

Group Dynamics in Group Discussion

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ABSTRACT

Group Discussion is one of the powerful tools to assess a candidate's suitability for the job. To train students for the effective participation in GD is a challenge to a language teacher. The present paper sheds light on the concept of GD, the practice of Fish Bowl and other Techniques, different assessment methods, etc.

Keywords: group discussion, group dynamics, fish bowl technique, abstract topics, assessment

Introduction

Effective participation in a group discussion is one of the crucial aspects in recruitment process. "A Group is defined as collection of individuals who interact with each other, accept expectations and obligations and share a common identity." The concept of group discussion could be better understood by narrating a family situation. A middle class family felt happy that they are going to enjoy four days of unexpected holidays. How to spend the days was a big issue. Family members had their own plans to make the best of those four days. Initially, the mother fed up with the domestic chores declares that they can travel to some hill stations. The grandmother counters by saying that it is an ideal time to go on a pilgrimage to temples and seek the blessings of god. The father, the bread winner, is more concerned that the recreation should not hit his pocket, and pacifies that the best option is to get some

good movie CDs, watch movies and have sumptuous food at home. The studious daughter says "I will not come as I've a lot to study." Her brother says, "I am not a bookworm like her. I've to enjoy with my friends, play cricket and watch movies. I need money for the expenses." Finally everyone gives assent to a feasible option that has been taken after discussion. Thus group dynamics implies, "*continuously changing and adjusting relationships among members.*"

In a group discussion each one has their own views to contribute. It is observed that views of one don't match with the other. But it is not a debatable situation. Everyone has their right to express their view. But it should lead to a productive conclusion. This is what the team should bear in mind while speaking in the discussion.

Enabling students to understand group discussion skills

In a GD the participants' convincing skill is

tested but in a debate their argumentative skill is tested. This can be understood by making them involve in two activities namely tug of war and circle game. Six boys participate in a tug of war game (3 on one side and 3 on the other side). They express their might and play. The next game is a circle game in which the same six students form a circle and face inwards. Instruction should be given that they should face outwards with two conditions. i) they should not leave their

hand ii) there should not be any change while making an outward circle, for example, if Y is in between X and Z, while facing outwards also the same condition is maintained. Students should be given time to think the feasibility of the condition stated. The teacher instructs two of them to sit with joined hands, so that the others can step inside the circle without leaving hands and changing their position. The table better below illustrates the goal of GD is win-win.

Sno	Tug of war game	Circle game
1.	Domination	Co-operation
2.	Physical Power	Teamwork
3.	Only winning is motive	Thinking and logic
4.	Fight	Harmony
Result:	One team will win; the other will lose	Win-Win

The table better illustrates the concept behind GD is win-win.

Case-based GDs

This type of GDs assesses the student's leadership skills which include problem solving, decision making, tolerance to ambiguity, conflict management, mental quickness, creativity and attitude. The following case may be given for discussion. "A high cadre official presently employed in XXX Company, USA, decides to shift his family to India at its branch office in Mumbai. At Mumbai office he becomes shocked to know the timings of the office. Being the head, he intimates the change in office timings from 8 am to 3 pm against the present 9 am to 4 pm to his subordinates and employees. No one is interested with these timings, but they cannot raise their voice against their US boss."

In a case like this the students feel free to

speak their views but the teacher should monitor whether they aim to resolve or aggravate the conflict and their attitude in maintaining decorum and dignity.

Abstract Topics

Topics like 'Elephants make good software engineers', 'Good fences make good neighbours', 'Car Vs Bar', 'Miles to go before I sleep', 'Chair', 'Destination', 'Question Mark,' 'Egg is to be broken at bigger or smaller end' etc are given to assess the candidate's creativity and ability to make wealth out of waste.

As soon as the topic is given students are asked to put 'Wh' questions on the topic to get clues to speak. Focusing the pros and cons of the topic will prove one's analytical thinking. Analyzing a given topic based on

the acronym SPELT where S stands for Social aspect of the topic, P for Political, E for Economical perspective, L for Law or Logical point of view and T for Technology enables the speaker with wealth of points to contribute.

'Chair' is an abstract topic on which only a few will be able to think productively. One can interpret 'chair' in many ways. **S**ociety gives respect based on a person's chair. Students burn midnight oil to win a chair in their dream company. It is the culmination of one's hard work or smart work. **P**oliticians' aspiration to chair makes them brutal. One's wealth or **E**conomic status is determined by the chair that he sits and works. It is the symbol of prestige. Judge's chair is very valuable because it determines the life of many and assures **L**aw and order that enables peace to the people. Hence a judge should be fair in his pursuit. The modern **T**echnology has enabled many kinds of flexible chairs, but it cannot be paralleled to the chairs of the yore. In those days chairs were made of wood, but now it is made up of plastic and non- degradable materials causing hazard to the society.

Rather than pondering over the problem, the students should be motivated to be farsighted to suggest alternative solutions to the topic. It is the teacher who has to cultivate the habit of thinking and speaking in a productive way.

Different Strategies to be followed

The teacher has to suggest the students the following tips before conducting a mock GD. The initiator has the power to shape the

discussion or break it. The discussion should not start with an emphatic statement. If it is started so, it leads to counter argument, opening red carpet welcome to debate, hence it should start with a balanced view. If the topic is on the sport gambling the initiator may start, "It's our pleasure to discuss gambling. It has pros and cons. Let us share our opinions on this."

The body language of the participants in a group discussion is assessed from top to bottom especially when it is Detail Observing Style GD. One's head position affirms involvement. So it should turn like a table fan, addressing all the persons in the group, leaving none. On the other hand if only one person is addressed it may cause an embarrassing situation to the other. One should not tap legs or fold hands. Placing hand cuffs on the discussion table is acceptable rather than leaning totally which creates an impression of uncertainty and lack of confidence. Cross legs and watching the ceiling while speaking will create a negative impression.

To handle a talking terror in the group, one has to tactfully take one point from him, appreciate it, "I agree with your point, wonderful." While appreciated naturally the talking terror stops and listens, this is human psychology, now the chance can be passed to others. Suppose the given topic is unknown the student should act like a sponge type silent person by grasping a few points or impact words in others speech and then he/ she can proceed.

Fish bowl technique for practicing GD:

This activity is used for assessing the performance of the participants. It also helps in correcting the errors committed.

Activity: Six members namely A, B, C, D, E, F sit in chairs that are arranged in a semicircle position. Six candidates, namely U, V, W, X, Y, Z stand behind each chair. They are instructed to assess the performance of an opposite person sitting in the chair, so that he/she can see him/her easily and note down the feedback. All the six members' (A, B, C, D, E, F) performances are taken care by six members (U, V, W, X, Y, Z) by taking individual attention. These six members' (standing, U, V, W, X, Y, Z) performance, whether it is appropriate or partial, any errors in evaluation etc are taken care by two people G and H. Another student T evaluates the performance of G and H. Yet another student J keeps a check on audience by watching their concentration on GD. All the four members (evaluators) are instructed to move all over the room. Nobody is left out, everyone is kept under watch. Group Discussion topic is given and the discussion starts, after all the evaluators' comments the trainer gives his final opinion on all the members. (6+6+2+1+1)

The next step is to alter the position of the candidates. Whoever stands and evaluates is asked to sit as a participant and vice versa.

Students become Judges- An Alternative Technique for Assessment

Six students, selected as judges, scrutinize and give unbiased report on the

performance of their classmates. They are given a checklist to observe and assess the performance. The first member is asked to observe only the **eye contact and body language** aspects. Do the participants maintain good eye contact? Are there any odd mannerisms like watching the ceiling while talking, or observing only the moderator (in order to please him for selection), etc.? Are the candidates' legs in cross position? Is he/she leaning on the table or playing with the key chain, etc? Are the participants polite?

The second judge studies the **team work**. Each participant's contribution towards team goal is assessed? Does a participant motivate silent member to speak? Has he / she taken the initiative to divert the chance of speaking from a talking terror to silent member? Is there any co-ordinator in the group who makes the best to motivate others to speak as well as keen in resolving the conflict, if any? Does anyone play the role of a conflict manager?

The third judge's concentration is on **'content, statistics, and quotation.'** Is the candidate's speech relevant to the topic or diverted? Is the topic viewed and analyzed in various angles? Does the participant give any quotation, reference, anecdote to support their speech? How good is their knowledge on current affairs?

The fourth student's attention is on **'leadership, initiative and innovative skills.'** Leadership is gauged in terms of the candidate's approach towards his team members, initiation, motivation, shaping the GD by linking the points spoken on the topic

and concluding the GD by taking all the points into consideration. A candidate's innovative skills can be tested by their novel ideas.

The fifth judge monitors **pitch of voice, language and receptiveness**. Is the participant aggressive or assertive? Pitch of voice reflects one's confidence level too. Assertive and convincing style of tone can do magic in a GD. Clarity, fluency and spontaneity are also assessed. The candidate's error free usage of language is gauged. Do the peers nod their head while the other person is speaking? Do they take initiative to jot down the points? Do they use the points as a clue for their speech? 'I agree with you' of course highlights one's receptiveness but it is not mandatory that one should always accept others' points. A new idea related to the topic definitely demarcates the candidate from the others.

The sixth judge keeps an eye on **stress**

tolerance, problem solving and decision making skills. Before commencing the discussion the teacher explains in detail about the rating scales. The judges are instructed to give marks based on the following assessment criteria. They have to jot the names of the participants, after keen observation, give marks, and write comments. For example, if the candidate's eye contact is up to the mark he/ she can give 4 marks, moderate 2 marks. If it is not satisfactory the mark can be 1 or even 0. A participant who scores 0 in eye contact may secure 5 full marks regarding his dress code or moderate marks in receptive skills.

As soon as the GD completes the teacher invites each one to the dais and asks to speak about each candidate and their marks. Instruction should be given that the comments are received in a sportive manner. The teacher thoroughly monitors the whole activity.

Assessment Sheet on Eye Contact and Body Language

Sl. No.	Name	Eye Contact (5 marks)	Hand Movement (5 marks)	Posture (5 marks)	Dress code (5 marks)	Overall comments and marks (Total: 20 marks)
1.						

I. Assessment Sheet on Team Work

Sl. No.	Name	Enthusiasm and Initiation (5 marks)	Clear and Logical Objective (5 marks)	Giving constructive Feedback and Being at Ease with others' Disagreement (5 marks)	Use of Humour/ Conflict Management (5 marks)	Overall comments/ remarks and marks (Total: 20 marks)
1.						

II. Assessment Sheet on Content, Statistics and Quotation

Sl. No.	Name	Relevance of Speech to Topic (5 marks)	Application of SPELT (5 marks)	Statistics (5 marks)	Quotation (5 marks)	Overall comments and marks (Total: 20 marks)
1.						

III. Assessment Sheet on Leadership, Initiative and Innovative Skills

Sl. No.	Name	Leadership skills (5 marks)	Initiation (5 marks)	Novel Ideas (5 marks)	Situational Awareness (5 marks)	Overall comments and marks (Total: 20 marks)
1.						

IV. Assessment Sheet on Pitch of Voice, Language and Receptiveness

Sl. No.	Name	Voice Audibility (5 marks)	Clarity and Fluency (5 marks)	Grammatical mistakes if any (5 marks)	Listening to others (5 marks)	Overall comments and marks (Total: 20 marks)
1.						

V. Assessment Sheet on Stress Tolerance, Problem Solving, Decision Making Skills

Sl. No.	Name	Stress Tolerance (5 marks)	Problem Solving Skills (5 marks)	Decision Making Skills (5 marks)	Grammatical mistakes if any (5 marks)	Overall comments and marks (Total: 20 marks)
1.						

Moderator's Evaluation

Teacher's role is crucial in GD. Apart from the students' judgment teacher's comment is mandatory to rectify mistakes and polish discussion skills. It should be an objective appraisal that probes into every aspect of their performance. As Young (2007) says, "By listening to criticism from instructor and

others, the student will be able to correct errors and learn more effective ways of behavior in GD." Teacher should have updated information. If the candidate fails to speak in a logical way or unable to get points when an abstract topic is given the trainer should point out the same and suggest measures for improvement. If a

student goes deep into subjective examples, though it is related to topic she should instruct them to be objective or speak in generalized tone. The tone of the student while speaking, application of SPELT method in analyzing the topic, confidence level, positive approach are the important things that constitutes teacher's comment. An appraisal should be made whether the candidates have spoken on both sides of the topic namely, victim and the victimized. The teacher should add dimension by revealing

the other possible points that the students failed to speak.

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