

Summary of Chapter

In this chapter, I have outlined several concepts based on literature and research undertaken by a wide variety of authors which supports my hypothesis, while accepting some of the limitations and shortcomings. Firstly, self-awareness is a concept which goes back thousands of years to the Greek philosophers who understood self-awareness as a basis for personal development. Knowing oneself and knowing God are also key *foundations of the Christian belief as expounded by John Calvin.*

Secondly, self-awareness is listed as one of five pillars of emotional intelligence (as defined by Daniel Goleman) comprising of emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment and self-esteem. I have been most concerned with the accurate self-assessment component in this research.

Thirdly, self-awareness is also a biblical concept. The Bible teaches that God made man in his image, and is comprised of unique characteristics which not only give God pleasure but enables the individual to both serve and worship God distinctively and play a unique role in the bringing forth His Kingdom. Carrying out and fulfilling this unique role will give a person joy, pleasure, and peace.

Fourthly, research by Gallup, Buckingham, Winseman et al, Hanson and Miller among others clearly shows that when one understands what they do well and what brings them joy and makes strategic job and career related decisions which allows them to work in such a role, they will not only perform well in their job role but be more motivated and contribute to greater organisational success as a whole.

Fifthly, I have also stated that working within one's areas of strength and passion unleashes creativity, satisfaction, enhanced effectiveness and energy. This can influence one's motivation, level of job satisfaction and improve their quality of work.

Sixthly, self-awareness is enhanced through balanced feedback sought intentionally from colleagues and others who can give a different perspective on an individual's strengths than they can themselves.

Seventhly, self-awareness is the foundation of good decision-making which leads to improved job-role fit. When many people in an organisation experience good job-role fit it can make the organisation as a whole stronger and could have a potentially transformative impact on the NGO sector and thus society as a whole.

Eighthly, self-awareness is the foundation of personal leadership development. Investing in one's own leadership development will enhance one's interest in knowing other peoples' strengths and in facilitating their personal growth. This will thus make one a better leader.

Finally, there are other factors not directly related to self-awareness that may also affect decision making about their career or job role. These include one's culture, character, values, family and financial circumstances.

In addition to the argument laid out and summarised above, it should be noted again that while self-awareness is only one aspect of emotional intelligence and has not received much criticism by itself, Daniel Goleman's definition and work on emotional intelligence has been criticised by some in that its claims are not adequately backed up through research. From the Christian perspective, the generally held belief is that rather

than first assessing *oneself*, one should look at God first for clues as to one's unique make-up, and how one should act to serve God in light of these gifts and characteristics.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

I used an exploratory research design to understand how in Kenya, a non-profit leader's awareness of personal strengths, passions and ideal job role(s) influences his or her strategic decisions about career/position, tasks and responsibilities. A combination of questionnaires, VIA signature strengths test and a follow-up interview was used in order to obtain the necessary information to respond to the research questions outlined in chapter one. Furthermore, I used the following observable and objective criteria to identify a person as being self-aware in terms of:

- a) Good understanding of personal strengths
 - The participant will be able to cite specific professional and character based talents, skills, traits which they possess and which they are able to do well almost every time they are used.¹⁰²
 - The participant will be able to cite specific examples of when they have used their cited strengths effectively in personal/work environment.
 - The participant will be able to cite at least one example of when a colleague (or friend) has commented on their strengths or they have sought feedback on strengths or weaknesses from others.
 - Participant able to cite results of any strengths or personality based tests taken and remember most significant results.

¹⁰² Based on the definition of a strength as "A specific talent, skill, or gift that one possesses and carries it out well almost every time they attempt it."

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- Of the 24 cited strengths in Dr Martin Seligman's VIA signature strengths test, participants are able to accurately rank three of their top five strengths (in comparison with a self ranking completed through the questionnaire taken previously).
- b) Good understanding of personal passions
- The participant will be able to cite specific topics, activities, situations and/or contexts which they enjoy, make them feel excited, motivated and/or energised and which they feel they could do/be every day and not get bored or tired. ¹⁰³
 - The participant will be able to cite specific examples of when they have undertaken these activities in personal/work environment effectively, enjoyed it/them and left wanting to do it/experience again.
- c) Good understanding of most suitable job role (and/or collection of specific tasks) for participant personally as per their own identified strengths, passions and gifts/talents.
- Able to cite most ideal job role and show active pursuit of it (if not already in it)
 - Able to cite extent to which current (or a former) job role is a good and poor fit for their set of strengths, passions and personality and what role or mix of tasks would make it a better fit.
- d) Objective/observable criteria of a good decision making process related to career/job role/tasks and responsibilities

¹⁰³ Based on the definition of a passion as "an activity, area of work or group of people which you enjoy doing or working with and which brings you joy and satisfaction"

- Able to give detailed, valid reasons why they made a particular career or job related decision (e.g. increased responsibility/pay/interest/less travel, felt leading from God etc).
- Has a set of career goals and actively uses them as a way of guiding decisions about job roles and career moves.
- Made job or career-related decisions based on strengths and passions and able to give examples (such as turning down an unsuitable job and/or asking for more responsibility/tasks in one's area of strength or passion).
- Able to cite example of a poor career or job-related decision, reasons for taking it and lessons learnt in hindsight

Population

The population under study were NGO leaders who work in Kenya, are based at a Nairobi office, are 28 years old and above, and who have had at least one professional position before their current one. However, they do not necessarily have to be the top leader in the organisation or department. The following criterion was also used:

- The NGO leader must have at least one staff member reporting to them and be in programmes department
- The NGO or non-profit organisation must be working with vulnerable women and/or children in Kenya

Whereas over half of the organisations in the study had a Christian focus or the participants were Christians themselves, this was not a requirement for involvement in the study. Furthermore, whereas most of the people to be interviewed were of Kenyan

nationality, leaders of other nationalities who fit the criteria were not excluded from the study.

Sample

Twenty participants from seventeen different NGOs were included in the study out of twenty-four people from twenty organisations who were approached. Of these organisations, seven were Christian organisations, six were international organisations (including four international NGOs) and the remainder Kenyan local NGOs or ministries. The organisations included in the sample were: International Justice Mission (IJM), Church World Service (CWS), Child Line Kenya, Tumaini Ladies Integrational Program (TULIP), RETRAK, Amani Ya Juu, Vision Africa, Tumaini Kwa Watoto, Centre for Urban Mission (CUM), Centre for Rights Education and Awareness (CREAW), Child Legal Action Network (CLAN), Save the Children, GOAL Kenya, World Vision, Church Mission Society (CMS), First Love Kenya and Jamii Bora Trust. Whereas initially it was anticipated two people in each of the organisations would be included initially, only one leader was available for participation in most organisations. Therefore, a higher number of organisations were included in order to get an adequate sample size. Twenty people were included in sample in the first part of the study (questionnaire), and fifteen for the second (strengths assessment) and twelve in the third part (interview).

Data Collection and Research Tools

Data was collected using three methods: questionnaires, online strengths test and interviews. Baldry and Fletcher (2000) assert in Fletcher and Bailey that there is no consensus among researchers of how to best represent self-awareness both conceptually

and statistically.¹⁰⁴ Although one of the most effective way of testing self-awareness is believed to be 360° feedback (or other multi-source multi-rater feedback system which assesses the extent to which the self- and other-raters agree on the level of competence the focal individual attains)¹⁰⁵ this is a new concept in Kenya and may feel like intrusion for the participants. For this reason, I used self-report only. According to Taylor, self-report is too limited a measure of a person's capability since self-assessors are usually more biased assessors compared to managers, direct reports, and peer¹⁰⁶ This understanding will be taken into consideration during the data analysis and conclusion. However, comparing the results between self-reported strengths and the strengths test will help to reduce this gap and participants will be encouraged to start using 360° feedback in their organisations. Furthermore, Fletcher and Bailey cite some of the weaknesses of 360° feedback. They suggest a more effective methodology of assessing self-awareness may be through using interview questions to assess previous incidence of feedback seeking behaviour, capacity for self-criticism, emotional intelligence and awareness of others' perceptions rather than using "direct" measures of self-other rating congruence. They also suggest it is possible to assess the extent to which an individual can accurately identify how others perceive them such as by asking, "how do you think your boss rates you on this competency," irrespective of whether this is in accordance

¹⁰⁴ Fletcher and Bailey.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Taylor, 645.

with their own self-view.¹⁰⁷ These types of questions are used in the online strengths assessment.

a) Self-administered Questionnaire

Twenty self-administered questionnaires were completed which assessed the following factors:

- General information such as gender, age, job title, nationality, length of time working in current position and in NGO sector in general.
- The extent of NGO leader's own perceived self-awareness of strengths, passions and ideal job role and/or career.
- The initiatives the participant has made in order to become more self aware such as taking respected personality/strengths type tests and seeking feedback from peers, friends and other colleagues.
- The extent to which the participant has made decisions related to their job role, career and specific job related tasks and responsibilities on the basis of their strengths and passions.
- The extent to which they have made career goals and made decisions in light of them
- Other influences on their decision-making processes related to job and career.
- The extent to which they are currently experiencing good job-role fit and working within areas of strength and passion

¹⁰⁷ Fletcher and Bailey.

- The participants were also given a list of twenty-four strengths. They were asked to rank those that they feel are their top five strengths (and rank 1-5). These strengths were as follows and divided into six categories according to the author, Martin Seligman.

Wisdom and Knowledge: 1. Curiosity and interest in the world; 2. Love of learning; 3. Judgement, critical thinking and open-mindedness; 4. Creativity, ingenuity and originality; 5. Social Intelligence; 6. Perspective (wisdom).

Courage: 1. Bravery and valour; 2. Industry, diligence and perseverance; 3. Honesty, authenticity and genuineness.

Humanity and Love: 1. Kindness and generosity; 2. Capacity to love and to be loved

Justice: 1. Citizenship, teamwork and loyalty; 2. Fairness, equity and justice; 3. Leadership

Temperance: 1. Self-control and self-regulation; 2. Caution, prudence and discretion; 3. Modesty and Humility

Transcendence: 1. Appreciation of beauty; 2. Gratitude; 3. Hope, optimism and future mindedness; 4. Spirituality, sense of purpose and faith; 5. Forgiveness and mercy; 6. Humour and playfulness; 7. Zest, enthusiasm and energy

A copy of the questionnaire used is attached in Appendix B.

b) VIA Signature Strengths Test

The VIA signature strengths test

(<http://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu/register.aspx>) was chosen as a tool for assessing strengths in the participants. This test has been created by Martin Seligman of

the University of Pennsylvania and who has written the book *Authentic Happiness* on the same. Although the test has not been featured widely in academic literature, it is a suggested tool in a wide variety of college psychology departments for students and in coaching and mentoring organisations working with clients. The link for the test was sent to the same participants as above to complete by themselves online after they had completed and submitted the initial questionnaire. Using this tool, participants ranked 240 statements on a five point Likert scale as to the extent to which the particular strength described them (such as very unlike me, neutral, very much like me). The tool generates an immediate ranking of the participant according to twenty-four different strengths, including their top five. These twenty-four strengths are the same as those listed above and which were ranked by participants in the initial questionnaire. Alex Linley describes the VIA Inventory of Signature Strengths as follows:

The VIA-IS provides a reliable assessment of 24 character strengths across a consistent question and response format. The measure allows researchers to assess each of the 24 strengths in relation to each other, and for many of the strengths, provides the first specific self-report measure of the strength available. On this basis, the VIA-IS now appears to be a valuable addition to the repertoire of researchers and practitioners who are interested in the effective assessment of character strengths.¹⁰⁸

c) Interview

Follow-up interviews were conducted with eighty percent of the participants who took part in the strengths assessment in order to attain additional information not availed or clearly articulated through the questionnaire and to discuss any variation of results between the self-ranked strengths and those ranked through the VIA signature strengths assessment tool. The questions probed in more depth about: what the participant has done

¹⁰⁸ P. Alex Linley. "Character Strengths in the United Kingdom: The VIA Inventory of Strengths," *Personality and Individual Differences*. (43) 2007

to know their strengths, passions and ideal job role (e.g. tests, seeking feedback from colleagues), asking participants to give examples of when they have used their strengths in the workplace, the extent of their job-role fit, how their decision-making about job role and career has been informed and why there may be a variation between the self reported strengths and those in the strengths test. The questionnaire had to be submitted before attempting the strengths test to avoid a participant changing their answers based on the strengths test. Participants were asked not to refer to their signature strengths assessment results in the period between the questionnaire, strengths test and interview so that their answers were spontaneous and from their instinctive response rather than rehearsed.

Twelve participants who had completed both the questionnaire and the strengths test were interviewed. This represents 50% of the original population sample and 60% of those who completed the questionnaire. The interview guide is attached in Appendix C. Each interview took approximately 30-60 minutes with an average of 45 minutes to complete the interview. In addition to taking the participant through the interview questions, they were also encouraged in how they can build on their strengths in their workplace and how to think through their particular situation. One hundred percent of the participants in the interview stated that they really enjoyed and benefitted from taking the strengths assessment test and being involved in the whole process. One respondent, (who was one of only two participants who stated they feel they are in the right job only "sometimes" and who has made career related decisions largely on financial grounds), even mentioned that this process has propelled her to start looking for masters courses so she can re-train into her area of passion. It was extremely encouraging and satisfying