

The concept of mani ism (meaning by name) and mani harf (meaning by letter) as a comprehensive theoretical tool for educational philosophy and method and the importance and impact of the Risale i Nur in Fethullah Gülen's educational out

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The 'truth' has been fragmented into many pieces today; as positivist approaches to the material sciences and the universe do not provide mankind with the complete truth. It is due to this deterministic approach of qualitative reasoning that the human society has turned its face completely away from spirituality and the metaphysics, leading to a gradual moral degeneration of the masses that are left still unsatisfied with their current ensuing state of darkness and lack of 'complete and holistic truth'.

This loss of balance in the approach of viewing life and the material world has resulted due to the narrow vision of observing world with the 'eye of the rational' only and a total abandonment of the spiritual and metaphysical dimensions. The ensuing discussion, identifies the approaches to knowledge and education by the renowned contemporary scholar Fethullah Gülen who is leading the world in an innovative way in the field of education, his model is based on the theoretical framework proposed by his predecessor Bediuzzaman Said Nursi who provided a critique of the modern educational model and proposed a comprehensive alternative method.

According to the twentieth century exegete and scholar also known as "Wonder of Age" Bediuzzaman Said Nursi this opposition has been the ensuing long battle since the beginning stages of human history on this planet, the battle between philosophy and religion. In it, if the two come together in union and submission to the higher truths of religion and metaphysics then humanity achieves great perfection and witnesses many glories, however if one dominates the other particular philosophy, then humanity is dominated by either total darkness or total light. Nursi accords these

two paths as the 'two faces' of the human self-hood '*ana*' or the 'I'. Nursi explains that it is this over emphasis on the human self-hood or "I" that has dominated the intellectual thought of the world today, which he asserts has restricted the perspective of humanity to see through the narrow lens of the self or "individual" quantitatively, rather than a qualitative and holistic way.

According to Nursi, there are two perspectives and methods of viewing the world and the universe, through the medium of *mani ism* 'meaning by name' or that of *mani harf*^[1] 'meaning by letter'. Nursi own life and teachings demonstrates the expanded understanding of meaning by name and *meaning by letter*. Nursi describes that 'meaning by name' as the perspective or method of identifying, categorising, and recognising things or objects as an entity on their own, in this perspective, entities are studied and examined on their own with no link to . Nursi is critical of this 'quantitative' approach to life, knowledge and the sciences, as it is merely a descriptive method whereby the 'real' or indicative meaning is missing.

Subsequently, Nursi's accords *mani harf* meaning by letter, as more effective than meaning by name, as it encompasses a greater universal meaning beyond the particular. In accordance with this second approach, objects or things are not perceived individually, but convey a meaning indicatively or by way of inference signifying a higher purpose and meaning. This can be better understood through an example. Suppose there is a tree, this tree is deemed to be a creative piece of art work of the Divine, that emanates the flashes of mercy and generosity and contentment from the realm of the Divine and it sustains the most important need of human beings – oxygen which makes life possible on this planet. The tree is therefore not examined solely as an entity on its own (that perspective would be to just see the tree and its most obvious immediate function – it would just be a descriptive account of the physical use of the tree with no other indications to a greater meaning as proposed above.) but rather by its connection to the universe by the virtue of its createdness and purpose.

Qualitative model

As a consequence Nursi, places greater emphasis on the second approach, the meaning by letter or qualitative approach. According to Nursi this describes the worldview of a believer who derives a **qualitative appreciation** from every singular entity in relation to the greater reality and whole. With this view and method, anything can automatically derive an added value due to its connection or association with the Almighty One (swt). Nursi is therefore illustrating with this categorization the effect of belief as opposed to non-belief.

Through the use of this simple terminology, Nursi both critiques and addresses the problem of the current methodological approach towards viewing and perceiving the world and the universe, that is conducted through the narrow view and 'eye' of non-belief in contrast to the eye of faith and belief. Consequently, Nursi's simple yet sophisticated concept is signifying a greater point about the rigid and narrow 'institutionalisation' of educational pedagogy and method of enquiry of knowledge and the sciences.

Nursi adopts the view that positivist sciences and knowledge should not be separated from the 'meaning' and qualitative expression. Nursi encourages an educational model that embraces the positivist sciences and philosophy with those of the metaphysics as taught by religious sciences. For Nursi to separate and 'divorce' the two would mean that 'one wing of the perspective' is missing and the balance is hence lost.

The neglected *spirit* in the modern world

Since the advent of the industrialism and the new world order of nation states, in the name of liberty, fraternity and freedom, the Western world made an important break away from the realm of the metaphysical. The separation of Church and state, was not merely at a political level, but also manifested in all facets of human life and existence. It particularly dominated the leading human philosophical thought which formed and enforced the foundations of the educational model that was to be projected across the globe. This model was based on a total divorce and escape from the metaphysical or the spiritual realm. As it was believed that all forms of life and existence could be examined and understood through the material as the better way of moving forward. This paved the way for the increasing dominance of positivist sciences that stood alone and disengaged with the metaphysical sciences.

This soon manifested in the emergence of all types of school and tertiary educational institutes that implemented these thoughts in their various institutions and schools, that are all branches of the various sciences were examined on their own. This new era was thus marked by 'specialisation' that sought information, data and analysis was led by experts in a particular field. This led to the division of the sciences and fragmentation of knowledge and enquiry in individualised studies of the world, universe and existence a "*ismy*" Meaning by name approach, with no engagement with the other sciences of knowledge and in particular with the metaphysical.

Further, today a close examination of our leading 'institutions' of knowledge and the philosophies behind them including the legal system, the scientific fields and human sciences and social, economical and political systems are failing as a whole to bring peace and balance in human life and global world peace, order and harmony, what is missing at the core and foundation of all these institutions is the balance provided by teachings of the Prophets of God through Divine revelation and the whole dimension of the metaphysical.

Neglecting the spiritual dimension of human beings has caused greater social, economical, spiritual and psychological problems in the world, despite all the continuing material advancements; humanity has not been absolved of war, destruction, discord, hatred and enmity. Many nation states are still at war, the power struggles have changed their outward appearance but in essence they are at the same level as the earlier human societies and civilisations existed. The three immense and unlimited human powers of *reason*, *aggression* and *passion* have not been curbed due to the abandonment of religion, and therefore these manifest today outwardly in most horrendous forms in many 'advanced societies' and nation states today including and in particular the West. Only a true Divine light from

the realm of the Almighty can curb these and restrain them and this has been the sole duty of religion for centuries, and it needs to be given back to its true owner again.

Nursi, Gülen & Nasr on tradition as an organic method of educational Outlook

At the backdrop of this austere global situation, which has engulfed human potential, knowledge and development to mere materiality and distanced it from the 'eye of spirituality' and the metaphysics, many advocates for an alternative method of educational philosophy have voiced a concern and provided a theoretical 'return' to traditional methods of viewing the universe, knowledge and science. Stating that the human condition and spirit cannot be ignored in examining and approaching the various fields of knowledge.

In the Muslim world, many have called for a revival of the traditional methods, including Nursi, Sayed Hussein Nasr and Gülen, however in recent times the unique, innovative approach and outlook of Muhammad Fethullah Gülen Muslim Turkish scholar from the East has dominated the discussion in this field. Gülen comes with a paradigm shifting remedy; to open hearts and minds by including the metaphysical dimension in the discussion of knowledge and viewing the world and the universe. He has applied Nursi's theory of marrying heart and mind with a unique proposal for a more wholesome approach to knowledge; combining the material sciences with the religious sciences. Through this unique approach he has made a lasting impact that has inspired hundreds of thousands of people to adopt this educational method as demonstrated in the hundreds of schools and universities around the world and other such institutions. This will be examined in later part of this paper.

Sayed Hossein Nasr also recognises that the 'fall of modern man' as a subsequent neglect of 'traditions' albeit its stems from spiritual and metaphysical ignorance and neglect. Like Nursi and Gülen, Nasr is also critical of the modern philosophical outlook and worldview, stating that modern man is in search for material progress and has there in lost his true essence and nature. Accordingly he affords that human nature which has aims and purposes stemming from the micro and looking towards the macro and the metaphysics to the abode of Eternity and the Divine. Nasr further posits that the human being is stuck in this 'stalemate' and vicious game, which he expounds "is the human manifested outwardly" in this state, the human condition which if outwardly manifested will have adverse ramifications on the natural environment as well as in human social conduct. Nasr like Nursi blames the capitalist greed stemming from materiality to be the cause of the recent destruction of our natural environment as the 'greatest rape of our virgin nature'[\[2\]](#)

Similar views are also voiced by contemporary scholar Ali Unal, who is associated with Gülen, according to Unal,

Modern materialistic civilization cannot endure for long, because it is materialistic and unable to satisfy our perennial needs. Such Western sociologists as Oswald Spengler have predicted its collapse, as it is against basic human nature and values[\[3\].](#)[\[4\]](#)

Gülen addresses this through the implementation of the qualitative method of education as proposed by Nursi and emphasises on the maintenance of traditional values of language and culture as important tools in ‘preserving’ or resurrecting the organic essence of qualitative inference embedded in all human beings. However it is necessary to examine the theoretical and theological propositions set down by Nursi in order to further comprehend Gülen’s approach.

Nursi’s theoretical framework and the greater meaning in *Mani harf* and its connection to the Divine

Nursi whilst valuing the tradition proposes a new model for the modern world. He recognises the existing gaps in our educational approach and philosophies in viewing the world and the universe, as well as social, political view of the world and living through tools of ‘qualitative inference’ (a method of the Risale-I Nur that Gülen promotes) to demonstrate how today more than ever humanity needs to come back to a balance that includes and explores the metaphysical dimensions in union with the physical.

The Human History of The “I”

Nursi examines more closely the reasons for the moral degradation of humanity[5], which he predicts will lead to the total destruction of human life and the environment in his famous treatise titled *ana* the “I”. Nursi maps out the history of mankind and in doing so he explains in simple yet compounded terms the “enigma” of the self, which according to him is the key to solving the riddle and mystery of the creation of life, by asking the epic questions of; Who am I? Where do I come from? And where am I going?

Although in Islamic theology, theologians have derived various meanings for the verse:

Surely We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains and they refused to bear it and feared from it, and man bore it. Surely he is ever unjust ignorant[6].

However Said Nursi is unique in explaining, ‘the trust’ referred to in this Qu’ranic verse to be the *ana* the “I” that is the sense of selfhood as the ultimate *amanat* or trust, given to humanity. In the 30th Word First Aim[7], Nursi explains the essential need for ‘bestowal of ana’ by the mystery of “I” ness, which he affirms brings one to grow into a degree of *Pharaoh*, whereby the self has given itself so much self worth, recognition and praise that it has made itself into its own god. Nursi actually recognises the importance of the *ana, which* describes as the key to the Divine Names. He states that;

“God gave the “I” to man as a trust which has indications and samples to recognise the truths and attributes of dominicality *rububiyat*”.

If humans did not have the ability to love, to learn, to have compassion how could infinite love of a Divine being and other attributes be measured or understood. We therefore have attributes of sight and hearing and especially the attribute of ownership so that we understand that God is All Seeing, All Hearing and the owner of the whole universe *Rab al Alameen*. Therefore we know God by his of '*Malik*' owner because we also bear certain attributes of ownership in a finite proportion so that we comprehend the 'infinite' proportion of *Al Malik* The All Sovereign Owner total universal Lordship.

Cartesian Dualism|Two Faces of Ana the “I”

Nursi further refines the nature of the 'ana' the “I”, explaining that one face looks towards good and existence and is only able to receive favour, it accepts what is given to it and therefore is in total submission and peace, as it carries out the 'trust' and acts only like a mirror measuring tool for the Everlasting One. And thus shows resultantly a greater meaning' pointing to others, it thus emanates the 'thick conscious strand from the rope of humanity that attains the truths of the verse, “we have created man in the most excellent pattern”[8] and attains the *Alif* of the word *Adam*.

However it is the breach of this trust as witnessed in the great imbalances that greed tyranny, oppression lust etc is as a result of the second face that dominates the world politics, educational and scientific, philosophy research and enquiry and control, humanity by abandoning its true duty as 'mirror' like and by viewing the 'self' solely as 'Divine' on its own accord is manifesting today as individuals are all in a race for power, dominance, recognition, wealth and might. Also today it has truly become the world of the second face of the “I” as the 'I' world as seen in the *I-pod, I-pad, I-phone, My Career, My Space, My House*, just to name a few. Thus today the self hood has abandoned and betrayed the trust and fulfilled the Quranic prophecy. “And he fails who corrupts it”[9] and in doing so has created a new “idol” within. Note the prohibited statute is either petrified tyranny, or embodied lust, or personified hypocrisy”[10] which all point to the second face of the self hood or the “I” ana[11].

Nursi's description of the ana is also expanded in the 30th word, where he explains the selfhood or the 'I' as the 'seed' of two 'trees of *Zaqqum*' tree[12]of hell or the *Tuba*[13]tree of Paradise. The seeds of these trees he explains has been planted in human history since the time of Adam (as) where the *Zaqqum* has manifested in the many various forms including; philosophy, completely devoid of religion, this he claims has scattered many 'darknesses' by looking at things with no meaning other than itself, it also represent *mani ism* meaning by name and has manifested in the three human powers of intellect, passion and appetite negatively. Nursi expounds that through the one eyed intellect of philosophy it has produced the great evils of atheism, materialism, and naturalism on the aspect of 'passion' it has given back to unjust tyrannical rulers like Nimrod and pharaoh. To the aspect of animal appetites and attraction, it has invented 'gods, and goddesses, idols of all things, claiming people's divinity and self – these all accountable to either the negative aspect of the ana as a represented by 'philosophy devoid of religion'.

The *Tuba* tree on the other hand has been planted and watered by the light of prophethood and religion. This face this seed, which is embedded in faith and belief, is sheer worship, it

manifests *mani harf* carrying meaning of another, pointing to a higher reading, greater meaning, through belief in All Powerful, Omnipotent all Knowing God.

Therefore it suggests and knows that the self has existence only due to the existence of another, it knows that its ownerships are 'illusory' and accepts its reality as a 'shadowy like true reality' and therefore functions as a measure and balance for the attributes of the creator, which results in 'conscious service', thus the face of the prophethood and religion has handed over the 'trust' by acknowledging its weakness, poverty in the court of an All Powerful Sovereign 'perfect fruit of the universe' this side was perfecting depicted and witnessed in the self of the final Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) who showed and guided the mind and intellects of mankind by the light of the Quran and provided many prophets messengers and saints who provided meaning and purpose and given answers to the deepest questions as held by humanity – who am I , where do I come from, where am I going? He pbuh also his legacy showed how to curb human passion and his nation produced just rulers and angelic beliefs and lastly to the aspect of animal appetites, and attraction Prophet Muhammad and all other prophets exemplified in his self and educated millions of his followers 'good character, modesty and beautiful manners' putting humanity on the road to the tree of *Tuba*, in order to become the fruit of creation and excellent pattern.

To be a slave of God is an indescribably pleasurable honour.[\[14\]](#)

Thus Nursi provides us with a simple yet comprehensive answer for the reason and explanation behind today's moral de-generation of the world, as evidently seen today in the social, political, economical, environmental and spiritual 'desserts' that the world is heading towards – the reason for all of this according to Nursi is that the 'educational philosophy of today' is headed by the one eyed vision of material philosophy that teaches the selfhood ana to see objects only through materiality *mani ism* (meaning by name).

This quantitative method has left human kind with vast amounts of accumulative knowledge that lacks vastly in provision of fulfilling answers which indicates a greater meaning and purpose – this can only be combated by the balance provided by the light of prophethood and religion which educate humanity to ascend from the hallows of bestial want of power, emotion, passion and appetite” to climbing up the indication and inferences (*mani harf*) meaning by letter perspective provided only by belief. It is thus through this method of observing that the universe, life and existence that is matter with the eye of spirituality by connecting all observable matter and data to the Divine as a higher beautiful meaning, where the story unfolds.

Nursi therefore highlights that Prophet Muhammad pbuh life and teachings and character are the 'archetype of perfection the 'excellence per se' to be adopted today for his 'Shariah question has provided humanity with true civilisation. Nursi therefore provides that the *ene* selfhood can only be humbled by being a true servant of God and by abandoning the ego which will enable (as Prophet Muhammad (sas) did) in this way also he elaborated that if and whenever philosophy has been subservient and obedient to religion (like during early times of Islam) then it can produce great happiness and development for humanity indeed the medieval philosophies such as Ibn Rush (d.

1198)[\[15\]](#) and Al Ghazzali (d. 1111) were both students of Prophet Muhammad in the school of Islam).

Today too humanity can once again regain the balance as was witnessed in the *Era of Bliss* (Prophet Muhammad's time) if only instead of feeding the ego of the selfhood through quantitative, subjective, narrow perspective wrought by unbelief, this will blind humanity from living with true purpose and loose the balance on the other hand the qualitative method as codified and taught by the perspective of belief' provides a greater holistic view of events , life, and existence through its relation to the Divine Being – and through this success this enables the self to solve the enigma and mystery of life and creation.

Medresetu'z-Zehra Project

In both Nursi's own biography titled in Turkish original *Tarihce-i Hayat*[\[16\]](#) and in his treatise called *Munazarat*, Nursi entails his great desire and wanting for the construction of an educational institute or university called *Medresetu'z-Zehra*[\[17\]](#). Said Nursi went to Istanbul in 1917 to visit the Ottoman Sultan Resat, Nursi envisioned the problems of the future in the context of his time, and alerted the Islamic world's capital in order to raise awareness of the issues. Nursi saw that there were 'errors' on both sides of the spectrum and envisioned a way out of this 'stale mate'. The only way out of this was, his new found project titled *Medresetu'z-Zehra*, a plan for a university to be built in the eastern Anatolian region of Turkey (near Van) where positivist sciences are taught alongside religious sciences together. The idea was very unique in his time and still today. The university was to be named after its 'sister' university in Cairo *Al Azhar*, which was symbolic for Islam, as it was the first tertiary institute, developed by Muslims[\[18\]](#) during the reign of the Fatimids. It was to be relocated and adapted into the *Medresetu'z-Zehra*[\[19\]](#). This third branch was to be located at the centre or strategic centre of the Muslim world, at the cross roads of Kurdish, Turkish, Persian and Arabic cultures and territories. Its vision from the start was a pan Islamic unity, a complete 'oneness' of the Muslim community *ummah* achieved through the 'oneness' attained in the new educational pedagogy and approach, aligned with the view that positivist sciences and sciences of religion, to be taught side by side, as both are pointing to one aim, that is to uncover the reality and character of God.

In actuality Nursi had defined the problem of the Muslim world and the *medrese* system that had fallen behind in positivist sciences. It was arguably this that was a result of this in completeness that led to the ultimate destruction of the superpower of the time – the Ottoman Empire, after which saw events that plummeted the world of Islam once again. Conversely on the same token Nursi is critical of the "Godless" material world without the religious sciences, stripped off its "metaphysical essence". This view he claims is also incomplete, Nursi posits eloquently that "those who seek everything in materiality, know only what their eye see and such eyes are blind in spiritual matters"[\[20\]](#). Thus, without the 'reading' the metaphysical dimension, the inferences drawn from science are only *quantitative* and hence incomplete in conveying the qualitative meaning and reality.

Meaning beyond Matter: The *Risale I Nur* as a tool to perceive the metaphysical

Said Nursi's success in the implementation of his educational framework can be assessed by the success of his magnum opus and commentary of the Qur'an called the *Risale I Nur*. The *Risale I Nur* collection itself has advanced Nursi's objective of unifying the positivist sciences with those of the spiritual as he had envisioned for the *medresetul zehra* project. In this epic collection the *Risale i Nur* replaces the individual institute, or teacher by providing a library of ideas, thoughts ranging from philosophy, various sciences, psychology to theology. Although it is not meant to be a book of science, or psychology nevertheless in expounding the verses of the Quran Nursi has amalgamated various branches of science and theology in order to make it relevant and complete. Thus at a time where a great divide was seen between science and religion, he postulated that religion and science are two strands of the same body, in another parts of the risale there is discussion of how religion without science leads to bigotry and science without religion as pure misguidance and incomplete.

Today the *Risale I nur* has a large following largely in Turkey, however as the Gülen inspired schools excel in various parts of the world, so do the reading circles based on the *Risale I nur*, this not only proves the alignment of Gülen with Nursi, but also demonstrates the success of the *Risale I nur* in establishing an important framework that is it educates its readers to perceive the material world through the 'eye of belief' and from the perspective of the Divine. With the various examples that illustrates many key points in Nursi's ideas, like the sun analogy, or the majestic palace, the reader is 'trained' to see a 'greater meaning' behind and beyond the immediate material object or entity. This creates a greater sense of purpose and aesthetic and spiritual appreciation in the reader.

Gülen's practical implementation of Nursi's theoretical plan

The importance of Gülen comes from his success in transforming these dynamics that other Muslim scholars have discussed and more recently brought to light by Nursi discusses, is that he puts these dynamics into action in socio-cultural life^[21]. Nursi's sophisticated theoretical framework has clearly inspired those of Fethullah Gülen's, this is evidenced by existence of the Gülen inspired schools, and this will be discussed further below. Also Gülen's ideas although are very original, he has in many of his works expounding on the *Risale I Nur* and references the *Risale I Nur* thoroughly. Also Gülen's promotion of dialogue across various segments of society is another demonstration of his deep understanding of Nursi's intent when he postulated the *mani ism* meaning by name and *mani harf* meaning by letter theory. Gülen is therefore the contemporary of Nursi and in many ways a reinforcer of Nursi's ideas and philosophies.

Gülen on Dialogue and Education

A key example of Gülen's adoption of Nursi's educational framework is Gülen's promotion of dialogue amongst all segments or "parts" in society. Gülen inspired institutions have established dialogue centres around the world, they aim to bring together the various segments of society including and not restrictive to dialogue of amongst the; religious, political, legal bodies, media outlets, think tanks, intellectual institutions, law enforcement agencies. Gülen established that it is essential to engage in dialogue in order to bring together the various sects within our global society. In other words, through the means of dialogue Gülen is promoting Nursi's theory of meaning by letter, or qualitative inference, by bringing all these different parts he aims to achieve a greater part and meaning. The various efforts of dialogue initiatives have become a melting point where the varying members of any given society come together to exchange ideas and understand the other 'parts' holistically. If these discussion continue, the inevitable meeting of the positivist sciences with those of the spiritual ones will eventually meet, as envisioned by Nursi.

There are many examples of such centres, in the Australasia Affinity Intercultural Foundation, and the Australian Intercultural Society has been instrumental in pioneering dialogue Australia and its surrounding neighbours.

Gülen inspired schools as a fulfilment of the *medresetul zehra* project

Like Nursi, Fethullah Gülen asserts that there can be no conflict between science and religion because the phenomena described by scientists are manifestations of God's characteristics (*His Names*) in the physical universe. Any contradiction is only an apparent, not an actual, one, for science and revealed truth both flow from the Divine Will. Gülen makes this point in an interesting, and thoroughly Islamic,^[22] way that leaves room both for the miraculous and for law-bound natural processes: "Causality is a veil spread by God Almighty over the rapid flux of existence so that we can plan our lives to some degree."^[23]

In the case of an apparent conflict science must yield to revelation, for the products of reason and observation merely reflect the limited workings of the human mind while revelation is the product of a boundless, all-powerful, and all-discerning intellect. At any rate, the passage of time will bring humanity a deepened understanding of the natural world and resolve any perceived difficulty. Therefore, science and true religion are not, and cannot be, rivals; they represent different currents issuing from the same source and guiding humanity to the same end.^[24] Using vivid imagery, Gülen has extensively elaborated on that idea:

...there can be no conflict among the Qur'an, the Divine Scripture (coming from God's Attribute of Speech), the universe (coming from His Attributes of Power and Will), and the sciences that examine them. The universe is a mighty Qur'an deriving from God's Attributes of Power and Will. In other words, if the term is proper, the universe is a large, created Qur'an. In return, being an expression of the universe's laws in a different form, the Qur'an is a universe that has been codified and put on paper.^[25]

One of the key activities of the Gülen followers is the building of educational institutes and in particular the building of schools. There over 1000 schools worldwide with around 300 or more in Turkey alone. The schools have an estimated 2 million plus students who receive education, many with full scholarships. The schools are based in all continents all over the world. The interesting characteristic and aim of the schools are to promote a qualitative method towards learning, that is the inclusion of spiritual sciences alongside the positivist sciences, this vision of Nursi is somewhat fulfilled by these Gülen inspired schools all over the world, where in some countries if opportunity is afforded, students gain a greater appreciation of material sciences, and even mathematics and history with the perspective of drawing a qualitative inference. This educational philosophy needs to be further researched and in particular to assess the influence of such a method in improving student fulfilment, appreciation and passion for the subject at hand, this is however beyond the capacity of this paper.

The success of the schools is seen in the emerging tertiary institutions and universities as well, this is more common in Turkey, however it is growing abroad.

Can theory reflect reality? Sule College- An Australian Case study of a Gülen inspired school.

In order to comprehend the reality of the vision of Fetullah Gülen and understand the basis of his theories as based in the Risale I Nur. I conducted a case study of a school in the Sydney Australia. Sule College in Prestons presents a Sydney based High School College presents a unique example of one amongst the hundreds of Gülen inspired schools around the world.

Sule College was inspired by a group of concerned parents who had been longing for an educational institution that could provide the highest academic and ethical standards for their treasured children. With this goal in mind, Feza Foundation, the founding body, was formed in January 1994. After much effort from individuals and families in February 1996 Sule College opened its doors to its first students, with 32 children from Kindergarten to Year 3. The following year, Sule College had enrolled 282 students from Kindergarten to Year 7. The College has continued to grow till today. In 1999 Sule College extended its educational services to Illawarra region by opening a one stream Primary School. In 2001, due to the demand from our parents, Sule College Auburn Campus opened its' doors. Currently Sule Colleges are providing quality education to more than 1400 students over three campuses.

The fast growth in the school population clearly illustrates the enormous community support for and the expectations of Sule College. The College demonstrates the community's vision for an exceptional academic system^[26].

The school's vision reflects the qualitative value that Gülen based schools aspire to instil in their students. On the school's own website the message from the administration reads;

The unknown scares us and leads us to have stereotypical images of others making it difficult for us to accept one another. It would be great if we could all open our hearts so that there is not one soul untouched. It is only through love, tolerance and understanding can we hope to leave our children a world free of all the negativity it has today. This is one of our aims here at Sule, **to educate and enlighten the minds and hearts** so that our students can participate in the wider community as informed and well-adjusted citizens.

It is clear from this main aim of the school that its vision and key objective includes the ethical and moral values of the students with particular emphasis placed upon the 'enlightenment of their minds and hearts' in addition to the high achieving academic aspirations.

Furthermore the emphasis on the vigorous development of the mind and the display of good morals and virtue are stressed in the vision.

In this light, the central aim of Sule College is the achievement of academic and creative excellence, and the nurturing of moral and socially responsible students so as to enable them to participate as informed, active, caring and contributing citizens in our democratic Australian society.

These visions and objectives reflect the success and great achievements of the school in a very short time span.

Conclusion

In short, this paper has asserted there is a gap in contemporary educational philosophy and therefore its institutional pedagogy and that is the approach of quantitative inference at its core at the cost of qualitative approach. The research has made an attempt to address two concepts as follows: a) Quantitative approach particularises focus b) Qualitative inference unifies and expands on the interrelatedness and comprehensiveness in focus by depicting a meaningful connection between sciences and disciplines. It is this core issue that Nursi considers to be at the centre of this gap within our educational philosophy and one that Gülen adopts practically.

Nursi develops this argument further as he draws upon different epochs in human development at the collective and individual levels to prove that a quantitative approach leads to an incomplete appreciation of reality and resultantly discord eventuates. Qualitative approach on the other hand not only unifies thought but that comprehensiveness of thought and universalism allows development at greater heights. Nursi then branches these to categorically fall under the umbrella of 'belief' and 'non-belief', he proposes that belief delivers relatedness and meaning. The ant is connected to the universe by the virtue of its createdness and purpose. Nursi here draws upon the phenomenal and comprehensive role that prophets in general and Muhammad (pbuh) in particular played in order to bring that unity in understanding, observation, appreciation and therefore balance-peace *salam*Islam.

He strongly argues that non belief particularises meaning. The tree is deemed to be an entity not only on its own right but also in its own context. Therefore each facet within this universe is an almost independent world of its own. Its relation with other facets and sciences is therefore divorced. This philosophy of divorce therefore has been the reinforcing agent of this polarised gap within our educational institution. Nursi's appreciation of the reductionist approach that quantitative inference has goes to the direct core of human nature – the ego, *ana*, the 'I'. He argues that if the 'most excellent of patterns' is not educated with a balanced qualitative approach the 'I' will take on a lordship that is driven by the passions of its carnal appetite and lastly that the 3 potentially destructive traits of human reason, power and lust will spell blood to satiate the insatiable.

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T. Michelle Symposium 2004 for a discussion on Medresetu'z-Zehra.

Fatimid named after the daughter of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

Also exiled in Umayyad dynasty in Andalusia former name of Spain Al Medina Al Zahra.

Unal *Islam addresses contemporary issues*, Light Inc, pp 79 – 83

Footnote

[1] S. Nursi (30th Words) Words, Sozler publications, 2003 pg 566

[2] S Nasr *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man*, Kazi Publications, Lahore, 2001

[3] Unal *Islam addresses contemporary issues*, Light Inc, pp 79 – 83

[4] Either it will abandon itself to its inevitable decay or equip itself with Islam's creeds moral and spiritual values, and socioeconomic principles. In other words Muslims will rediscover that science and religion are in essence two aspects of the same reality. Once again they will know that being Muslim means, first of all, to represent Islam's beauties in practical life. The luminous world of the future will be founded upon the firm foundations of Islamic morality, spirituality and its other principles.

[5] The civilization of unbelievers is mostly founded upon five negative principles: It is based upon power, and power is inclined toward oppression. It seeks to realize individual self-interest, even though this causes people to rush about madly trying to earn possessions. It considers life as a struggle, which causes internal and external conflict. It unifies through national and/or racial separatism, and feeds this selfish solidarity by swallowing the resources and territories of "others," both of which engender terrible conflict. It strives to satisfy novel caprices or aroused desires (whether the satisfaction is real or not), and so brutalizes people's tastes and aspirations. Compiled From: The Words, "The 12th Word," Said Nursi, p. 147

[6] Quran (33:72)

[7] 30th Word Words 2003

[8] A. Unal, *The Glorious Quran* (English translation), 2004, Light Publishing verse

[9] Ibid

[10] S. Nursi, Seeds of Reality, pp 11

[11] It may also be useful to point out that, today although we hear about the 'taming' curbing or even annihilating the 'ego' it is important to note here that whilst Nursi exercised self –restraint and discipline in line with Islamic, and prophetic way of the (pbuh) nevertheless, the killing of the ego in the West and the surrenderance is often given back to the 'self' by claiming that the self has capacity for 'Divinity. This popular notion as written by writers such as Wayne Dwyer and those like him is somewhat a shadow and mixture of Eastern philosophy in particular, Buddhism mixed with some

psycho analysts like Carl Jung. It is clear from the Risale that in Islam the self can never have 'divinity' but if purified, the self can be like a 'clear mirror' radiating the sun's light, even heat fully'. Nursi's description of the selfhood as just measuring tool, absolves his theory and explanation from falling into the association of partners with God (shirk) caused to be the biggest 'pitfall loss and sin of humanity'.

[12] A tree that produces rotten fruit know as tree of hell

[13] A tree which blooms fully in heaven

[14] S. Nursi, Words (2003) pp 30

[15] See his major work '*The Incoherence of the Incoherence*'

[16] I have used the English equivalent in this paper by S. Vahide, *Towards an Intellectual Biography of Said Nursi*, 2002, Sozler Publishers, Istanbul.

[17] See S. Vahide, The Intellectual Biography of Said Nursi, Sunny Press 2004 and S. Nursi, Munazarat pp 28, 27 See also T. Michelle Symposium 2004 for a discussion on Medresetu'z-Zehra.

[18] Fatimid named after the daughter of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

[19] Also exiled in Umayyad dynasty in Andalusia former name of Spain Al Medina Al Zahra.

[20] S. Nursi (13th Words) Words, Sozler publications, 2003 pg 566

[21] Ergene.E 'Basic Dynamics of the Movement', 03 October 2008 from www.fgulen.com viewed on 23.09.10

[22] <http://www.fethullahgulen.org/conference-papers/the-fethullah-gulen-movement-iii/3486-the-second-path-to-god-revisited-the-reconciliation-of-science-and-religion-in-the-gulen-movement.html>

[23] ibid

[24] ibid.

[25] ibid.