

**Interviewing Skills and Strategy
Global Connections
Large Churches Forum
24 June 2010**

■ **What do we want from our selection processes?**

Asking this question to different groups has suggested the following:

- Test vocation to cross-cultural mission through specific mission agency
- Determine factors influencing suitable locations
- Identify training, pastoral and spiritual needs
- Affirm as a Christian loved and valued by God

Two models to help us consider the *status* and *nature* of selection material:

1 The Selection Strategy Window

(A much modified version of the Johari Window)

- The two columns are things the candidate
 - **knows** about self and
 - things the candidate **does not know** about self;
- The three rows are things that the selectors:
 - **know**,
 - things that they **think, assume** or **feel** and
 - things that they **do not know**

	YOU (candidate) KNOW	YOU (candidate) DON'T KNOW
WE (selectors) KNOW	OPEN	BLIND
WE (selectors) THINK	SUSPECTED ASSUMPTIONS	UNSUSPECTED ASSUMPTIONS
WE (selectors) DON'T KNOW	HIDDEN	UNKNOWN/ POTENTIAL

- Evidence and intuition
 - We need evidence to make decisions, to justify our decisions to ourselves, candidates (and tribunals!)
 - We use intuition to decide what issues to explore in seeking evidence

- **Transparency**
 - **For those we select**, we need them to understand location parameters, training, pastoral and spiritual needs
 - **For those we do not select**, if they are not to be damaged by the process, we need them to understand our reasons
 - We need to get as much material as possible into the OPEN domain; we are helping candidates to know themselves better.

- **Interview Reports**
- **Narrative Report - example**
 - *She spoke of her move to university in 2005; she took a long time to feel settled and make friends. As a result of this, God seemed far away from her and she gave up on her regular prayer times and didn't really try to find a church to belong to. Instead she buried herself in her academic work and found her identity and self worth through this.*

- **Judgemental Report - example**
 - *Although she is academically very able, she finds it difficult to cope with change and make new friends. Her Christian life is very vulnerable and she only appears to thrive as a Christian when her social life is going well.*
- **Narrative report could be followed up with**
 - *The next interviewer should explore*
 - *how she came through this time, and what she learnt from the experience*
 - *How she coped when she moved from university to her first job in 2008*

- **Reports**
 - Legally these can be read by candidates
 - Keep them narrative based
 - Only when we have fully explored the issue through different episodes, should we include a value judgement

- **References, Activities, Testing etc**
 - We don't know if these are true assessments; they need to be treated as assumptions and we need to find evidence to explore the truth, or otherwise, of these assumptions.
 - We don't always know whether the candidate is aware of the assumptions being made, and so will need to be sensitive in how we explore such assumptions
 - The input of References, Activities, Testing etc needs to come early enough in the process for further exploration to take place in interview so that these assumptions can either be affirmed as knowledge or dismissed.

- **Exploring the unknown/potential**

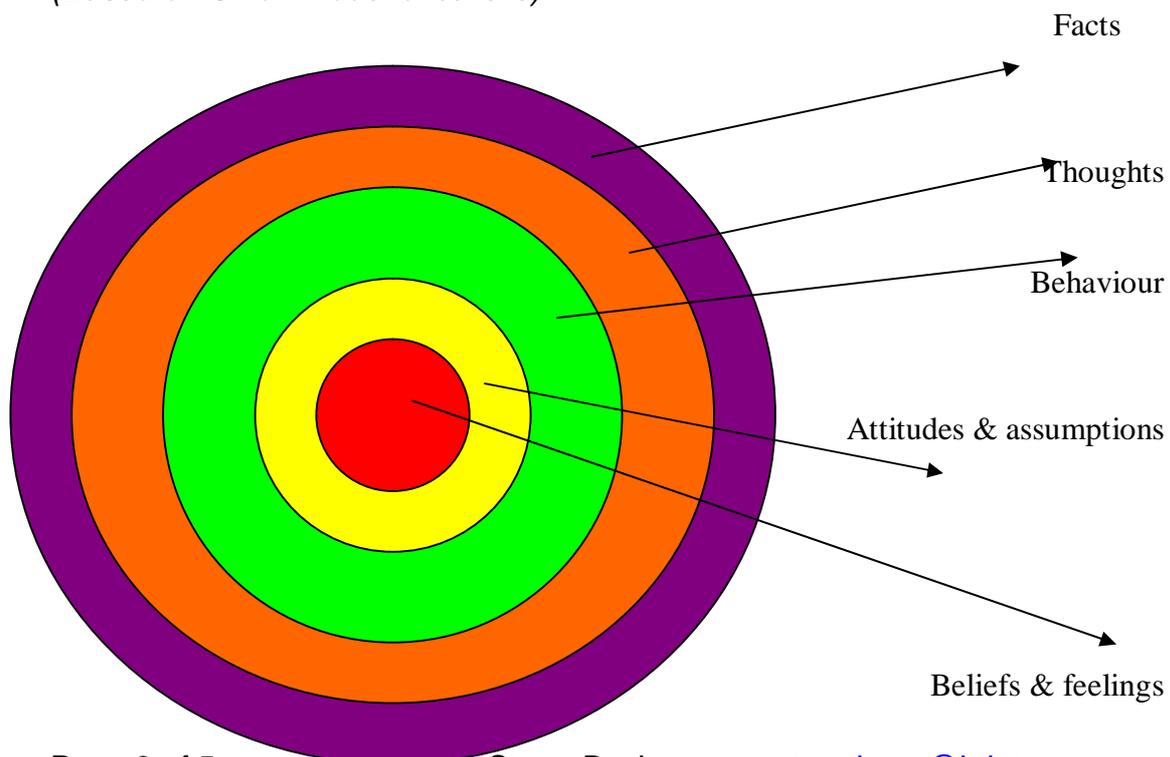
The **answers** will be found in the *hidden domain* of the *selection strategy window*, by exploring real situations; the **clues** as to what needs to be explored will be found in the *suspected assumptions* and *unsuspected assumptions*

■ The Selection Strategy Window and Selection Processes

- With some processes, the interviewers appear to use their own windows, rather than it being a shared view amongst all of the selectors
- This might be because each interviewer wishes to come in fresh and make their own decision about the candidate, rather than be influenced by previous interviews
- In such cases, decisions can easily be determined by the dynamics between the interviewers
- If we are clear about *what we know* and *what we think*, interviewers can pool knowledge and, because they are different, healthily bring different assumptions to the process
- We should pool the information we have as interviewers into one window to work effectively; this means writing and sharing narrative interview reports
- *Assumptions* need to be turned into *knowledge* through further interviewing
- The selection process needs to have enough stages in it to allow exploration of material like references that inform our assumptions so that we can produce the evidence needed to make decisions

2 The Onion Model

(Based on Onion model of culture)



■ What shapes Beliefs?

Christian faith, but also:

- Generational perspectives
- Cultural perspectives
- Personality
- Peer pressure
- Family
- Church teaching
- Role models
- Books
- Experience

■ How do you feel about?

Will usually tell you about *thoughts* rather than about *feelings*

■ Doctrinal questions

Doctrinal questions will usually tell you about thoughts, rather than real beliefs. Stories about conversion are often about when a thought process changed. To explore both of these we need to explore behaviour and how that has changed as a result of conversion. How does behaviour reflect doctrinal understanding? When someone has been brought up within a Christian family then it is helpful to explore what happened when they moved away from the family influences and had a real choice of behaviour.

■ Applying faith

Many questions will usually tell you about thoughts rather than about what is real. Explore behaviour and the attitudes shaping the behaviour to find what is real.

■ Well rehearsed narratives

Candidates know they need to share details of a difficult situation; a broken relationship, divorce, a job that didn't work out or other 'failure'. They can easily rehearse what they are going to say and what we are presented with is a chosen narrative of the events – these are in the *thoughts* layer. We need to ask questions to get deeper than this and explore behaviour and the assumptions and attitudes that lie beneath this. It can be helpful to ask about what they have learnt (about themselves or God) or what they could have done differently. Although both questions can easily be answered at the 'thoughts' level, answers can be followed with exploration of behaviour and then underlying attitudes and assumptions can be explored.

■ Hypothetical questions

Tell you about verbal reasoning and how the candidate operates at the *thoughts* level. To find out how the candidate might cope in the future, explore real situations they have faced and how they have coped in the past; explore at the *behaviour* level. In the *Selection Strategy Window*, hypothetical questions are in the *selectors don't know/candidate doesn't*

know window, you should explore issues in the *hidden domain* with issues that the candidate is aware of. By helping the candidate reflect on how they have coped in the past, or not coped in the past, they will have better idea them self of how they are likely to cope in the future

■ **Consistency across the layers of the onion**

We should be looking for consistency across the different layers of the onion. If we notice that assumptions and thoughts are at odds with each other or that behaviour doesn't match what they feel their beliefs are, we should be helping the candidate reflect on this.

***The above material is covered more fully in
Called by God? – a handbook for those testing Christian vocation
Stuart Buchanan SPCK September 2008.***

See particularly:

- ***Developing a Strategy*** – ***Part 2***
- ***Interviewing*** – ***Part 4***