

Amplifying Honesty and Truthfulness in Learning from Risale-i Nur Perspective

Siti Farahin Ahmad Nawawi

Learning Technology and Innovation Module Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan
Malaysia, UKM Bangi, 43600, Selangor, Malaysia
Email: farahinnawawi@gmail.com

Rossen Din

STEM Enculturation Centre, Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, UKM
Bangi, 43600, Selangor, Malaysia
Email: rosseni@ukm.edu.my

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Abstract

“The truth” is constantly being challenged and revealed in today’s world. That led to the age of uncertainty and doubt causing the process of teaching and learning becoming a way of transgression of possibilities that are challenging the authority, questioning power and rebuttal traditional way despite the original purpose of seeking knowledge has always been about questioning, challenging, transgressing, and bringing in new positions. With the rise of digital phenomenon of fast and easy access to a wide range of information, students now evolving into new digital habits especially for Generation Z that cause academic dishonesty. Students also often underestimated and sharing knowledge has become one-way again (with online learning and virtual class) and if this new normality continues without transparency and understanding, learning will be lacking values and excitement. This cause students to approach problems with unique manners, asking honest curious questions and eager to unpack new experiences. Hence, this review article will focus on value of honesty which is the key value in learning—be it personalized or in general—from the perspective of Risale-i Nur, a treatise of light that discuss how honesty is a strong opponent for falsehood, against deceit and as spiritual remedies for spiritual sickness caused by lying.

Keyword: Values, Honesty, Truthful, Nursi, Spiritual Value

Introduction

Teaching and learning during this age of uncertainty, is a path to restore the joy discovering the truth in all its complexity can bring (Scapp, 2021). Scapp also added how in today’s world, “the truth” is constantly being challenged and being revealed, it has become the age of uncertainty, doubt and this includes the process of teaching and learning becoming a way of transgression of possibility. Transgression of possibilities in a way that challenging the authority, questioning power and rebuttal traditional way as Scapp added how the original purpose of seeking knowledge has always been about questioning, challenging, transgressing,

and bringing in new positions. With the rise of digital phenomenon of being quick and easy access to a wide range of information, instantaneous interaction and communication, business possibilities for local and global, and even serving as a strategy to find out preferences and interests in particular issues, it evolves into the new digital habits especially for Generation Z, and it is believed to boost students' critical thinking capability by employing technology in teaching and learning (Rahman et al., 2021). Soler-Costa's theoretical approach to this new panorama in the educational field is digital competency as a concept that corroborates the impact of digital technology on personal development (Soler-Costa, 2021). This implies that educational institutions must rethink educational approach in the light of the new needs and demands from the rising usage of technologies and modern perspectives. Despite the urgency of technological tools and equipped teachers in educational world, students are often underestimated and sharing knowledge has become one-way again with online learning and virtual class. If this new normality continues without transparency and understanding, learning will be lacking values and excitement. Catalana (2020) explores how students has now approached problems in class with unique manners, asking honest curious questions and eager to unpack new experiences. Hence, this review article will focus on value of honesty which is the key value in learning—be it personalized or in general.

Truth and Honesty in Learning

By definition, being "honest" means suitability of words and behavior that conforms of words to exact facts or actions while the conformities of honesty become truth in both words and deeds (Fitriah and Madjid, 2020). Other meaning implies how the truth and honesty requires cognitive control as a way to suppress the attempt to cheat and actively resist the temptation (Abe, 2020). In contrast, Pascual-Ezama (2020) stated that honesty is not one-dimensional trait while insisting dishonest behavior is simply self-contradict trait for rebel individual that acknowledge the truth but break the rules anyway.

Simply said, honesty and trust are both subjective and in educational world, it is relationship built between teacher and students during class session (Belli et al., 2020). However, within the new era of emerging technology in learning, values are often interpreted as something everyone "already" knows and often required standard instruction to be followed for it to be implemented. This led towards academic dishonesty as Burbidge and Hamer (2020) reported, academic dishonesty is an epidemic that affected almost all students whether intentionally or unintentionally. With the emergence of technology era, and recently world-changing pandemic COVID-19, as technology is no longer alienated to most of us, in fact, it's a must-know and necessary tool to communicate effectively with virtual physical interaction, honesty is crucial in the daily interaction. Especially in higher education, honesty appears to be an important necessity especially from students; in order for educators to understand their insight, experience, engagement and reflections in learning (McGarr and O' Gallchóir, 2020). These only justify how important it is to implement values; to be selective with information, received knowledge with meaning and later able to have meaningful achievement with memorable outcome and most importantly, lifetime knowledge.

As from the perspective of religiosity, the integration of Islamic values and practices in the conventional education system should not be missed out as Rosli et al (2019) has managed to demonstrate Islamic spiritual concepts, values, practices and their applicability that requires educating and embracing spiritual values. Stonehocker (2020) also insisted that the moral status of intellectual honesty was based from religion practice however in spirituality it becomes an internal commitment as basis for personal integrity even without

the command of God. However, in the Quran, God commands: "O believers, fear God, and be among those who are the truthful ones" (Surah al-Tawbah, 9:119) which means people who fear God should always be truthful. These definitions can only lead towards simple meaning of truth and honesty which are right and true in both words and actions respectively.

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and Risale-i Nur

Imam Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (1877-1960) was an influential Muslim scholar in Turkey and philosopher of the late Ottoman who produced a thematic interpretation of the Holy Quran, known as the Risale-i Nur, which aimed to restore and enhance Islamic spirituality after the fall of the Ottoman Turkish Empire under secularism (Thomas, 2019). According to Abdulrahman (2011), Nursi was once invited to give a sermon in Damascus which was witnessed by nearly 10, 000 pilgrims comprising 100 religious scholars at the time. The Damascus Sermon (Nursi, 1989) is not only valuable and effective with a strong heritage that transcends geography, philosophy, boundaries and time, it even described the spiritual illnesses that were prevalent at the time (and are highly relevant to the present) accompanied by spiritual medicines as cures (Thomas et al., 2018). Thomas also added how Nursi elaborations on spiritual medicine in both Damascus Sermon and throughout Risale-i Nur Collection, with guidance from the Holy Quran, are referred to as the "pharmacy of the Quran" which reaches Muslim audiences to pay attention to the revelation of the Quran as the basis of the Islamic faith. Risale-i Nur Collection, also known as "Treatise of Light", has now been translated to almost 50 languages globally (Tuna, 2020) and read by students in *madrasah* (religious school) as Nursi's recommended it to be the shortcut in studying *tawheed* (monotheism) and strengthen believe towards Allah (Ishak et al., 2019). Tuna (2020) also clarified how Risale-i Nur produces inspiring spiritual values through enlightenment and elaborating profound meanings of the Holy Quran. This includes various topics from theological conversations to jurisprudential matters, especially in The Letters (Nursi, 2013), as well as deep reflection of longing for God's help in The Flashes Collection (Nursi, 2000; 2020), mostly on topics regarding ways to strengthen faith (Mohammad, 2015) and at the same time integrating sciences and religious, especially in education, in order to produce an integrative personality in our future generation that empowers both excellence knowledge in science and faith (Sempo, 2020), hence rebuilding the glories of Islam.

The Truth and Honesty from the Perspective of Risale-i Nur

Honesty against Falsehood

Nursi had explained in simple yet chosen words in The Words (Nursi, 2011) regarding the truth, "*The innate disposition of things does not lie, whatever it says is the truth,*". In this phrase, Nursi explained how the creatures and beings that is created is made to follow and obey Allah's command and speaks the truth, hence becoming its form as commanded. Despite Nursi's elevated words, it clearly means that obeying God's command is part of speaking the truth, as well as part of our original-created tendencies. The same phrase also explained further, how the truth is important since human by nature and by intention, seeks the truth. Nursi (2011)'s simplified words define how falsehood or fabrication that is claimed as true, although it is faulty and sometimes led to heresy, simply proved that there's a seeker of the truth. This showed that guidance is required and not easily obtained. Nursi also explained how *syariah* (Islamic rules) plays a huge role in containing and amplifying the truth. As the rules is from Divine decree to protect human beings from the unknown future and

abstaining from committing sins, since honesty is like the *nur* (light) while falsehood is like *nar* (fire) (Nawawi et al., 2020).

Honesty against Deceit

Nursi explained in his sermon back in 1911, that one of Muslim's illnesses was the lack of honesty (Nursi, 2014). In the same sermon, Nursi elaborated the ability of being honest should be nurtured as a precious asset in daily social lives as honesty is one's attitude when faced with a certain situation, being able to tell the truth in all circumstances and honesty should come out from one's pure heart without greed and lust thinking. Truthfulness and lying are also distant from one another as are belief and unbelief, hence truthfulness has become the most valuable treasure in the market of human society, and the most demanded goods (Nursi, 2014). Nursi (2012) also added how being honest is equally being on the right track of Islam which should be the basic principle for all Muslims. Nursi (2012) also simplified: either truthfulness or silence where there are only two ways; the truth or silence. Fadel and Tatari (2015) elaborated and explained that one should only speak truthfully with sincerity and if one's truth might lead to harm or miscommunication, one should refrain from being boldly. Therefore, it is better to remain silent whenever in doubt and unsure of the truth and avoid it as well if one is insincere. In today's modern educational world, the concept of honesty extends widely to our speech, acts and thoughts, especially in the cloudy world and virtual classes, the value of honesty should be applied in our daily interactions and social. Even though teachers now have powerful, modern tools to assess the level of honesty in a way that promote honesty and trust in students (Belli et al., 2020), this simply shows that honesty should be implement in the first place during teaching sessions as well initially nurtured individually through character development (Yassin, et al., 2011).

Honesty as Remedies for Spiritual Sickness

As said by Nursi (2011) in one of the treaties titled "Falsehoods Are Blasphemies", Nursi described the truth and its heavy importance. Honesty should be treated as one's grand principle and principle should be held accountable (Nursi, 2011). This show Nursi's concept regarding being truthful is to be guided with wisdom where what spoken should be true as one's principle and attribute to one's attitude. Another principle of honesty is to take what is clear and untroubled, to leave what is turbid and distressing, to see the good side of things and one shall have good thoughts; to know things to be good and think of them as good hence one will find the pleasure in life (Nursi, 2011). These principles are simple yet very important and helpful due to the fact that positivity is the main contribution towards a happier spiritual state. Nursi also added how each one of us in this life are always in state of hope and thinking favorably of certain things. Therefore, while to think the worst is despair; the destroyer of happiness and slayer of life (Nursi, 2011). Despite these words does not directly relates with honesty, Nursi metaphorically insisted how being honest and truthful led towards happiness. This somehow easily understood as we learnt that dishonest people are usually miserable or prone to emotional exhaustion (Do et al., 2021), always fearing the consequences of truth being known (Pascual-Ezama et al., 2020) and eventually ashamed of the lies they told (Fernandez et al., 2019).

In alignment with the goal of education in the 21st century by Din (2015), to produce knowledgeable learners with developed generic skills and values transferable to their daily life, Nursi (2011) also reminds us regarding the truth in a chapter "After Finding What's Right, Don't Cause Dispute for the Sake of Something Better", Nursi explained how seeker after

truth, likewise students, should not be involve in dispute whenever there is a doubt concerning what is right and dispute concerning what is better. Nursi concluded that sometimes what is good is better than what is better which means to accept the good that is achieved at the moment as long as it maintains the peace and harmony.

Conclusion

Honesty and truthfulness are both fundamental needs in today's modern learning. Not only this treasured value is required in our cloud interaction, it is also a combat against falsehood, against deceit as well as spiritual remedies for sickness of lying. It is also the key factor in general and personalized learning where trust and passion will help teachers nurture the students' interest during teaching and learning session. Intensifying honesty by promoting transparency and understanding will subsequently multiply other good values. It is important to apply honesty as a principal value towards becoming a successful individual, community and nation. All in all, the importance of being truthful and honest are highlighted throughout this study for positive changes and as an agent for a multiplier effect to further create abundance of goodness. It is expected to benefit not only learners but also teachers, parents and the community at large. Honesty can extend when applied in various aspect and field, such as medical, financial, engineering, social science and humanities apart from education and learning. However honesty and values should be ignited and integrated into fundamental subject in all education system for a start by integrating spiritual values into the curriculum or co-curriculum directly or indirectly across curriculum. Risale-i Nur Collection has deep treasure of treatise for various needs especially for formal education and individual or personalized learning which is the basis of human development and growth. It is a tool and means through which social, economic, political and moral lives can be expand, improve, modernize, brand and rebrand. Sustainable and quality educational investment for the future of 21st century in creating humanized society requires tremendous development of multiskilled personnel not only in technology but also in work ethics and social responsibility.

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