TOWARD AN INTEGRAL PERSPECTIVE OF CHARACTER EDUCATION IN BUSINESS SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Character education shapes people's values and behaviors and fosters a sense of responsibility and empathy for others. While some argue that character development should be the sole responsibility of families and communities, it is essential that educational institutions actively engage in the teaching of ethics, morals, civic values, and citizenship. By integrating these elements into the curriculum, schools can help reduce societal problems resulting from a lack of character education. This article aims to highlight this concept and propose a conceptual framework based on Ken Wilber's integral theory for the emergence of a virtuous profile in business schools.

Keywords: Character education; Business schools; Integral theory; Ken Wilber

Author's Declaration

We, CHAOUI ROQAI Mehdi & ALLOUANI Saif Allah, the undersigned authors of the manuscript titled "Toward an Integral Perspective of Character Education in Business Schools" hereby declare and confirm that: (1) The work presented in this manuscript is entirely original and is the result of my own research and writing efforts. (2) We have appropriately cited and credited all sources of information, ideas, and contributions of others used in this work. Any borrowed material or ideas have been clearly and properly acknowledged in the text and listed in the references section. (3) This manuscript has not been previously published in the same or substantially similar form in any other publication. (4) The work in this manuscript does not infringe upon any copyright or intellectual property rights of others. (5) We understand that any false statements regarding the originality of this work may have serious academic and legal consequences. (6) We also confirm that this manuscript is not currently under review by any other journal or publication.

We take full responsibility for the authenticity, originality, and accuracy of the content presented in this manuscript.

Introduction

Postgraduate education provides students with knowledge and skills. It encourages critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and a lifetime love of learning. This development enables graduates to adapt to a fast-changing world and effectively participate in various fields. Ultimately, the value of higher education is found in its ability to mold students into well-rounded, empathetic citizens capable of positively impacting society.

These attributes and skills encompass academic knowledge, critical thinking, problem-solving, adaptability, and collaboration. Universities recognize the importance of preparing students to be well-rounded individuals who can make meaningful contributions to their communities and address complex societal challenges. By emphasizing holistic education and fostering socially engaged mindsets, universities aim to equip students with the tools they need to thrive in a rapidly evolving world.

Universities may struggle to effectively prepare students for the problems they will confront in their personal and professional lives unless there is an explicit knowledge and articulation of the relevance of character and flourishing. Creating a consistent vocabulary and Framework around these notions can help bridge the gap between academics and the real world, ensuring that graduates have the knowledge and skills required for success, resilience, flexibility, and an ethical foundation.

By providing a conceptual taxonomy, the Framework aims to enhance the understanding and implementation of character development within higher education institutions. It recognizes the importance of character cultivation in preparing students for a rapidly changing world. It emphasizes the role of universities in fostering student flourishing.

This study aims to improve the understanding and implementation of character development in business schools by presenting a conceptual taxonomy. It emphasizes the role of business schools in encouraging student development. It recognizes the necessity of character education in preparing students for a continuously changing world.

This article attempts to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive structure combining philosophical rigor and practical application. It provides students with a roadmap for navigating complex ethical dilemmas and making informed decisions aligning with their values. It also gives them the tools to analyze and critically evaluate different perspectives, fostering a deeper understanding of the world around them.

This article attempts to answer a fundamental question:

- To what extent can business schools produce a virtuous profile under the current conditions?

This article is divided into three main sections to answer the above question. The first deals with a literature review on "character" and "character education," while the second proposes a theoretical framework, based on Ken Wilber's integral theory, for the emergence of a virtuous profile in business schools. The article concludes by suggesting possible avenues for future research and empirical investigation into character education practices in business schools.

1. Literature review

1.1. Definition of "character."

Many debates have revolved around whether character is innate or shaped by external factors such as upbringing and environment. Some argue that specific characteristics are intrinsic in individuals. In contrast, others believe that character is molded through experiences and social interactions. As a result, it was inevitable that discussions of character would be fraught with conflicting definitions and endless personal and ideological battles.

The term "character" has come to mean physical features and the unique combination of attributes and qualities that identify a person. The distinct behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs shape a person's identity and impact their actions. This concept emphasizes that each person has a distinctive character shaped by nature and nurture.

These various sources provide different perspectives on what constitutes a virtuous character. While Aristotelian thought emphasizes cultivating virtues through habit and practice, Judeo-Christian beliefs highlight the importance of moral values and virtues in guiding one's actions. Confucian principles emphasize the development of personal character traits that contribute to harmonious relationships within society. Similarly, Lakota Sioux emphasize characteristics that are valued within their cultural context. Finally, modern secular approaches provide frameworks for understanding character's impact on society.

Character is a complex and multifaceted construct explored from various perspectives. Scholars from different disciplines have attempted to define character, each offering unique insights and interpretations. We can comprehensively understand this concept and its significance across academic fields by examining the diverse definitions.

According to John Stuart Mill (1860), a character is not solely determined by innate qualities. Still, it is shaped by the influence of one's culture. He emphasizes that personal desires and impulses play a crucial role in defining an individual's character, asserting that lacking these elements renders one as devoid of nature as a mere machine, "a person whose desires and impulses are not his own, has no character, no more than a steam-engine has a character."

Hunter (2000) identifies three essential components of character: moral discipline, moral commitment, and moral autonomy. These components shape an individual's character and guide their actions and decisions. Moral discipline refers to the ability to adhere to ethical principles and values. In contrast, moral commitment involves a deep dedication to acting by those principles. Lastly, moral autonomy emphasizes the importance of independent thinking and ethical choices based on judgment and understanding.

Peterson & Seligman (2004) argue that character involves moral aspects and social dimensions, highlighting the importance of shaping an individual's character. In this regard, Peterson & Park (2006) expand on this concept by emphasizing that character is a multidimensional construct, suggesting that it encompasses various traits and behaviors that contribute to an individual's overall character development.

Wright & Goodstein (2007) define character as an essential aspect of an individual's identity and can significantly influence their behavior and decision-making processes. It encompasses traits

such as integrity, honesty, and empathy. These traits shape how individuals interact with others and contribute to society's overall wellbeing.

Gentile (2010) states that character is not simply about having beliefs but also about the strength and resilience to uphold them. It implies that true nature is revealed when individuals are tested and have to make difficult choices that align with their beliefs.

Wright & Lauer (2013) assert that character comprises three dimensions: moral discipline, attachment, and autonomy. These interconnected dimensions influence an individual's ethical decision-making process. Moral discipline refers to the ability to adhere to moral principles and resist temptations. Moral attachment emphasizes the importance of social connections and relationships in shaping one's character. Lastly, moral autonomy highlights the capacity to make independent ethical judgments and take responsibility for one's actions.

Arthur (2020) argues that character is not just a collection of traits but a dynamic and diverse concept encompassing moral virtues, personal values, and ethical decision-making. He emphasizes the importance of character in guiding individuals toward making morally sound choices and leading a virtuous life. Furthermore, Arthur suggests that character is not fixed or predetermined. Still, he can be cultivated and developed through intentional effort and practice.

1.2. Definition of "character education"

According to Snarey and Samuelson (2014), character education focuses on developing specific virtues and attributes, such as honesty and responsibility, through explicit instruction and modeling. On the other hand, moral education focuses on investigating ethical quandaries and developing critical thinking abilities to make honest and informed moral decisions. These distinctions highlight the area of character education's numerous viewpoints and emphasize the necessity of knowing its many approaches.

London (1987) contends that character education has two key components: (i) civic virtue education and (ii) personal adjustment education. These two aspects of character education are essential for developing a well-rounded individual who knows their obligations as citizens and possesses the required abilities to navigate and constructively contribute to their society. Character education strives to educate people who can actively participate in their communities while leading meaningful and successful lives by emphasizing civic morality and personal adjustment.

Likona (1988) explains that character education fosters a positive learning environment where students can develop essential social and emotional skills. Students learn the value of teamwork and empathy by promoting cooperative relationships and mutual respect. Furthermore, fostering a moral community within the classroom and school promotes justice, care, and involvement. It instills ideals guiding children to become responsible and compassionate members of society.

Kohn (1991) has pointed out that character education is essential for developing moral and ethical values in individuals. He argues that character education promotes good behavior and helps students become responsible and compassionate members of society. Additionally, Kohn emphasizes that character education should be integrated into the curriculum and taught through real-life experiences to ensure its effectiveness in shaping students' characters.

According to Williams (2000), character education is not confined to the classroom but extends to all aspects of a person's life. It emphasizes the development of moral values, empathy, and the ability to make good decisions.

Milson & Mehlig (2002) have defined character education as the process of developing in students an understanding of, a commitment to, and a tendency to behave following core ethical values.

According to Matula (2004), character education is a proactive strategy cultivating virtues like respect, responsibility, and empathy. Character education can be incorporated into the curriculum to help schools build a welcoming community where children can grow holistically. Additionally, character education provides kids with crucial life skills like decision-making, problem-solving, and ethical reasoning that will help them outside of the classroom.

Benninga (2010) has attempted to define character education. He claims that character education is a catch-all word for educating people so that the learning experience aids in their development as well-mannered, socially acceptable individuals.

Furthermore, Berkowitz (2012) highlights that developing students' ethical decision-making abilities and cultivating a sense of community are essential to character education. He also asserts that character education should incorporate the development of moral thinking and empathy into the curriculum to raise well-rounded individuals.

Arthur (2014) confirms that character education focuses on shaping the overall moral character of a person rather than just their acts. It underlines how crucial it is to instill virtues and values in children so they can act morally all their lives.

Based on the previous concepts, we have concluded that any character education project confined to teaching character is inadequate; a broader framework is required. As a result, our study's added value is providing a thorough framework for understanding character education. The basis of this comprehensive Framework will be built on integral theory.

Integral theory is a multidimensional approach that considers multiple aspects of a person's development, such as cognitive, emotional, social, and moral dimensions. We hope to create a more comprehensive picture of character education by combining these several characteristics. Moreover, this holistic approach recognizes the significance of character development through explicit education and the environment, relationships, and experiences that individuals are exposed to.

2. Integral theory

Integral thinking strives to bring together and integrate the various views, knowledge, and practices found in all aspects of life. It seeks to establish a global and holistic picture of the world, rejecting simplistic reductions and recognizing our reality's inherent complexity. Integral thinking integrates various viewpoints, approaches, and information to better grasp the world's complexities. It also promotes critical thinking and opposes oversimplified assumptions that can limit our comprehension. It seeks global and holistic solutions to our complicated challenges by adopting a "simplex" viewpoint.

This integral approach allows us to look back at the issues we face. It also enables us to connect the various facets of our reality, whether economic, political, environmental, or social. This

conceptual map assists us in locating ourselves and seeing the big picture by connecting the various components of our reality: individual, social, cultural, economic, political, and so on. It assists us in understanding the connections and interactions between these various aspects, which can be pretty exciting and instructive. It also encourages us to take a broader view and analyze all variables.

Some scholars have argued that Wilber's approach was overly simplistic and failed to account for the complexities of social systems and material structures. They recognize, however, the significance of his work in promoting a more holistic view of the world and encouraging a more full understanding of reality.

This unprecedented access to cultural information has provided people with new viewpoints and learning possibilities worldwide. It also encourages richer intercultural exchanges and mutual understanding among people, which contributes to developing our collective intellectual heritage. We could acquire significant lessons about the diversity of lifestyles, values, and goals by attempting to comprehend what these civilizations can teach us about human potential. We may obtain a more holistic and inclusive perspective of being human in all dimensions if we seek the critical points of human growth across available cultures.

This necessitates thorough consideration and critical study of each notion to determine how they fit together. It is crucial to seek connections and relationships between these incomplete truths to construct a stable conceptual structure encompassing the puzzle.

Wilber has produced numerous books that provide a comprehensive and multidisciplinary perspective, allowing readers to investigate and use several fields of knowledge. They also offer practical methods for dealing with life's obstacles and contributing to humanity's progress.

K. Wilber's five fundamental notions (quadrants, levels, lines, states, and types) enable him to develop a comprehensive paradigm (AQAL) that incorporates all elements of reality, whether individual or communal, inner or outward. This conceptual Framework offers a global and unified perspective that aids in the comprehension and practical application of the numerous facets of human life.

Wilber's integral method is frequently criticized for its complexity. Still, it is critical to recognize that the complexity stems from the nature of the world itself. Indeed, the integral approach provides a holistic perspective that allows us to better understand and simplify our complex world.

2.1. Four aspects
Everything (object, system, circumstance, etc.) in Wilber's integral approach can be analyzed from four essential perspectives that emerge from the intersection of two axes of analysis: individual-collective on the one hand and interiority-exteriority on the other.

2.1.1. Individual and collective
Individual behavior, in turn, contributes to the shaping and transformation of society. Thus, there is an interdependence between individuals and the community in which they evolve, in which each individual's activities can impact the functioning and evolution of society, and vice versa, a

"holon," as Wilber defines it. This concept of the "holon" is critical to understanding the universe's interrelated character, in which each portion contributes to and is influenced by the total. Furthermore, this holistic perspective allows a greater understanding of the connections and interactions between different organizational levels.

The collective approach allows for the consideration of the intricate interactions between the various constituents of an ecosystem, which can lead to a better understanding of the dynamics and processes that occur there. It also emphasizes the significance of assessing the overall influence of an organism's actions on its surroundings.

Individuals and collectives interact in a dynamic cycle in which actions taken by individuals are influenced by and influence the social structure. As a result, changes in social network can result in changes in individual behavior, leading to changes in society as a whole.

Figure 1 demonstrates the co-dependence of individual behavior and group structures. Cultural factors influence our behavior, urging us to standardize and adapt to the expectations of others. This dynamic highlights the role of society in shaping our individual behavior.
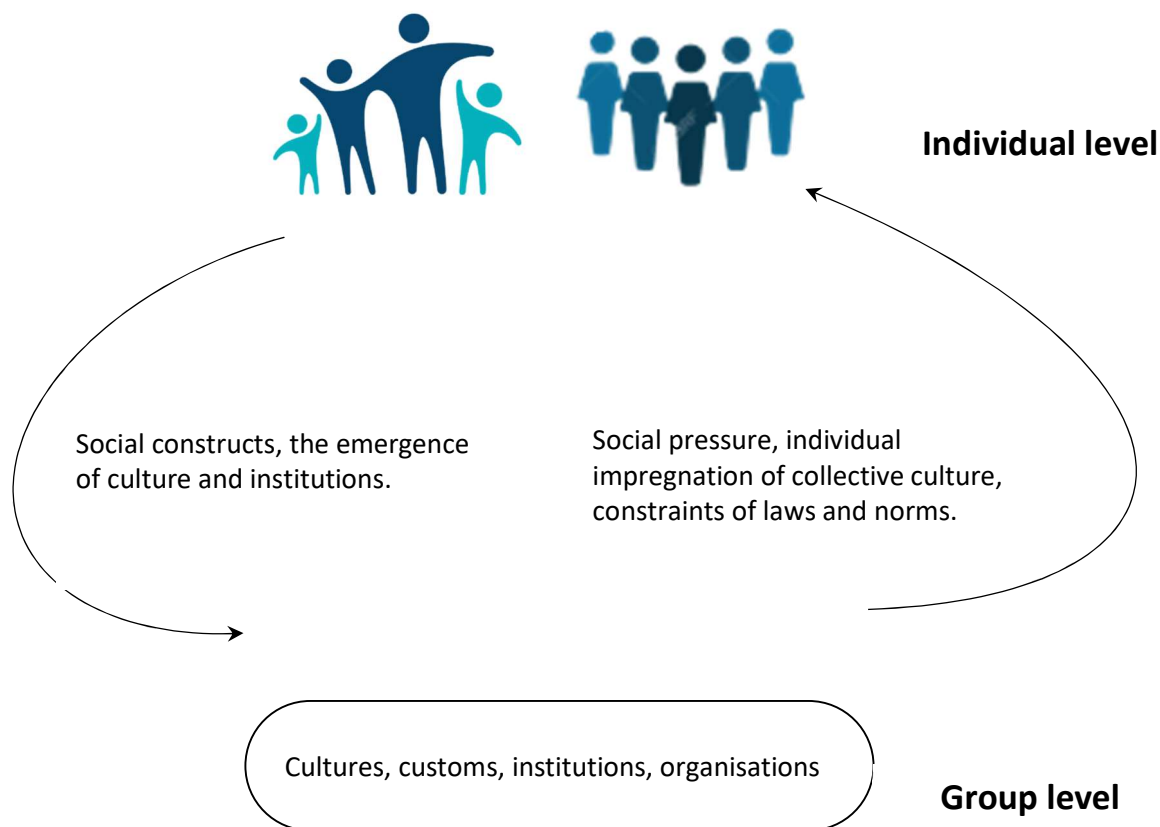

Individual level

Social constructs, the emergence of culture and institutions.

Social pressure, individual impregnation of collective culture, constraints of laws and norms.

Cultures, customs, institutions, organisations

Group level

Figure 1: Interaction between individual and collective structures

However, it is essential to note that these standards and social influences differ from culture to culture, which means that what is deemed normal in one community may be regarded as unusual or unsuitable in another. It is, therefore, critical to consider cultural variety when examining and analyzing how these norms are absorbed into our identities.

2.1.2. Interiority and exteriority:

This dimension refers to the interaction between an individual or society and its physical, social, or cultural surroundings. It includes how individuals or organizations interact with their environment and how this shapes their identity and behavior.

Exteriority, on the one hand, is not restricted to visible or tangible characteristics. It also includes the interactions and relationships of the object, event, situation, or person with its surroundings and other aspects. Because of this, they can be objectively viewed and scientifically investigated. It also promotes communication and information exchange between different individuals about these objects. The scientific method is the foundation of science, and it entails developing hypotheses, designing experiments, and collecting data for objective analysis. It seeks to comprehend natural events using logical concepts and hard facts. Scientists must set aside their emotions and personal prejudices to obtain reliable and trustworthy results.

On the other hand, a person's inner self is a reflection of our inner world, thoughts, emotions, and sensations. The inner self also allows us to grow in understanding ourselves and our deepest motivations. Each person's inner self is unique and can be shaped by upbringing, personal experiences, and social interactions. It also encompasses the emotions, thoughts, and perceptions that influence how we experience our surroundings. In this way, the inner self is a critical component of our identity and deep understanding of the whole person.

Indeed, studying the brain enables us to better understand the physical and neurological mechanisms underpinning our ideas and actions. However, it is critical to recognize that each individual's subjective experience is unique and cannot be entirely captured by a strictly scientific investigation of the brain. Brain imaging has provided new insights into the relationship between interiority and exteriority. Thanks to this technology, researchers can now identify correlations between neural states and conscious experience, contributing to a better understanding of the complexity of the human mind.

These two perspectives, exteriority, and interiority, also exist at the collective level.

Externalities of a society manifest themselves both in the norms and values shared by its members, which influence their collective behavior (e.g., traffic jams on highways when vacationers leave, national enthusiasm for sporting events such as the World Cup, etc.) and in the social forms and structures that are necessary for understanding how individuals interact with one another and how society functions as a whole (e.g., political institutions, educational establishments, etc.). This field is studied by politics, economics, and sociology, which employ a range of approaches to better their understanding of these complex social processes, such as observation, surveys, statistics, and qualitative analysis. In addition, the external perspective enables us to understand the external factors that can affect the system's behavior and evolution.

Understanding how a civilization or social group functions and its collective identity requires an awareness of its interiority. Cultural transmission, education, social interaction, and lived experience all contribute to its formation. This interiority impacts both individual and collective behavior and the norms and values that govern social life. This is the subject of social psychology,

anthropology, and Anglo-Saxon cultural studies in general. These disciplines study how people form themselves and engage with their social and cultural environments. They also investigate how norms, values, and beliefs influence self- and other perceptions and social behavior.

2.1.3. At the crossroads of dimensions:

Crossing these two dimensions gives us four perspectives called quadrants by Wilber. These quadrants are depicted in Figure 2 as follows:

A- The upper left quadrant represents the individual-interior perspective (I). This is how people perceive and interpret the world based on their emotions, thoughts, and experiences. This viewpoint emphasizes introspection and self-awareness.

b- The Individual-Exterior (It) quadrant is in the upper right quadrant. It is frequently connected with impartiality and a fair assessment of events. It represents the ability to take a step back and assess situations from a safe distance.

c- The Collective-Interior quadrant (We) is at the bottom left. This is where the social norms and cultural practices that shape society are developed. Individuals interact and exchange their ideas, values, and beliefs in this quadrant, contributing to establishing a common culture.

d- The Collective-Exterior (Its) is the emphasis of the fourth quadrant. Understanding how collective systems work and influence individual and collective behavior, whether in terms of social or economic structures, is required. It also encompasses the investigation of governmental policies and their impacts on society.

Figure 2: Quadrants derived from individual-collective and interior-exterior axes

This grid provides a global and multidimensional perspective. We can use it to analyze the various facets and consequences of a situation, allowing us to make better judgments and comprehend the underlying issues: What observations provide an objective view of reality and an understanding of how individuals behave in specific contexts (quadrant I-E of individual objectivity), how the individual interprets and gives meaning to the situation (quadrant I-I of subjectivity), what is the social structure that governs this situation (quadrant C-E of systemic objectivity), and finally, what are the social representations, mentalities, and thus culture that exist at a collective level (quadrant C-I of intersubjectivity)?

2.2. Framework for character education in business schools:
2.2.1. Why business schools?
- Because these institutions produce a large number of managers who will work in public administrations and private companies;
- Because these institutions attract a large number of baccalaureate graduates and tend to specialize in them due to the ease of access to the labor market;
- Because the graduates of these institutions occupy decision-making positions.

2.2.2. Conceptual Framework:
The first quadrant (I) will focus on students' thinking, reflection, and cognitive development on their institution's virtues, their feelings about them, and their view of right and wrong within their institution. It will also investigate their goals on how they are addressed as individuals in terms of virtues and their feelings regarding how teachers and administrators treat them in a virtuous or vicious manner. We will also strive to understand their desires, needs, and expectations of the institution in terms of their own character development.

The second quadrant (It) is dedicated to behavior, attitudes, and objectivity. We will concentrate on the procedures designed to instill virtue in students, as well as the measures and regulations that allow them to translate virtuous or vicious behavior, and the charters approved both in the classroom, administrative processes, examinations, and extracurricular activities to promote and cultivate students' virtuous character. In this approach, we will analyze the facts that arise from these behaviors with fresh eyes.

The third quadrant (We) concerns the institution's culture and ethos. Teachers, students, and administrators must examine and acknowledge their social and communal representations of Moroccan identity and values. In this quadrant, we will also investigate the conventional perspectives of the community and the collectivity about academic freedom, the degree of integrity and honesty in relations with students, their selection and evaluation, and the degree of mutual respect among the actors in the institution. The degree of transparency and credibility, equality, non-discrimination and justice, independence, involvement and decision-making, the right to defer, dialogue, and collective representations of respect for campus franchises will also be prioritized.

In the fourth quadrant (Its), we will examine the challenges that the higher education system (university presidents, the Ministry of Higher Education, the Higher Council for Education, Training, and Scientific Research, among others) faces in terms of the transmission of values and the development of character in students, to identify the measures that are required to strengthen this process. Finally, we will investigate the many pedagogical approaches that could encourage the development of a virtuous profile among students.

Conclusion

Character education in higher education plays a crucial role in shaping students' qualities beyond academic knowledge. It instills qualities such as integrity, empathy, and resilience, which are necessary for personal and professional growth. Business schools may encourage ethical decision-making, social responsibility, and well-rounded persons by actively incorporating character education into their curriculum and campus culture. Neglecting character education will jeopardize students' development and limit their ability to constructively contribute to society.

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