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Article

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ENDOGENOUS MORALITY AND THE CHALLENGE OF GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY IN AFRICA

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Abstract

Graduate unemployment has been a perennial problem in most African countries over the years. Several factors have been attributed to the lingering problematic of increasing rates of unemployment in African economies, which include the lack of employability-enhancement training programs in several African tertiary institutions, most especially in the universities. The problem of unemployment is further compounded by the poor cultivation of soft skills such as work ethic, which can further promote such values as professionalism, integrity, accountability, trust, motivation, punctuality and so on, amongst university graduates. Beyond the poor cultivation of work ethic amongst university graduates, the western-centric nature of university education curriculum in Africa marginalizes endogenous moral systems that should promote certain virtues and values embedded in African culture, such as the Yoruba *Omólúàbí* doctrine and the Xhosa *Ubuntu* philosophy. This paper also observes that the 'ideal employee' can be considered to be a person of moral character, from the standpoint of virtue ethics, as well as on the basis of African endogenous moral frameworks. The paper adopts the method of conceptual and critical analysis in studying the relationship between endogenous morality, work ethic and university employability amongst African graduates. The paper contends that the cultivation of work ethic and its attendant principles and values is crucial for achieving the employability of university graduates in Africa. Therefore, individuals who possess strong work ethic can be considered as the 'ideal employees', due to the fact that they possess the drive for success, which propels them to achieve goals being set for them by employers.

Keywords: Graduate, University, Work Ethic, Employability, Ideal Employee, Endogenous Morality.

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Introduction

Unemployment has been a perennial problem in most African states, with an estimated average of 34 million persons being unemployed as at 2019 on the African continent (Mohamedbhai, 2015). The problem of unemployment is often associated with poverty, low income levels, poor living conditions and other ripple economic effects. Graduate unemployment is also a prevalent problem in contemporary African countries, which involves the low level of graduate engagement in fully paid employment in Africa. There are several factors often considered to be responsible for graduate unemployment in Africa, they include a significantly low level of graduate employability, rapidly declining interests in skilled work, lack of adequate enabling environment for skill and knowledge development, poor skill utilization and self-development cultures, poor soft-skill development and lack of employability enhancement programs in African universities amongst others. The sub-Saharan African region is replete with the lowest level of higher education enrollment, which is a major factor that contributes to its relatively high graduate unemployment rates. The realization of the importance of education to social and economic development has led African states to improve access to higher education. However, increased access to higher education has spurred an unforeseen problem, which is that of drastically increasing levels of graduate unemployment across the continent, most especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. The problem of graduate unemployment is largely precipitated by increasing number of graduates being turned out on yearly basis, with limited employment opportunities.

This paper observes that graduate unemployment in African states is partly a resultant effect of poor cultivation of soft skills amongst African graduates, one of which is positive work ethic. We thereby contend that work ethic, being a disposition towards maintaining appropriate and positive conduct within the context of the workplace is crucial to the improvement of graduate or university employability in Africa. The idea of work ethic itself is captured in certain African endogenous moral precepts and principles, such as the *Ubuntu* and *Omólúàbí* philosophies. Both *Ubuntu* and *Omólúàbí* emphasize the importance of honesty, truth-fullness, loyalty, respect, empathy, support in one's relations with others. This study shall thereby discuss the problematic of graduate unemployment in Africa, while engaging in a conceptual analysis of the idea of work ethic. The Fundamental values of an ideal work ethic shall also be explored, while discussing the 'ideal employee' from the standpoint of virtue ethics. African endogenous principles of morality shall also be brought to the fore in order to encourage their revitalization from colonial imperialism and facilitate their careful articulation into formal University education curriculum on the continent. The crust of this paper is how African countries can harness the principles of positive work ethic, inherent in endogenous moral values and principles, towards achieving graduate employability in Africa.

The Problem of Graduate Unemployment in Africa

Petronella Jonck avers that graduate unemployment is globally attributed to the global economic recession of 2008 and the expansion of access to higher education (Jonck, 2014). According to the African Capacity Building Foundation, youth unemployment in Africa remains higher than that of the rest of the world, despite being home to the world's highest population of young people (The African Capacity Building Foundation 2016; 1). Graduate unemployment, like several other problems bedeviling Africa is tied to the experience of European colonialism and imperialism on the continent, which resulted in the gradual neglect of traditional systems of economic administration and endogenous moral values and

principles, which animated economic life in pre-colonial Africa (The African Capacity Building Foundation 2016; 1). While colonialism seems to have ended in Africa, coloniality still subsists in most African states (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013; 16) – a situation that is evident in the infusion of wage employment, industrialization and other indices of capitalism left behind by colonialism. The disconnection between Western educational paradigm and curriculum introduced by the colonizers and the precinct traditional economic systems and endogenous values operational in pre-colonial Africa, also further exacerbates the problem of graduate unemployment on the continent. The brain drain syndrome also represents another factor responsible for the problem of graduate unemployment in Africa, as being evident in the emigration of African graduates to other countries in search of better job opportunities. However, it is important to note that graduates are not a homogenous group (Graham et al., 2019, 361), as there are certain nuances that define the disproportionate rates of unemployment amongst graduates, such as holders of post-secondary school certifications, like National Diplomas, Lower and Higher University degrees. African states are being confronted with the problem of graduate unemployment in recent decades, owing to several factors, which include low graduate employability profiles, poor soft-skill development in the universities, poor or inadequate infrastructure and resources for career development, as well as little or no emphasis on the cultivation of work ethic by graduates. The perennial problematic of graduate unemployment in Africa is partly attributed the over-emphasis on increasing access to university or higher education without adequate financial, physical and human resources to effectively and efficiently produce graduates who are qualified to occupy the labour force.

Alarudeen Aminu characterizes the problem of graduate unemployment in Nigeria by stating that “an estimated 2.5 million new labour force enters the nation’s labour market every year with 60% (1.5 million) of the new entrants being youths (including graduates) who possess only paltry job experience and skills (Adesugba & Mavrotas, 2016a) ... While job creation in the labour market is split between the formal and informal segments, a higher percentage of the job creation resides in the latter segment” (Aminu, 2019; 114). Aminu further gives a breakdown of the distribution of job creation between the formal and informal segments of the Nigerian labour market, with 5% of new jobs being generated by the public sector, while 33% is generated by the private sectors, both representing the formal segment of the labour market. The remaining 62%, representing the bulk of newly created jobs is traceable to the informal sector, which is often regarded as being less organized and structured (Dablen, et al., 2000). The problem of graduate unemployment in the Nigerian case is traceable to two main factors, the first of which is the high rate of skill acquisition amongst Nigerian university graduates, as well as the ever increasing level of graduate turnouts by Nigerian universities. The second factor responsible for the high rate of graduate unemployment in Nigeria is the mismatch between the skills acquired by graduates and those required by the labour market (Aminu, 2019; 115).

The trio of Andrew Dablen, Bankole Oni and Olatunde Adekola in their co-authored study associated the problem of graduate unemployment in Nigeria to the ever-increasing dissatisfaction of labour employers with the quality of Nigerian graduates, most especially as it pertains to skills mismatch. They conclude that there is a mismatch between university training and the needs of the labour market, while asserting that university graduates are poorly trained and unproductive on the job, with poor written and oral communication skills (Dablen et al., 2000). The typical Nigerian situation reflects private and public universities both sacrificing quality for quantity in terms of student enrollment and graduate rollout

annually. The qualifications being awarded by these universities are adversely impacted by the proliferation of graduates without paying due attention to expertise. Employers operating in the contemporary global public and private sectors pay more emphasis on qualities such as competencies often regarded as “soft skills”, such as work ethic, professionalism, interpersonal skills, effective communication and the likes.

Graduate unemployment in South Africa is relatively low, compared to most African countries, such as Egypt, Morocco and Algeria, to mention a few (Graham et al., 2019; 361). South Africa’s degree graduates are reported to only face an 8% risk of being unemployed, compared to individuals with only a school-leaving certificate who have a 55% chance of being unemployed (Van Broekhuizen & Berg, 2016.) Due to the high skill preference in South Africa, graduates are mostly sought after in the labour market, which is heavily contrasted with the situation in other developing economies in Africa, where there has been rapid growth in higher education without the requisite growth in jobs demanding higher education skills to absorb graduates (Graham et al., 2019; 361). However, Lauren Graham, leilanie Williams and Charity Chisoro, attribute the subsisting rate of graduate unemployment in South Africa to skills mismatch (Graham et al., 2019; 361) – a situation that is similar to other economies in Africa. Having discussed the current trends in graduate unemployment in Africa, with specific recourse to the cases of Nigeria and South Africa, it is pertinent to address certain approaches to the facilitation of graduate employability in Africa in the following section.

Approaches to the Facilitation of Graduate Employability in Africa

Work Ethic: A Conceptual Analysis

The idea of work ethic encapsulates several dimensions, as it was first developed by Max Weber. According to Max Weber, work ethic is associated with seven dimensions, which include “leisure, Wasted Time, Self-Reliance, Work Centrality, Delay of Gratification, Belief in Hard Work, and morality/Esteem. This characterization is referred to as the Multidimensional Work Ethic Profile by David Miller. Leisure is often described as total time minus working time, which refers to the amount of non-working time (Feldman & Hornik, 1981). In the context of work ethics, leisure orientation is being often emphasized, as it deals with the importance placed by individuals on leisure or non-work activities. Individuals with strong work ethic often display a high level of passion for their jobs and are ready to positively contribute to organizational productivity. As regards the characterization of work ethics as wasted time, the idea of wasted time as being used here refers to a high level of commitment to time management, which involves the planning and organizing of time use to achieve time efficiency. Therefore, the efficient and constructive use of time is associated with a strong work ethic (Harman, 2002; 65).

Work ethic as self-reliance involves individuals who are just nursing their careers who need to build a high level of self-dependence, due to the fact that they will be more closely observed than professionals who are already established in their careers. Self-reliance becomes more prominent in the contemporary global working context characterized by weakening long-term commitments between employers and individual employees. Self-reliance within the context of work ethic refers to the exhibition of a strong propensity for self-expression, desire for more responsibility and self-relevance (Taylor & Thompson, 1976). Work ethic as centrality of work deals with the orientation that work should be held with a high level of importance, based on the premium placed by an individual on the opportunity to work. The centrality of work as being described here goes beyond the mere need for compensation and reflects the pursuit of self-identification. In certain climes, it is being said

that there is dignity in labour and this is a reflection of the premium placed on work centrality. Delay of gratification is a form of work ethic which deals with the desire to forego short-term rewards for future career benefits (Joy & Witt, 1992). Delay in gratification is a determination to suspend present gains for the achievement of long-term goals which are often associated with a career pursuit. A person who entertains a delay in gratification is often tied to a sustained course of action over a long period of time.

In the context of work ethic, hard work refers to the assumption that a successful career is only achieved through a commitment to the value and importance of work. Individuals who have strong commitment to hard work believe they can overcome any obstacle in the course of their careers, while achieving personal goals and career progression. Individuals who have tendencies displaying hard work have a drive for achieving personal objectives such as desire for career success and wealth (Miller et al., 2002; 451). The work ethic dimension to be emphasized most in the context of this paper is morality or ethics. Morality, by its etymology refers to *moralis*, while ethics refers to *ethos*. Both morality and ethics when loosely translated from their Latin terms refer to issues involving “character, customs and behavior” (Miller et al., 2002; 452). Morality involves the set of acceptable standards of determining good behaviour in a social context, while ethics refers to the study of moral principles. In the context of work ethic, morality and ethics are combined to refer to the belief in a moral behaviour or practice (Miller et al., 2002; 452). In this paper, we shall adopt notion of work ethic which encapsulates the seven dimensions being discussed above, which implies that our subsequent discussions on work ethic will include leisure, Wasted Time, Self-Reliance, Work Centrality, Delay of Gratification, Belief in Hard Work, and morality/Esteem. In the following section of this paper, we shall discuss the fundamental values which constitute an ideal work ethic.

The Fundamental Values of an Ideal Work Ethic

The idea of an ideal work ethic precludes certain essential values, which serve as the basis of the beliefs, behaviours and conducts which reflect a work ethic orientation. The values that are often associated with an ideal work ethics include dependability and responsibility, adaptability, self-motivation, motivation to grow and learn, honesty and integrity, possession of a positive attitude and professionalism. These values constitute the expected behaviour of an employee with the ideal work ethic. Dependability and responsibility involve the duty of an employee to perform his or her tasks and job assignments in the most efficient manner possible, by updating employers on expected changes early enough, showing a high level of accountability and being punctual at work. An employee who possesses the ideal work ethic is expected to show adaptability to the personal and work habits of co-workers and superiors at the workplace. An ideal work ethic involves possessing interpersonal and team work skills, which reflect adaptability. An ideal ethic also involves the possession of self-motivation, which requires employees to function effectively and efficiently with limited supervision. Employees who possess the ideal work ethic are expected to require few commands and direction before completing a task. An employee who possesses an ideal work ethic is expected to exhibit a high level of motivation for self-growth and career development. There is a requirement by employees operating in the contemporary global business environment for employees who seek for new developments and information in their fields. The Ideal work ethic involves learning new techniques, methods, skills or theories, which facilitates professional growth. An ideal work ethic requires the possession of honesty and integrity, based on the belief that an employee

should uphold the truth and display fairness and transparency in the discharge of his or her duties in the workplace. The possession of a positive attitude is an essential requirement of an ideal work ethic, which demands that an employee should perform in a way that motivates others to function effectively and efficiently. A positive work attitude also involves being passionate about the job and showing a high sense of commitment. An employee who exhibits an ideal work ethic is expected to display a high level of professionalism, which involves performing premium work and being detail-oriented in the discharge of one's duties. Being professional involves paying attention to detail and acting in an ethical manner at work.

The Ideal Employee from the Standpoint of Virtue Ethics: Establishing the Ethical Foundation of African Endogenous Moral Principles

Virtue ethics is an ethical theory which is often associated with Aristotle, an Ancient Greek philosopher. The focus of virtue ethics is placed on areatic notions, such as what is "good" or what is "excellent", rather than deontic notions, which involve obligation, ought, right, and moral wrong (Slot, 2004). According to virtue ethics, morality essentially revolves around inner factors, such as character and motive, rather than producing good results or having to conform to moral principles. Virtue ethicists uphold the position that the character of the individual should be used as a standard for determining the moral status of his or her actions. A virtuous character is not automatically formed, but is as a result of habitual action and practice which is cultivated overtime. Virtue and moral character are relevant in the contemporary global social life and business environment due to the fact that they provide "the wisdom necessary for applying rules in particular instances" (Hinman, 2006). The concept of 'virtue' is coined from the Ancient Greek word *arete*, which implies 'excellence' or "virtue" (Hursthouse, 2003). According to Aristotle, "All actions aim at a good" (Gensler et al., 2004), as such, all human aspirations, pursuits and particular actions are directed towards achieving a particular good. This implies that the 'good', for Aristotle, refers to the object at which everything aims. The good can be expressed in different forms, according to the various aspirations and objects at which people direct their actions. For instance, the good in medicine could involve saving lives, while the good in law could mean promoting justice.

For Aristotle, the highest good achievable by man is *eudaimonia*, which implies happiness, well-being, flourishing and success. For Aristotle, *eudaimonia* is "an activity of the soul according to complete excellence/virtue over a complete life" (Aristotle, 2004; 345). For Aristotle, virtue is not only a state of character, but a state of character that makes a good man and which prompts him to perform excellently in his work (Aristotle, 2004; 345). Aristotle goes further to emphasize that there is a mean to be sought for in-between two variables, which are excess and defect. As such, for Aristotle, there is excess, defect and the intermediate in every human action and passion. He thereby advises that we should seek to maintain the intermediate in all our endeavours, while avoiding excess and defect. It is by so doing that a man can achieve a virtuous and happy life. For instance, working too much and working too less can negatively impact a person's effectiveness in the workplace. Likewise, such experiences as confidence and fear, pity and anger, pain and pleasure and so on, may be felt excessively or too little by anybody, which are evil in both cases. As such, maintaining the intermediate between overworking and underworking helps achieve our desired goals, which should be based on the pursuit of happiness (*somum bonum*). Thus, Aristotle asserts that "a master of any art avoids excess and defect, but seeks the intermediate and chooses

this” (Aristotle, 2004; 345). As such, the person with a virtuous character aims at the intermediate between excess and defect in his actions and passions. Therefore, from the standpoint of virtue ethics, the ideal employee is the individual who possesses a virtuous character, based on his ability to behave or act ethically in accordance with personal moral principles. The ideal employee should be able to avoid acting excessively and behaving defectively, but is required to aim at the mean between excess and defect, to achieve happiness and self-realization. Due to its emphasis on moral character, Aristotle’s ethics serves as a theoretical foundation for explicating African endogenous morality.

African Endogenous Principles of Morality

African endogenous morality captures the moral values, principles and practices that are deeply rooted in the cultural backgrounds of the African people. However, these endogenous moral values and principles are shaped by continent’s diverse cultural heritage. To guide against ‘unanimism’ it is pertinent to note that there is no single or unanimous endogenous morality in Africa, but what obtains are the diverse moral systems, incorporating the values, principles and norms being acceptable in various African cultural backgrounds. African endogenous moral systems share certain commonalities that are sufficient for us to conceive of an endogenous morality on the continent, which include the emphasis on community orientation, solidarity and interconnectedness. African endogenous morality is based on the ontological framework of the African people, which is predicated on a holistic framework, emphasizing the interconnectedness of human, spiritual and natural realms. Endogenous moral principles in Africa are community-oriented, as they prioritize the well-being of the community over individual interests, respect for elders, due to their wisdom, experience and role in transmitting cultural values across generations and the importance of tradition.

Instances of endogenous moral systems in Africa include the *Ubuntu* philosophy of South Africa and the *Omólúàbí* principle of the Yoruba people of West Africa. These moral principles are predicated on certain basic assumptions of traditional life in Africa, which include the assertion that life in pre-colonial Africa was essentially communalistic, humanistic and egalitarian. The term *Ubuntu* is derived from the Nguni Bantu languages spoken in Southern Africa, with specific reference to the Zulu and Xhosa. *Ubuntu* originates from a longer expression, which is the phrase *umuntungumuntungabantu*, implying that “a person is a person through other persons” (Ajitoni, 2024; 3). This phrase perfectly captures the essence of the *Ubuntu* philosophy, which emphasizes the interdependence of all people and the assumption that a person’s identity, essence and existence are connected to their “being with others.” In other words, an individual’s “being with others” not only represents his ontological essence as a person, but also places certain moral obligations on him, such as the duties to support others, to promote communal bonds, while cultivating a sense of empathy, compassion and respect for others. The *Ubuntu* principle is represented in several other words expressing similar ideals in other African cultures, such as the Sothoan *botho* and the Tswanaian *buthu*, as well as the Yoruba concept of *Omólúàbí*.

The *Omólúàbí* principle in Yoruba culture literally captures a collection of intrinsic Yoruba virtues and values such as “humility, integrity, courage, modesty, moderation and understanding” (Azenabor, 2022; 65). *Omólúàbí* centers on character, thereby referring to the inner qualities of an individual who possesses the good character – a well behaved person. *Omólúàbí*, just like other central endogenous moral systems in Africa is also deeply rooted within the holistic framework of the African ontology, which emphasizes the

interrelatedness of all entities, both the physical and spiritual, the seen and unseen, material and immaterial. The ontological status of the “*Omólúàbí* as *omo ti Olu Iwa bi* (the person begotten by the master/chef of good character)” (Oyeweso, 2012; 3), confines on him certain moral obligations, which include upholding and exercising good character in all his dealings, while promoting virtues like hardwork, industry, dignity and honour. According to Siyan Oyeweso, an *Omólúàbí* is expected to possess certain moral qualities, such as “personal integrity, chastity, responsibility, reliability, humility, generosity, hospitality, decency, moderation, prudence, faithfulness, kindness, respectfulness, trustworthiness, keeping to promises and covenants” (Oyeweso, 2012; 5). Several tenets of endogenous morality in Yoruba culture are contained in the Ifa literary corpus, which represents a compendium of the historical wisdom and thought systems of the Yoruba people. Ifa underscores the core values of an *Omólúàbí* and its connection with character (*ìwà*) in a number of verses, one of which is *odu irosun meji*, as being presented in the following passage:

Ìwà l’ẹwà, ìwà l’ẹwà,
Ẹni tó bá ní ìwà, ó ní gbogbo nṣkan,
Bí ọmọdé bá mọ ìwà, yóò dára ju ọkùnrin lọ,
Bí ọkùnrin bá mọ ìwà, yóò dára ju Ọrúnmìlà lọ.

Translation:

Character is beauty, character is beauty,
Whoever possesses good character has everything,
If a child has good character, he is better than an adult,
If an adult has good character, he is greater than even Orunmila.

In another verse, *osa meji*, Ifa captures the divine essence of character, thus;

Ìwà ni oríṣà ní gbé,
Tó bá pé l’ówó, tó bá pé l’ọlá,
Tó bá pé ní oyè,
Tó bá pé ní ìwà, ó ti pé patapata.

Translation:

Character is what the gods uphold,
If wealth is complete, if honour is complete,
If titles are complete,
But if character is complete, everything is completely fulfilled.

The emphasis on the divine essence of character showcases the ontological background of morality and good character in Yoruba culture. *Omólúàbí* is endogenous in Yoruba culture, owing to its ontological status as an ideal image that embodies good character in all ramifications, which is upheld by the gods. The concept of *Omólúàbí* thereby evolves from the cultural background of the Yoruba people, based on their historical wisdom and religious beliefs and traditions. As such, he who possesses wealth, honour and titles, but lacks character is regarded as lacking everything. In essence, *Omólúàbí* epitomizes the Aristotelian “virtuous man” who possesses both moral and intellectual virtues. Aristotle’s virtuous man possesses moral virtues, such as courage, justice, and temperance, which are developed through habit and practice. The intellectual virtues possessed by the virtuous man include

wisdom and understanding, developed through education and experience. Therefore, a guiding principle for *Omólúàbí* and Aristotle's virtuous man is the pursuit of moral excellence.

Endogenous Morality as Basis for Graduate Employability in Africa

Graduate employability involves the possession of the dynamic capabilities and skills required for job-seeking and job-keeping in the labour market by graduates of higher institutions of learning. Employability also deals with the cultivation of certain soft skills, such as work ethic, integrity, professionalism, collaboration, agility, critical thinking skills, financial literacy and a plethora of others, towards the achievement of a suitable job placement. However, the problem of graduate unemployment in African economies can be tackled by facilitating the revitalization and incorporation of endogenous moral systems embedded in African cultures into formal education curricular, including University education. Universities in African should serve as places where salutary values in African cultures are cultivated, taught and promoted. Endogenous moral frameworks, such as the *Ubuntu* and *Omólúàbí* principles discussed in the previous section should be imparted in University students, while also serving as the moral basis or foundation of University education in Africa. A major factor responsible for the problem of graduate unemployment in Africa is the marginalization of endogenous knowledge in general and the crystalizing values and virtues that undergird such bodies of knowledge by Western education curricular that were introduced into African countries and which still dictate the form and status of post-colonial University education in Africa. Godwin Azenabor underscores the imperialistic tendencies of Western education curricular over African endogenous knowledge and moral systems by stating that "*Omólúàbí's* dispositional character trait of assumed innocence and demonstration of exemplary life have been overtaken, to a significant extent, by westernization, which has foisted academic prowess and certification, wealth and position over moral character development and excellence. Concern for moral conduct and character is now being progressively de-emphasized" (Azenabor, 2022; 66). For Azenabor, the consequence being faced by African countries as a result of this academic and moral extroversion is that African states are populated by "moral Lilliputians and academic giants" (Azenabor, 2022; 66).

A neat articulation and careful incorporation of these endogenous moral values will engender the development of a Pan-African institution of moral education on the African continent, which will be imitated across all African higher institutions of learning. The production of graduates who are worthy in character and sound judgement requires a process of either institutionalizing African endogenous moral systems or integrating them into already established educational institutions on the continent. The core virtues embedded in principles like *Ubuntu* and *Omólúàbí*, such as value for honesty, kindness, support for others, selflessness, as well as respect for others, including the elders in society, represent soft skills that enhance the employability of a graduate. The disconnection between post-colonial graduates of African universities and the pristine endogenous moral values that undergirded life in pre-colonial Africa is a major factor responsible for morally bereft graduates who are considered unemployable by employers of labour. Endogenous moral education should be implemented into the pedagogical framework of post-colonial African universities. In the context of the contemporary challenge of graduate unemployment in African economies, endogenous morality has the potential to play certain essential roles, which include the provision of a framework for understanding the cultural context of African societies and developing solutions that are relevant to local needs, such as

enhancing the employability skills of African graduates. Incorporating endogenous moral principles and values in University education curricular in Africa helps achieve values-based education on the continent, by helping graduates develop a strong sense of values and ethics, thereby making them more employable and individuals who contribute to the wellbeing and development of their immediate communities and the society at large. In the context of the efforts by scholars and academics in Africa to develop frameworks for decolonizing African intellectual spaces, endogenous morality serves as a genuine template for rethinking our conceptualizations of morality.

Moreover, there is the imperative of cultivating the principles of positive work ethic, six of which will be discussed here, including responsibility, productivity, hardwork, team work, goal-oriented mindset and integrity. Responsibility is a principle of positive work ethic, which demands that an individual should be dependable and accountable as a person. A positive work ethic involves the capacity of an individual to achieve a high level of productivity in the workplace, which has to do with being able to perform tasks effectively and efficiently within the required time frame. Hard work is a core principle of a positive work ethic, which informs the need to input an appreciable level of concentration, energy and consistency in a given task. An effective team work skill is a core principle of a positive work ethic, which relies on interpersonal skills and the ability to contribute to the achievement of team goals and objectives. A positive work ethic requires individuals with a goal-oriented mindset who are often willing to set goals for themselves as a way of motivating themselves to perform efficiently. Integrity is an important principle of a positive work ethic, which demands that an individual should be fair and trustworthy in his or her actions. At the core of the six principles of a positive work ethic being discussed here is the idea of virtue. Virtue is central to an individual's achievement of productivity, hardwork, team work skills, goal orientated mentality and integrity, since virtue is the driving force of all human pursuits according to Aristotle. It is therefore only a virtuous person that can be able to effectively harness the principles of positive work ethic, such as responsibility, productivity, hardwork, team work, goal orientation and integrity, towards the achievement of organizational objectives and goals. Conversely, an individual lacking in virtuous character will not appreciate the positivity in the work ethic principles. It is important to note that higher institutions of learning in Africa, particularly the universities should specially design courses in soft-skill development and work ethic principles and values, which should serve as the basis for the entrepreneurship and vocational trainings that students are exposed to. An instance of this can be found in certain courses offered by management students in the United States, where courses such as "The Power of People", "Thinking Through it", "Leadership Skills" and so on are being taught. African universities can also incorporate these courses into their curricular, to further advance the project of graduate employability on the continent.

Conclusion

This paper has applied the philosophical methods of conceptual analysis, critical thinking and rigorous evaluation in discussing the problem of graduate unemployment in Africa, while preferring solutions for the achievement of graduate employability amongst graduates of African universities. The idea of work ethic has been discussed in this paper, while also identifying the seven dimensions of work ethic, as well as the principles and values underlying work ethic as a soft-skill. This paper has suggested that the principles of virtue ethics should be cultivated by an ideal employee, who should possess a virtuous and moral

character. In this paper, the idea of endogenous morality has been discussed, while highlighting certain endogenous moral frameworks in some African cultures, such as the *Ubuntu* and the *Omólúàbí* principles of the Xhosa and the Yoruba people of Southern and Western Africa, respectively. This paper proposes that the incorporation of endogenous moral principles into formal or university education in Africa will in producing responsible, respectful and communally sensitive graduates. Part of the criteria for graduate employability in Africa should be the possession and exhibition of endogenous moral values and principles.

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