

Group Discussion

Nowadays Group Discussion is being extensively used along with personal interviews for the final selection of candidates. It plays a main role in selecting the best among the best. Having scored high marks, students who get selected for a higher/another course or employment are placed on a par - on equal footing - based on their age, qualification and experience. It becomes necessary to conduct further screening for choosing a few among many. It is here, the Group Discussion plays an important part. It helps in choosing the socially suitable candidate among the academically superior achievers. It is one of the best tools to study the behavioural and attitudinal responses of the participants.

Rightly speaking, Group Discussion is more a technique than a conventional test. In fact it is one of the most important and popular techniques being used in a number of personality tests. It is a technique or a method used for screening candidates as well as testing their potential. It is also designed as a situation test wherein a sample of a candidate's group worthiness and potential as a worker comes out quite explicitly.

Group discussions are a very important aspect of group communication. Group discussions are a creative and dynamic activity which stimulates reflective thinking among the members. Group discussions may be defined as an activity in which a small number of persons meet face to face and exchange and share ideas freely or attempt to reach a decision on a common issue.

Group discussions are unstructured and less formal compared to meetings or conferences wherein specific roles are assigned to the participants. In a group discussion, an individual's thought process is influenced by the views and opinions of the other members. It also depends on where and in which direction the mood of the discussion moves. In a group discussion, each participant is free to speak his views. A successful discussion involves both listening and speaking

Characteristics of Group Discussions

Some of the salient features common to all group discussions are as follows:

(i) **Interface:** A basic feature of group discussions is the interaction among the various members of the group. They see, hear and communicate with each other orally by paying attention to each other.

(ii) **Leader and Members:** Group discussions are effective only when there is a group of members and a leader. The leader has to summarize facts and information, integrate them, stimulate thinking and agree to a unanimous solution of the problem. The members of the group become actively related to each other in their respective roles.

(iii) **Participation:** The effectiveness and efficiency of a group discussion depend, to a large extent, upon the active participation of the members.

(iv) **Interpersonal Attraction:** Another characteristic feature of a group discussion is interpersonal attraction. As long as interaction continues, the likes, dislikes, behaviour and temperament of members are known to each other. Among them, empathy develops and as such they share each other's problem.

(v) **Pressure to Conform:** In a group discussion, there is always an element of pressure to conform to norms. The pre-defined and established standards are always enforced and followed.

(vi) **Conflict:** A conflict is a difference or disagreement among the members of the group, which often arise during deliberations and discussions. A conflict is inevitable and usually develops when alternative solutions are present. It can stimulate the members to find new solutions to the problem. Thus, conflict is not necessarily bad. But if it arises due to the political behaviour of the members it will have dysfunctional consequences.

Advantages of Group Discussions

The advantages of group discussions are as follows:

(i) It provides a deeper understanding of the subject.

(ii) It improves the ability to think critically.

(iii) It provides different approaches to solving a problem.

(iv) It helps the group in taking a decision.

(v) It gives an opportunity to hear the opinions of other persons.

(vi) It enables a participant to put across his/her viewpoint.

(vii) It enhances confidence in speaking.

(viii) It can change your opinion and show you things from a
different perspective.