be raised in philosophical readings and discussions. Is this something that you have experienced? If not, why do you think that is the case? If so, how do you handle it? Could you give an example?  
Follow-ups:
- a. Do you ever withhold sharing with students what you think in order to teach philosophy in the way you think is most appropriate? (If so, what would be a good example of this kind of situation?)
  - b. In your experience, how often does this happen?
17. Do your students sometimes express beliefs that you think are really wrong?  
Prompts:
- a. If so, could you give an example?
  - b. Could you talk about how you handle it?
- Follow-ups:
- a. In terms of how you handle it, does it matter what the belief is about (e.g., an interpretation of a passage in a text or an epistemological perspective versus a moral belief)?
  - b. If so, why do you think this is the case?