

Discussion as a Tool for Learning

Discussion is a valuable and inspiring way of revealing the diversity of opinion that lies below the surface of any complex issue. Although there are multiple ways to learn, discussion is one of the best ways to explore significant questions and develop a fuller understanding of the multiplicity of human experience and knowledge. A topic is said to come alive as diverse and complex opinions multiply in number (**Brookfield & Preskill**, 1999). Since discussion reveals and acknowledges multiplicity of perspectives, it has been described as a democratic process. It is believed to nurture and promote human growth. Discussion is said to facilitate what **John Dewey** (1916) described as ‘the development of an ever-increasing capacity for learning and an appreciation of and sensitivity to learning undertaken by others’. Discussion is significant because it emphasizes acknowledgement of new points of view through collaboration and cooperation. Discussion also leads to the emergence of a collective wisdom through mutual understanding and exploration of multiple perspectives. Besides in remaining open to the unexpected, the participants in a discussion feel engaged and alive. So the importance of discussion is not only just moral or philosophical but also deeply personal and self-ratifying. **David Bridges** (1988) claims that discussion is different from general human conversation and other forms of group talk by its concern with the development of knowledge, understanding or judgment among those taking part. According to Bridges discussion involves participants who are mutually responsive to the different views expressed and are disposed to be affected by the opinions. **James Dillion** (1994) defines discussion as a ‘highly disciplined and concerted talk’ in which people come together to resolve some issue or problem that is important to them. Discussion, is thus, a process that incorporates reciprocity and movement, exchange and inquiry, cooperation and collaboration, formality and informality.

Purposes of Discussion

The purposes of discussion are principally fourfold. They are –

- i. To help the participants reach a more critical understanding about the topic under consideration.
- ii. To enhance participants’ self-awareness and their capacity for self-critique.
- iii. To foster an appreciation among the participants for the diversity of opinion that invariably emerges when viewpoints are exchanged openly and honestly.

- iv. To act as a catalyst to helping people take informed action in the world. Discussion is an important way for people to develop participatory skills that contributes to democracy in the long run.