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Multi-aspectual Interview Technique (MAIT); an alternative approach towards interviewing students in further and higher education

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1. Introduction

This paper reports on the Multi Aspectual Interview Technique as a method for addressing three particular challenges for interviewers practising in the area of educational research. It is important that all kinds of interviewee are able to express that which is most meaningful to them, whether they are familiar with conceptual thinking or not.

Several challenges have to be met that might prevent the full 'voice' of interviewees being heard (Paxton, 2012). One is to overcome barriers that often exist between researcher and interviewee, arising from differences in background, class, culture or ways of thinking (Mullings, 1999; Blommaert, 2005; Mellor et al., 2014; Amoroso et al., 2010). A second is to reveal the many important issues that often remain hidden, some of them being taken for granted (Ybema et al., 2009), some being assumed by the interviewee to be too trivial to mention, or are embarrassing (Morris et al., 2006; Stommel & Willis, 2004; Mooney et al., 2014). A third is to ensure that what is discussed reflects the interviewees' everyday lives, rather than being limited to what the researcher is interested in and what prior theory specifies as important (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Burgess, 2001; Sellar et al., 2011), or what is 'extraordinary' rather than the ordinary things of everyday experience.

It was found that the suite of aspects delineated by the Dutch philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977) provides both a practical device and a philosophical basis for achieving this kind of interviewing. Rather than using a list of questions, aspects provide spaces in which to discuss things that are meaningful. Previous research by Winfield (2000) had shown the power of Dooyeweerd's aspects to elicit tacit knowledge and expertise as a Multi-aspectual Knowledge Elicitation (MAKE) technique (Winfield et al., 1996). This was adapted to interviewing more generally, about issues that are less precise than existing expertise, such as aspirations and future potential.

The sample utilised here to investigate the usefulness of the method is two groups of students in FE and HE. One group consisted of students at a university in the north-west of England

and the other was a group enrolled on an Access to HE course in the same region. The result, Multi-Aspectual Interview Technique (MAIT), was empirically used and tested with the two cohorts of students.

2. Three specific challenges of interviewing

Three specific challenges are examined here, which are important because they distort or hinder what the interviewee expresses: barriers between interviewee and interviewer, hidden issues, and the distorting of everyday experience by theoretical expectations or influences.

2.1 Barriers of culture, background, power and class

The researchers in this study are from university backgrounds; many of the interviewees in this research are not. Many were attending a FE college. HE and FE institutions have different cultures, pedagogy and status, reinforcing the issue of status and class differences and potential interviewee-interviewer incompatibility. Many researchers in HE may have very different perspectives, aspirations or values than those of the interviewees.

Interviewing in cross-cultural settings presents many challenges (Mullings, 1999), including differences in perception, ways of interacting rapport, and power relations between researcher and interviewee, which might be actual or perceived (Mellor et al., 2014). What is said does not translate well across cultural barriers (Blommaert, 2005), and misunderstandings might occur. Trust, empathy and cooperation are particularly important. Many may see the researcher as a distrusted intruder, so the data collected might be suspect (Shah, 2004). Usually it is the researcher who has the power in relation to interviewees and it has been assumed that class matching is optimal when researchers interview interviewees from the same class, but Mellor et al. (2014) argue that this is not the case, citing dangers of working-class backgrounds being romanticised (Hey, 2008), problems with rapport, limitation on the questioning process, and ensuring that the interviewees express what is genuinely meaningful to them. It is often useful to be aware of differences of background and culture, but merely identifying differences might stultify dialog (Mullings, 1999, 349). Even speaking about inequalities can reinforce them (Amoroso et al., 2010).

A common response to such barriers is the critical approach, which emphasises the emancipatory possibilities in interviewing, such as sharing in reflections (Freire, 1996). Emancipation is not only from oppressive life conditions but also from unwarranted assumptions that constrain interviewees' thinking or aspirations (Avgerou, 2000; Myers & Klein, 2011). This approach, however, often sees the world through the narrow lens of power, often misinterpreting situations (Basden, 2008, p. 164).

We suggest an alternative approach, based on meaningfulness that transcends classes and backgrounds, which facilitates interviewees in considering the detail of their own comments and represent their own meanings.

2.2 Revealing hidden issues

It is important to avoid encouraging obvious or simplistic responses from interviewees that would leave other important issues hidden from view. Issues might be overlooked for reasons linked to either researcher or interviewee.

Researchers often arrive with prior theory, as in positivistic approaches, or theoretical lenses, as in interpretivistic or critical approaches, with research questions being at least in part defined by issues that emerge from these (Klein & Myers, 1999; Angharad cited in Bryman & Bell, 2011). What is researched is often constrained by what is already of interest in past and present research, so that new issues are not given their due. Theory frequently defines questionnaire questions (Burgess, 2001; Brewer & Headlee, 2010; Rugg & Petre, 2007) and interview questions (Bryman & Bell, 2011), so the range of issues about which data emerges is limited. Either way, many issues that are meaningful to the interviewee are overlooked.

Interviewees can fail to disclose whole ranges of issues for several reasons. Most interviewees hold tacitly known scripts and schemas (Ybema et al., 2009) and, as Polanyi (1967) argues, tacit knowledge is very hard, if not impossible, to explicate.

Conventions of the community in which the interviewee lives can affect what interviewees talk about (Morris et al., 2006). Interviewees might feel embarrassed to talk about socially sensitive issues, especially in face-to-face settings (Stommel & Willis, 2004, p. 255; Mooney et al., 2014, p. 18). Fear of ridicule or alienation can also suppress disclosures and the alienated interviewee does not recognise issues as relevant or worthwhile (Mann, 2001). Where there is embarrassment or alienation, whole spheres of issues can remain hidden.

Interviewees might not have the linguistic resources to match those of the interviewer, so their 'voice' is not heard, even though the researcher might understand what the interviewee says or writes at a surface level (Paxton, 2012). This occurs especially where the interviewee and researcher are of different cultures or backgrounds, or where they are of a different class or status (Amoroso et al., 2010). The relationship between researcher and interviewees can also prevent issues being raised, especially where cultural barriers exist (Blommaert, 2005). When the researcher and interviewee share the same cultural assumptions, the interviewer may treat some topics as too insignificant for discussion (Shah, 2004). So issues might be left unsaid because the interviewee assumes they are trivial (Mellor et al., 2014).

2.3 Everyday issues

Everyday experience is important because it is diverse in its meaningfulness (Habermas, 1987) and because it often subverts institutional and societal expectations and beliefs (de Certeau, 1984). Two challenges arise. One is that some interviewees don't want to be seen to be 'everyday' they want to appear more knowledgeable. They assume that everyday issues are trivial. The other challenge arises from treatment of the everyday by researchers and the literature.

Ybema et al. (2009) remark that organisational studies have tended to ignore the humdrum, everyday experiences of people and are often remarkably remote from these commonplaces and that we tend to have a blind spot for what is usual, ordinary, routine. Everyday life, far from being uninteresting and even self-evident, is highly complex and, they argue, being immersed in everyday experience need not make us unaware of the social structures that contextualize them. This is contrary to usual researcher assumptions. Ybema et al. (2009)

found very few useful texts in the field of organisational ethnography. In almost every field, everyday life has not been addressed adequately.

Theoretical approaches of any kind abstract from everyday reality, to focus on limited ranges of aspects, and employ limited kinds of rationalities (Basden, 2011; Dooyeweerd, 1955). So the diversity of meaningful issues encountered in everyday experience can be much reduced, and many interconnections missed.

A few contemporary thinkers have begun to respect everyday experience. Bourdieu's (1977) idea of habitus has been useful in some research. Yet Bourdieu sees everyday life in terms of 'struggle' and 'taking advantage', and he holds a strong normative dislike of symbolic violence, where people harm each other by their use of language, and so he tends to miss the joys of everyday life. Bourdieu's idea of habitus is criticised by de Certeau (1984, 58-60) as a fetish, an appearance of reality that is no more than a plausibility.

De Certeau (1984) himself claims interest in the 'ordinary man' who is silently forgotten by academic interests, and in the quiet majority who are marginalised because they are non-producers of culture (de Certeau, 1984, p. xvii). But this claim might be questioned, by a rather dismissive attitude (p.111). In fact, de Certeau falls into the trap of aestheticisation of the everyday, trying to elevate it to the level of poetry or art, rather than understanding it as it presents itself to us (Ganguly, 2002).

We need a way of interviewing that supports the researcher in finding even the humdrum aspects of the interviewee's life interesting, regardless of their prior theoretical standpoint, prejudices or ideological commitments, and one that supports the interviewee in expressing all the richness of these 'ordinary' aspects.

2.4 Reflection

The challenges of interviewing across cultural barriers, of encouraging discussion of the full range of issues found in everyday life, and of disclosure of hidden issues, have been discussed. If the aim of research is not just to gather idiographic detail but to generalise, in order to find the generic ways in which life situations are meaningful (Klein & Myers, 1999), then the challenge in interviewing and subsequent analysis is to ensure that all issues that are meaningful to interviewees are given their due, including those that are usually hidden, deemed mundane, or hindered by such barriers.

The philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977), a Dutch thinker of the mid-twentieth century, offers a different approach to everyday life and its diversity, which seems promising as a foundation on which to address the three challenges. The next section outlines portions of Dooyeweerd's philosophy that are relevant to this research.

3. Dooyeweerd's philosophy and research methods

Dooyeweerd (1955) made everyday experience and meaningfulness the starting point for his philosophy, rather than treating them as phenomena that require theoretical explanation. Until recently, philosophy has tended to treat the everyday as inferior and meaning as essentially a property we arbitrarily attribute to things. By contrast, Dooyeweerd's idea of meaning echoes the presupposition behind the question 'What is the meaning of life?', that there is some

meaningfulness that transcends us, was already there before us, and by reference to which we live our lives. Meanings that are attributed by us or signified via language, are now seen, not as generated, but as though wrapping up pieces of this meaningfulness in things or words. In this view, what interviewees say may be interpreted as pieces of this transcending meaningfulness, and its very transcendence offers a basis for meeting the challenges, as will now be explained.

3.1 Dooyeweerd's Suite of Aspects

Everyday experience tells us this transcending meaningfulness is diverse, with multiple aspects (irreducibly distinct ways in which things, events or situations can be meaningful). Dooyeweerd separated out fifteen of these aspects, presenting a suite that has been found useful in a range of studies and methodologies (de Raadt, 1989; 1995; Bergvall-Kåreborn, 2001; Eriksson, 2001; Basden & Wood-Harper, 2006; Ahmad & Basden, 2013).

The aspects that Dooyeweerd delineated each have a kernel meaning, around which a constellation of meanings revolves that involve meanings from other aspects. His aspects and their kernels are as follows, expressed by examples of some human activity meaningful in the aspect:

Quantitative: quantity, number, calculations

Spatial: continuous extension, space required

Kinematic: motion, movement

Physical: energy

Biotic: vitality, e.g. breathing, circulation

Sensitive: feeling, emotional reaction

Analytical: distinguishing, conceptualising, critical thought

Historical: deliberate goals, achieving, culture, formative power (also technology, shaping and creativity)

Lingual: symbolic meaning (development of language)

Social: social interaction, relationships

Economic: frugal management of scarce resources, (budgeting)

Aesthetic: harmony, pleasure, incl. fun

Juridical: what is due; 'retribution', rights and responsibilities, law (negotiation)

Ethical: self-giving, generous love

Pistic: vision, faith, commitment, (aspiration, hope)

Each aspect may be seen as a mode of functioning and existing, and in any thing or situation all the aspects may be exhibited in different degrees simultaneously. The kernel meaning of each aspect is irreducible to that of others, and yet the aspects relate to each other; for example, social functioning depends on good lingual functioning. Aspectual interdependency ensures coherence in life.

It is proposed that Dooyeweerd's suite of aspects may be employed as a way in which interviewee and researcher can share spheres of meaningfulness.

3.2 The promise of Dooyeweerd's Aspects

Three things recommend Dooyeweerd's suite of aspects as a tool for interviewing. Dooyeweerd attempted as full a coverage as he could of ways of being meaningful, taking into account 2,500 years of discourse about them. Thus use of the suite opens up the possibility of gaining fuller coverage of everyday issues and of revealing hidden issues. Eriksson (2001), for example, employed Dooyeweerd's aspects to understand the unexpected failure of an ICT system, by revealing which aspects had been overlooked.

Second, Dooyeweerd's aspects are not grasped by theoretical thought but by intuition. This is built up by our 'dwelling' within the aspects, responding to them as we act and exist, so that primary knowledge of the aspects is tacit rather than theoretical. This implies that the meaningfulness of each aspect should be able to be grasped relatively easily. As Winfield et al. (1996) have found, it is possible to present Dooyeweerd's aspects to interviewees in a way that they can be understood and be referenced and explicate some tacit knowledge.

Third, since Dooyeweerd believed that we all function within and by reference to the same set of aspects, both researcher and interviewee, then it should be possible to find common ground of understanding between them, whatever differences of background, context, culture, class or power there may be. Directing the interviewee to these spheres of meaningfulness, rather than to what the researcher happens to find meaningful, might therefore reduce the power imbalance and remove some of these barriers. Even though intuition can at some levels be modified by culture, there is a deeper level of intuition that is common across all cultures.

3.3 Using Aspects during interviews

Though aspects can be used to generate checklists for use during questionnaires or interviews, here we look at their use in open interviews. Since aspectual meanings are grasped with the intuition rather than with theoretical thought, this implies that during interviews, if we can tap into people's intuitions rather than more explicit or formal conceptualisations, then we might elicit a wide range of aspects of their lives. It also suggests that the aspects can be understood by those not used to conceptual thinking. Conversely, it also implies that by opening up spaces around the aspects, it is likely that what is intuitive and perhaps hidden to people might be revealed. This is what the Multi-aspectual Interview Technique (MAIT), which is introduced here, relies on.

What the interviewees says (the 'text') may be seen as pieces of the transcending meaningfulness 'picked out' and signified in the symbols of speech, gestures, etc. Usually, one or two aspects are the main ones signified (for example, 'It gets you thinking' is mainly of the analytical aspect).

However, since Dooyeweerd argued that things exhibit all aspects simultaneously, utterances and gestures are also meaningful in most other aspects; for example, 'It gets you thinking', might also have pistis meaning relating to the interviewee's vision of themselves. These other aspects may be seen as those of background or context; these are rather amorphous things, which reference to aspects might crystallize. The non-primary aspects also include aspects of social structures. In particular, social norms are collective functioning in the juridical aspect, pervading attitudes of selfishness or generosity are the collective functioning in the ethical aspect, and prevailing beliefs about what is important in life are the collective functioning in the pistis aspect.

This suggests that if the interviewee is encouraged to express what they find meaningful in each aspect, then not only text, but also context and structures will be revealed.

Whether in each aspect is achieved by systematically going through each aspect in turn, or in some more flexible manner, depends on the style preferred by interviewee and researcher. Winfield et al.'s (1996) Multi-aspectual Knowledge Elicitation (MAKE) technique lets the interviewee select which aspects they speak about and then, noting which aspects have not been covered, would prompt them about the others; Winfield found that only two or three needed such prompting. MAIT offers both these approaches.

Interviewees are free to express opinions, tell stories, convey ideas, or even cite formal knowledge, as they wish. All are seen by MAIT as meaningful in relation to aspects, and thus able to be analysed to find out what is meaningful to the interviewees.

Aspects may be asked about in several ways: in terms of concepts, like rights, harmony, commitment or resources; in terms of properties or functions of an object (for example, a key functions physically to activate the lock, spatially to be unique, and juridically to protect property); or as activities, such as enjoying a concert (aesthetic), categorising insects (analytic), feeding the roses (biotic), making a pot from clay (formative), committing to an ideology or faith (pistic). Other ways are possible.

In MAIT, since the reason for using aspects is to stimulate people to think and talk widely, it does not matter if the interviewee's interpretation of aspectual meaning differs slightly from that of the researcher. In any case, since aspectual meaning is not theoretically grasped, the researcher's understanding is always tentative, however much experience they have. There have been cases where the reason for assigning what the interviewer feels is a wrong aspect is tacit (not yet spoken), which suggests that such disagreements offer opportunities for deeper co-exploration.

4. The study

4.1 The research approach and method

Dooyeweerd's aspects were used in an empirical study that aimed to investigate what was meaningful to students in FE and HE. Two cohorts were studied, 16 students enrolled in a

higher education institution (university) and 13 students enrolled at a further education institution (college).

MAIT was originally developed from Winfield, et al.'s (1996) MAKE. In MAKE, the interviewee is given a brief explanation of the aspects, and then asked to suggest aspects which might be meaningful to them (for example a veterinary surgeon might start with the biotic and economic aspects). They are then asked to identify things meaningful in those aspects, which Winfield recorded pictorially. As interviewees wander towards things meaningful in other aspects, these aspects too are recorded, until most have been covered. The interviewer would then ask if they wished to speak about the remaining aspects.

4.2 Steps in MAIT (Multi-aspectual Interview Technique)

MAKE was augmented with extra 'courtesy' steps at the start and end and developed for exploring imprecise issues like aspirations and potentialities rather than expert knowledge. Two versions were used, with ten and nine steps shown in Table 1. The ten-step version was developed from MAKE first and was used to interview the university students. The nine-step version was developed when the need for conceptual thinking proved difficult for some students at the FE college. The bold text expresses important points in common between the two versions, and the italic text expresses where they differ.

Table 1. The Steps of MAIT, Two versions.

10-step version used with students at University	9-step version used with students at College of FE
Introduction	
1 The researcher welcomes the interviewee and asks them to take a seat. They are informed that the interview process will be anonymous.	1 The researcher welcomes the interviewee and asks them to take a seat. They are informed that the interview process will be anonymous.
2 The researcher then sits next to the interviewee and places the list of aspects before them. The researcher spends approximately ten minutes explaining the interview technique.	2 The researcher then sits next to the interviewee and places the list of aspects before them. The researcher spends approximately ten minutes explaining the interview technique.
3 The researcher then points to the list of aspects and explains that the <i>first five aspects</i> from numeric to biotic are sometimes accepted as given due to the fact that they are obvious. However, the researcher also suggests that <i>each interviewee is different</i> and that they are welcome to use all the aspects in the	3 The researcher also states that each interviewee <i>may suggest aspects at any time</i> and that they are welcome to use all the aspects in any <i>comments</i> they make.

<i>relationships</i> they make.	
4 The researcher then points to each aspect name individually and talks about the keywords which are printed next to the aspect names.	4 The researcher then points to each aspect name individually and talks about the keywords which are printed next to the aspect names.
5 Next the researcher explains that the large piece of paper laid on the table will be used to map out the information provided.	5 Next the researcher explains that the large piece of paper laid on the table will be used to make notes from the information provided.
6 The researcher then asks the interviewee if they have any questions . After this they are asked to sign an authorisation form and the interview begins.	6 The researcher then asks the interviewee if they have any questions . After this they are asked to sign an authorisation form and the interview begins.
The Core of the Interview	
7 The researcher asks each student to talk about how they feel about their experience of HE. <i>Notes of specific points are made on the piece of paper and the interviewees are then asked to relate these to any of the aspects</i> which are again made note of along with any concepts that are stated. This repetitive process carries on throughout the interview building a picture of the interviewee's thoughts and perspective.	7 The researcher asks each student to talk about how they feel about their experience of FE. <i>They are then asked questions which relate to each aspect in turn.</i> This was a simple process of <i>asking them to consider each aspect</i> rather than asking them to state which parts of the information given related to the aspects overall. This repetitive process carries on throughout the interview building a picture of the interviewee's thoughts and perspective.
8 When the interview seems to be nearing a natural end, the researcher checks through the maps to determine <i>whether any of the later ten aspects have not been utilised</i> . If this is the case the researcher specifically asks if they can be made reference to or not.	
9 Then the researcher asks the interviewee if there is anything they would like to say without any reference to the aspects . If so, this is recorded as stated by the individual and the researcher thanks the interviewee for their time.	8 When the interview seems to be nearing a natural end and the final question has been answered, the researcher asks the interviewee if there is anything they would like to say without any reference to the aspects . If so, this is recorded as stated by the individual and the researcher thanks the interviewee for their time.
Conclusion	
10 The interviewee is then asked whether or not they <i>accept and confirm</i> the information	9 The interviewee is then asked whether or not they <i>are happy with</i> the information and

and relationships and whether they would like to change anything. The researcher then tells the interviewee that a transcript and map will be sent to them for their approval.	whether they would like to change anything. The researcher then tells the interviewee that a transcript will be sent to them for their approval.
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5. Analysis of the MAIT format

5.1 Characteristics of both versions of MAIT

What is common between the two versions of MAIT, which makes them good at engaging with interviewees and revealing tacit knowledge, is marked in bold in both columns of the tables.

A number of standard interviewing steps are included, such as the welcome in Step 1, the seating positions in Step 2, the explanation of the process, the checking whether all is understood, in Step 6, the invitation to talk about how they feel in Step 7, and the confirmation that what was recorded was what was meant in Step 10/9. These points may be modified as appropriate to the interview situation.

The list of aspects, presented to the interviewee in Step 2, provides not only a reminder and prompt of the spheres of meaningfulness, but also a tangible symbol that the spheres chosen can be under the control of the interviewee rather than the interviewer. The interviewees were allowed to interpret the aspects in any way they wished (within reason); there was no 'correct' answer. The emphasis that there is no right or wrong interpretation, but that personal perspectives are valued, serves to put the interviewee at ease and reduce the fear of 'getting it wrong'.

The invitation to use all aspects, in Step 3, reinforces the freedom and control of the interviewee. The brief explanation of each aspect in Step 4 helps to activate the interviewee's intuitive grasp of its meaningfulness. Finally, the invitation to talk about anything without reference to aspects in Step 9/8 offers the interviewee freedom from the aspects if they wish to take it.

During pilot interviews, interviewees suggested that the early aspects, from quantitative to biotic, could be 'taken as given', in that, for example, being on the course assumed being alive. So it was decided to focus on aspects from sensitive to pistic. This was made clear in Step 3 to the university students, but was omitted from the nine-step version because the interviewer would go through the aspects. However, both sets of interviewees were explicitly invited to include the early aspects if they wished.

Similarities can be seen here with the interview structure for in-depth interviews suggested by Oppenheim (2003). It appeared that any related guidance statements, which usually reflected what the interviewee had already said, were helpful to the interview process as and when the researcher answered any calls for assistance with encouraging and helpful statements; the interviewees were able to carry on conveying their perceptions. This type of encouragement is noted as a useful 'non-directive technique' by Goodale (1982)

5.2 Differences between the two versions of MAIT

There were a number of differences between the two versions, which are indicated by italics in the table. The fundamental one was that students at the University were comfortable with concepts and relationships and when asked To which aspect does {what you have said} refer? they were usually able to give an answer. However, it soon became clear that students at the FE College were less happy with concepts and relationships.

While the University students were able to look through the aspects and apply them to what they had just said, the College students were not, because to do so requires conceptual thinking in a way they had not experienced. Instead, they were much happier when asked to simply go through the aspects one by one. They were allowed to go through them in any order they wished.

The University students could understand the aspects from the names and keywords. But the College students found this confusing as conveyed by comments such as; Do I have to understand this? This suggested the need for a new initiative. It was the names of the aspects and the conceptual way in which they were explained, that caused problems, rather than the aspects themselves. Payne (1951) goes to some lengths to show that difficulties in understanding what others might consider jargon should not be judged as ignorance, and positions the responsibility for making concepts understandable squarely on the shoulders of the questioner.

Therefore, the researcher began explaining the meaning of the aspects in terms of 'aspectually informed statements', for example:

When I ask you about your 'role in society' I will link your answer to this aspect'

instead of:

'Therefore if the answer relates to 'role in society' you may wish to reference this aspect along with others'.

From this the interviewees quickly focused on the meanings rather than the names of the aspects. When the aspects were expressed as aspectual statements, these interviewees were much more comfortable and forthcoming about their experiences, and were able to employ the aspects creatively.

6. Discussion

6.1 Findings about both versions of MAIT

Though the intention of this paper is to discuss the Multi-aspectual Interview Technique, and not primarily the findings about the student experience, it is useful to look briefly at this because it demonstrates some of the ability of MAIT to reveal what is often hidden and disclose some of the finer nuances.

Both cohorts of students readily grasped the aspectual kernel meanings intuitively, and were able to employ this understanding in thinking and talking.

Issues to do with aspiration and potential occupied nearly half of the comments. This suggests that MAIT is a useful method for tracing aspirations and potentialities. This result suggests that encouraging students to discuss different spheres of meaning, helps to reveal more diverse issues related to aspiration and potential than is usually the case. Statements related to commitments to education, doing something good and useful, a responsibility to learn, and confidence building, came from both cohorts across the ten aspects. This demonstrates the nuanced complexity of aspiration. Whereas a factor like aspiration is often treated as a unitary concept, as in Croll & Attwood's (2013) study of 'aspiration to enter HE, MAIT treats such factors as inherently multi-aspectual, and meaningful in a myriad of ways and enables analysis of that myriad.

Such aspectual analysis can also be useful to explore what is important and, crucially, what seems to be less important, to the interviewees. In considering the sensitive, analytic and formative aspects of life, many aspiration issues emerged. These three aspects relate to the individual feelings, distinctions and plans or development of the individual, and thus are more personal. The social aspect was found to be reasonably important in aspiration, and accounts especially for those aspiration issues that are to do with standing in family, community or society. A number of aesthetic aspirational issues were mentioned, but only by the University students, and were mainly to do with harmony in life. The juridical aspect was important especially in terms of responsibility and respect. Finally, the pistic aspect, which relates to vision, commitment and religion, yielded the most aspirational issues of any aspect.

What is equally interesting is the aspects that did not seem to yield many aspirational issues. Perhaps the most surprising is the low number for the economic aspect; it suggests that finance is not a major aspiration, which supports the claim by Hertzberg (Huczynski et al., 2001) that money is not strictly a motivational factor. The lingual aspect of being able to communicate well seemed relatively unimportant as an aspiration or potentiality, and the ethical aspect, of giving of oneself, seemed to be an aspiration only for a minority.

6.2 Findings about the different versions of MAIT

Two versions of MAIT have been described here, one suited to those who are used to conceptual thinking and one suited to those not accustomed to conceptual thinking. Though the two cohorts are small, some insights may be drawn about the differences.

MAIT Version 1, derived from Winfield et al.'s (1996) MAKE method, relied on thinking about concepts and relationships, and the ability of the interviewee to identify which aspect was meaningful. It proved successful with university students because the kernel meanings of aspects are grasped by intuition. However, when it was utilised in relation to students from the FE college, it was less successful.

MAIT Version 2 was developed, suited to interviewing non-graduates, those who are not used to or trained in conceptual thinking. The three ways in which it differed from Version 1 made it successful: aspects were introduced by means of aspectual statements rather than keywords, the interviewee was not asked to talk about concepts and relationships, and the interviewee was not asked to identify aspects but rather was asked to talk about each aspect in turn (in any order they chose).

Though both cohorts readily grasped the aspectual kernels intuitively, this seemed to be higher when the aspects are expressed as aspectual statements rather than concepts.

6.3 Findings about use of Aspects

The function of aspects in interviewing differed from their function in analysis. During interviewing, aspects were helpful in enabling the interviewee separate out issues, to arrive at tacitly known issues. During analysis, the aspects were used by someone who understood them, to detect ways in which they are meaningful to the interviewees, and to separate these ways out for analysis.

Of the 29 students, 21 of them gave information about every aspect from the sensitive to the pistic without any prompting. Of the other eight, seven University students omitted between one and three aspects but, when the researcher prompted them, they very easily and willingly offered information from those missing aspects. The aspects initially not spoken about were: sensitive, lingual, aesthetic, juridical and ethical. One College student omitted the analytic and lingual aspects but, when prompted, did not offer anything further. This suggests that Dooyeweerd's aspects can indeed be grasped intuitively, by both those used to conceptual thinking and those who are not.

All interviewees were invited to speak about issues without reference to aspects. Only four ventured extra non-aspectual comments; interestingly, these were all University students. This suggests that the suite of aspects was complete enough to largely satisfy the interviewees, and the framework allowed them to consider all issues that they felt were relevant.

6.4 Exploring everyday issues with MAIT

The three challenges are now discussed, beginning with everyday issues because that is where Dooyeweerd started. The transcripts were analysed to identify where interviewees had spoken about everyday life and about theoretical or professional life. Some issues have different meanings, depending on whether viewed from an everyday or professional / theoretical perspective. For example, getting to work on time can mean 'so as not to be rebuked' when seen from the everyday perspective, but can relate to prospects for promotion when viewed from a professional perspective. Some students might take one perspective, some another, and some more than one.

Even though the study was explained to each interviewee as an exploration of the student experience (education having a strong theoretical base), and even though a strong motivation for entering FE and HE is to improve professionally or educationally, everyday life issues still emerged very strongly. Over three times as many everyday issues emerged as professional or theoretical issues, with slightly more among the College students. This shows the power of the aspectual framework as operationalized by MAIT to address the complexity that Ybema et al. (2009) and Sellar et al., (2011) say characterizes the everyday.

Unlike Ybema et al. (2009), who believe it is necessary first to focus on the extraordinary in everyday life, MAIT allows both interviews and analysis to focus on the ordinary. Every 'ordinary' issue is meaningful in at least one of the aspects, and thus identifying its aspect can focus the researcher on its importance and its innate interestingness can be revealed.

Because it is based on a philosophical understanding of the entire range of what might be meaningful in everyday life, MAIT does not constrain the interviews, neither to the prior interests of the researcher and their theories (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Evans & Herr, 1994; Morris et al., 2006), nor the aestheticization of de Certeau, nor to the factors that are already visible in the community of practice. Instead, it provides a space in which the often-unseen issues can be present alongside those which are already more visible, thus addressing the next challenge.

6.5 Revealing hidden issues with MAIT

The aspects linked to aspiration illustrates the nuances that emerged, even without asking for them. Dooyeweerd distinguished two main kinds of assumption, assumptions about facts and states of affairs, and assumptions about what is meaningful and possible. The former might result in individual facts being overlooked, and MAIT might help interviewees to think around their situations, just as any sensitive interviewing process would. The latter results in whole sets of issues being overlooked; in many studies, aesthetic issues or issues of language are often taken for granted. Here MAIT makes a signal contribution, in that reference to each aspect separately helps interviewees to focus on the varied ways in which things are meaningful. Thus MAIT can be expected to reveal whole swathes of issues that other methods might not.

If the researcher finds certain aspects of interest because of the theoretical framework they use, then using all aspects goes beyond this, to find issues not predicted by the theory. Deliberately looking for all aspects can increase the researcher's sensitivity to things that are not expected (Shah, 2004). Surprise discoveries for the authors arose from the fact that all (post-biotic) aspects were equally important.

If the interviewee makes assumptions about what the researcher might find interesting, going through all aspects stimulates them to mention that which might normally be considered 'trivial', obvious or insignificant.

By offering the interviewee the entire set of aspects, as something to which they may refer, MAIT provides the opportunity to speak about things that they usually feel are socially sensitive or embarrassing (Stommel & Willis, 2004; Mooney et al., 2014).

Regarding linguistic resources (Paxton, 2012), the second version of MAIT, can assist interviewees who find conceptual thinking challenging, by introducing intuitively-grasped aspects via statements that contain more concrete examples or situations, by refraining from asking conceptual questions ('Which aspect?'), and by encouraging interviewees to wander through the spaces of meaningfulness opened up by each aspect. As a result, interviewees can disclose many issues without high-level linguistic resources, and their 'voice' can be more readily 'heard' by the interviewer.

Though hidden issues might be revealed by the lengthy ethnographic processes advocated by Paxton (2012), or the 'slow-motion' approach of Baer (2008), MAIT's use of aspects reveals them more quickly.

6.6 Addressing barriers of culture, background, class and power with MAIT

Since the deepest meanings of the aspects are the same across all cultures and transcend differences in individual backgrounds, MAIT's reference to aspects can provide a basis for mutual understanding across such barriers. This does, of course, depend on the aspects being handled aright.

Likewise, since researcher and interviewee are both subject to the same set of aspects, neither party has authority in relation to them. As long as the interviewee's interpretation is accepted, use of aspects does not constitute a power relation in which one party is treated as having the authority to determine what is meaningful or how things are to be interpreted. This was borne out by the final/leaving comments of the interviewees, such as, 'I'm glad to do this. I have a lot to do and this is a way to think.'

The MAIT process seems to have been emancipatory in two ways. One, mentioned above, is that MAIT helps the interviewees to talk about things that they might usually deem either embarrassing or too trivial to mention (Morris et al., 2006; Stommel & Willis, 2004; Mooney et al., 2014; Mellor et al., 2014). Some interviewees expressed gratitude for being encouraged to speak about things they would not normally voice.

The other is that the intuitive nature of Dooyeweerd's aspects can provide a sense of ownership and power for the interviewee. This generates trust, which can be reciprocated and provides the reflexivity, empathy and communication that Mellor et al. (2014) advocate as an alternative to class matching.

6.7 Limitations of this research

The research has a number of limitations. The number of students is not large. MAIT version 2 emerged during the research as a response to encountering problems with MAIT version 1, so a fully rigorous comparison between them is not possible here. Nevertheless, these limitations, which echo those found in much research, should not detract from the indicative value of this research. What we have presented is a new approach, and these results suggest it shows promise and is worth exploring further.

7. Conclusions

MAIT (Multi-aspectual Interview Technique) has been demonstrated as a useful tool to aid qualitative interview practice, which engages people in reflection, giving them freedom to talk about what is important to them. MAIT does not provide questions, but offers spheres of meaning within which interviewee and interviewer might explore together.

The spheres of meaning are Dooyeweerd's aspects, derived from philosophy, which are intended to be those of everyday, pre-theoretical experience, and transcend both researcher and interviewee (Dooyeweerd, 1955; Basden, 2008). As used in interviewing, they have a stimulatory effect, because they suggest spheres of meaning which the interviewee might wish to explore.

This paper has discussed, theoretically, these philosophical foundations on which MAIT is built, practically, steps that can be used to guide MAIT interviews, and, empirically, how MAIT was used in interviewing two cohorts of students. Two versions are offered, one more

suited to those who are used to conceptual thinking, which offers slightly more freedom, and one more suited to those who are not, which offers slightly more support.

MAIT encourages students of both cohorts to 'open up' about a wide range of issues and reveal the nuanced richness of factors like aspiration and potentiality that are often treated as simple, unitary concepts. It has been shown that MAIT addresses three challenges of interviewing, helping interviewees speak more readily about everyday issues, revealing hidden issues, for example those assumed to be trivial or embarrassing, and lowering barriers between interviewee and interviewer, of class, background or culture. MAIT seems to shift power towards the interviewee.

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