UNIT 13   GROUP DISCUSSIONS AND MEETINGS

Structure

13.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we will first take up Group Discussions and cover the following topics:

i.   Planning what to say and how to say it in a group discussion

ii. Maintaining roles

iii. Group communication skills

iv. Group Processing and assessment

We then take up Meetings, where we will discuss:

i.   Agenda of a meeting

ii. Preparing for a meeting

iii. Attending a meeting

iv. Group-Decision making

13.1 INTRODUCTION

13.1.1 Group Discussion

You might have often chatted with your friends on various topics. It could be about the prospects of a course, about a film or a book, pros and cons of politics and so on. As humans we love to talk and express our ideas on any issue of our interest. In the process we learn about others' points of view on the same topic, agree or disagree with them, and help ourselves with a more definite understanding of a situation or a problem. When you interact with many people on a topic a lot of ideas get generated. If done in a systematic way, these ideas prove beneficial in many ways such as solving problems or creating new avenues. When the conversation is intended to serve an objective in an organized manner, it transcends being mere 'chat' and is called a **group discussion.**

A group discussion is a means of interaction within a team or between various teams in an organization. It often determines managerial success. It is a common procedure in competitive exams and job-interviews and is a standard component towards the end of an interview, which the short listed candidates have to take.

The interviewers and examiners nowadays find it necessary to evaluate a candidate's capability to work as a member of a team. Through such group discussions the interviewer looks for the candidates'

- Knowledge and awareness about a topic
- Creative aptitude
- Ability to work as a member of a team
- Ability to lead a team, especially as a opinion leader
- Conferencing skills

To make a group discussion successful you should have good listening skills, an approach to contribute ideas, and show a positive interdependence. You need to convey your thoughts in a meaningful way, and at the same time as a member of a team.

As a result a group discussion is a very useful technique to fulfill many purposes. For example, it is used to

- ➢ Generate ideas (in preparation for something such as a film or a seminar)
- ➢ Summarize
- ➢ Assess levels of skill and understanding
- ➢ Reexamine ideas presented earlier
- ➢ Review a situation
- ➢ Process learning outcomes of a session
- ➢ Compare and contrast theories, issues and interpretations
- ➢ Brainstorm applications of theory to life

13.1.2 Meetings

A meeting forms a part of the various activities of an organization and serves to bring together the members of the organization to fulfill one or more objectives. It is useful when:

➢ Opinions from members become necessary to decide on an issue

➢ Participation of members becomes important to solve a problem

➢ Explaining previous matters becomes important before taking a decision

➢ The organization needs to settle conflicts

➢ The organization needs to communicate sensitive information

➢ The organization needs to generate new ideas

Meetings as well as group discussions basically help us to communicate our own ideas or views about a topic to others and know others' opinions about the same. But a meeting has a more controlled structure than a group discussion. The following components form the structure of a meeting:

● A chairperson

● An agenda

● A process for making decisions

● A well-managed discussion

● A productive physical set-up.

An agenda contains a list or an outline of the points to be discussed in the meeting. Based on the agenda a group discussion can serve as a decision making tool in a meeting. Keeping the agenda in their minds the participants of the meeting come prepared to attend it.

The agenda is normally geared by one person - the chairperson or the convener. In a meeting, unlike a group discussion, it is the chairperson who first takes up an issue and expresses his or her views about it. He or she also holds the responsibility to direct the procedures of the meeting and may allow a group discussion on the basis of the agenda.

A meeting also looks back at what had happened in the previous meeting by presenting the minutes. This is because the participants are required to reflect on the earlier issues in order to analyse and evolve a step to move forward in the present or future.

Voting is a prevalent way of expressing one's views in a meeting even as an open discussion is not always possible. A group discussion may form a part of the whole course of action in a meeting based on the agenda.

13.2 GROUP DISCUSSIONS

13.2.1 GDs at Interviews and GDs in General: Functional Differences

We have said that group discussions can form a part of a meeting, or form a part of the interview process. Although group discussions (GDs) in general and GDs in an interview have a similar structure, they have some functional differences. In a

classroom or an organization the purpose of a GD is to generate thinking, enhance group communication skills, facilitate a successful exchange of ideas and derive a conclusion. It may not be very formal as the members as well as the observer are known to each other.

GDs can also be part of competitive examinations and job interviews. In the civil services, MBA admission process, and Armed Forces and Private Sector examinations, GDs are conducted to observe a candidate's suitability for the course or the job. Hereafter GD in job interviews and GD in examinations will be referred together as GD in interviews.

The various functional differences can be categorized as follows:

GD in an organization or classroom	GD in interviews
1. The main purpose is to generate thinking on a particular topic.	The main purpose is to see who communicates well in a group.
2. The role of an observer may be maintained by a member within the group. In a class discussion, the instructor also observes group interaction and gives feedback.	The interviewers maintain the role of the observers. There may not be any feedback given to the candidates, except the interview result.
3. The roles of a team captain, a recorder, an encourager or a reflector are decided in advance, either by the group members or by the instructor.	The roles are not defined before the discussion. They come up according to the candidates' capabilities.
4. The topics depend upon the organization's interests, related to the group's work and responsibilities or the instructor's requirements in a classroom.	The topics are chosen in such a way that everyone is expected to be aware of it. For example, a topic related to current affairs.
5. The members know each other fairly well, so there is no introduction required at the beginning. By referring to a person who had made a relevant point, the discussion encourages further interaction in the group.	Usually the members introduce themselves when they speak. Mentioning the name of a member while referring to him might help the interviewers determine your listening skills.

13.2.2 Getting Started

In any GD we are supposed to discuss a topic that is either given to us (as in a classroom or an interview) or comes up as a follow up of some other discussion (as in a meeting).

In a classroom we are in a relaxed state as we are still learning to discuss in a group from an instructor and can work on the feedback given to us. In a meeting, one or more objectives have to be fulfilled which is more important than other requirements. The role of an observer is also limited here as it does not serve any purpose as such. Therefore in a meeting the feedback is given on the basis of what result is obtained at the end of the group discussion, and not on individual performances.

For obvious reasons, an interview GD is more difficult than the other two because here we are evaluated for our leadership qualities, group communication skills,

attitude and style. Also, the interview GD is more formal than the other two and usually no feedback is given to the candidates.

In an interview GD a representative of the company organizes the GD. He or she may give you two topics (instead of one) and ask you to decide on one in, say, 5 minutes. You will be observed during these 5 minutes regarding your role in the group: how you make the group agree with you to make the choice. After the topic is chosen, one group member communicates it to the representative who announces it to the group and specifies a time, say, 30 minutes to complete the discussion.

In general, when a topic is given to you to discuss in a group, you need to understand it well. If you are confident about the topic you can begin the discussion. Breaking the ice is generally considered a sign of leadership, provided you have convincing ideas to share and you can speak logically. If you are not sure what to say, you may wait for someone else to start, in order to understand the topic better. Silence is acceptable because one needs to think before speaking. You may try to remember when you last came across the topic and the reaction(s) associated with it. Not speaking at all and speaking too much are both to be avoided. Speaking in a meaningful and insightful way is what is expected in a group discussion.

13.2.3 What to Say and How to Say it

You can begin by saying:

1. *"To begin with, I would say, …*

2. *"The first thing that comes to my mind when I think of …*

3. *"We may think that it's the government's responsibility to deal with corruption, but…*

4. *"Let us first look at the facts known to us, for example, …*

5. *"A very good morning to all of you. I strongly support…because…"*

If you speak after someone you can continue with

6. *"As my friend has just said/spoken persuasively about/argued   …"*

To involve others in your thinking you may say

7. *"You will all agree with me that…"*

You can begin in a way that suits your own style of speaking. Try to include others in your conversation to convey that you are open to others' views as well. You can also do this by using 'we' and 'us' instead of 'I' and 'me'. It is important that whatever you say fulfills a purpose (gives information, agrees or disagrees with a point already mentioned, illustrates a point or justifies your actions).

You need to consider the five **whats** given below:

- What is <u>known</u> to some or most of the participants

- What may be <u>unacceptable</u> to some or most of the participants

- What level of <u>detail</u> is needed

- What <u>depth</u> of ideas is required to deal with <u>possible</u> questions related to the topic

- What <u>must</u> be said at a point, and what is to be <u>retained</u> for the appropriate time

Asking for **clarification** is very important when you do not understand what another person has said. You should also respect others' contributions to the discussion even if you may not agree with everyone. Remember to address the points rather than the persons. Try to give equal time to everyone in the group for speaking.

During the discussion, you may use phrases like:

1. "*I would like to add a point here,* …

2. "*As you have rightly said,* …

3. "*I think we forgot to consider the fact that* …

4. "*Coming back to Nikhil's point that examinations should not be mere memory tests…*

As you can see, the phrase in (1) is useful to make an additional point, and can be used even to interrupt a speaker. So is (2), which agrees with the previous speaker and adds a point. The phrases in (3) and (4) come in useful to continue the discussion from an earlier point, after a slight gap. Perhaps you wanted to say something but didn't want to interrupt the speaker. With these words, you may refer back to the person and her point when you speak again.

Activity 1

Here is an excerpt from a group discussion. Read it well and answer the questions that follow.

Observer: "The topic given to you is 'Should children be allowed to watch TV?' You need to discuss this in your group for 30 minutes and come to a conclusion."

Speaker 1: Good morning friends. In my opinion children should be allowed to watch TV because there are many programmes on TV that are instructive and educative. Cartoons and certain serials are very much liked by children and such sources of entertainment cannot be denied to children. After all they have a right to enjoy TV. Channels like Discovery and National Geographic show very good programmes and provide a lot of general knowledge to children. However parents have to ensure that children watch TV for a short time only.

Speaker 2: Hello friends, I am of the opinion that watching TV does not help children much. There are many programmes that mislead children. If they are allowed to watch TV, they get habituated to it and lose interest in physical activities. Moreover, watching more TV affects the reading habits of children. They slowly lose their concentration on studies too. Children try to imitate their role models in style and looks, which might become an expensive affair for the parents if not checked early.

From the points mentioned above by Speakers 1 & 2, make a list of those that you agree with:

Speaker 1   Speaker 2

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And those that you don't agree with:

Speaker 1   Speaker 2

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Who do you agree with more, Speaker 1 or Speaker 2?

Now can you add a few more points to strengthen your views about the topic?

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How do you think the discussion will end? Write one or two lines in illustration.

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13.2.4 Group Communication Skills

Positive interdependence is when a group either sinks or swims together. It is met in a group as its members share a task, a goal and common resources. Therefore a feeling of *oneness* is important in the group members. This also helps them to develop a positive way of speaking in a discussion. For example, using 'We' instead of 'I' or 'You' will show the feeling of positive interdependence.

Disagreements are a common possibility in any group discussion. These need to be dealt with in a positive way too. Aggressive behaviour affects a healthy discussion. Remember to address the point of disagreement rather than the person who makes it. Disagreements should be reframed in constructive ways:

Say	Instead of
1. I don't think I agree. Could you please explain...	That doesn't make sense at all.
2. I disagree because .... `	That is not true.
3. I see it differently because	No, I don't agree.
4. I think we should check what we are supposed to do.	That is not what we are asked to do.
5. It might be better to	You are dead wrong.
6. Have you considered	How can you say this.
7. Does everyone agree?	Let's vote on it.
8. I understand how you feel, but I think you might also consider	That really upsets me!

To be aware of possible differences among group members will help you to frame your ideas well.

√ **Check Your Progress 1**

1. The topic given to you is " Coaching is necessary for academic studies and competitive exams".

   Generate as many ideas as you can on the topic and write them down as they come to your mind (you need not write complete sentences).

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2. Now arrange the points in order to arrive at one of the two conclusions below:

   a) Coaching is necessary because

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   b) Coaching is not needed because

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3. Now think of speaking about your ideas to a group. Start by stating what you are going to say.

13.2.4.1 Overcome Differences in Communication Style

By differences in communication style we mean that everyone does not express their thoughts in the same way. Some 'think aloud' composing their thoughts on the fly. That is, they state their views as they think and feel. Since they are comfortable with forceful speaking, they may be uncomfortable with silence in a group. Such an extroverted communication style is completely different from one where people love to ponder on an issue or listen to what everyone else has to say before they speak their mind. They have an introverted communication style and long periods of silence don't disturb them.

As a group member you have to remember that only when you appreciate varied communication styles can you achieve balanced contributions to a group. Occasionally you may step out of your form to encourage each other to participate. Group members with an extroverted style need to periodically relax and silently deliberate on an issue. Those with an introverted style need to periodically encourage themselves (if not be encouraged by others!) to contribute, even if they haven't worked out the problem fully in their heads yet.

13.2.4.2 Acknowledge Differences in Gender and Culture

You may face culture differences when you interact in a group from different cultural backgrounds. This can sometimes make communication difficult. Growing up in a different region, state or country generates different styles in people's communication styles. Your style may be quite different from what you confront at the time of discussion. Degrees of bluntness, assertiveness in speech, preferences for direct or indirect (roundabout) conversation styles may be some of the patterns based on community upbringing.

You need to remain open to talk in spite of such differences. A group member who is sensitive towards these differences will value their uniqueness and will not hesitate to share his or her ideas with the other members.

It is very common to take up roles in groups based on gender socialization. You may rely on communication styles with which you are most comfortable in *social settings*. However, groups work together best when group members experiment with a variety of roles in groups, even those with which they don't have as much experience.

13.2.4.3 Effective Involvement

Expressing one's views must be well balanced with listening to others, to reach at an understanding as a group. On the other hand, agreeing to any statement offered without any effort to analyze its worth can misfire everything. For an effective group discussion you need to adopt a middle road between the two: one that monopolizes and the other that is passive. An extended conversation that is gradual and steady helps to lead to the integration and synthesis of views. Through an effective discussion, creative, high-energy, and effective learning occurs among all members of the group.

In short, a participant of a group discussion needs to ensure that (s)he has *group communication skills*. For that he or she can check whether he or she has fulfilled the following points after the discussion:

- Incorporated prior knowledge into discussion

- Asked questions in an open-minded way

- Built on the comments of other group members to enhance discussion

- Volunteered ideas in a constructive manner.

- Helped to summarize the group's progress.

- Identified any missing information in the group answer.

13.2.5 Maintaining Roles in a Group

You may be required to maintain **roles** in a group discussion. The roles are decided before the discussion begins.

- The role of a *team captain* is to keep the group focused on the task. He or she also manages time and mediates conflict.

- The role of a *recorder* is to take down the salient points. He or she also reports back to the group as a whole.

- The *encourager* gives feedback to the group members. He or she is responsible for ensuring that all group members are heard.

- The *reflector* keeps track of dynamics of group process and makes comments about focus, direction, organization, listening skills and participation of all members.

Once a role is decided upon you, try not to switch over to other roles.

In an interview GD, these roles are not decided before but come up according to the candidates' abilities. You may show an interest in playing all the roles or just one. The role of the team captain is one of leadership. The recorder and the encourager support the smooth functioning of a GD and the reflector steers the process.

These roles are extremely important in a GD that is a part of a meeting. They help to fulfill the objectives of the discussion.

13.2.6 Group Processing and Assessment

Group processing and group assessment is very important to develop effective communication in a group. To assess your group after a group discussion you need to reflect on each other's

- contribution

- way of speaking

- attitude.

This will also help you to understand the role of an observer in a group discussion, especially in an interview GD. As you get a feedback from others about your performance in the group you can ponder on your strong and weak points. You can identify your communication style and attitude towards others' views. Listening to each other will facilitate your learning. Questions such as 'What is working?', 'What isn't working?' and 'How can the groups function more effectively?' can be raised for assessment. You can also prepare a group report in this way to determine the areas on which further work is needed.

Above all you must not forget that what you say is more important than how you say it. So pay more attention in generating more ideas and views on the topic given, and improve your presentation through practice in a group.

√ **Check Your Progress 2**

Read the following excerpt from a group discussion and observe the different capabilities of the speakers. Give your assessment of each speaker on the basis of skills such as leadership, decision making, logical reasoning and convincing skills. You can explore the traits that are optimistic, constructive, visionary, practical, acceptable and progressive. Then give an overall assessment of the speaker.

The group consists of Koyel, Nirmal, Suman, Rekha, Bhargav, Bala and Jeet. After the topic is chosen, the discussion begins with Suman breaking the ice:

i)   Suman: Hi friends! I strongly believe that child care is the sole responsibility of the parents. Every living creature takes care of its young ones. You will agree with me that parents feel responsible to mould their children into healthy, happy and successful human beings with love, respect and care.

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ii) Nirmal: Friends, to my mind, child care is the responsibility of everyone. The child is a hope for the parents, the country, and above all mankind. Therefore everyone should take care of it. The contribution of people other than parents right from its childhood make the child emerge as a good human being, as an artist, a writer, a scientist, an inventor. Teachers, guides and other concerned people must have fulfilled their share of responsibilities to make the child a successful man or woman. Parents are responsible to take basic care of their children but they are not the only people responsible for the child's mental and physical development.

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iii) Jeet: Good afternoon to all! I agree with Suman and also with Nirmal that childcare is definitely the responsibility of the parents. Only the parents provide it with the basic requirements i.e., food, health, clothing and education. They are also responsible to give it a safe and carefree childhood. They take them to doctors when they are sick and bear all their expenditure till they stand on their own feet and get married. They have given birth to the child and they hold themselves responsible for both their success and failure.

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iv) Rekha: Dear friends, I have heard all of you who have spoken so far. I agree that parents do their best to provide the child with everything they can to make their children all rounders. But the basic necessities are not enough for a child's growth. They are of primary importance, but a child cannot develop completely if it does not acquire intellectual and technical skills. These may or may not be provided by parents. Morever these require interaction with more and more people coming into the child's life other than its parents. The teacher influences the child much. The child can come across people with extra ordinary talents and vision either within its family or otherwise. It is the responsibility of every adult to encourage the intellectual development of the child to let it identify its own talents and capabilities.

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v) Bala: Good afternoon everyone. I believe that childcare is parent's responsibility. They have to take care of the child as they have given birth to it. They take up the responsibilities of their children so that the children will look after them in their old age. Everybody is selfish in this world. The children are the future of the parents and so they give due care to see them grow as healthy and wealthy citizens.

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vi) Suman: I have listened to your comments on both sides and I still hold the stand that childcare is parents' responsibility. The parents are the closest to a child and so their role is the most important in making the child an asset to the nation and to mankind. Apart from providing the basic necessities they also support the child to fight all adverse situations in life. In my opinion, family values and strong bonding is the most important step in the development of a child and this is done mostly by the parents.

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Read the above excerpt again and answer the questions below:

a) Can you guess the topic that was given for the GD?

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b) Who do you think has displayed good group communication skills?

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13.3 MEETINGS

13.3.1 Agenda of a Meeting

The agenda is the most important component of any meeting. It gives the necessary details about the meeting: the <u>time</u> and <u>place</u> of the meeting, the <u>names</u> of the people who will attend it, the time when the meeting <u>starts</u> and <u>ends</u>, the <u>issues</u> to be discussed in the meeting, any <u>preparation</u> the attendees have to take for the meeting such as contacting people and collecting relevant information.

Meetings can not be effective in fulfilling their objective(s) if the agenda is too large. A hidden agenda also makes meetings a waste of time. It results from personality clashes, private conflicts and discussing issues unrelated to the proposed agenda. It lies only in the chairperson's hands to handle such situations.

The agenda must consider the usefulness of a meeting. It should be formulated while aiming at:

- Giving depth to decisions
- Preventing mistakes
- Evolving diverse thinking
- Encouraging the attendees in decision-making

The agenda is usually presented by the secretary (to the chairperson or of the group or committee) and approved by the chairperson.

13.3.2 Preparing for a Meeting

Remember the following things to do before you attend a meeting:

1. Carefully read the notice and understand the purpose of the meeting.

2. Decide what preparation is required: e.g. make necessary arrangements at your office while you will be in the meeting or notify the convener in advance if you cannot attend the meeting.

3. Prepare any materials or information that may be needed.

4. Prepare answers to any questions that may be asked.

5. Prepare a list of points that must be covered.

6. Prepare a list of questions that you want answered.

13.3.3 Attending a Meeting

You need to follow these meeting 'etiquettes' while attending one:

1. Be on time.

2. Be an effective listener. Good preparation allows you to LISTEN to others.

3. Let others participate without interruption.

4. Jot down questions that you will want to ask.

5. Be flexible to other solutions, but don't accept just to avoid an argument.

6. Don't take strong disagreement as a personal attack.

7. Explain your points clearly and briefly. Don't overstress a point.

After the meeting is over reflect upon any important issue that needs to be addressed depending upon the context. You can check the following points:

1. Complete any assignments.

2. Notify the chairperson as required.

3. Inform others as required.

4. Prepare minutes of the meeting while recording

   ● the decisions taken

   ● the names of people who were given the charge of implementing the decisions

   ● the deadline by which action has to be taken

   ● the date for the next meeting, if decided already

Very often the meeting is summed up by the chairperson including the important decisions taken by its members. You can also get a recapitulation of what had been discussed in order to perform the above tasks. Leave the meeting after the chairperson announces it to be over.

√ **Check Your Progress 4**

You are the Project Head of a reputed company. You have observed that the quality of your product has been deteriorating over the past two years in spite of taking corrective measures. You need to call a meeting to plan for the next year. Prepare an agenda.

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13.3.4 Group Decision-Making

Establishing the purpose and agenda of a meeting is often easy compared to making decisions as a group. Since there will be decisions to make at every meeting you attend, it is worthwhile to spend a few minutes looking at how groups make decisions. These are the steps involved in group decision-making:

1. **Define the problem** - In some discussions, there may be more than one problem to solve. Issues must be clearly defined and separated.

2. **Ask for alternatives** - Members will offer suggestions. All suggestions should be accepted without criticism by the group.

3. As a group, **explore the pros and cons of each idea;** what are the advantages and disadvantages of each alternative.

4. **Choose an alternative** based on what you have learned after exploring the advantages and disadvantages of each. Choosing a solution can be done by voting, either secret or public ballot. It can also be done by consensus. The chosen solution might be modified to satisfy all members. It doesn't matter how the decision is reached. It does matter that every member in the group has had the opportunity to participate in making the decision. If everyone doesn't have input into the decision, implementing the solution is difficult.

5. **Evaluate the outcome.** This is usually done once an action has been implemented. It can be done through a discussion or through a report by one member.

√   **Check Your Progress 5**

Suppose you work in an organization responsible for the country's defence and security. Your Chief Executive has recently received this information from the Central Investigation Bureau: "Your organization is under threat of a bomb attack"

He or she needs to call a meeting with all the senior executives to take all precautions against the threat. You are the convener. Prepare the agenda of the meeting.

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13.4   LET US SUM UP

13.4.1 Group Discussion

A group discussion is a very useful technique for fulfilling many purposes. It can form a part of a meeting, or form a part of the interview process. Based on the agenda, a group discussion can serve as a decision-making tool in a meeting. A group discussion can also be part of competitive examinations and job interviews.

After the topic is chosen, one group member communicates it to the representative who announces it to the group and specifies a time, say 30 minutes, to complete

the discussion. Speaking in a meaningful and insightful way is what is expected in a group discussion.

Group communication skills are very important requirements for a group discussion to fulfill its objectives.

Disagreements are a common possibility in any group discussion. To be aware of possible differences among group members will help you to frame your ideas well.

As a group member you have to remember that only when you appreciate varied communication styles can you achieve balanced contributions to a group. Group members with an extroverted style need to periodically relax and silently deliberate on an issue.

Through an effective discussion, creative, high-energy, and effective learning occurs among all members of the group.

Finally, a participant of a group discussion needs to ensure that he or she has:

a. Incorporated prior knowledge into discussion

b. Built on the comments of other group members to enhance discussion

c. Helped to summarize the group's progress.

d. Identified any missing information in the group answer.

You may be required to maintain **roles** in a group discussion. The *encourager* gives feedback to the group members.

Group processing and group assessment is very important to develop effective communication in a group. To assess your group after a group discussion you need to reflect on each other's style and contribution to the topic.

13.4.2 Meetings

The agenda is the most important part of conducting a meeting. It should consider the usefulness of a meeting. It should be formulated while aiming at:

a. Giving depth to decisions

b. Preventing mistakes

c. Evolving diverse thinking

d. Encouraging the attendees in decision-making

A meeting also looks back at what had happened in the previous meeting by presenting the minutes. This is because the participants are required to reflect on the earlier issues in order to analyze and evolve a step to move forward in the present or future.

Establishing the purpose and agenda of a meeting is often easy compared to making decisions as a group.

13.5   ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. 1) *Generating ideas:*

Deterioration in the standard of teaching, teachers to be well paid to overcome financial constraints, continued supervision of teaching for the sake of the students, commercialization of education, closing the coaching centres will elevate the standard of education, age of competition – rat race, techniques to score more

marks, coaching institutes have better facilities than regular schools and colleges, high amounts of fees at coaching – financial burden on parents, end result, difference between regular (academic) and competitive examinations, many students clear the competitive examinations without attending any coaching, hard work and thorough preparation is the key, yet no guarantee of success.

2) *Arranging points in order to arrive at one of the two conclusions:*

a) Coaching is necessary because:

● The standard of teaching is deteriorating day by day,

● Education has been commercialized and teachers tend to earn more through coaching institutions, they fail in their duties at schools and colleges,

● It is an age of competition – to win in the rat race, you need to know more than what is taught in regular institutions,

● Coaching centres teach useful techniques to score more marks, e.g. time management,

● Coaching institutes have better facilities than regular schools and colleges,

● End result is that those who attend coaching are more successful than those who don't,

● Coaching centres makes one understand the difference between regular (academic) and competitive examinationsv

b) Coaching is not needed, because:

● If the coaching centres are closed it will elevate the standard of education,

● If the teachers are well paid to overcome financial constraints,

● If continued supervision of teaching is done for the sake of the students,

● Example/Fact: many students clear the competitive examinations without attending any coaching,

● Hard work and thorough preparation is the key,

● High amounts of fees at coaching – financial burden on parents,

● There is no guarantee of success – the good students anyway get through the exams but the coaching centres advertise their success as their own credit. Others fall in the way, lose money and repent after their failure .

3) *Beginning to speak:*

Good morning friends. In my opinion coaching is necessary these days in order to prepare for academic studies and competitive exams. But I strongly believe that coaching for such purposes is not a recommendable practice. If certain things are changed to improve our educational standard, our students can become more capable and thorough in their subjects.

2. i) **Suman** took the lead by being the first speaker. She decided quickly and put her ideas into action. She spoke with a touch of reality and out of common experience.

   ii) **Nirmal** was the second speaker. He was confident, logical and has convincing skills. He has a high vision and is optimistic. He spoke for a longer time than Suman without any interception. He too has leadership qualities and is a good speaker.

iii) **Jeet** gave practical and acceptable points. His true examples focused the discussion on facts. However his discussion was average.

iv) **Rekha** spoke late, but she spoke well. She spoke justifiably and systematically. She has a mature style of speaking and was successful in discussing her ideas. She can be encouraged to take up leading roles.

v) **Bala** supported the idea that childcare is the responsibility of parents. But he was focusing on the responsibility of the children towards parents and exhibited a selfish attitude. He appeared to be unsympathetic.

vi) **Suman** spoke twice (as the first and the sixth speaker) in the group, which is impressive. Her discussion was logical and convincing. It can be concluded that she has leadership qualities.

3. a) The topic for group discussion may have been: "Is child care the sole responsibility of parents?"

b) Among the 7 speakers, Koyel and Bhargav did not speak. They may have difficulty in generating ideas or in putting them forward, difficulty to start due lack of confidence or some other problem. Suman and Nirmal have good group communication skills. Rekha has also done reasonably well and can be recommended.

4. **Agenda: Ninth meeting of Project X Committee**

Date and Venue: 10:30 AM, Thursday, 27 March 2008 at Bureau of Standards

Chairperson: DR. MMM, Project Head

Item 0 GENERAL

Opening remarks by the Chairman

Item 1 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the eighth meeting held on 30th January 2008 at Advanced Research Centre.

No comments have been received.

The committee may confirm the minutes as circulated.

Item 2 ISSUE ARISING OUT OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Actions taken on them and progress made thereof.

Item 3 ADDRESSING THE QUALITY PROBLEM STILL EXISTING

Brainstorming of ideas

New proposals

Boosting the morale of members

Item 4 GROUP DECISION MAKING

Changes to be implemented

New recruitments whether required

5.   Agenda: Meeting to be held on 21 March 2008

To: All the Senior Executives

Priority: Urgent

Date: 21 March 2008

Venue: Conference Hall A

Time: 2:15 PM

Chairperson: Mr. XYZ, CE   Convener: Mr. ABC

Item 0 GENERAL

Opening remarks by the Chairman: the reason for sudden meeting

Item 1 THE ISSUE OF BOMB THREAT

    1.1 Background

    1.2 The scope of the threat

    1.3 Proper understanding of the situation

Item 2 PREPARATIONS REQUIRED TO ENCOUNTER THE THREAT

    2.1 At Security level

    2.2 At Managerial level

    2.3 At Production level

Item 3 GROUP DECISION MAKING