

University of Benin NAPS Conference, 5th August, 2015



# THE PHILOSOPHY PROGRAMME IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS AND JOB PROSPECTS FOR 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY NIGERIAN GRADUATES: AN APPRAISAL

**WOGU, I. A. Power<sup>1</sup>; OGBUEHI, U. Kingsley<sup>2</sup>; AKINNIFESI, F. Justinah<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Department of Political Science & International Relations, College of Leadership Development Studies, Covenant Universities, Ota, Ogun State,

<sup>2</sup>Department of Educational Foundations and Management Studies, School of Education, Federal College of education (Technical ) Bichi, Kano State

<sup>3</sup>Department of Financial Services (Internal Audit), Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State.

<sup>1</sup>Phone: +2348034956069, [ike.wogu@covenantuniversity.edu.ng](mailto:ike.wogu@covenantuniversity.edu.ng)

<sup>2</sup>Phone: +2348034913, [uckings1@yahoo.com](mailto:uckings1@yahoo.com)

<sup>3</sup>Phone: +2348168156016, [foluke.akinnifesi@covenanuniversity.edu.ng](mailto:foluke.akinnifesi@covenanuniversity.edu.ng)

**A PAPER PRESENTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY, UNIVERSITY OF  
BENIN, ON THE OCCASION OF HER ANNUAL NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
PHILOSOPHY STUDENTS CONFERENCE**

**5<sup>th</sup> August, 2015.**

## Abstract

This study examines the roles parents play towards influencing the choice of careers for their children and wards, long before they commence their University Education. The study observes that this factor arguably accounts for the rising crave for most of the traditional degrees and careers which majority of students opt for without the corresponding requisite aptitudes and intellectual prowess. This scenario tends to promote a derogatory feeling on the part of students who find themselves pursuing supposedly none lucrative degrees in Nigerian Universities. This scenario is perceived to be responsible for the main question which this paper seeks to address: *What! if any, are the job prospects for philosophy Graduates?* While adopting critical content analysis and deconstruction methods of philosophy for analyzing basic notions and arguments for the philosophy program in Nigerian Universities, The study observes that there are yet profound opportunities and prospects waiting to be harnessed by philosophy graduates.

Key Words: Education, Graduates, Job Prospects, Philosophy, Universities.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

It is the desire of every good parent to leave a legacy for the generation after them especially in their children. Legacy in this regard is an interesting word. It means an inheritance of property or money, but it also speaks to the value system you live by and the memories you will leave behind (Bunting, 2012). This is one of the foremost wish every good parent has in mind for their children and perhaps for their grandchildren after them. It has therefore been argued that leaving a legacy for most persons, is whole essence for living for most families and communities in this 21<sup>st</sup> Century. While noting that legacies can be a worthwhile gift, it can also be a burden passed on to your children or the next generation. How parents go about this assignment differ from one family to another. The individual perspectives of what legacies are largely influence the priority parents place on what form of legacy they wish to pass on to the next generation after them. Some of the most talked about legacies known to occupy the minds of parents include:

1. A legacy through a good education
2. A legacy entrusted in a community,
3. A legacy in values such as: that relationships supersede Business,
4. A legacy in the inheritance left behind for their children to enjoy, (Stoval, 2012)

### 1.1. Background to the study

Part of the focus of this study shall be a review of the efforts parents make to give their children a good education, which is expected to influence the kind of career they eventually settle for later

in life. Recent studies (Omoegun and Buraimoh, 2000:2) have shown that parents are not the only ones agitated about what choice of education and career they desire their children and wards to undertake in order to ensure the kind of future they envisage and desire for their children when they come of age. Youths themselves, from the tender age of 12 and 13, begin to get disturbed about the choice of career and the requisite education needed to actualize their dreams and future aspirations. To this end, top on the agenda of every teenager, is the choice of career he or she desires to pursue in life. A study by (Omoegun and Buraimoh, 2000:2) affirms this fact:

One of the most important decisions a young person has to make in life has to do with a future occupation. The choice of an occupation is regarded as second most important decision, next to the choice of future partner in marriage. The choice of an occupation becomes important because it could determine the prospect of our success in life, our group of friends, business associates, recreational activities, opportunities, salary status and general life style seemed to be determined or influenced by our career.

## **1.2. The problem**

While acknowledging the importance of making the right choice of career and acquiring the requisite training in education necessary for actualizing these goals, other studies reveal that there are a lot of other problems associated with deciding on a choice of career. This is because the choice of deciding on a career has become more complex in these modern times than it used to be in times past. Some of the following reasons have been adduced for this:

- i. Parents more often than not, sometimes out of ignorance, force certain choice of careers on their children. This scenarios studies have shown, accounts for some of the reasons why most youths encounter major and temporary setbacks in the line of studies and career they finally settle for in life.
- ii. The rising economic problems in Nigeria have resulted to a rise in the rate of unemployment in various categories of occupations.
- iii. Many people (students) do not have the competence to asses themselves for a realistic choice of career.
- iv. Information about various occupations does not readily get to those who are contemplating the choice of a career.
- v. Many youths are influenced into setting very high vocational goals and aspirations for themselves without necessarily possessing the natural endowments and personal and intellectual qualities necessary for pursuing such occupations or career.
- vi. Development in education, science and technology has led to the creation of new careers which most people are not aware of. The ignorance of these new careers and areas of study are largely behind the uniformed choices of careers and values which youths tend to crave in popular disciplines like: Medicine,

Law, Engineering and Accounting, careers which by reason of intellectual prowess, are often out of the reach of these youths.

While most of the issues identified above shall be discussed in passing, the main focus of this study shall be on the last issues raised above. This study is therefore geared towards enlightening the students of philosophy of the awesome and tremendous opportunities which a philosophy degree holds for students who find themselves pursuing a career in this prestigious discipline also known to be the mother of all science (Moore and Bruder, 2002:2).

### **1.3. Objectives of the study**

- i. The study shall endeavor to identify the careers prospects in the discipline of philosophy and how the students of philosophy are able to harness, to the fullest, all the potentials that are available to students who chose to pursue a career in the discipline.
- ii. The study shall attempt to identify the career scope that is available to philosophy students
- iii. The study shall basically enlighten the philosophy student/graduate of the relevance of the study of philosophy as a degree programme.
- iv. The study shall offer fresh insights into: the notion of philosophy, the conception of the 21<sup>st</sup> century philosopher and the fact about what contemporary philosopher study.

### **1.4. Methodology**

The method to be adopted for this study is simply the method of content analysis. All the conceptions pinned down for study shall be subjected to content analysis. However, critical and reconstructive methods of analysis in philosophy shall be adopted to analyze the basic arguments presented in support for the benefits of the philosophy programme. Other factors pertinent for advancing the aims and objectives of this paper shall also be analyzed.

## **2. UNIVERSITY DEGREES & JOB PROSPECTS FOR GRADUATES IN NIGERIA**

A close look at the trends of unemployment in Nigeria and in the world generally reveals that discussions of issues surrounding unemployment have become a major part of the debate and discussion among politicians and government officials in concerned countries. In Nigeria, a lot of these deliberations built up as the country approached the 2015 Presidential Elections season. The emphasis of the deliberations were centered less on the scarcity of jobs and more on the scarcity of unqualified graduates emerging from Nigerian Universities to take up the new trends of jobs that were created with innovations in technology and Information Communication Technology (ICT). This perhaps explains why each year, the number of unemployed graduates continues to increase. The Editor of (Business Day, 2015) corroborates this fact in their publication of 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2015:

...this easily explains why Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest labour force participation rate in the world, according to the ILO's 2015 employment trends report, estimated at 70.9% – compared with a global average of 63.5% in 2014. In addition, unemployment, at a rate just under 8% in 2014, is expected to remain stable across the region through to 2016. The youth-to-adult employment ratio is 1.9 – the lowest of all regions worldwide and without a doubt, Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rate of working poverty and vulnerable employment across all regions (Business Day, 2015:1).

Consequently, the rise in unemployment in Nigeria is traceable to graduates inability to identify on time, the career opportunities and the necessary skills they are expected to acquire in preparation for these jobs available to them by virtue of their vocational training and calling in the Universities. This problem has been identified as the problem of underemployment: "...while Nigeria continues to focus on reducing the unemployment rate, a bigger and more pertinent challenge of underemployment, continues to stare it in the face" (Business Day, 2015:4).

### **2.1. The General Expectations of Parents in Choosing a Career**

The reality of the rising number of graduates joining the unemployment and underemployment cadre every year, perhaps, is one of the strongest influences on parents and guardians who go out of their way to influence the choice of course and career which their children and wards settles for in life. While not entirely discrediting the move by parents and guardians who seek what is best for their children, and the once under their care, this study finds most of the efforts directed in this line, wanting since studies like the one conducted by (Omoegun and Buraimoh, 2000) clearly indicates that a large number of this forced choices, are also instrumental to the unnecessary anxiety and fear which now informs and influence the choice of career and academic pursuit which persons in the higher institutions of learning experience. The consequence of this is that most students graduate in disciplines they were not really cut out for. As a result, they unfortunately wind up in the rising group of the under-qualified, underemployed and unemployed cadre.

The fear and anxiety of not wanting to fail in preparing the next generation with all they need to excel and survive in life, has been identified as one of the main factors responsible for driving parents and guardians to the extremes as already highlighted above. Consequent on this fact, most parents influence their wards and children into pursuing careers likes Engineering, Medicine, Accounting, Law and Architecture. While admitting that these careers are laudable and distinguished in their own right, not everyone is intellectually and otherwise disposed to favorably and successfully pursue a career in these areas. By the time these students discover that they are not cutout for the choice of courses and degree programs they have put so much time and energy, to no avail, it becomes too late for most of them to make amends. Their next and perhaps only remaining option will either be to drop out of the programme or decide to settle for

a lesser demanding course so as to be able to graduate from the University. Most students who fall into this class never really recover from the poor experience they go through in the process. The end results of this class of dropouts and those who graduate in fields forced on them; tends to further populate the already teeming populations of the Unemployed and underemployed.

The truth however is, there are a whole lot of other careers and courses in the University outside the traditional Medicine, Accounting, Engineering, Law and Architecture degrees which parents and guardians tend to prefer; especially with the innovations in technology and ICT that is revolutionizing the world of work. There is therefore, an abundance of other careers and courses which are in fact, more honorable, distinguished and also have high income generating capacity. Some of the income which these new jobs and career generates even outweighs the income and prestige associated with the traditional degree and courses highlighted above. We shall be careful to highlight and discuss some of these courses in the next few pages.

## **2.2. Degrees with Lowest Potentials for Job Prospects in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Nigeria.**

Before we go all out to discuss those other degrees and courses with relatively high potentials for ensuring a very reasonable income and a good livelihood when chosen as a course of study – that is apart from those prestigious degrees and courses mentioned earlier to be in very high demand- this study will at this point, highlight some of the courses and degree programmes which have very low potential for securing meaningful employment in an economy like Nigeria.

The truth about degrees with potential for job prospects is that, there is really no specific degree *purses* that guarantees one a job in and by itself. However, considering the current economic and technological advancements and innovations which continue to take place in Nigeria, there are degrees you will be wise not to spend so much time and resources to acquire from Nigerian Universities. This is because the value attached to those areas of endeavor has gradually eroded in the face of modern innovations and advancements in the area. Another important factor worthy of note is the fact that not all degrees have equal value before the eyes of employers (Eze, 2013:1). To them, some of these degrees have become obsolete in the job market, as such; they are of little or no value; by value we mean that such degrees have less competitive advantage in the labour market of today. Where you discover you fall in the class of persons who have already acquired these class o degrees, you will need to perhaps put on your thinking cap with regards to knowing how you can increase the value of your degree at the verge of going out of relevance.

In the next few pages, we shall briefly discuss some of the courses and degrees which have been considered to have very low potential for securing any meaningful employment in Nigeria.

### *2.2.a. Degrees in the General Arts*

Degrees under the general arts include courses from art history to painting/sculpture, Dance, local languages and all other courses in this category. Having a degree in the arts several years

ago could fetch one a decent job in the western world. However, since after the depression, when most of the European economies are yet to recover from the strain on the economy, it has become very difficult for people who majored in areas like Archeology, Painting/ Fine Art, History and the likes to easily secure a job.

In Nigeria, the harsh economic situation largely translates to no opportunities for individuals who graduate from this category of courses and degrees. The only option left to them is to either set up their own private outfits, even though this option sounds unrealistic considering the very harsh climate of doing business in Nigeria. The other option would be to go back to the University and get higher degrees like a Master's and Doctorate Degree which will allow them teach in the disciplines in question.

### *2.2.b. Degrees in the Humanities and the Liberal Arts*

For those who delight in reflecting, thinking and dwelling on very sensitive issues of life's theories and existence or those who would prefer to analyze political theories and events, (Eze, 2013:3) believes that for such people with such aversions, "there may not be enough opportunities to do that in real life with a philosophy or political science degree and earn good money". This is because courses and degrees in the humanities such as Anthropology, philosophy, political science and other related courses; do not give graduates who possess them any specific in-road access to the employment market. This is because, unlike having a degree in one of the professional courses like in Engineering, Medicine, Law and in the Business fields, having a degree in any of the courses in the humanities does not really point to any specific career direction. Whatever opportunity available to the individuals bearing degrees from the Humanities discipline, they are often not clearly stated. This probably explains why many individuals holding Humanities degrees, find their way back to the academia. Nevertheless, making a career and headway from any of the degrees in the Humanities often requires additional plans and strategy from the individuals concerned.

### *2.2.c. Degrees in Education*

For individuals bearing education degrees, (Eze, 2013:4) argues that "Unless you are willing to take higher degrees and pursue teaching opportunities at higher levels of the education ladder, having an education degree is hardly going to get you the best jobs". This is because the results of a survey conducted a while ago revealed that the pay package for education degree holders; who teach in secondary schools across the country, are hardly worth the expenses incurred in acquiring the degree in Universities. Furthermore, when you remember that there are yet a host of other individuals who hold none B. Ed degrees, who are also battling for teaching jobs with those who are majors in the B. Ed disciplines, the reality of the situation becomes clearer. It has therefore been suggested that the only way individuals in the B. Ed discipline could really make a head way and a careers out of the discipline is to either acquire further higher degrees in the education discipline so they would be able to teach at higher levels and thus, earn more for



themselves in the education industry. The other way would be to entirely breakaway from the B. Ed discipline and acquire a higher degree in other disciplines with higher career prospects.

#### *2.2.d. Degrees In Religious Studies*

Considering the way churches are now spring up on every nook and cranny of the streets in our societies, manned by self-styled pastors with little or no education in the field, it would appear way out of line for youths of this dispensations to go into our Universities with the intent to spend hard earned resources in the university trying to acquire a degree in religion. Present realities will not present the holder of such degree with a bright career prospect. Even when individuals with degrees in Religion plunge in to open their own church by the corner of the street, etc. Eze, (2013:4) believes that “there are hardly any existing opportunities for you to explore if you have a religious studies degree and wish to exploit opportunities therein”. The only possible way out is when one becomes a Religious Educator or Instructor working in religious establishment. Even with that in the coffin, the picture it presents is usually not too appetizing.

#### *2.2.e. Degrees in Mass Communication*

The reality for this discipline is that there is a massive number of students from Nigerian Universities and abroad who now hold degrees in Mass Communication. It also means that the greater number of Nigerian youths still desiring to plunge into universities to acquire fresh degrees and perhaps also pursue a career in the field of mass Communication or in related fields, will really need to pray or lookout for better strategies which will make them excel in this discipline.

The reason for this is the increased introduction of media technology which has eaten deep into what used to be the foundations of Mass Communication degree holders. Professional reporters and Journalist now realize that the platform on which they stand has gradually been pulled off their feet by these innovations in technology and ITC. Bloggers and numerous writers and commentators on the web who know nothing about mass communication now seem to have taken over news reporting. Televisions, Magazines and Newspapers no longer hold the ace baton when it comes to information dissemination. It has therefore become very necessary for the mass of students still desiring to pursue a career in this field to understand the innovations taking place in the media and communication industry and acquire the right tools and skills that will make them more relevant after they graduate with their degrees in Mass Communication.

### **2.3. Career Guidance for Nigerian Students**

The sections just concluded above underscores the importance of making some comments about the essence and the place of career guidance to younger students desiring to pursue whatever field of endeavor they choose to pursue in the University. Our emphasis in this section shall be to focus on pertinent factors students need to consider before they chose a career. some of the factors to be discussed here include: interests, intelligence, aptitude, family background, etc.



### *2.3.a. Personal Interests*

Once personal interests is the expression of the desire to know or learn something. This interest could be something in which we concern ourselves. It could also be something that arouses our attention, curiosity or concern. Now since the interests of students differ from one subject area to another, it becomes wise for students to pursue courses and subject areas they discover they have more interests in. Thus, were you discover that you have interests in imparting knowledge to other people, you will do better to pursue a course in the academia and the teaching profession which will avail you the opportunity to continuously express that interest while earning a living from it.

### *2.3.b. Intelligence*

Intelligence refers to the ability to learn, perceive understand and to know things. Studies so far reveal that people differ in their capacity for intelligence. It is measured with the aid of the IQ test (Intelligent Quotient). Thus, intelligence comes in three different categories; there are people with the high, there are others with the average and those with low intelligent capacities. Intelligence is a very necessary requirement for attaining success in any field of endeavor, as such, any student desiring to excel in whatever discipline or career needs to first consider the capacity of his or her intelligence before embarking on the chosen field of career.

### *2.3.c. Aptitude*

Aptitude has also been perceived as skills, talents or gifts. It refers to the ability for one to excel in a programme after being trained. While some people have verbal aptitude: the ability to speak eloquently and are able to manipulate words to their advantage thereby convincing others about a point they wish to pass across, other have numerical aptitude which avails them the opportunity to excel in the ability to manipulate figures and other courses like mathematics and computer science. Students without this kind of aptitudes will be wise to stay away from all mathematically related and basic calculation based courses or career.

### *2.3.d. Family Background*

Most students possess high intellectual ability but due to poverty in the family, are not able to get formal education at all. Such persons may at times only receive a minimum level of education that will not satisfy them if given opportunities, unless such students get scholarship or sponsorship, they cannot aspire for certain careers that require a training in higher education. Students seeking whatever course or degree in the University, need to put this very important factor into consideration, as this very factor determines in most case, the choice of course, the choice of University or the career one could pursue. A poor preparation in most case will amount to unexpected termination of the student's career.

### *2.3.e. Academic Performance*

A good academic performance is measured by the degree or quantity of high grades which a student is able to obtain after every stage of learning and training in a University or any other institution of learning. Some studies or career require certain quality of grades in qualifying examinations before certain careers or profession can be chosen or embarked upon. Students seeking to advance their studies for instance, are expected to make grades like a 1<sup>st</sup> Class after their final examinations. Students who fall short of this expectations and lag behind in class in a particular course or disciplines have no business continuing in that choice of course. A student who continues to fail mathematics courses in school need not bother desiring to pursue a course in Engineering.

### *2.3.f Parental Influence*

As notes earlier, most parents in modern day societies tend to dictate the type of career their children or wards will chose at the end of the day. Consequently, many students have wasted time and resources battling to acquire a degree or a career chose for them by their parents, most of which fails to materialize in the long run. The enormity of the pain and frustration of failure is usually drastic and unbearable for some of the students in question. To this end, (Eze 2013:5) argues that "Parents could indeed guide their children and assist them in making a career choice but NOT enforcing their own wishes on them without considering the interest and personal ability of the child involved". Where students find their parents playing overt and domineering roles on these matters, they will be wise in trying by all means to promote, sell and pursue their personal and real life's ambitions and careers, irrespective of the influence their parents may exert on them. Other facts which, for want of space we will not be able to discuss in this paper include: Ability, Attitude, Working environment, Specific human needs; Prestige and Peer pressure.

## **3. THE PHILOSOPHY PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA**

Literally speaking, the direct interpretation of the term "philosophy" means, "the love of wisdom." In a more broad sense, philosophy is largely perceived as an activity people undertake when they seek to understand fundamental truths about themselves, the world in which they live in, and their relationships to the world and to each other. As an academic discipline, philosophy is much the same. Those who study philosophy are perpetually engaged in asking, answering, and arguing for their answers to life's most basic questions, largely divided into three traditional areas for precision and simplicity: Metaphysics, Epistemology, Ethics and Logic.

At Covenant University (CU), the study of the course philosophy, Logic and Human Existence consist of a wide range of rigorous investigations into the basic and fundamental issues in the highly esteemed discipline of philosophy Logic and the science of Human Existence. Since the study of philosophy continues to grow in these contemporary times, the team of faculty at CU is poised to investigating all the branches of the discipline with the view to further offer solutions to contemporary issues facing mankind, his quest to knowledge and his existence generally.

The rising relevance of this course to humanity generally, we perceive, is one of the main reason for its adoption by the National Universities Commission (NUC) as a prerequisite course that must be taken and passed by every student seeking a degree in any of the programmes or disciplines in all Nigerian University. It is thus the opinion of this paper that philosophy as a programme is the core catalyst which aids the attainment of the goals set aside by the various disciplines for Nigerian students.

### 3.1. General Misconceptions About Philosophy

There are several misconceptions about philosophy which, in the opinion of this paper, are erroneous and unfounded. One of such misconception is the claim that philosophy is difficult and troubling to understand. I shall in this section, show why this conception is not a true representation of what philosophy stands for.

A 19<sup>th</sup> century philosopher and literary genius Soren Kierkegaard, once wondered how everything in the world was constantly being made easier by man's inventions and latest innovations in technology etc. "How then can I make a difference" he thought "in a world where virtually everything has been made easy". "What there is left to make contributions to" he thought. After brooding over this thought for a while, an idea popped in his mind which reads:

...You must do something... since you cannot make anything easier than it has become, you must with the same humanitarian enthusiasm as the others, undertake to make something harder... Out of love for mankind and out of despair at my embarrassing situation, seeing that I had accomplished nothing and was unable to make anything easier than it had already been made, and moved by genuine interests in those who make everything easy, I conceived that it is my task to create difficulties everywhere (Kierkegaard, 1941:165-66).

This quotation will perhaps bring the following questions to mind: *Why should someone want to make life more difficult? In what ways can a Philosopher like Kierkegaard make life more difficult for his readers? More importantly, why would we want to read an author who takes making life difficult for his readers as a mission?* The truth is, when you give some thought to the questions in italics, you likely come to terms with the idea that those things that are cheap and come easy in life are usually those things that are worth little in the long run. A N50 note will easily get you a small pack of biscuits. A pack of biscuits is cheap to obtain, but its only value is a few unites of pleasure. On the other hand, a mother's labour pain brings forth a new life. The musician long and hard hours of practice brings forth musical perfection. The athlete's pain and determinations in training are rewarded with a medal of honour, In the case of each of the examples portrayed above; something of value was gained but only as a result of great difficulty and persistent efforts.

Perhaps Kierkegaard's point is that only by facing the really difficult issues in life will we gain something which is truly valuable. His mission therefore was to coax us, to irritate us and to provoke us into making the effort necessary to overcome our reticence to face fear, one of life's most difficult but rewarding tasks. For Kierkegaard, this activity is at the heart and soul of philosophy. Like many other strenuous but valuable activities, becoming a philosopher can involve intellectual labour pain, practice determination, and creative struggling. But philosophy obviously does not produce the tangible rewards of the sort enjoyed by the mother, musician or the athlete. The question therefore is; what then is the reward for doing philosophy?

According to Kierkegaard, what philosophy can give us is *self-understanding*. Self-understanding involves knowing who I really am apart from the mask I present to others, the social roles I fulfill or the labels and descriptions imposed on me by my society and my peers. It also involves understanding my beliefs and my values and being aware of why I act the way I do, including knowing whether my actions result from my own authentic choices or from taken-for-granted, unexamined assumptions or the influence of my culture.

At first glance, it would seem that self-understanding is something that everyone will desire given the opportunity. But for Kierkegaard, it was not only the important goal in life, it was also a most difficult goal to attain, as such, we are often tempted to avoid it. It is easier to be complacent, to be self-satisfied, and to stick with beliefs that are comfortable and familiar than to be painfully and fully honest with ourselves and to the subject of our deepest convictions to examinations (Lawhead, (2003:3).

You will recall that fitness centers promote the saying: 'No pain, No gain'. The same is true with the struggle to become a fully realized and actualized person. It is in this light that philosophy can be viewed as an 'Aerobics for the Human Mind.' In Kierkegaard days, every one professed to provide solutions to everyone else's problems. Kierkegaard, however, thought that the greatest contribution to his society would be to provide the problem to everyone's answers. Only in this way he thought will we be goaded into searching for those answers that are worthy of our beliefs. This response by Kierkegaard automatically provides us with one of the foremost definitions of philosophy: *Philosophy is the search for self-understanding*. The misconception about the discipline of philosophy as being a difficult, is really baseless and unfounded.

### **3.2. What is Philosophy?**

As earlier noted, the Greeks were identified to be the first to engage in the systematic enterprise of the pursuit of wisdom and knowledge (Wogu, 2010:1). They therefore considered anyone who partook or engages in this activity as a philosopher. By this thought, philosophy to them became the concern; among other things, the effort to respond the fundamental questions of life which include: what is the ultimate constituent of reality? How should we live? Is there a god? If god why evil.

The term literarily means ‘the love for wisdom’ (Lawhead, 2003:4). The first one to be called a philosopher is Pythagoras, a Greek who lived between 570 -495BC. While Pythagoras was the first to introduce the term, it was Socrates who popularized the term and made it famous. For Socrates, the philosopher is the one who had passion for wisdom and at the same time is intoxicated by this love. This definition makes quite a contrast with the image of the philosopher as being cold and analytical-sort of a walking and talking computer. In essence, philosophy is the love for wisdom. (Moore & Bruder, 2002:2).

### **3.3. What Philosophers Study**

Many people have no idea what philosophy is all about. This is because most times, the term philosophy often conjures up the images the image of a vague, fuzzy realm of irreducible subjective opinion. the common questions “what do philosopher study” does not seem to exist with other disciplines. For examples: Biologist study frogs, geologists study rocks while Historians study wars. The question then is, what part of the universe of the human body do philosophers study? One philosopher once attempted to give a very short answer to this questions when he responded thus; “Philosophy’s center is everywhere and its circumference nowhere” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964:128). The feature of philosophy can be made clear by comparing the sorts of questions asked by different disciplines with the sort of questions asked by philosophers in the main branches of philosophy: Logic, Epistemology, Metaphysics, Ethics, Political philosophy and Religion.

#### *a. The Area of Logic*

Psychology study how people think and the cause of people’s belief, whether their thinking is rational or not, philosophers in the same vein study how we ought to think if we are to be rational and seek to clarify the reasoning for holding a belief. The study of the principles for distinguishing correct from incorrect reasoning is the area of philosophy known as Logic.

#### *b. The Area of Epistemology*

While historians seek to increase our knowledge of civil wars and past events with the view to determine which of the events are most true, Philosophers ask what is knowledge? What is fact? What is truth? How can we know for certain that something is true or not? Therefore the questions regarding the fundamental source of knowledge etc are basically the confines of Epistemology.

#### *c. The Area of Metaphysics*

While Physicists study the ultimate constituents of reality such as atoms or neutrinos, philosophers ask: Is physical reality all that there is? Are all mental events brain events? Or is the mind something separate from the brain. All the questions in this category constitute what philosophers do in the field of metaphysics.

*d. Philosophy of Religion*

While the astronomer studies the laws that govern the starry skies and the heavenly bodies such as the stars, the moon and the sun, the philosopher on the other hand ask questions such as: is the existence and the nature of the universe self-explanatory, does it need an explanation of a divine creator that lies outside it? How do we account for the order in the world that makes things like science possible? Is the evidence of design enough evidence for the existence of a designer? Questions that fall into this category all depict what philosopher do in the field of religion.

*e. The Area of Ethics*

While the anthropologists study the moral codes of various societies, describing there similarities and differences in the process, the philosopher will rather ask: Are there any correct ethical values or are they all relative? Which ethical principle if any, are the correct ones. All questions that fall into this category are the preoccupations of philosophers in the ethical discipline.

*f. Political philosophy*

While political scientists study various forms of governments, the philosopher rather will ask: what make a government legitimate? What is justice? What is the proper extent of an individual freedom? What are the limits of governmental authority? Is disobeying the laws ever morally justified? Questions that falls within this category are basically the preoccupation of political philosophers.

## **4. JOB PROSPECTS FOR PHILOSOPHY GRADUATES**

### **4.1. The Philosophy Student**

From the directive given by the NUC, every student in the Nigerian University at some point or the other, engage effectively in the activity and study called philosophy. But does that make them full-fledged philosophy students? If not so, what are the qualities/factors which are typical of philosophy student?

The philosophy student is one who wholly embraces philosophy for what it is, by this we mean, one whose loves for knowledge and wisdom is driven by a force beyond him, a force to succeed in the quest to find meaningful solutions to the questions of life, existence and the universe. A philosophy student in this context is one who belongs to a specific known school of thought and is mentored by at least one philosopher and a philosophy from the said school of thought. University of Ibadan students are currently known to belong to the analytical school of thought while Covenant University students of philosophy are known to belong to the scientific school of thought. The proponents of these schools of thought must abide and live by the laws and principles which govern these schools as history recorded in the case of the students of the Pythagorean School of thought.



#### 4.2. The Edge The Philosophy Student Has

Philosophers and philosophy students have been frequently asked the question: what is the practical value of philosophy. In other words, what edge do the philosopher or philosophy student have over none philosophers or philosophy students. Without being too assertive about the response we wish to make here concerning the value and the edge which philosophers and philosophy students have over their counterparts in other disciplines, let us start by noting that The American Philosophy Association has identified four pertinent skills that one who studies philosophy acquires as a skill and an edge over none philosophy major students.

- a. A general problem solving skills:
- b. Enhanced communication skills.
- c. Persuasive powers for argumentative discussions.
- d. Enhanced writing skills.

Let us be quick to note that these skills are very important in every discipline as well as in high level career. to this end, studies have repeatedly shown that philosophy major students do more than average on admission test for law schools, medical schools and the graduate programs in Business Administration, to name but a few. Furthermore, in an economy that is based on the analysis of information, the skills of analytical reasoning, critical reading, effective writing and conceptual analysis become very essential, a skill on cannot do without. Persons (students) who therefore possess a wealth and a reservoir of these skills are naturally preferred above those who possess little or none of these requisite skills for addressing daily life issues and challenges. To corroborate this point, The New York Times Career Planner reports: “Philosophy is one fundamental area of study that has found a new role in the high-tech world” (Fowler, 1987). The fact here is that the philosophy student, by virtue of his training, has acquired a conceptual lens for looking at the world, asking questions that no one else thought to ask, discover creative answers to age-old answers and weave new patterns out of the threads of human experience.

In a nut shell, the Philosophy student/philosopher will develop reasoned arguments, will communicate effectively; also will have the ability to speak, think and write more clearly. They are known to **have more creative and original solutions** to problems than their counterparts from every other discipline, as such; they can easily analyze complex problems as well as examine problems systematically. Also, philosophers tend to learn to be empathetic and also understand related disciplines (SUCCESSCDS.NET, 2015).

While philosophy can give you practical skills that can be applied to a wide range of tasks in schools and in your chosen careers, the most important benefit of studying philosophy is the change it can make in your own growth as a person. Hence the questions about the practical value of philosophy should not be framed as “what can I do with philosophy”.it should rather be framed as “what can philosophy do with me” (Lawhead, 2003:9). Prude University puts it thus:



...in philosophy, we do not train people (students) to be lawyers, doctors, business leader... we train them to be *better* lawyers, *better* doctor, *better* business leaders and to *better* practitioners in general. So in response to the question of what type of career the philosophy students goes on to pursue?... this is like asking what kind of sport well trained athletes compete in. The simple answer, in both cases, anything they want! This is because philosophy graduates are strong in the areas of reasoning and problem solving; the employment opportunities are virtually limitless (Prude University, 2015).

### 4.3. Philosophy Career Scope

Philosophy is one of those subjects which offer one too many choices to the students opting for it. Students who complete their education with a Bachelor's or Master's degree in Philosophy will be eligible to working in quite a number of avenues, both in their home country or abroad. Jobs easily come in handy in many sectors ranging from specialized areas as in Human Resources (HR) outfits, Become an interviewer, Become a consultant, working in the student affairs division, working in the public service, journalism, research, law, diplomacy, insurance, etc.

Students, who after graduation, still have an aversion for research, can opt for teaching jobs in research institutes, Universities and in colleges of education as their contribution will be immense in these areas. Those who desire to acquire higher education in the field of philosophy could do so in the following areas: Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy; Bachelor of Arts (Honors) in Philosophy, Master of Arts in Philosophy, Master of Arts (Honors) in Philosophy, Master of philosophy in Philosophy, Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy.

To be more specific, because philosophy prepares the student with the ability to think, question what is being thought, which leads to finding new answers and drawing new conclusion, this type of skills become special and in high demand in virtually every sector of endeavor. The training in philosophy makes you a prime candidate for a variety of positions requiring someone with strong intellectual base and abilities. For a philosophy degree holder, five career options stand out. They are some of the specific areas that greatly demands the service of philosophy graduates: The Lawyer in legal institution; The philosophy teacher in the academia, The Political Scientists, The Research assistant in the Universities and the Government Analyst

- a. **The lawyer:** With philosophy major getting some of the best scores in the LSAT examinations for entry into law school, such students are best suitable to apply logics, reasoning and argumentative skills to become one of the best in the legal business.
- b. **The Philosophy Teacher:** This is one of the jobs that allow you continue doing the work and research you loved as a student. Nurture the next generation of **Philosophers** by educating university students on how to think, while at the same time researching and publishing your own philosophical thoughts.

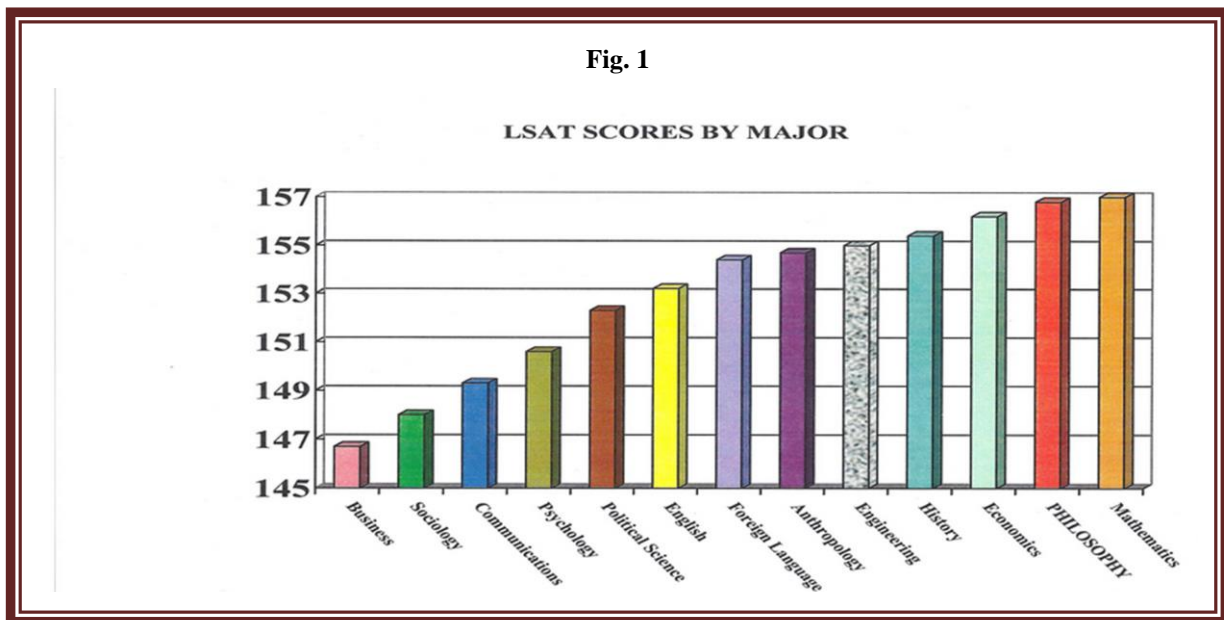
- c. **Political Scientists:** In this career, the philosophy graduate is able to test the theories and ethics of a political system with the tools of logic. He/she is thus able to do either of the following: working as a researcher, consultant, teacher or political analysts who brings light into political issues and problems of everyday life.
- d. **Research Assistant:** A job as a research assistant avails the philosophy graduate at this level o be able to search outside the box for answers to questions bothering on reality and on any other area of concern. This level of career brings the student in contact with University professors in research institutions embarking on fundamental research.
- e. **Government Analyst:** A position readily found in all aspects of government, the analyst is able to look closely at the way things are being run, and find a better way to do them better through empirical and analytic research and investigations (Insidejobs, 2013:2)

**4.4. Performance Rating for Philosophy Students /Graduates**

In this section, the study shall attempt to present rankings, facts, figures and reports about the general outlook and performance rating of philosophy major and graduates students in general examinations all over the world, alongside their counterparts from other disciplines.

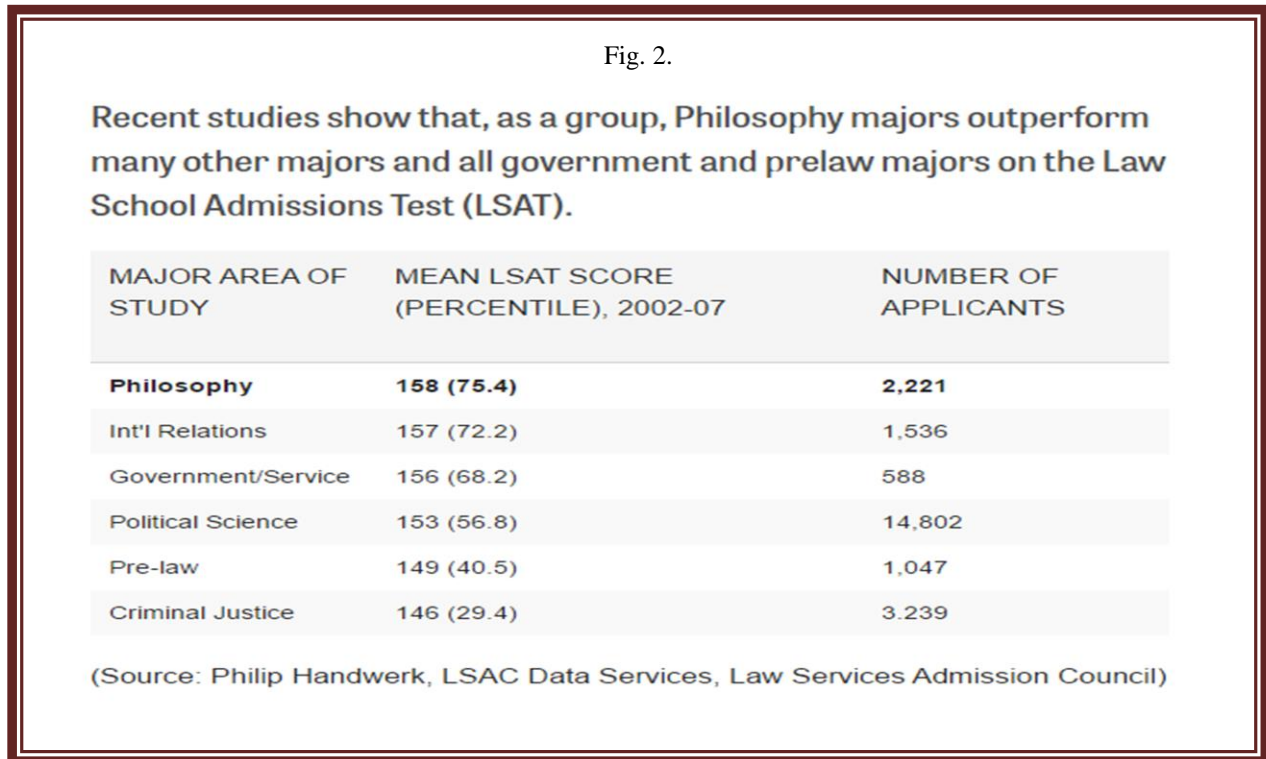
A very recent report released by the University of Akron UA, in 2014 shows how philosophy students excelled comparably with mathematics and physics students in an international examination (LSAT) for admitting law students; See charts in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 below:

Data from the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) shows that Philosophy majors outperformed all of the other most popular pre-law and humanities majors. On average, Philosophy students scored 156.8. Mathematics majors scored just slightly higher (University of Akron, 2014).



<http://www.uakron.edu/philosophy/careers/philosophy-law-school-lsat.dot>

In another similar report: <http://www.kent.edu/philosophy/interested-career-law> the under listed records were obtained:



These Links are sites containing similar reports to show the impressive reports and ranking of philosophy students and graduates all over the world:

- i. **The American Philosophy Association published in 2013:**  
[http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.apaonline.org/resource/resmgr/Data\\_on\\_Profession/Philosophy\\_performance\\_on\\_LS.pdf](http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.apaonline.org/resource/resmgr/Data_on_Profession/Philosophy_performance_on_LS.pdf)
- ii. **London Times article on Philosophy as a modern discipline:**  
<http://www.cbu.ca/academics/philosophy-religious-studies/careers/think-on>
- iii. **The Guardian News UK Reports:**  
<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2007/nov/20/choosingadegree.highereducation>

Among some of the reports captured and presented by the Guardian News, the under listed report titled: "I think, Therefore I Earn" might interest you:

The Higher Education Careers Services Unit (Heccsu), which also collates data of this kind, agrees philosophers are finding it easier to secure work. Its figures show that, in 2001, 9.9% of philosophy graduates were unemployed six months after graduation. In 2006, just 6.7% were. On average, 6% of all graduates were unemployed six months after graduation. In 2001, 9.3% of philosophy graduates were in business and finance roles six months after graduation. In 2006, 12.2% were. In 2001, 5.3% were in marketing and advertising six months after graduation. In 2006, 7.3% were. It is particularly significant that the percentage finding full-time work six months after graduation has risen, since the number of philosophy graduates has more than doubled between 2001 and 2006. In 2001, UK universities produced 895 graduates with a first degree in the discipline; in 2006, they produced 2,040. (Shepherd, 2007:2)

With this current trend and report on the abilities of philosophers and philosophy graduates generally, I dare say that there is no stopping now for philosophy graduates of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. All they just need to do now is to ‘think that they may earn...’ (Shepherd, 2007:1).

## **5. THE PHILOSOPHER AND THE ACADEMIA**

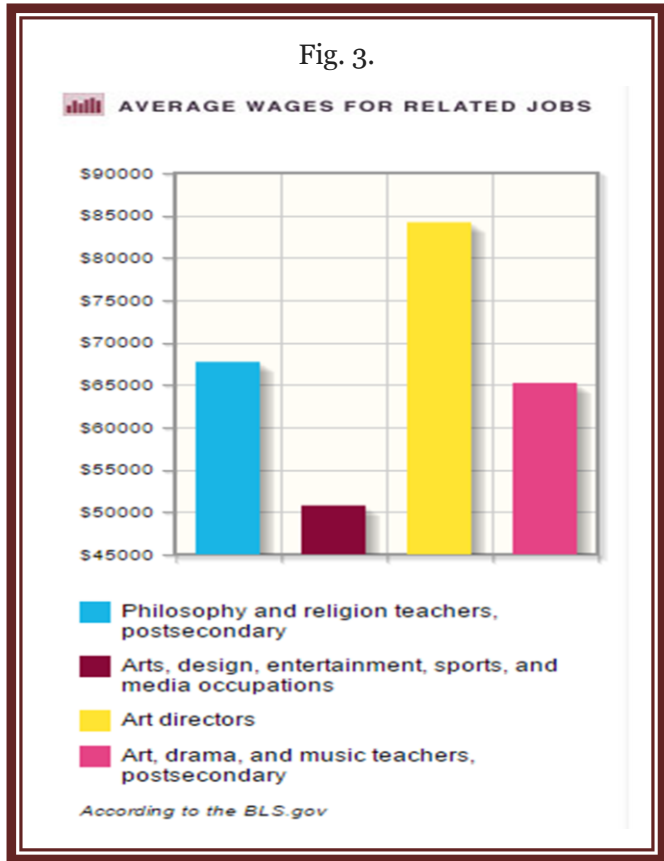
### **5.1. The Life of A Philosophy professor.**

For the purpose of this study, a survey was carried out to identify the job prospects for the philosophers in the academia. The entry in this section is a summary of some of the findings gathered as results from the survey.

Most of the respondent’s interviewed on the above subject noted that the working environment in philosophy and for philosophers generally is good. The school environment may vary from one school to the other, as is the case with privately owned institution which falls into two categories, the for-profit and the non -profit organizations and the government owned schools. Majority of the privately owned institutions considered for the study are faith based organizations either managed by Christians or Muslims. These faith based institutions were discovered to have a different structure and work-ethic put in to their institutions which has greatly impacted on the kind of results and goals they are able to obtain at the end of the day. One of such faith based institution investigated for this study is Covenant University, Ota in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Majority of the respondents from the faith based institutions were of the opinion that the work environment and working as a philosophy professor in institutions of learning is generally, a very positive experience. This arguably, is due to the fact that the job of the professor is rated at No 2 among job rankings in America (LaBossiere, 2007:2).

Typically, a professor has an office that might be shared or private and teaches in various classrooms. Schools vary greatly in assigned responsibilities. A privately owned University might require 4-6 classes a semester, but have no other expectations. A major research University might require 1-2 classes a semester, but expect committee work in research, professional service, and mentoring younger academics on the Ph. D programme. In all, the work load is not unreasonable relative to the salary. Starting salary in a tenure line ranges from N367,779.00 - N484,218.00 for Associate Professors and N446,381.00 – N581,964.00 for full Professors. It is important to note that a lot of other factors go into what each professor takes home at the end of the day. Interestingly, prestigious schools do not always pay more than privately owned Universities. For example, a friend of mine, a Professor in a Public and Federal University, with Ph. D makes about N432,467.00 per month, while another Professor with PhD, and the same number of years and experience etc., makes about N521,705.00 per month in a nearby privately owned University. The existence of Unions tends to be a major factor which influences these differences in wages. Public schools in strong union states, in this wise, tend to pay well.



The chart in Fig. 3 above captures the average statistical data of wages/salaries for related jobs in the US. It is clear from the wage structure of the individual professions in the chart that philosophy and religious teachers' wages are seen to be the second best in the chart and for the country in question. So in all, the life of a professor - by this we means those who takes up teaching and research appointments in Universities - could be more interesting than most persons have perceived in the past.

## 5.2. Conclusion

Generally, the job outlook of a philosopher is something that could be described as variable. In 2002 when I was looking for a teaching appointment, the job market for philosophers was not interesting at all. The standard job listing for philosophers then was published by The American Philosophy Association and was then called Job for Philosophers because it was so thin due to

the small number of jobs and the few numbers of Universities available at that time. In 2008, Nigeria had about 92 Universities (NUC, 2008), distributed between the federal, state and the private sector. Now that more Universities have been approved by the NUC, which brings the total numbers of Nigerian Universities to about 180 Universities (NUC, 2015; Ozovehe, 2015), in the space of just 7 years and coupled with the improved and thriving economy of the country, the job market for philosophers, especially those with Ph. D's, have become very lucrative and interesting. This rise in the number of Institutions awarding degrees in Nigeria has placed a demand for philosophy teachers all over Nigeria. Since there are very few teachers with Ph. D's, philosophers are now able to negotiate their working conditions and take home package at the end of the month.

Overall, being a philosophy professor is a good job that pays reasonably well. The opportunities have been quite good in recent years-relative to when I obtained a Masters' degree in philosophy 2002.

## Notes & References

1. Bunting, Joe. (2012). Three Ways To Leave a Good Legacy in a Broken World. Online text. <http://storycartel.com/blog/good-legacy/>
2. Stovall, Jim. (2012). *The gift of a Legacy...* in Joe Bunting. <http://storycartel.com/blog/good-legacy/>
3. Omoegun and Buraimoh, (2000): “Career Guidance for Nigerian Students”, Online text. p. 2.
4. Business Day, (2015). Employment in Nigeria: Unemployed or Underemployed. online text. P. 1. <http://businessdayonline.com/2015/05/employment-in-nigeria-unemployed-or-underemployed/#>
5. Eze, A. (2013). 5 Worst degrees with lowest potential for employment in Nigeria. Online [http://www.academia.edu/8240602/Worst\\_Degrees\\_With\\_Lowest\\_Potential\\_for\\_Employment\\_in\\_Nigeria](http://www.academia.edu/8240602/Worst_Degrees_With_Lowest_Potential_for_Employment_in_Nigeria)
6. Kierkegaard, Soren. (1941). *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Trans David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie. Princeton: Princeton University Press. pp. 165-166.
7. Lawhead F. W. (2003). *The Philosophical Journey: An Interactive Approach*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. McGraw Hill Higher Education. New York. p. 3.
8. Wogu, I. A. (2010). *A Preface to Logic, Philosophy and Human Existence*. Pumak Nigeria Limited. p. 1.
9. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1964). “Everywhere and Nowhere” in Signs, trans Richard C. McCleary. Evanston Ill.: North Western University Press. p. 128.
10. Fowler, E. (1987). *The New York times Career Planner*. New York Random House.
11. Insidejobs, (2013). Philosophy Degree: 5 Careers Options Online. <http://www.insidejobs.com/articles/philosophy-degree-5-career-options>. p. 2.
12. Prude University, (2015). “Value of a Philosophy Degree”: Career Options. Online Text. <http://webs.purducal.edu/philosophy/career-options/>.
13. Shepherd, Jessica. (2007). ‘I think, therefore I earn’ The Guardian News UK. Online. <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2007/nov/20/choosingadegree.highereducation>
14. LaBossiere, Michael. (2007). Philosophy Professor/Profession. Posted in Philosophy, Universities & Colleges on June 5, 2007. A philosopher’s Blog. <https://aphilosopher.wordpress.com/2007/06/05/philosophy-professorprofession/>
15. NUC, (2015) List of Nigerian Universities and Year Founded. Online text. [http://www.nuc.edu.ng/pages/universities.asp?ty=1&order=inst\\_name](http://www.nuc.edu.ng/pages/universities.asp?ty=1&order=inst_name).
16. NUC, (2008). List of Nigerian Universities and Year Founded. Online. [https://www.unilorin.edu.ng/nuc/list\\_of\\_approved\\_private\\_univers.htm](https://www.unilorin.edu.ng/nuc/list_of_approved_private_univers.htm)
17. Ozovehe, Timothy. (2015). See Number of Applicants Per University, 2015/2016 Jamb UTME Application in Unilag Admission Guide.com, Online. <http://unilagadmissionguide.com/2015/02/12/see-number-of-applicants-per-university-20152016-jamb-utme-application/>