

A Critical Analysis of Fieldwork Report Writing of BBS

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ABSTRACT

The students of BBS program of Tribhuvan University (T.U.) must carry out a fieldwork study of two weeks by visiting the organizations or projects. The results of past years show that students are not able to follow the requirement of Faculty of Management in writing the report of their fieldwork. So this study attempts to uncover the common mistakes and their causes while writing the fieldwork report. Students were found moderate in writing the fieldwork report. They lack the habit of reading related books, do not get appropriate, effective and intensive orientation to equip themselves with research skills.

THE PRESENT BIGGEST HIGHER education institute in Nepal, the T.U., was founded in 1959. Before it came into existence as a university, there were few institutions of higher education in Nepal, which were affiliated with Indian Universities. After a long gap of 28 years, another university, the Sanskrit University was established in 1986. Kathmandu University was established in 1991 as the first private university of the kingdom. Thereafter, Purwanchal University and Pokhara University came into existence. There are some more under considerations. Nevertheless, one obvious point is that the increase in the number of universities in the kingdom has not been able to reduce the load of T.U.

T.U has initiated a number of reform measures to reaffirm its commitment to the goal of qualitative higher education and nation building. No doubt, the successful implementation of reform measures will enhance the overall performance of T.U. and its contribution to the society.

One of the latest reforms undertaken by T.U. was the extension of the Bachelor Degree Course to three years from two years course. As a part of this reform, the Faculty of Management (FOM), T.U. has implemented the new BBS curriculum in the academic year 2053/54. The basic objective of BBS program is to develop students into competent managers for any sector of organized activity. The new curriculum for BBS degree comprises of four separate and distinct course components-foundation course, core course, functional course, and elective course.

In the first and second years, students study foundation and core courses. In the third years they have to choose two subjects from functional course as their specialization and one each from functional area and sectoral area as elective courses. To complete the elective course of the sectoral management area, students will have to undertake the fieldwork study for two weeks. Thus the fieldwork has become an integral part of the BBS and BBA programs. After the completion of the fieldwork, the students will have to write a fieldwork report according to format prescribed by FOM.

There are books, which guide students to plan the assignment, locate information source, collect and analyse data and prepare the overall project report. However, students are not able to write project reports as required by FOM. They commit so many mistakes in writing the report. The reason why they make so many mistakes has become a subject of investigation. Therefore, this study attempts to find out the areas in which students made common mistakes in report writing; the actual causes that make students commit common mistakes while writing a fieldwork report and effective guidelines to be provided to the students for report writing, and forwarded suggestions to FOM to create an effective and conducive environment of report writing.

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1. Objectives and Scope

The basic objective of this study was to uncover the common mistakes and causes of committing such mistakes by the students in their fieldwork report writing and to suggest them corrective measures. At the same time, its aim was to suggest FOM to make conducive environment for report writing.

The scope of this study was limited to the reports submitted by the first and second batch students of BBS third year, P.N. Campus, and opinion survey of teachers who have supervised the students and students who have submitted their fieldwork reports to FOM.

2. Methodology

The research design of this study is analytical as well as descriptive in nature. The study is based on the analysis of the fieldwork report submitted by the students of BBS third year plus questionnaire survey of 11 teachers and 25 students. Twenty percent of the reports submitted by the students were taken as sample size for the study. The sample was drawn by using the random number table. The population-the total number of reports-into two strata, viz. (i) reports submitted by the first batch, and (ii) reports submitted by the second batch.

3. The Theory

A project report is a form of written communication. Therefore, it should be informative and persuasive. The basic objective of the fieldwork assignment to the students of BBS third year is to give them exposure to business reality. They can select any one of the three methods-case study, feasibility study, and small scale survey-for conducting their project work. Students have to submit the report as a final output of the fieldwork. Students are required to submit the report in the format prescribed by FOM.

3.1 Fieldwork Assignment: A Mini-Research

For the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of BBS, the students of T.U. affiliated campuses must submit a fieldwork report to their campus. For this purpose, students visit and study an organization or a project for about two weeks. They should conduct independent analysis and appraisal of the situations facing the organization or project. Then, they write and submit a fieldwork report in the format prescribed by FOM, T.U.

A fieldwork report should provide information and ideas clearly and persuasively. However, one should be always conscious not to let the mechanics of gathering source materials, taking notes, and documenting sources make him/her forget to apply the knowledge and experiences acquired previously.

"Fieldwork is a systematic study of a specific situation in an organization. It is a database scientific investigation. It can be regarded as a mini-research effort (Agrawal 2000)."

Theoretical knowledge alone is not enough to produce a competent graduate in management field. Therefore, the theoretical knowledge should be backed up by practical experiences. In this context, the fieldwork assignment to be completed by the students of BBS is an academic exercise as well as means of exposing students to business reality and making them familiar with day-to-day management work.

"The fieldwork assignment is an off-the-class-room study project undertaken by a student under the guidance of a faculty member. The students are required to visit organizations for fieldwork. After they work in organizations or in the field for the specified

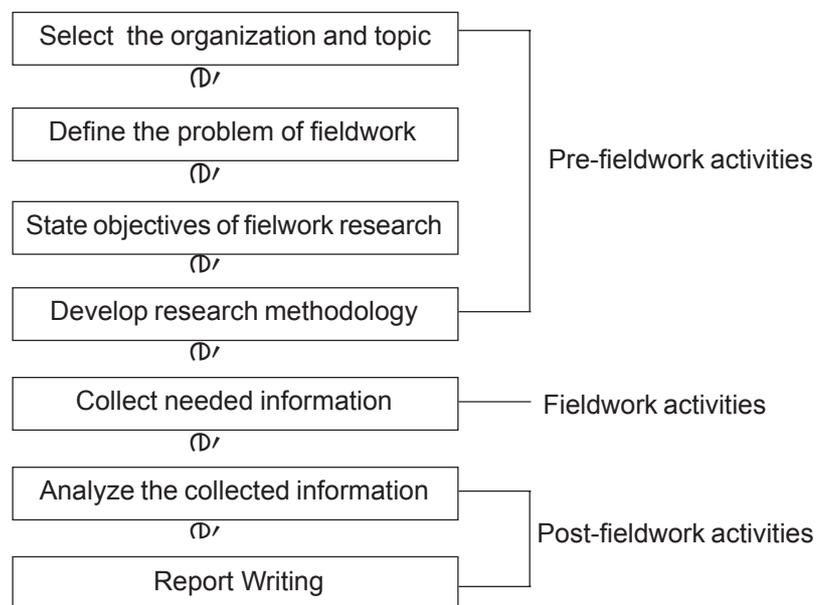
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period of time, they are supposed to write and submit a field study report using the format as approved by the business school (Pant 1998)."

The fieldwork research is conducted in different stages. Figure 1 depicts a standard model of fieldwork research process. According to the figure, there are three broad activities- pre-fieldwork activities, fieldwork activities, and post-fieldwork activities. The pre-fieldwork activities comprises of the selection of the organization and topic, defining the problem of fieldwork, setting objectives of fieldwork research, and developing research methodology. Collection of needed information falls in the fieldwork activities. Finally, post-fieldwork activities consist of analysis of collected data and report writing.

3.2 Research Process - A Model

Fig. 1: Steps in Fieldwork Research Process



Adopted from Agrawal, *Project Management in Nepal*

3.3 Evaluation Criteria of BBS Fieldwork Report

Four major and broad criteria- report format, presentation of facts and figures, and analysis, language and style and conclusions are set to evaluate the submitted report. The fieldwork report is submitted to the campus for the purpose of evaluation. Therefore, the students should pay attention to the fact that their reports should be comprehensive and self-contained. More important, the student must follow the rules and principles involved in writing a fieldwork report.

3.4. Facets of the Fieldwork Report

3.4.1 Format of the Fieldwork Report

A report-writer should be aware of the need for an attractive format for the report. For the third year BBS students, FOM, T.U. has prescribed some common format to be followed

in report writing.

3.4.2 Presentation of Facts and Figures, and Analysis

The facts and figures are used to convey a message to the readers clearly. If the tables, charts, and figures are presented in an attractive way, it draws the attention of readers. Similarly, if the data presented in the tables or figures are analyzed in a systematic way referring the table number and placing the table as near as possible to the content, the readers can understand the analysis even if it is tedious.

3.4.3 Language and Style

The language and style of writing report plays a vital role to make it attractive and interest generating. To make the style of the report impressive, one must care in presentation of data, especially diagrammatic and graphic representation, simplicity of statistical tables, its approach, sentence construction, clarity, and even the words, phrases, and idioms used (Michael 2000).

3.4.4 Concluding Section

The concluding section of a BBS fieldwork report should include summary and conclusions of the study. However, suggestions or recommendation can also be included after the conclusions. The conclusion should be like a good receptionist of a well managed office who has all-round knowledge and capacity to systematically present a comprehensive picture of the whole office and to represent it to one who approaches her (Michael 2000).

3.4.5 Typography

The report writer should have knowledge of typography. The proper use of typography not only presents the report in an attractive way but also reflects the knowledge and professionalism of report writer. For the purpose of this study, spacing, margins, justification, indent, title page format, pagination, chapter title, upper and lower case and font size have been taken into consideration as the variables of typography.

4. Findings

The analysis of this study has been made from three dimensions - (i) analysis of the fieldwork report written by the first and second batches of BBS students of Prithwi Narayan Campus, (ii) survey of teachers' opinion, and (iii) survey of students' opinion. The major findings of the analysis of each dimension are presented below.

4.1 Findings from the Analysis of the Fieldwork Report

The bibliography, annex, list of figures and recommendation sheet are found poorly managed/written by the students. Students seldom have used statistical tools like standard deviation, regression, correlation, median etc. in their fieldwork report writing. Most of the students could not present the table in attractive way. Similarly they could not use table title and heading correctly. They have not mentioned the source of the data in table. However, the percentage of the report written in English is satisfactory. Forty-one percent of students are incredibly weak in documentation. Almost all the students have committed blunder in writing bibliography and footnote. However, the positive aspect is that most of the students have written the report using simple language and in third person.

Majority of the students have not related their conclusions absolutely with the problems or objectives they set. They either have not covered all the issues mentioned in the objectives or they have deviated from the main issues. Most of them have committed critical mistakes in setting the correct margin (98 %); in writing chapter title (76 %); and maintaining consistency

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in the use of upper and lower case. However, they are good. in other aspects of typography like, justifying, indent, and font size.

4.2 Teachers' Opinion

Teachers were asked to rank the level of students in four aspects of report writing viz. (i) format, (ii) language, (iii) presentation of facts, figure and administration, and (iv) conclusion drawing. They ranked 1 (as the weakest area) to the presentation of facts, figure and administration. Similarly, they ranked conclusion, format, and language as second, third and fourth respectively.

According to the teachers involved in supervising and evaluating the fieldwork report, students are very weak in presenting and analyzing of data, making summary and drawing conclusions. In the area of language and style of report writing-grammar, spellings, use of headings and sub-headings, proper labeling of charts are the variables where students are mostly weak. They are weak in drawing conclusions logically from findings.

Setting margins, spacing, appropriate use of upper and lower case, and font size similarity are the variables in typography, where according to the teachers, students have committed common mistakes.

Major reasons that played a vital role in making students commit common mistakes according to the teachers are: (i) lack of reading habit of research-related books, (ii) lack of proper and effective orientation to the students (iii) lack of knowledge of methodology and ignorance of format (iv) very poor language base and (v) lack of appropriate supervision.

4.3 Students' Opinion

Eighty-eight percent of the students believe that the provision of fieldwork study improves the quality and level of BBS students. Major benefits of the fieldwork study to the students, according to them, are that it helps develop base for research work, makes students familiar with the real world situation, and provides opportunities to implement the theoretical knowledge practically.

Insufficient inputs in orientation class, difficulty in getting access to organization, and lack of proper record keeping system in organizations are the major problems faced by students. Majority of the students opine that only few students are sincere in fieldwork report writing.

5. Conclusions

Based on the major findings the following conclusions have been drawn. Performance of the majority of the students has not been found satisfactory in any aspects of the report writing - be it format, presentation, language and style, conclusion drawing or typography. However, there are some students whose performances are not so disappointing.

5.1 Major Common Mistakes

Students are comparatively weaker in the presentation of facts, figures, and administration with compare to other aspects of writing fieldwork report viz. format, conclusion, and language. In the area of format, most of the students commit common mistakes in writing bibliography, annex, list of figures and recommendation sheet. Likewise, their performances are poor in presentation and analysis of data, writing summary and drawing conclusions. In the area of presentation of facts, figures and analysis, most of the students are not able to present the tables in an attractive way and they are not able to use the table titles and headings correctly. Furthermore, they neglect to mention the sources of the data presented in the tables. Similarly, they are not able to make the specific analysis concentrating on the objectives they set.

In the language and style aspects of report writing, areas of committing common mistakes by the students are grammar and spellings. In the same way they are poor in writing bibliography and footnotes; proper labeling of charts and figures; and use of headings and sub-headings.

Majority of the students are not able to relate the conclusions of the report with the

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objectives they set. They either are not able to cover all the issues mentioned in the objectives or are not able to focus on the main issues. Similarly, they are weak in drawing conclusion logically from the findings of their analysis. They are found very poor in the typography of the report. The common areas that they commit mistakes are - putting page number, setting margin, writing chapter title, maintaining consistency in the use of upper and lower case, and maintaining font size similarity.

5.2 Causes of Common Mistakes

The real causes that make students commit common mistakes are: (i) students do not read research-related books, (ii) they lack the knowledge of research methodology, (iii) they lack proper and effective orientation for fieldwork study, (iv) language base of the students are very poor, (v) they do not get appropriate and quality supervision, (vi) they lack skills of time management and try to do all the work at the eleventh hours, (vii) they consider the fieldwork report writing only a formality, and (viii) they do not get uniform guide.

6. Suggestions

Concentrating on the major findings and conclusions of the study, following suggestions are forwarded:

- (i) Students should read books that deal with research methodology. They should study hard, devote time, take the project work seriously, improve their language, and grasp the format of the report.
- (ii) Teachers should be provided the orientation classes to supervise the students. They should also participate in the orientation classes conducted for the students. They should give more time and effort in the supervision of the students' project work and try to give an absolute methodology for fieldwork report writing.
- (iii) The concerned campus should organize effective orientation classes to the teachers and students. It should coordinate the projects or organizations where students go for project work. It should monitor to see whether students spend their two weeks in the organizations or not. Teachers should be provided attractive incentives to supervise the students. The campus should develop a standard format of report writing and make it available to the teachers and students. The reports that do not meet the minimum criteria should not be accepted.
- (iv) Students should be made aware of the evaluation criteria so that they could present their reports as per the need of the FOM.

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