



# From Business Ethics to Business Education: Peter-Hans Kolvenbach's Contribution

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## Abstract

This essay begins with a look at the contribution made by Business Ethics and by Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to Business Education, and how the first two have moved to the last over time. Yet their contributions also reveal limitations that need to be taken into account in the debate on the training provided by Business Schools. This debate cannot be confined to speaking of disciplines and their cross-cutting natures but rather needs to focus directly on the kind of personal profile fostered among business students. In the context of this debate on the future of Business Schools, the essay stresses the relevance of Peter-Hans Kolvenbach's framework. He proposed an educational ideal based upon educating competent, conscious, compassionate, and committed people. This ideal took shape in the form of an educational paradigm integrating four dimensions: professional (*utilitas*), ethical-social (*iustitia*), humanist (*humanitas*) and spiritual (*fides*). The essay not only shows how each of these dimensions is in tune with some of the present proposals for renewing Business Education but also how Kolvenbach's more holistic approach can help to further integrate and spotlight the blind spots of each of them.

**Keywords** Business Ethics · Business Education · Peter-Hans Kolvenbach · Society of Jesus · Higher Education

This essay has two parts. The first part summarises the process in the development of Business Ethics to the point where it now questions Business Education as such. The second part focuses on the university proposal made by Fr. Kolvenbach and links it to the debate on Business Education. This second part shows how Kolvenbach's holistic concept (comprising four dimensions: *utilitas*, *iustitia*, *humanitas* and *fides*) can facilitate dialogue with and between the main proposals for reviewing Business Education. Above all, the concept complements the blind spots and gaps in each of those dimensions. That is why the possible links are highlighted between each of Kolvenbach's dimensions and the focus proposed by some reviews of Business Education. This allows attention to be paid to the fact that these proposals often stress only some of Kolvenbach's dimensions and by doing so, risk foregoing the scope that better integration of all four dimensions has to offer.

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## A vision of the evolution of Business Ethics

Business Ethics has had a long and fruitful history on its path to becoming an academic discipline (De George, 1987, 2005; Frederick, 2006; Liedekerke & Dubbink, 2008). Its history is marked by the endless interplay of two tensions, namely whether Business Ethics was: (a) one discipline or two stuck together; (b) “teaching Ethics without Ethics to teach” (Bahm, 1982) or, simply, “can Ethics be taught?” (Piper et al., 1993). This process has consolidated and enriched the discipline but its impact is not limited to the usual question as to whether it had a greater or lesser influence in transforming business education and business practice. The underlying issue is whether it could not have gone further as a discipline alongside others (Frederick, 1991). In other words, the question is whether it has been satisfactorily integrated in the curriculum (Donaldson, 1994). Here, one needs to consider two aspects: Internal Integration and External Integration. With regard to Internal Integration, has the interaction between ethics and business been fruitful and transformative, or has it been like trying to mix oil and water? (Mulligan, 1987; Trevino & Weaver, 1994). With regard to External Integration, has it: (a) made an impact on other disciplines, both from an academic and educational point of view?; (b) gone hand-in-hand with discourses from other disciplines, leaving each student and manager struggling to make sense of largely mutually contradictory messages?

In fact, Business Ethics had to go a long way before learning to think in organisational terms (De George, 1987). The ethical discourse dwelt on individuals and society rather than on companies as such. That is why it has often confined itself to making proposals on how managers ought to behave (Abend, 2013). On other occasions, Business Ethics has made either critical or apologetic reflections on economic systems as such, as if this were enough to clarify the practices involved. In any case, despite the interest and richness of its contributions (Donaldson, 1989; De George, 1990), it often proved difficult to satisfactorily resolve the tension inherent in what has been termed ‘Applied Ethics’. Here, the problem arises from the weight given to a normative-deductive approach, according to which practice is nothing more than the stage on which philosophical doctrines must take shape (De Marco & Fox, 1986; Lozano, 1997). The problem was made worse by the fact that many ethical philosophies often seemed like a self-service buffet where one was free to dish up whatever took one’s fancy. In the end, Business Ethics’ constructs came to be seen by students and practitioners not as real theories but rather as cold abstractions divorced from reality. To sum up, one often got the impression that a lot was said about business actions but not from a business standpoint. Put another way, those engaging in normative discussions on companies were from outside the corporate world and did not understand its special features.

Many of these difficulties were overcome (at least in discursive terms) on Business Ethics’ path to becoming a discipline. It was also enriched by a historical perspective (Ciulla, 2011). Three levels of discourse were clarified: (micro: individual; meso: organisation; macro: system) and their integration was postulated (Sacconi, 1991; Lozano, 1997; Carroll & Buchholtz, 2003). The field became increasingly interdisciplinary, with ever greater dialogue with other business academic disciplines — something that was not always reciprocated (Liedekerke & Dubbinck, 2008), with each discipline continuing with its own implicit ethics (Bowie, 1991). More and more empirical studies were conducted, generating specific cases from the discipline itself, and ethical dimensions and challenges in each specific management area were

posed (Beauchamp & Bowie, 1988; Carroll & Buchholtz, 2003). At the crossroads of globalisation processes, Business Ethics increasingly incorporated a multinational perspective into its analyses (Frederick *et al.*, 1988). At the same time, it naturally incorporated all the conventional requirements of a discipline: textbooks, journals, associations, conferences, research centres, and chairs (De George, 2005). Yet the academic interest in Business Ethics was accompanied by doubts about the discipline's real impact on business practices (De George, 1987).

In the context of this dynamic, there was a growing need to think beyond areas and issues to embrace organisational and educational processes themselves. On the one hand, there were ethical issues bearing on decision-making (Trevino, 1986; Jones, 1991; Falque & Bougon, 2013), with the moral relevance of organisational cultures and purpose (Norton, 1988; Beach, 1993) gaining force, advancing ethical understanding of what business success meant and how this could be evaluated and incorporate accountability (Brenkert, 2004). On the other hand, teaching practice with undergraduates, MBA students, and executives led to reflection not only on the teaching features of Business Ethics but also on their impact (Cooke & Ryan, 1989).

In this dynamic, the growing progress and consolidation of Business Ethics as such was also accompanied by questioning of its failures (Boda & Zsolnai, 2016) and the need for a new agenda (Zsolnai, 2013). The attempt to transform business practices seems to have failed. This was because such efforts were basically doomed to fail without changes in both the system and in global governance (Heath *et al.*, 2010). Interestingly, it is as if there has been a change of scale. Back then, the criticism was that organisational changes could not take place under an approach that solely addressed individual behaviour. Now the criticism is that we cannot meet global challenges by only addressing the ethics of business actions without also taking institutional and political governance elements into account (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011; Scherer *et al.*, 2014).

The stress on business performance is one of the reasons why CSR is gradually taking the place of Business Ethics in public opinion, in business culture, and in Business Schools. Apparently, arguments of all kinds supported this transition: economic, management, political, social, and cultural arguments, and even ethical ones (Lozano, 2000). What the diverse arguments had in common was: (a) a change of perspective (CSR does not speak of companies but rather from companies); (b) a change of criteria (CSR does not lay down rules and principles but rather speaks of their impacts and consequences); (c) a change of actors (CSR does not speak from the company standpoint but rather of the company's relationships with its stakeholders).

However, this has not prevented CSR as a concept from falling into hazy inaccuracy: the terms 'social' and 'society' are too broad, ambiguous, and abstract to be operative in management (Clarkson, 1995). This allowed for a diverse range of interpretations given the difficulty of establishing what exactly we are talking about when we refer to the 'S' in 'Social', or simply to 'CSR' (Frederick *et al.*, 1988; Carroll & Buchholtz, 2003; Devinney, 2009). We thus find a spectrum that ranges from those who subsume CSR in philanthropy or social action, reducing the 'S' to 'social' stakeholders (Burke, 1999; Porter & Kramer, 2011) to those who have tried to systematise all its dimensions (Sethi, 1975; Carroll, 1979, 1999), or who see it as a process (Zadek, 2003). In any case, there is a persistent tendency to build a discourse that swings between reaction to bad business practices, and questioning companies' impact in shaping society in the wake of globalisation (Handy, 2002). In both cases, the issue of responsibility is intertwined with that of the real power wielded by

companies: “Power cannot be viewed in isolation from responsibility, and it is this power-responsibility relationship that is the foundational call for corporate social responsibility” (Carroll, 1989: 17). Yet this focus on the power of companies and the social impact of their actions makes CSR the result of overlapping approaches by various actors. These actors try to turn CSR into a meeting point and to hammer out a common goal based on stakeholders’ diverse agendas. As Marrewijk recalled (2003), CSR is a brilliant term: it means something but not always the same thing to everybody. It is not surprising, then, that the European Commission, in its Green Paper (2001), began its proposal in these terms: “Most definitions of Corporate Social Responsibility describe it as (...)”. Yet in truth it is nothing more than the intersection point of various perspectives that do not always coincide with one another.

Undoubtedly, CSR entails a vision of the company that is increasingly framed in relational terms (Lozano, 2010). However, this does not hide the fact that CSR is a meeting point for the various stakeholders. This is so precisely because for each of them, CSR is not a goal in itself but rather the common ground on which everyone seeks to advance his own agenda and formulate his own demands on companies. In other words, the actors seem to agree on the importance they attach to CSR, provided they are not asked why they consider it so important since this is where the discrepancies lie. To this must be added the paradox that CSR has been identified as a discourse on the company that takes stakeholders into account yet at the same time Stakeholder Theory is not exclusive to CSR as it also exists in its own right (Freeman *et al.*, 2010). Indeed, one can find diverse uses of the term ‘stakeholder’ framed under widely varying approaches, namely: “as a management theory; as a process for practitioners to use in strategic management; and as an analytical framework” (Freeman & Reed, 1983: 91).

In any case, we can say that a shift has taken place in both business culture and in Business Schools, where the more talk there is of CSR, the less there is of Ethics. We speak about stakeholders’ interests but there is little discussion of whose interests these are, which are legitimate priorities and why (Donaldson, 1989; Donaldson & Dunfee, 1999). Often everything ends up reflecting stakeholders’ respective powers to influence outcomes. Significantly, it is a CSR that has neither converged in nor created any specific principle of responsibility (Jonas, 1979). The result is that ethics has evaporated in a generic discourse on values from the personal point of view (Gentile, 2010) and from the organisational one (Gagliardi, 1986; Sinclair, 1991). This discourse is one that recognises companies’ impact on the societies they operate in, and how this is amplified by globalisation. Yet it often ignores the political dimension (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011) and demands for new forms of global governance (Boda & Zsolnai, 2016).

## From Business Ethics to Business Education

The tension between stressing either Business Ethics or CSR could have evolved in terms of contents while making few structural changes. The field could have continued swinging between two extremes: (1) reacting to bad business practices, or (2) fostering understanding of management into a force for good. Such swings would both have manifested the discipline’s special nature and its desire to play a cross-cutting role in other disciplines. Yet at the beginning of the 21st Century, there was a sea

change that went far beyond discussing aspects of the curriculum or teaching methodologies and contents. The issue was no longer a choice between Business Ethics or CSR. The question was what contribution Business Education made. Here, one recalls the provocative question posed by Elkington (1998) on whether progress consists of teaching cannibals to eat with a fork. What was being called into question was Business Education as such. As Hühn said (2014, 533): “the preference for unreflected, model-heavy *training* instead of *education* is a structurally flawed approach”.

Consequently, the quality of the training imparted by Business Schools was called into question. Critics not only wondered what contribution Business Schools made to society (Morsing & Sauquet, 2011) but also argued that they were to blame for the undermining of Good Management Practices (Ghoshal, 2005) and had thus lost their *raison d'être* (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002; Bennis and O'Toole, 2005). Others said they had not given the training that companies needed (Mintzberg, 2004) or had lost all notion of management as a profession (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002, 2004; Khurana, 2007). It is thus hardly surprising that some came to consider Business Schools as enshrining The Triumph of Emptiness (Alvesson, 2013) while others thought they should be closed without further ado (Parker, 2018).

Without going this far, there were growing calls for a serious debate on the future of Business Schools (Durand & Dameron, 2008) and Management Education (Thomas *et al.*, 2014). In this vein, there were demands to radically transform business education because change was needed (GMAC, 2013), to redesign it (Dameron & Durand, 2011), or to rethink it (Datar *et al.*, 2010; Colby *et al.*, 2011). In short, one needed to move towards “a vision for Business Schools serving people and planet” (Muff *et al.*, 2013). Yet this vision also needed to address what has been described as “the being component” of Business Education (Datar *et al.*, 2010). That component was a second line of attack because from this perspective, the problem not only lay in the content and skills fostered by Business Schools but also in the kind of people they churned out and their personality traits. The latter issue not only applies to Business Schools but also exemplifies the drift in Higher Education (Bok, 2013, 2017).

Deresiewicz went to the heart of the problem, (2014: 25):

It is unreasonable that we have constructed an educational system that produces highly intelligent, accomplished twenty-two-year-olds who have no idea what they want to do with their lives: no sense of purpose and, what is worse, no understanding of how to go about finding one.

Here, the criticism is that Business School training has focused on fostering technical skills, thus accentuating a purely instrumental approach in which any sense of purpose (‘the being component’) is fast dwindling (Sullivan, 2016; Clydesdale, 2016). The issue is neither ‘the what’ (content) nor ‘the how’ (pedagogy) but is rather a question of philosophy and grounding (‘the why’) (Hühn, 2014). In this respect, Giacalone stressed that the basic management curriculum never speaks of high ideals and transcendent goals. Rather, it merely encourages students to focus on the quest for profit, not on what they might contribute to society (Giacalone, 2004). So we are not only talking about curriculum components and deciding which should be given priority but also the assumptions upon which the whole training process is conceived. This change in education’s goal is now formulated as follows: “To enable students to make sense of the world and their place in it, preparing them to use knowledge and skills as a means to engage responsibly with the life of their times” (Colby *et al.*, 2011: 60).

These are complex, turbulent times and it is not in vain that the term ‘VUCA world’ has become a commonplace. In such a world, there seems to be a growing need to grasp that training professionals means fostering their personal development so that they can bring their human quality to bear in dealing with situations and meeting challenges. Hence the need to develop more holistic Management Education (Waddock & Lozano, 2013) because “only those who train in self-reflection can develop a solid connection to their core that can resist fear, pressure and uncertainty” (Muff *et al.*, 2013: 32). At the end of the day, Management Education must also accompany a process of personal development that encourages people to act from their true centre (Gentile, 2010).

This, of course, highlights the fact that learning is not about becoming a consumer of education, and that Business Schools should not be reduced to being mere providers of educational services. It also affects the way they see academic activity and the institutional frameworks that shape it. As Haughey (2009) has pointed out, the problem is not that Business Schools have wondrously crafted statements on their mission and values scattered throughout their campuses. The issue is whether these statements are simply embellishments to make them look good in the market yet are ones disconnected from the ethos that is breathed and proposed. A former President of Harvard put it thus:

In the last analysis, developing a strong sense of moral and professional responsibility is not merely a matter of learning to think about the issues involved; it is an integral part of figuring out what sort of a person one wants to be and what sort of a life one will be able to look back upon with pride and satisfaction. This is an even greater challenge than teaching ethics and social responsibility, and few professional schools have considered it within the proper scope of their activities. However, there are reasons why introspection of this kind may have become too important to ignore and why it may come to represent the ultimate challenge for professional schools to meet. (Bok, 2013: 316).

## Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach’s contribution

The challenges lie in working out what sort of person someone wants to be and what kind of life they will be able to look back upon with pride and satisfaction. There is more to meeting this challenge than just ethics classes in CSR. It is similar (albeit from other perspectives) to what Meyer & Sison (2020) propose in terms of character-building, and to Quinn’s idea (2015, 29) when he says “motivation follows purpose, inspiration and intrinsic rewards”. If tackling this challenge is a key issue for professional schools, we need to explore frameworks and projects that help us. That is because it this is one of the great debates in which Business Schools are embroiled and goes to the heart of their purpose, and what they have to offer in the relationship between business and society. Father Kolvenbach’s proposals may make an important contribution to this debate. Let us first recall that Kolvenbach was the Superior General of The Society of Jesus from 1983 to 2008, at a time when the Jesuits were rethinking their activities and by extension, the university. In this context, Fr. Kolvenbach publicly proposed a frame of reference for understanding the university’s educational mission. One might think that this was a proposal for the Jesuits’ internal use and of course it largely was. Yet the core proposal was one of such strength and vigour that it deserves consideration by universities beyond the Jesuit sphere.

Kolvenbach’s proposal was of course in line with the Jesuit educational tradition. It is worth remembering, however, that The Society of Jesus was neither founded as an educational Order nor with the goal of devoting itself to institutionalised education. That said,



without exception all the founding fathers came from the university world (Kolvenbach, 2008). Rather, the Jesuits saw themselves as an order with very broad service horizons in working for the greater glory of God, ready to take on any of the missions that the Pope charged them with. Paradoxically, the dire educational shortcomings of the time, the demand from influential people from various cities, and the need to train future members of the Order meant that teaching soon became one of the Jesuits' most important activities (de Leturia, 1960; Sauvé *et al.*, 2001). When the Jesuits embarked on educational activity almost a decade after their foundation, they could not have foreseen how big an impact it was to make on both them and on The Society of Jesus as an institution (O'Malley, 1993).

This is neither the place to present the whole evolution of the Jesuits' teaching model nor its strengths and weaknesses. Yet it is worth stressing the driving force behind it. The Jesuits did not create but did adopt the humanist ideal in which they themselves had been schooled. They systematised it, adopting it as an educational model for all their institutions. Their universities "emerged as a critique of the self-contained university model" (Kolvenbach, 2008, 201). This took shape about 50 years after the start of the Jesuits' educational activity in the so-called *Ratio Studiorum* (RS). The RS is a compilation of best practices both in terms of the organisation of educational institutions and of the teaching approach (Batllori, 1999). In a way, the RS was what we would today call a proposal for educational renewal appropriate to the needs of the new emerging era and it should be understood in that sense here. It is a proposal in which the concern for teacher training is strongly present. One of its distinctive features is to focus on the student that is based on a personalised relationship, active learning, setting precise goals and content. Above all, it seeks the holistic development of the human being (Gil, 1999). The underlying assumption was that one needed to help students get the most out of themselves and an approach to the Classics of Ancient Greece and Rome was seen as the best way to do so (O'Malley, 2019). One should stress that RS' concern for teaching was not limited to curricular content and teaching methodologies but also sought to make education relevant to students' lives and their society. In other words, the aim was to shape character, and to foster sensitivity to the human condition and humanising values. It also involved striving for the common good and opening up to the new, emerging world.

Of course, today it makes no sense to adapt or translate the RS. Yet its principles still resonate in the revisions and rethinking that has shaped the Jesuits educational model. This model is rooted in the vigorous, provocative proposal that Fr. Arrupe made in 1973 in Valencia at a congress of alumni: 'It is about educating men for others' (Arrupe, 1983) or 'men and women with and for others' (as his successors, Fathers Kolvenbach and Nicolás, later formulated it). The aim was to turn out graduates who were professionally *Competent*; aware and imbued with knowledge of themselves, and of society and its imbalances (*Conscious*); *Compassionate*, sensitive to the suffering of others and showing solidarity; *Committed* to social and political transformation to make a fairer society (Mesa, 2019) (this profile's features are known as "The 4Cs").

It was Kolvenbach who came up with an overview of the paradigm for rethinking the educational contribution to be made by Jesuit universities. It was the fruit of 17 public expositions between 1985 and 2007 at various universities around the world (Kolvenbach, 2008)<sup>1</sup>. Clearly it is a proposal rooted in The Society of Jesus' apostolic mission. Yet its humanistic heart — summarised in the aforementioned '4Cs' — ties in with Bok's synthesis: Beyond Teaching Ethics and CSR, and comes down to asking what kind of person

<sup>1</sup> The cited book is a recompilation of these statements. In this essay, we state where and when a given statement was made if we consider this information relevant.

a business school graduate becomes, the life they want to lead, and how they enquire into their personal and professional purpose. Kolvenbach's discourse is aimed at universities and discusses why it is worth rethinking Business Education (which increasingly takes place in a university context) insofar as its focus is education rather than training (Hühn, 2014).

While Kolvenbach does not conceal the Jesuit character of the universities he addresses, he also makes it clear that universities have their own goals and that these must not be subordinated to alien objectives. He told the Georgetown Management Board in 2007 that "From the outset, Jesuit education struggled for human dignity and human rights, enlightened freedom of conscience, responsible freedom of speech, respectful dialogue, and patient promotion of justice" (Kolvenbach, 2008: 261). On this score, it is reasonable to think that this ideal is meaningful to any university whether or not it happens to be a Jesuit one. We should remember here that Business Education must be education and not just business, and that university education always articulates values and an anthropological vision of life. Thus what is at stake is a humanistic proposition that gives an all-embracing vision of human beings and society. That is why education cannot be reduced to a mere combination of knowledge and skills. To put it in the words of Datar *et al.* (2010), it boils down to the 'knowing' and 'doing' dimensions being rooted in education's 'being' dimension and of integrating all three. The aim must be "to help men become more truly human, enshrining human dignity, and being active participants in building a better world" (Kolvenbach, 2008: 38).

This educational ideal takes a holistic approach that fosters the individual's integrated development. The aim is to shape people who are open and sensitive to society's transformative pressures and demands. Spurning universities as an 'ivory tower', Kolvenbach's paradigm sets out the co-ordinates for approaching Higher Education, giving indications that should be borne in mind in the debate on Business Education. Kolvenbach states this paradigm with four Latin words, inspired by what the Jesuit Diego de Ledesma proposed in drawing up the RS in the second half of the 16th Century. These words are *utilitas* (practical-professional dimension), *iustitia* (ethical-social dimension), *humanitas* (humanist dimension), and *fides* (religious-spiritual dimension).

## Utilitas

*Utilitas* refers to what seems a self-evident requirement of Higher Education to prepare students for the high standards of professional practice and give them the excellent academic training they need to pursue their chosen careers (Hortal, 2008). Clearly the education offered by a Business School must provide excellence in terms of knowledge and the development of skills and abilities. However, Kolvenbach stresses that a professional career cannot be reduced to merely technical and instrumental dimensions. In line with what Sandel (2020) has called 'the tyranny of merit', Kolvenbach emphasises that training tomorrow's leaders should not create "a sect marked by elitism" (Kolvenbach, 2008, 228). Professionalisation is much more than just furnishing technical skills. It also involves taking onboard certain norms and values (Khurana, 2007). Introducing students to professional *praxis* means familiarising them with the assets enshrined by that practice — it should not be treated as something that is value-neutral (McIntyre, 1984). Were this not so, teaching would be nothing more than training mercenaries to serve whatever master and purpose. Affirming *utilitas* also means asking for whom and for what one strives.



This broad and not merely instrumental sense (Vivanco, 2016) of the professionalism proposed by Kolvenbach ties in with approaches stressing the need for a broad, complex view of organisations. Thus Laloux (2014) speaks of re-inventing organisations and Quinn (2015) suggests that a positive organisation with a purpose needs professionals who are capable of seeing themselves and the organisation in that light. Quinn, for example, speaks of the need to shoulder responsibility for the purpose, of the need to connect people to it such that “organizational purpose is communicated by personal commitment. Such communication involves integrity, the willingness to become what one wants to see in the organization” (Quinn, 2015, 43). This is fully in keeping with Kolvenbach’s goal which is to foster a university education in which *utilitas* (professionalism) is not reduced to mere utilitarian and instrumental dimensions.

It is true that the discourse on management professionalisation can be seen as an effort to legitimise management itself — something for which there is a need. That is because management is not just an occupational activity (Hortal, 2005) for one cannot speak of a profession without also speaking of demands for “expertise, autonomy, and an ethos of service to society” (Khurana, 2007: 101). That is why Kolvenbach never speaks solely of training leaders but rather of training leaders to serve others. From this perspective, Management Education must involve the building of a professional identity that includes taking the corresponding values and criteria onboard. This goes far beyond whether business schools make students take an oath or not (Watson, 2007; Khurana & Nohria, 2008; Hühn, 2014; de Bruin, 2016), it raises issues such as what professional identity Business Schools foster, the model of professional success they hold out, and whether their offerings boil down to “worldly success based on market skills” (Kolvenbach, 2008: 182). In a context of complexity, uncertainty and interdependence, a training model based only on participants ‘knowing and doing’ falls short of what is needed. ‘Being’ requires nurture to open minds and broaden perspectives. It is not only about achieving professional goals but also about being able to consciously build one’s own professional purpose. What model of excellence - and especially of professional success - do Business Schools propose in theory and in practice? This question worried Kolvenbach, which is why he insisted that the success of a university should not be measured by the high positions achieved by its graduates but by the kind of people they become and the service they render to society.

In his approach to *utilitas* Kolvenbach is at one with Khurana:

For educating leaders, if that is what business schools are truly about, is also a matter of socializing individuals into a particular conception of themselves, of the peer group to which they belong, and even of the meaning of Higher Education itself, thus helping to develop informed, reflective, integrated individuals fully able to engage with ultimate questions about the meaning and purpose of their lives and their work. (Khurana, 2007: 366).

From Kolvenbach’s perspective, this means that the education imparted must be values-based. Students need to be motivated by values that “are above money, fame, and success” (Kolvenbach, 2008: 108). Students must be people who are capable of articulating their values, find their own way, and obtain the means to put their ‘giving voice to values’ (Gentile: 2010). Yet one has to go further. Students must be challenged and reflect on the values enshrined by the disciplines they are studying. Here, it is important that they not only activate the habits of the heart (Bellah *et al.*, 1985) but also the habits of reflection. In this respect, we can say that education should

produce reflective practitioners (Schön, 1987) if *utilitas* is not be a sham. Reflective practitioners should not only think about their actions in their work (Schön, 1987) but also reflect upon their professional practice in their jobs, interpreting what they do in the societal context in which they live. In the same vein, Meyer & Sison (2020) remind us that Management Education helps us discover what human beings are and what the aim of human life is, thus ensuring that reflective practices are not only mental exercises but are also linked to character-building and developing virtues.

Yet as Kolvenbach warned the Georgetown Management Board, *utilitas* has the potential to hijack everything even if it yields a rich and complex view of professional practice and identity. That is why the paradigm proposed by Kolvenbach does not end at this point. He considered that the only truly practical training is one that is well-integrated and takes a broader, holistic approach to education. As he put it, we need to “educate to create responsible citizens in the city that is the world” (Kolvenbach, 2008: 81). That is why his paradigm includes (and gives equal weight to) the other three components: *iustitia*, *humanitas*, and *fides*.

## **Iustitia**

For Kolvenbach, it was not enough to train competent professionals — something he considered a necessary condition but not a sufficient one. Even if reflective professionals are trained, they must be able to go beyond merely exercising their professional skills. The questions of why and for whom thus remain open. Put another way, what kind of society do such professionals help build? How do they incorporate the ethical-social dimension in their professional self-knowledge? These issues troubled Kolvenbach because he saw an ethical-social dimension is an inextricable part of exercising a profession — a view that naturally leads one to ask what such people do to create a fairer society.

It is true that traditional approaches to Business Ethics usually considered ideas on and demands for justice (Beauchamp & Bowie, 1988; Frederick *et al.*, 1988; Moussé, 1989; De George, 1990). Such considerations were often of a generalist nature, which gradually disappeared in the CSR discourse. Elkington had already warned of this in his seminal proposal on how to approach the so-called ‘Triple Bottom Line’: “focusing on economic prosperity, environmental quality and — the element which business has tended to overlook — social justice” (Elkington, 1997:2). CSR has often incorporated new business practices while maintaining a conventional framework in the way the company is understood, and without questioning the society that helped shape it. In fact, CSR’s development reveals the way ‘social responsibility’ has supplanted ‘social justice’ (Rasche *et al.*, 2017), and ‘values’ have supplanted ‘ethics’ in the discourse (Gentile, 2010). Along the way, the question of purpose — personal, professional and organisational — has been lost (Business Roundtable, 2019). The power wielded by companies (and the responsibility that flows from it) means that purpose and reflection on society (which firms contribute to build) are intertwined. In a world built upon interdependencies (and therefore shared responsibilities), the question of justice can no longer be ignored on the pretext that it corresponds to the political sphere (Scherer *et al.*, 2014).

From the outset, the Jesuits’ concern for the common good has been part of their collective identity. Indeed, Sepúlveda (2018) considers that the idea of the common

good can be found in the Society of Jesus' foundational texts. Today, this Jesuit concern is linked to and formulated in terms of justice. This has also become a key goal in the Society of Jesus' universities (Álvarez, 2015). For Kolvenbach, promoting sensitivity and a commitment to justice is part and parcel of the educational proposal. This idea took root at the 32nd. General Congregation of The Society of Jesus, establishing that the Jesuit mission was "the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement" (CG XXXII, 1975). This requirement is also embodied in the way we understand Higher Education. That is why we must avoid the risk of reducing any theory of justice to an abstraction, to a generically universal principle, or to a general rhetorical reference. As Kolvenbach said at the University of Santa Clara in 2000, "Students, throughout their training, should learn to perceive, think, judge, choose and act in favor of the rights of others, especially the oppressed and the less advantaged" (Kolvenbach, 2008: 183). One must therefore go beyond a theory of abstract justice and fully grasp: (a) the nature of unfairness and inequalities; (b) the suffering inflicted by these inequities on the individual; (c) what justice means in terms of personal impacts rather than merely as a notion. Consequently, it is about empowering students to discover the challenges of justice arising in each specialty and profession, and that are unique to it. When talking about justice, one must always bear in mind that no single theory explains everything, and that the discourse on justice -especially in the field of business- must be contextualised (Donaldson & Dunfee, 1999). In the same way that Walzer (1983) argued that there were spheres of justice, we could say that training for justice involves being able to rise to the specific challenges posed by the issue in each professional sphere.

From Kolvenbach's point of view, this involves both active commitment to the common good, and the fostering of compassionate sensibilities. It is about helping to build a world with fairer social structures and that ties in with professional purpose — a quest that goes beyond purely pragmatic matters. Higher Education can never limit itself to giving students a passport to professional status. That is why Kolvenbach speaks of 'men and women for and with others' who are "active participants in the building of a better world" (Kolvenbach, 2008: 38)<sup>2</sup>. Incidentally, this is what Kolvenbach sees as the key to leadership training, namely education for service, and a commitment to justice as the frame for understanding leadership. Kolvenbach's quest for the common good ties in with proposals for justice (such as those made by Sandel (2009)). It also links to proposals for reforming Management Education (such as those made by Muff *et al.* (2013)). All these strands seek to reconnect business with society.

Kolvenbach believes that an active commitment to justice is inseparable from fostering sensibilities nurturing compassion and solidarity. At Santa Clara, he summed it up by saying that "The complete person of tomorrow must show well-informed solidarity" (Kolvenbach, 2008: 182). That is because delicate sensibilities are not what we are looking for. One needs to realise that arguments on justice and rights cannot be separated from those on 'the good life' (Sandel, 2009) — whether for professionals or the common man. Following Sandel, when it comes to justice, one should not only be able to reason on the common good but also know how to cultivate virtue. Reflective

<sup>2</sup> Recently, comments on this one of Kolvenbach's points have noted the need to explicitly include the ecological dimension on the lines proposed by Papa Francisco in *Laudatio Si* (2015). (See Cabaleiro *et al.*, 2016; Aguado *et al.*, 2016; Cermeño, 2021)

professionals should thus not only be able to open both their hearts and minds to the suffering of others but also be capable of turning this compassion into a sense of justice and solidarity. Put another way, bewailing cruel fate is not enough; one needs to show well-informed commitment to helping those much less fortunate than ourselves. Yet this kind of solidarity both requires and presupposes compassion. In fact, Lilius et al. (2013) propose speaking of organisational compassion because “in work organizations, it is often not limited to an interaction between two individuals but rather may take the form of more collective accomplishment” (Lilius et al., 2013, 275). Evidently, this compassion is rooted in a radical assumption of human dignity (Aguado et al., 2016).

Yet Kolvenbach’s aspiration is not confined to training competent, compassionate, committed people. At Chile’s Universidad Alberto Hurtado, he noted that: “In Jesuit education at least, the rule for measuring the quality of a university is the human quality that the student achieves” (Kolvenbach, 2008, 232). He thus incorporated a dimension that is not the sole preserve of the Jesuits. His comments should be seen as a pointer on the path for radically rethinking business education. The practical (*utilitas*) and social (*iustitia*) dimensions of education must also be incorporated into a humanist dimension (*humanitas*).

## Humanitas

To assert *humanitas* in Kolvenbach’s educational paradigm presupposes that one cannot train a professional without also educating the inner man or woman. This is the meaning of the question on the presence or absence of the humanities in Management Education. It assumes that professional quality and human quality go hand-in-hand. Consequently, speaking of the presence of the humanities in business education (Kronman, 2007; Colby et al., 2011) is not a purely intellectual exercise but rather an effort to spark concern for specific individuals and to forge commitment to humanising values. The proposed humanism questions the risks of fostering Narcissistic and self-referencing traits on the one hand, and of promoting specialists lacking interdisciplinary and inter-cultural skills on the other. In the educational tradition of the Jesuits, humanism always seeks answers rooted in humanisation of the challenges facing Mankind at any given time.

At the end of the day, each educational system seeks to produce a type or profile of human beings (Deresiewicz, 2014). Here, one should not confuse professionalisation with hyper-specialisation or an approach based on a single dimension. Instead, one needs to accept that the debate on humanities is not about the curriculum but about humanism in Business Education. Only by realising this will we stop the whole thing becoming more of a business and less of an education. The humanities can show us “how to read the future of Management Education” (Landfester et al., 2016) because in speaking of their role, we are also speaking of advancing towards Transformative Management Education.

Transformative education means not just tacking humanities content and skills on to a business curriculum but rather of genuinely incorporating the perspectives currently often split into disciplinary silos. [...] One does not complete a genuine process of learning as the same person who began it. (Landfester and Metelmann, 2019: X).

Humanism means raising the question of one's own and one's shared humanity. Hence the insistence that Business Education makes no sense if one hides from the fact that professional identity and one's goal in life are issues that are inextricably linked (Sullivan, 2016), or if one fails to recognise that the meaning of life is more than just the sum of its parts (Konman, 2007). One therefore needs to go beyond a narrow vision of education for this only fragments knowledge and shatters learning experiences (Colby, *et al.*, 2011; Sullivan, 2016), leaving personal integration to chance.

The humanities are a way to build personal reflection on meaning and purpose, and therefore help students to reflect upon themselves and their contribution to society (Deresiewicz, 2014). As Sullivan said, "humanistic learning can never be solely cognitive. It involves making sense of cultural life, including criticism of existing cultural forms, and so demands a response from those who encounter it" (Sullivan, 2016: 146).

One can imagine Kolvenbach nodding his head in agreement. That is because when we talk of humanism, we are not speaking of indoctrination (Kolvenbach, 2008; Clydesdale, 2015) but rather of aspiring "to the formation of more fully human people" that goes "beyond cognitive progress to foster human development that involves understanding, motivation and conviction" (Kolvenbach, 2008: 261, 131). This conviction explains the stress placed on interdisciplinary and intercultural approaches to training and the avoidance of its fragmentation. Hence, in addition to the aforementioned three Cs (the training of competent, compassionate, committed professionals), one can now add a fourth 'C' for conscious (aware) people. Such people are aware of themselves and the world around them, yielding an integrated humanism capable of transforming both the individual and society. More than a determined, specific content, "Jesuit Christian Humanism speaks to the 'whole person'" (Agúndez, 2008, 619). In this respect, it is more of an aspiration framed so that it does not leave out any dimension helping people realise their full human potential.

This humanist education must foster critical thinking, which extends to the education imparted. That, in Kolvenbach's view, is because we pay a price when "we limit ourselves to conceiving of education more as a transmission of culture than as a critique of culture" (Kolvenbach, 2008: 90). Such a critical attitude must lead to both a challenging education and to being challenged. This is where two key references in Jesuit education take on their full meaning: *magis* and *cura personalis*. *Magis* should be seen as a constant invitation to excellence in a given situation, something that can be understood as human plenitude in rendering service to others. Consequently, the attention, follow-up and support for each person's process become crucial. *Cura personalis* expresses the priority given to integrating education outcomes, emphasising that such integration not only covers academic aspects but also personal ones. It is something that has to take form in the student's attitude to learning while taking a 'Student First' approach. This is not because students might otherwise come to believe that "the customer is always right" (Selingo, 2013: 19) but rather because:

When we say "putting the student first", we are not advocating a student-centered environment that meets all their demands. Rather, we stress that faculty and other influential adults in the lives of students (coaches and the like) need to be involved to holistically foster student development. (Braskamp *et al.*, 2006: XVIII)

This pursuit of holistic development helps the student explore, seek and progressively configure his life, personal, and professional goals. We can use several words here: purpose, meaning, calling, vocation (Clydesdale, 2015). Moreover, we can do so without

blushing over their past religious connotations. That is because Kolvenbach's *humanitas* plays a key role when it comes to the human and social qualities of the purpose, and in the awareness and self-knowledge that frames it.

## Fides

Last but not least, we come to *fides*. Of course, Kolvenbach's approach has an apologetic component and divorced from that, it ceases to have meaning as a Jesuit proposition. It concerns the ideal of educating competent, compassionate, committed individuals because this ideal reflects the ultimate reason for serving the world and The Church through The Society of Jesus. *Fides* is the soul of *utilitas*, *iustitia*, and *humanitas*. Yet it is neither a mere embellishment of the other three dimensions nor a way to harness the university to serve the faith. Kolvenbach clearly rejected such instrumentalisation when he stated that a university "has its own purpose and it is not merely an opportunity to evangelise or to defend the faith"; "it is not a parish or a religious congregation" (Kolvenbach, 2008: 37, 42). A university is primarily a university and this means "the immediate recognition of institutional autonomy in the government of a Catholic university and of the academic freedom of each of its members" (Kolvenbach, 2008: 104). Where is the *raison d'être* of *fides* [faith] then? In line with all of the above, it lies on the horizon of the individual's integral realisation — something that is open to the transcendental dimension as to his or her ultimate meaning. Kolvenbach warns of the perils of turning universities into academic 'silos' characterised by: the absence of knowledge integration; a reductionist, instrumental view of training; a tendency towards uniformisation. Likewise, he rejects education that transforms human dimensions into 'silos' and that spurns the kind of intellectual and professional training which focuses on the whole person (including the individual's purpose or transcendence).

*Fides* is thus the exact opposite of indoctrination. It gives meaning to one's experience, inviting one to recognise that every individual seeks meaning in his or her life to some degree or other (Frankl, 1977). Consequently, one builds a forum for dialogue among cultures and religions. This is so because, as Kolvenbach said in Beirut in 2000:

Dialogue does not consist of a confrontation of doctrines and dogmas. It lies at the level of the founding experience, which is the root of the religious fact in general. This radical experience is the ground on which dialogue between religions can and must take place (Kolvenbach, 2008: 164).

Heeding Kolvenbach's observations is important if we are to prevent this radical human experience being turned into a taboo subject in university education. In this sense, the Jesuit tradition's *cura personalis* [personal care] was nothing more than the expression of a commitment to helping people become fully rounded human beings. This approach in a university imparts knowledge in a non-dogmatic, non-reductionist fashion, nurturing meaningful conversations in a spirit of pluralism and dialogue. Etxeberria (2008) stressed that there are three levels of *fides* in a university: (1) as a quest for the ultimate meaning of reality, which may or may not lead to religious responses, depending on each person's own itinerary; (2) as openness to experiences of spirituality that can be shared by all religions and – I would add — from what has been



called the spirituality of atheism (Comte-Sponville, 2006) or spirituality for sceptics (Solomon, 2002); and; (3) explicit openness to the theological Christian experience. Yet what all three cases share is their power to constantly enrich and deepen what Kolvenbach called the founding or radical human experience. They all awaken the contemplative capacity that underlies what it is to be truly human.

For Kolvenbach this contemplative capacity was clearly both of God and of the world. Yet the common strand is a shared openness to something that lies at the core of our existence. Whatever one wants to call it, it is something shaped by one's past and cultural context. Significantly, it is practically the same expression ('true centre') that M. Gentile proposed when she spoke of giving voice to values in a business context: "Managers at all levels in their firms report that a significant enabler of values-based action is the clarity, commitment, and courage that is born of acting from our true center, finding alignment between who we already are and what we say and do" (Gentile, 2010: 108). This ties in with one of the main success factors in an organisational setting, namely the inner state of the person taking the action, as Senge *et al.* (2004) said.

Sandelands (2012) presented an overview of ways of understanding spiritualities at work. Lozano (2022) showed how CSR is open to spirituality. On this point Kolvenbach mirrors the growing interest in spirituality in business (Tischler, 1999; Zsolnai, 2003). This interest increasingly goes beyond partial aspects and draws on diagnoses such as those made by Scharmer on today's burning issues. According to Scharmer (2009, 2013), Mankind is experiencing a triple divide: an ecological one (a disconnect between civilization and Nature); a social one (a disconnect between self and other); a spiritual-cultural one (a disconnect between self and Self). The problem is further compounded by the fact that all three divides are interconnected and, according to Scharmer, are such that we cannot bridge them separately. That is why incorporating the spiritual dimension in the business world is now considered of greater importance than ever. One of the reasons Kolvenbach is on the same wavelength is because he values the mental openness and flexibility that facilitates enquiry and he is not shackled by thought patterns that paralyse our ability to change (Ray *et al.*, 2011; Lampe & Engleman-Lampe, 2012). These attitudes are ones that can have a positive impact on the workplace (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003) insofar as they promote holistic excellence (Chakraborty & Chakraborty, 2008). These insights have led to proposals for linking meditation to business ethics education (Lampe & Engleman-Lampe, 2012) and for introducing contemplative practices in Higher Education (Barbezat & Bush, 2014). Such practices "all place the student in the center of his or her learning so that the student can connect his or her inner world to the outer one. Teaching and learning are transformed through this connection into something personally meaningful yet connected to the world" (Barbezat & Bush, 2014:6).

Nevertheless, Kolvenbach's affirmative and inclusive faith-linked proposition does have an uncrossable bound. In speaking of *fides* and the spiritual sphere, it is a self-standing concept, not a tool for seeking other ends. It has nothing to do with "selling 'spirituality as a new business fad bent on colonising the religious sphere'" (Carrette & King, 2005). Neither does it seek a spirituality tailored to new forms of Capitalism (Purser, 2019). Kolvenbach's thought is wholly at odds with such notions.

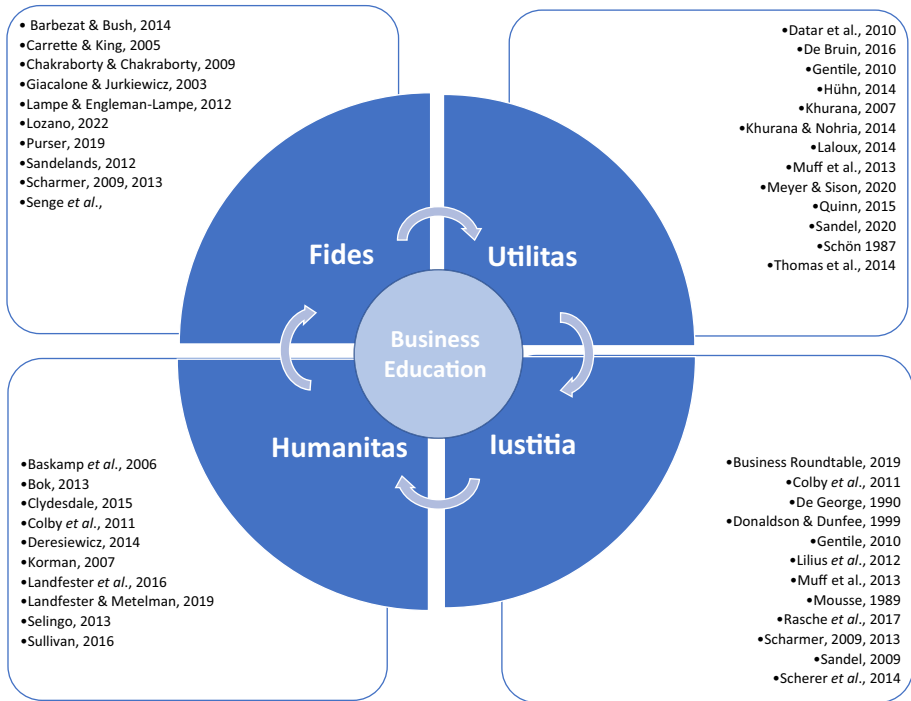
In Kolvenbach's proposal, *fides* is inseparable from patient, constant work for justice and for growth in human quality. If the university as an institution is nourished by the constant desire to seek the truth, it must draw strength from a wish to seek

the truth in oneself. *Fides* in the university context is the call and invitation to each person to act from their true centre. It is this principle that the ideal of training competent, conscious, compassionate, committed people is rooted. The horizon of such individuals is “to fully become a person, and not just a specialist or professional” (Kolvenbach, 2008: 233).

## Conclusions

The framework proposed by Fr. Kolvenbach and based on D. de Ledesma reflection has given rise to many proposals and their subsequent development, for example on: how to rethink the contribution made by Jesuit universities (Villa & Lemke, 2016; Ospina *et al.*, 2017; Igelmo & Lenke, 2018; Guibert, 2018, 2020; Lemke & Igelmo, 2021); how to redefine their management model (Sanz, 2017); new the new teaching proposals involved (Zaldívar & Lemke, 2018; García de Castro, 2021; Burgueño, 2021); education in social values (McCarthy, 2019; Villa, 2021a); the graduate profile (López & Lozano, 2018); how to focus on business ethics (Lemke, 2018; Cortina, 2019); the teacher profile required by the university (Vivanco, 2018; Lozano *et al.*, 2020); the proposed leadership model (Lozano, 2017; Villa, 2021b). Other issues reflected upon include those of a strictly business nature, for example, gaining a new understanding of the firm framed in sustainability terms (Cabaleiro *et al.*, 2016; Aguado *et al.*, 2016; Cermeño, 2021). In other words, these are internal approaches to the model and its development. In this sense, and thinking about Business Education, it would be interesting to explore the development of Kolvenbach’s framework in relation to various business fields. This exploration might be conducted in a way similar to that used by Sison *et al.* (2018) in their consideration of the ethics of virtue and the common good.

The itinerary we have followed in this essay is one that recognises the power and impact that companies have in shaping our societies — something that leads us to ask what the quality of managers’ training is. To answer this question, one needs to go beyond the curriculum subject (Business Ethics) and a cross-cutting approach to some social issues (CSR and sustainability). There are ever stronger indications that the key to the answer lies in the personal and human quality of those participating in business education. This in turn raises the issue of what educational project Business Schools pursue. That is why this essay has sought to highlight a different aspect of the possible contributions made by the Ledesma-Kolvenbach model, namely: the model’s potential for incorporating dialogue on how to rethink Business Education. This potential lies in a proposed framework (*utilitas, iustitia, humanitas, and fides*), opening up a more holistic, articulated vision of Business Education (in the Higher Education setting). We have sought to show how each of these terms lets one: (a) articulate the diverse proposals for rethinking Business Education; (b) foster links and interrelationships among these proposals, lessening the risk that each one may overlook the contributions made by the others. The figure shows the links there may be between each term in Kolvenbach’s paradigm and the diverse proposals considered.



Source: Author and Nuria Fenero

Thus in the context of the debate on Business Education, Kolvenbach’s proposal has a great deal to offer in this debate over and beyond its specific application to The Society of Jesus’ education centres. This is so because it puts forward an ideal of an educated person (one who is competent, conscious, compassionate, and committed) and that is both holistic and integrating. His proposal pursues this ideal within the frame of an educational paradigm whose goal is to integrate professional, ethical-social, humanistic, and spiritual dimensions (respectively labelled *utilitas*, *iustitia*, *humanitas*, and *fides*). We have seen many cases of Business Education review proposals that focus on just one of these four points but that usually ignore the others. Here, Kolvenbach’s ideas enrich reflection and debate on transforming Business Schools. This is not to say that the model is ‘a magic wand’. For example, the challenge of achieving true integration rather than mere aggregation of the elements is a real and persistent one. The 4 dimensions can easily take the form of 1 + 3 (in which professionalism would be the indispensable core, and the others peripheral or complementary dimensions). Alternatively, one might consider professionalisation as the core from a curricular standpoint, with the others being relegated to electives, to aspects of campus life, or to a department’s mission statement and identity. That is why Kolvenbach insisted on the need to foster personal and institutional judgment in weighing up what best leads to such integrated, holistic formation in all four dimensions.

In this respect, Kolvenbach’s proposal is a challenging one for everybody. This is because it assumes that: "the best thing about a university is not what is said about it but the lives of its students"; “the real criterion for evaluating our [Jesuit] universities lies in

what our students become”; “for [Jesuit] education the rule for measuring the quality of a university is the human quality that the student achieves” (Kolvenbach, 2008, 139, 182, 232). It is from these tenets that Kolvenbach challenges Business Education.

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## Declarations

**Conflict of interest** On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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