

# MCAST Foundation students' journey of the 'self' through the Community Social Responsibility unit: A micro-ethnographic approach.

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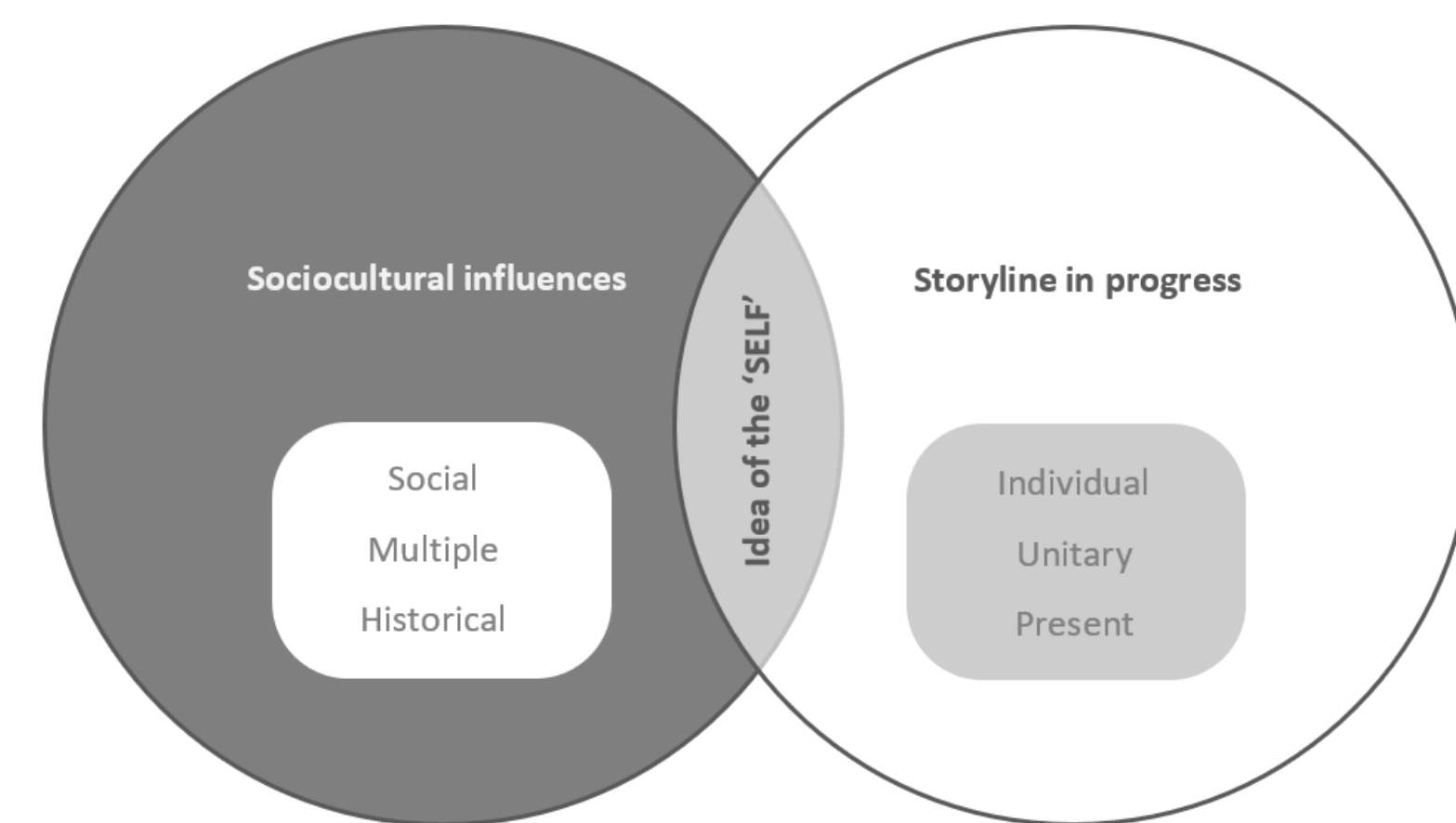
## Research Gap

Even though to date there are several studies which have dealt with the theme of self-awareness, only a fraction of them have investigated whether, and when students deem self-exploration related curriculum to be relevant. Hence, this micro-ethnographic research attempts to address this research gap by acquiring insights into how foundation students, most of whom happen to come from challenging backgrounds, are influenced by 'self-awareness' sessions presented through the CSR unit. The research additionally focuses upon the point at which foundation students recognise the curriculum being offered during the CSR sessions as relevant.

## Theoretical Framework

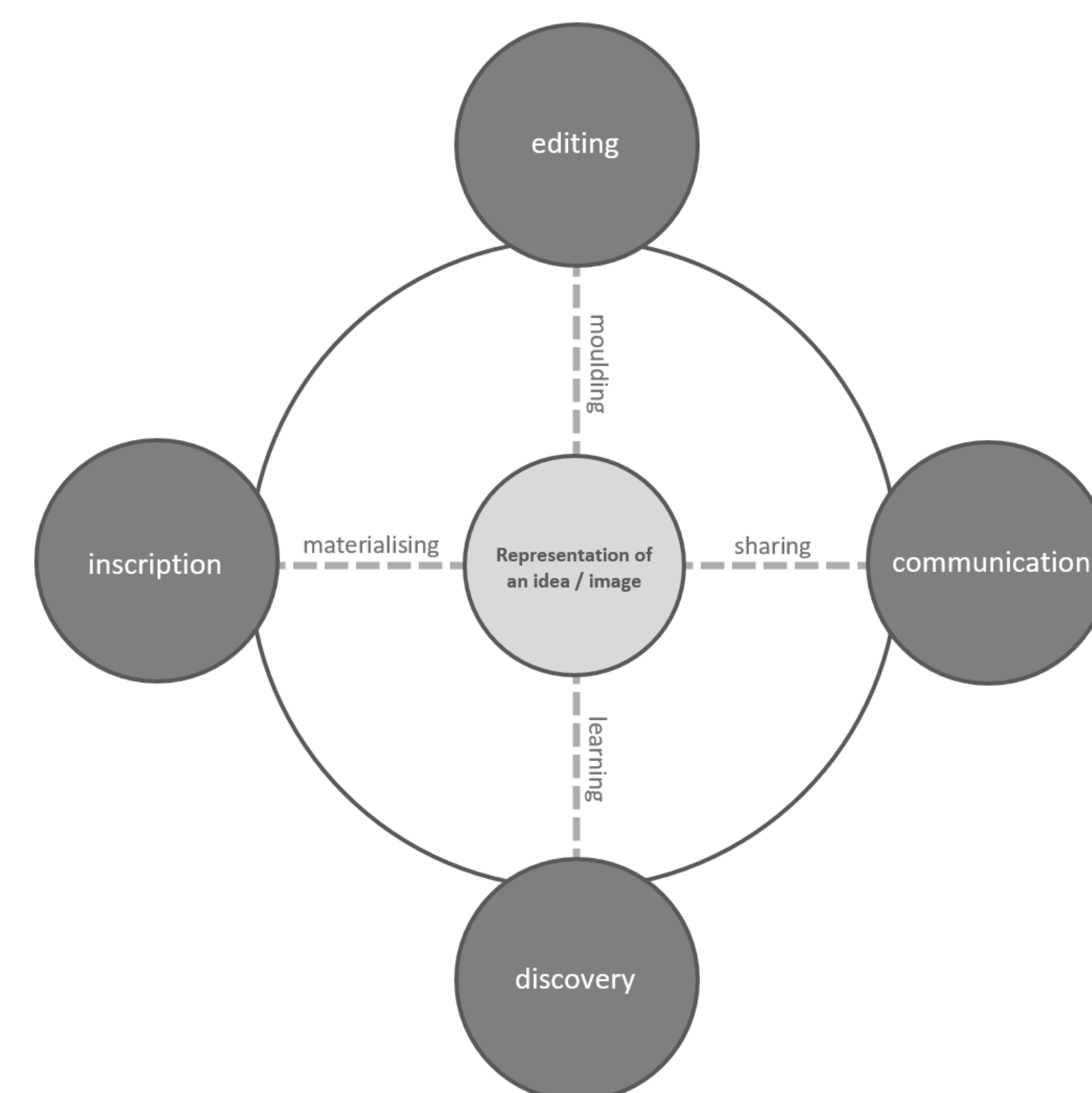
### Three Dimensions of Self-Awareness

The following diagram provides a visual representation, which aims to assist the reader with conceptualising Warin and Muldoon's (2009) Three Dimensions of Self-Awareness:



### The Process of Representation

In his book 'The Arts and the Creation of Mind', Eisner (2002) described the Process of Representation, which may be observed by means of the following visual representation:



## Methodology

The initial primary data for this qualitative study was acquired by means of a micro-ethnography, which saw the researcher's overt, active participative approach in a closed, non-public classroom setting. Due to ease of access, being a full-time lecturer at MCAST, the researcher opted to conduct the study with one of his own student groups. 'Mental notes' were taken during the actual observation sessions. These were later expanded into 'full field notes' by the end of each observation day. Through an 'iterative-inductive' approach to the acquired data, several analytic memos were formulated. The latter served as a basis for the compilation of specific guiding questions, which were later used to conduct a number of semi-structured interviews. These were followed up by a final focus-group. The data analysis followed a process of ordering, structuring, and interpreting information through a thematic data analysis approach.

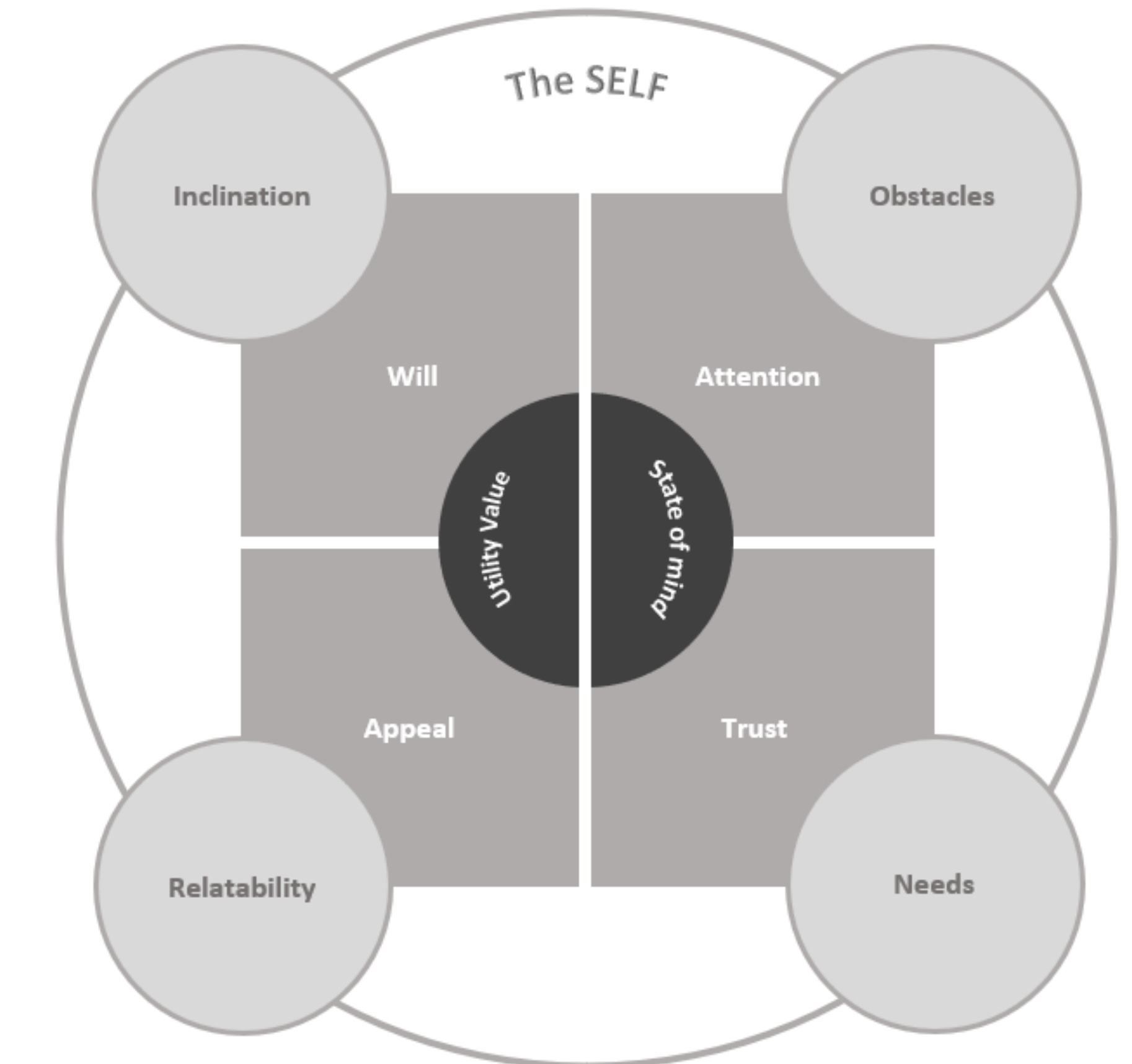
## Research Objectives

This study provides further insight upon the ideal conditions required for MCAST foundation students to engage and develop self-reflective practices. This was done through the exploration of a group of MCAST MQF Level 2 students' perceptions in relation to their experience of curriculum content related to the exploration of the 'self' within a Vocational Educational Training (VET) higher education context. This research focuses on the following overarching question, and the branching peripheral questions:

What is the relevance and impact of self-exploration related curriculum present within the Community & Social Responsibility (CSR) unit upon MCAST foundation students?

1. How are foundation students influenced by the content being offered within the CSR unit?
2. When do students recognise the curriculum being offered within the CSR unit as relevant?

## The Perception of Relevance Model



Inclination within the classroom appears to positively influence Willpower towards engagement during the sessions. Reliability to circumstances places an Appeal upon the experience. Inclination and Reliability levels appear to be directly related to the Utility Value of the said experience.

Frequency of Obstacles place a direct impact upon Attention. Obstacles may be introduced through an external source (eg. distractions via smartphones, the presence of a loud student, a knock on the door), yet they may also be present internally (eg. bearing a specific condition, lacking specific skills, language barriers). Meeting Needs is paramount towards making sense of an experience. Needs may pertain to both personal and contextual levels. Successfully addressing Needs appears to positively influence the level of Trust. Obstacles and Needs inter-relate with the State of Mind, hence the emotional experience of a perceived reality.

## References

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