

Handling Cultural and Social Issues, Abstract topics in GD's and Knowing MBA (Students' Handout)

Important socio-cultural terms:

Morality

Morality refers to the concept of human ethics which pertains to matters of good and evil —also referred to as “right or wrong”

The ability to decide what is good and evil is the function of **understanding**.

Various Moral issues

- Same-Sex Marriage
- Divorce, Remarriage
- Drinking Alcoholic Beverages
- Sexual Morality & the Family
- Suicide: Moral or Immoral?
- Cloning of Human Beings

Ethics

Ethics encompasses

- Right conduct and good living.
- Professional ethics
- Legal ethics
- Social ethics

Ethics V/s Law

Many acts that would be condemned as unethical are not prohibited by law, e.g. lying or betraying the confidence of a friend.

Business Ethics

Business Ethics refer to how corporations conduct business with respect to the "social contract" they hold both within the company and with external stakeholders. This includes how a company treats its own employees, or workplace ethics, proper governance, the anti-corruption measures it institutes, and corporate social responsibility

Recent issues in Business Ethics

- Satyam- inflated balance sheets & misappropriated accounting
- Airline strikes-almost an organized cartel
- Telecom operators-bending the rules

While ethics are more related to the rules defined by the society, Morals are more of Self Evaluation.

Values

Values are the principles, standards, or quality which guides human actions.

Values are initially inculcated by parents and then by teachers.

E.g. While for some people throwing a wrapper on the road might be acceptable, others might object to it.

Principle

A Principle is a rule, norm or law which has been proved and accepted...

While Values may be dependent on prevailing situations, Principles are not.

We may not throw a wrapper in front of our teacher in the class but we will throw it when we are alone in our room (in our house).

Values become principles when they have been practiced across all scenarios and situations and thus become independent of prevailing conditions.

Society

A Society is a group of individuals, which is characterized by common interest, and may have distinctive culture and institutions. A Society is region-specific.

Society can also be explained as an organized group of people associated together for religious, benevolent, cultural, scientific, political, patriotic, or other purposes.

Culture

Culture can be defined as all the behaviors, arts, beliefs and institutions of a population that are passed down from generation to generation.

Religion

Religion is a system of social togetherness based on a common group of beliefs or attitudes. It puts emphasis on person, unseen being, or system of thought.

It is a ritual based on supernatural, sacred, divine or highest truth. Religion is more socially defined than belief or faith which are more of personal convictions.

Religion - Issues

- 1947 – Partition riots
- 1984 – Anti-Sikh riots
- 1992 – Bombay riots
- 2002 – Godhra train burning/riots
- 2008 – Anti-Christian riots(Orissa)

Secularism

Secularism asserts

- That certain practices or institutions should exist separately from religious beliefs.
- Freedom from the government imposition of religion upon the people

Conscience

Conscience is a sense that leads to feelings of remorse when we do things that go against our moral precepts.

It can be referred to as inner voice.

E.g. “My conscience does not allow me to pay the bribe to get my work done”

Judgement

A Judgement in a legal context is synonymous with the formal decision made by a court following a lawsuit.

In non-legal contexts, a judgement is a balanced weighing up of evidence preparatory to making a decision. It is the outcome of an evaluation of alternatives e.g. “A is B”, “It is raining”.

To sum up

Morality + Ethics + Values = Society

Values + Morality = Reason

Reason + Values = Understanding

Group Discussion-HANDLING ABSTRACT TOPICS

Abstract topics are such that you do not really need any knowledge about the topic to speak on the topic. Your worldly knowledge and commonsense will help you in speaking on the topic.

E.g.

“The farther we look the closer we are”

“Poverty and Richness will eventually mean the same”

Discussion on these topics can be very nebulous.

Sometimes candidates feel that the topic is very simple but as the discussion progresses the participants find it difficult to discuss. On the other hand, at times the topic looks very difficult but the discussion proceeds smoothly.

By nature Abstract topics lend themselves to varied and widespread discussion. However participants who make the grade in such GDs are the ones who set clear boundaries as to what needs to be discussed.

Abstract topics can best be discussed using exemplification.

E.g.

- “Green is better than Red” can be discussed using examples that give a meaning to the abstract thought.
 - In this case GREEN can be defined as ‘capitalism’ and RED as ‘communism’.
 - Alternatively GREEN can mean ‘agriculture’ and RED can mean ‘manufacturing’.

How to handle such topics

- Look to associate the keywords in the topic with what you know.
- Remember there is nothing right or wrong (but obviously don't talk nonsense).
- Focus on generation of new ideas instead of criticizing the speaker. However, support to fellow speakers and elaborating their points (funnel approach) puts a positive impression on the evaluator.

So focus on LATERAL THINKING.

Knowing MBA

Most MBA programs are two-year post-graduate programs comprising six trimesters of 10-12 weeks each, or 4 semesters of 16-18 weeks each.

The two years teach future managers about the basic and specialist aspects of management. The MBA course is a holistic experience as the treatment is different from any other post-graduate course.

Difference

- ✓ Focus on presentation skills
- ✓ Focus upon team skills
- ✓ Inculcates values like Discipline, Hard work(10 - 12 hr work schedule) etc..
- ✓ Constant Industry Interaction
- ✓ Exposure to industry with summer training and live projects...

Program Highlights

- Two Year Post Graduate Program Fees between Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 8 lakhs (Varies between institutes).
- *First Year*- Introduction to functional Areas of Management. Get exposed to facets of running an organization.
- Summer Training (generally after first year)- Opportunity to work on live projects with organizations for about 8 to 10 weeks. Get an insight into the world of corporate management.
(*You could be working upon winter projects as well*)
- *Second Year*- includes 6-8 compulsory courses & 17 –20 electives of choice.
Areas of specializations Marketing, Operations, Finance, Systems, Human Resource, International Business etc....
- Placements- Companies hold a recruitment drive on campus. They conduct interviews and select students who join their companies after completing their MBA

SPECIALIZATIONS

Marketing

Marketing, in its broadest sense, is getting people and products together. This is the most popular specialization among students of management. It comprises four specific function areas :

- *Sales & Distribution,*
- *Product/Brand Management,*
- *Advertising,*
- *Market Research*

Finance

This function area is concerned with the efficient use of an important component of business - Money. The main career paths in this discipline are....

- Consumer Banking,
- Investment Banking,
- Development Banking,
- Non-Banking Finance,
- Corporate Finance,
- International Finance.

Human Resources

The broad career opportunities in this area are

- Personnel Management
- Industrial Relations

Systems Management

After consolidation and restructuring in the Information Technology (IT) sector, there is again a huge demand for software professionals and systems managers. For MBAs specializing in Systems, there are broadly four career options in this field:

- Systems Consultancy
- Account / Project Management
- Systems Depts. of Organizations
- Business Development and Sales & Marketing

Operations

Manufacturing is one of the most important areas for any product-based business. Management of large as well as small manufacturing companies involves various production and operational techniques and theories. These skills are especially useful for engineering graduates. The career options in this field are:

- *Quality Control*
- *Material Management*
- *Productivity Improvement*
- *Inventory Control*
- *Production Planning*
- *Supply Chain Management & Logistics*

Expected GD Topics

1. Are Indian companies catering to the needs of the rich only?
2. Will same-sex marriages ever find acceptance in India?
3. The job of a manager is to do the right things or to do things rightly
4. Is Indian media irresponsible?
5. 24x7x365