Shrinkhla Ek Shodhparak Vaicharik Patrika

Group Discussion: Strategies and Dynamics

Prabha Pant

Assistant Professor,
Deptt.of Humanities and Social
Science,
CBS & H, G. B. Pant University of
Agriculture & Technology,
Pantnagar

Abstract

Group Discussion is a method an employer uses to access the suitability of a candidate for a job. It is basically used as a tool to judge various personality traits of a candidate. It is a face to face communication between individuals to exchange or share their ideas or opinion to reach to a consensus. It includes the team work of the candidates as a whole. Group discussions are conducted among the study groups, among executives, in formal business meetings and even in panel discussions. The aim of the paper is to highlight its types, the strategies, process and dynamics.

Keywords: Group Discussion, Personality Traits, Study Groups, Executives, Business Meetings, Panel Discussion, Strategies, Process

Introduction

Group Discussion is an oral, face to face communication among individuals in a group to exchange ideas, information to achieve a goal. (http://gdpi.hitbullseye.com). Many a times we come across a problem or a situation in our everyday life and we decide to discuss over it so as to come to a conclusion. This reveals that group discussion is a convenient way for exchange of ideas and information. In fact it is simply a gateway to resolve the problem or a situation before we take any action. It becomes valuable if it is well organised and well thought of.

Review of Literature

Group Discussion is used as an important and effective tool to judge the suitability of a candidate for a job. It is defined as "a methodology...and one of the best tool to select the prospective candidate in a comparative prospective". (http://placement. freshworld. com) The purpose of the GD is to enter into intense interaction so as to extract the views of the participants.(*R.C.Sharma & Krishna Mohan, 2006, Pg* 312). The discussion becomes dynamic when it has five-ten members in a group as in such case the discussion is supposed to be diversified, but in a group of more than ten members "some tend to avoid participation and remain passive listeners and thus the significance of the group discussion is lost".(*Krishna Mohan &Meera Banerjee,2009,Pg.102*). If the number is small then it lacks diversity of opinion. Therefore 2-4 members participating in a group discussion is less stable and diversified than the group of odd members. " GD helps to reveal multiple aspects of one's personality and soft skills like the ability to work in a team, communication skills, leadership, flexibility, reasoning and above all an influential ability"(*Barun K. Mitra,2016, Pg.101*). The participants in a group "has to deal with a topic from all its aspects---which shows the well balanced mind of the candidate and provides a balanced decision" (*Nira Konar,2014. Pg.190).* Therefore to achieve excellence it is necessary to master Kinesics and various Paralinguistic features which helps the candidate who applies "in any government or private organisations" (*Sanjay kumar and Pushp Lata, 2012, 2015, Pg.280, 285).*

Aim of the Study

The aim of the paper is to highlight group discussion dynamics, strategies and process of group discussion .It will focus various types in which group discussion is conducted, certain personality traits which are observed during the discussion, and also would discuss few tips to excel in a GD.

Whenever we come across any situation we say lets discuss over it. The discussion take place among individuals, where exchange of ideas and information of each member is listened to attentively and then an attempt is made to reach to a conclusion. It is just like a game. For example a cricket match where the aim of each player is to put in their best efforts to win the match. Their joint efforts and skills help them in achieving

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the desired goal, that is, to win the match. So is the case with group discussion. A group discussion in the present scenario is considered as an effective tool in the recruitment process. It helps the employer to judge certain personality traits like leadership qualities, analytical ability, and knowledge about the subject, communication skills, and adaptability to adjust to situations and above all an affirmative and healthy attitude towards the group. There are various ways in which group discussion takes place. It can be conducted in formal and informal way as well.

Informally the group discussion can take place among the class-mates or the members belonging to the same trade. The motive behind such discussions is to exchange their knowledge about the subject and to imbibe from the knowledge shared by the class mates. In such discussions the problem is discussed but it serves no practical purpose.

Other informal situation we generally come across is in the informal meetings called by the executives. Such meetings are called by the chairperson of the organisation to discuss on certain projects , reports or important issues. The then existing conditions are discussed, policies are made and new innovative ideas are invited for the betterment of the organisation.

Group Discussion takes place in formal business meetings as well. These kinds of meetings are called by the firms or the organisations on regular basis on fixed date and time. Example, the meeting of the Academic Council in the universities is called at definite and regular intervals. There the participation of administrative officers, heads of the departments takes place and important decisions are taken and recorded on the basis of the discussion held. In such group discussions an attempt is made to resolve a discussed problem. Such formal discussions also include various national and international conferences and seminars with a view to exchange opinion on the latest trends on the topics of discussion. This widens the horizon of the participants.

In our day to day life especially on the television we come across panel discussions taking place on the matters of current interest. Here five to six members sit on the platform to discuss the current issues. Example, after demonetization in November 2016, the news channels telecasted panel discussions on the effect of demonetization on the common mass. The group members questioned each other and answered for the audience but not with the audience. In such discussions the members are chosen on the basis of their merit and expertise. In panel discussions the moderator opens up the discussion in an orderly manner and throws it for open discussion among the members seated on the platform. One speaker expresses his idea at a time. Utmost care is taken that the members do not speak for more than two minutes, do not digress from the topic, and do not criticize each other. A sense of co-operation and courteous attitude is expected from the members towards each other. (Aparna etal, 2004, pg.130-131)

Apart from such types of discussions, certain ways are adopted to test the suitability of the candidate in the recruitment process. The candidates are given general topics of current interest; Case based topics, Abstract topics, and Controversial topics. The groups are given social topics which are quite factual. Example, Growth of Indian Economy, Politics is a dirty game. Case based GD's have acquired a prominent place in the present scenario to test various personality traits of a participant like leadership skill, analytical power, tolerance, creativity and an ability to look at the given situation or problem in a holistic way. In such GD's the candidates are given a real life case to discuss so as to reach to a probable solution. Example, 'The most common complaint today the parents in our society have is that -their child is totally engrossed in electronic gadgets and thereby has become introvert'. This problem can be given to a group to discuss. Another case can be, "A manager working in a firm devotes his maximum time in his office from 8am-8pm. This affects his family life and his own health." These cases we come across in our society. The teacher in educational institutions needs to observe minutely the attitude of the group, whether it has positive or negative approach to solve the case, whether it invokes conflict of opinion or maintains decorum in a group. This would help the participants to overcome their mistakes when they participate in case based GD's during recruitment process. The group here should also try to analyse the advantages and disadvantages before approaching to a positive solution.

The Group discussion is not structured and there is no pre-selected leader. The leader emerges from the group. The one who initiates takes the lead. It then becomes his duty to introduce the topic, analyse the scope and implication of the topic to the group members. The topic to be discussed is given on the spot to test the analytical power, general awareness, mature reaction to the views expressed by the others, communication skills and above all positive behaviour towards the group. Sometimes the topic is provide to the participants in advance so that they can thoroughly ponder over it and enter into healthy discussion, and sometimes it is given on the spot.

Sometimes to test the innovative and creative approach of the candidates 'abstract topics' like Condiments, woman is the best god's creation, (http://gdtopics.in/)Beauty or brain, there is never wrong time to do a right thing (http://careerride. com)are given for discussion. The participants in such topics need to be farsighted. At times controversial topics like Reservation should be abolished from educational institutions are given for discussion .such discussions tests the temperament and mature reaction of the candidates along with other personality traits.

The students in their educational institutions should be made to practise all the above mentioned GD's. They should be taught certain strategies and dynamics to excel in GD's during their selection process. Body language plays an essential role in a GD. The candidates should be seated in a circle or a semi-circle so as to have eye contact with all the members of the group. One should not make a

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mistake to look at only one individual, as it would place him in an embarrassing situation. One should sit straight without leaning on the table as this would create a negative impression and would reveal lack of confidence. The leg position should not be crossed with sole pointing towards the other, as it is against group mannerisms. Gestures also speak a lot about an individual. Therefore utmost care is taken that the hand movements are positive. Clasp hands and tight fists reveal lack of confidence. So such gestures should be avoided. One should not try to dominate the discussion but should be a patient listener with a compromising and courteous attitude. The voice quality and, articulation of words should be clear with requisite pauses in between the sentences. Each participant should be allowed to express his views. Utmost care should be taken so that the reticent or silent members of the group are motivated by the group leader or by the co-participants. At times a vague topic given for the discussion creates problem for some of the participants. In such situations the participants participates after acquiring some information from their fellow participants.

In the beginning of the discussion, it is the duty of the initiator (group leader) to introduce the group members (if they are known) and then introduce the topic to the members highlighting few of the important aspects likely to be discussed during the discussion. He should be courteous and objective throughout the discussion. He makes sure that the participants do not deviate from the topic and do not pass personal remarks to each other even if one disagrees with the fellow participants. In other words one should not 'belittle the other person'. (*Sanjay Kumar and Pushp Lata, 2012, Pg.292*) He sees that no one monopolizes and substantiate their opinions with examples. He extracts all possible views and provides a compact summary in the end.

There are certain methods to teach the evaluation process during GD to the students, so that when they step in the outer world they are thoroughly polished enough to participate and get success in the recruitment process.

1. One of the techniques is that the instructor assesses the members participating in a group, scrutinize them and give them honest remarks on their performance regarding their leadership skills, initiation, content, body language, communication skills and tolerance. The group members are taught ways to overcome the errors they made during the discussion. For example, he must make sure that all the major points covered under discussion by the group are stated in the concluding remark by the group leader and after the discussion no member opens up the discussion again. Therefore, here the role of the instructor, who acts as the moderator is quiet crucial.

2. Another way of assessing the group is when the moderator assigns the duty of assessing each candidate by a different individual. Suppose there are seven students participating namely 1,2,3,4,5,6,& 7. Other set of students namely 8,9 10,11,12,13,14 are made to sit opposite to participants 1-7 respectively. Participant 1 will be assessed totally by the student named 8 and vice-versa. This way the students would also develop the ability to judge minutely the errors made by each participant individually and submit the report to the instructor. The instructor finally provides his overall expert comments.(*Sunitha Venugopal,2017,pg 43-44*) This way of participation creates interest among all. Once the participants are apprised of their mistakes they would improvise and the chance of repeating such errors again gets minimized.

Conclusion

To excel in the group discussion it is necessary to train oneself and practice group discussion in study groups. Humble attitude and a skill to maintain a balance between one's own performance and group performance enables an individual to achieve excellence and contribute effectively in an organisation.

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