Common Problems in and Technical Route for Writing Investigation Report

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Abstract: Investigation report is a form of writing that completely presents its process, analysis and results after an investigation. It mainly consists of four parts, namely title, investigation background, investigation analysis and conclusions & recommendations. The writing of investigation report must be based on facts, with research running through the whole process of writing and with evidences to support the conclusions. To well write an investigation report, thorough investigation, in-depth research and accurate and complete expression are indispensable.

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With the continuous deepening of teachers’ scientific research consciousness and the continuous enhancement of their scientific research capabilities, in the professional life of teachers, in addition to theoretical research and teaching research, educational investigation and research is often used. Teachers use this research method to collect a large number of materials and data through questionnaire, interview, measurement, observation, etc. around the subjects they are interested in, analyze, sort out and present the results of the investigation, finally explain the issues researched, give conclusions and provide opinions, suggestions and measures for improvement, which is the process of writing an investigation report.

Therefore, the investigation report is “a written report reflecting the situation of objective things based on the collation and examination of the investigation data after systematic and thorough investigation and study of the problems to be clarified and resolved for specific needs and purposes” [1]. For investigation report, in-

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vestigation is the premise, research is the key and report is the result.

However, many primary and secondary school teachers do not understand the stylistic features and writing methods of the investigation report, and the following problems often arise in writing.

1. Common Problems in Writing Investigation Report

(1) With Presupposed Viewpoints or Conclusions, Investigation Loses its Actual Meaning

Some investigation reports are not clearly targeted, or the authors have subjectively “prejudged” the investigation results, conducting investigation and analysis depending on the subjective cognizance, so it is easy to overlook the phenomena and materials that opposite their viewpoints but have material meaning but hard to have new findings. Therefore, investigation report should analyze the conclusions of investigation from the collected materials in a practical and realistic manner rather than presuppose viewpoints and conclusions and then “selectively use” materials to “explain” the viewpoints.

(2) Lack of Analysis and Refinement of Investigation Materials

Obtaining a host of materials through investigation for analysis and research is the basic work for completing the investigation report. In the process of writing an investigation report, the author should not only reflect the extensive and in-depth investigation of the object of investigation but also be good at structured analysis of the investigation materials. The author should “comprehensively collate relevant materials collected, systematize scattered things, rationalize emotional materials and substantialize superficial things to clarify the internal connection of things”[2], rely on certain theoretical framework or logic structure to analyze the materials, form viewpoints, find out the rules and draw the correct conclusion through the analysis “from the outside to the inside”. If only staying at the level of simply describing the investigation phenomenon or listing the investigation data and lacking in-depth and structured analysis, the investigation report will become a pile of materials and the hodgepodge of the listed phenomena and will lose its due value.

(3) Difficult to Generate New Discoveries and Understandings from the Investigation

The real value of investigation report lies in obtaining scientific and powerful conclusions through analysis of investigation results, clarifying the author’s viewpoints and opinions on the problems investigated and putting forward with the author’s own opinions, understandings or conclusions on the problems that need to be
solved. Some investigation reports only focus on the simple presentation and description of data and charts and lack in-depth analysis of “viewing the essence through investigation”, so they cannot reveal the essence of the problems investigated. The conclusions of investigation should preferably contain new understanding and discoveries. If the conclusions reached are well-known consensus, such an investigation report will lose its meaning.

2. Technical Route for Writing A Investigation Report

To write a good investigation report, systematic and thorough investigation, objective and in-depth research, and accurate and complete expression are indispensable.

(1) Scientific Investigation

When writing an investigation report, the author must first pay attention to the investigation itself. A high-level investigation report depends on a well-planned and scientific investigation. A good investigation includes the establishment of an investigation plan, the selection of an investigation method, the design of investigation tools, the precise implementation of investigation, the recovery of investigation data, etc.

The formulation of an investigation plan needs to consider the time, objects, methods, etc. of the investigation before it begins, and among them, the selection of investigation methods is particularly important. Common methods of educational investigation include observation method, forum method, interview method, questionnaire method, data collection method, expert investigation method, field evidence collection method, online investigation, etc. which should be appropriately selected according to the subject and feasibility of the investigation. The more detailed, meticulous and reasonable the investigation plan is, the more comprehensive and accurate the investigation data collected afterwards will be.

(2) In-depth Analysis of Investigation Materials

Analytical research is the key to writing an investigation report and the bridge from investigation materials to investigation results. It runs through the writing of the investigation report. Before the investigation begins, it is necessary to study which methods can be used to obtain as many effective materials as possible; the investigation should be conducted while performing researches to make the investigation deeper; when collating the investigation materials, key and typical materials must be grasped for analysis, with the false eliminated and the true retained through researches; in the process of report writing, a deeper understanding and recognition on things should be obtained through further thinking on the materials
to discover the essential laws of things, summarize scientific conclusions from the complicated materials and produce new insights.

Writing an investigation report, the author should pay attention to the analysis of the basic situation and characteristics of the object of investigation and should understand not only the composition of the object of investigation but also the relationship between its various parts. When analyzing materials, the author should be good at combining the analysis of the quantities of things with the analysis of quality of things and perform them alternatively. The author should comprehensively and deeply understand the object of investigation from macro and micro aspects, historic and present aspects, horizontal and vertical aspects. On the basis of analysis, the author must also pay attention to the integration of the investigation situation and learn to grasp the facts as a whole and from the connections. Only through in-depth analysis and research can the opinions and materials in the investigation report be combined in a natural and organic manner to make people can discover the essential and regular conclusions from the phenomenon, thus the results of the investigation have a wider value.

(3) Scientific Presentation of Investigation Results

The expression of the investigation conclusion is the most important part of writing an investigation report. When writing, the author should conscientiously conceive and carefully arrange the expression structure according to the status of the investigation materials and themes and strive to fully present the research results with rich and detailed materials, accurate and vivid language. The author can review and analyze the entire investigation process, use the data in a selective and focused manner to reflect the investigation results, and pay special attention to the investigation data that may contain new ideas and conclusions. To make the readers more convinced about the situation and conclusions of the investigation, the bases of conclusions and investigation results, diversified images can also be used in the text in addition to characters and tables, such as pie charts, tree diagrams and images, to enhance readers’ impressions of the investigation results.

3. Text Structure of Investigation Report

The text of the investigation report should “completely describe what an investigation wants to do? What has been done? What is the result? What can be seen?” [3] Its text structure has a relatively fixed format, which is the difference between an investigation report and a general article. The text structure of the investigation report mainly includes four parts, namely title, investigation background, investigation analysis, conclusions & recommendations.
(1) Title

The title of an investigation report can be in two forms: single title and double titles. The single title is generally a document-type title, and its content is: object of investigation + report content + language type, for example, “Investigation on Error Management of High School Students”. In case of double titles, the title is used to express the main purpose, and the subtitle reveals the object of investigation and the report content, for example, “The Status Quo, Problems and Countermeasures of the Subject Research in Primary and Secondary Schools - An Investigation Based on the Subjects of Qingdao’s Educational Science Planning”.

(2) Investigation Background

The investigation background, similar to the preface of the investigation report, is clarified at the beginning of the investigation report. It should explain to readers the significance of the investigation, the purpose of the investigation and the basic situation of the object of investigation so that they could have a basic understanding of the basic situation, main content and research value of the investigation. However, the preface is not the focus of the investigation report. A brief instruction for clarification purpose is enough when writing.

(3) Investigation Analysis

Investigation analysis is the main part of the investigation report and should clarify two contents: 1. Investigation method; 2. Investigation fact.

1) Investigation Method

In an investigation report, it is very important to clearly and truthfully introduce to readers the investigation method and provide readers with the information on the sampling of object of investigations, the measurement of concepts, the sources of data and the processing of data, etc. “The purpose of explaining the investigation method is to let readers know what methods and steps are adopted to obtain the investigation results and conclusions in the article, so that readers can judge the credibility and applicable scope of the investigation results and conclusions accordingly.” [4] In the investigation report, the description of the investigation methods generally covers object of investigation, investigation content, investigation method, investigation organization work, data statistics and processing steps. “Researchers must fairly well know the research process, operation effects, method limitations, etc. to be realistic and appropriate when drawing conclusions”. [5]

Some investigations may have taken a long time, and a lot of related work have been have done theretofore and thereafter. The author can select only the most important investigation information when writing an investigation report, such as the sampling of the object of investigations, the formulation of questionnaire scale,
and the presentation of the investigation data statistics, so as to make the entire investigation process clearly and accurately presented in front of the readers and make them convinced.

2) Investigation Fact

Investigation facts require the author to present the collected and collated information, data, charts, etc., accompanied by text description, so as to present the main features of the object of investigation. When using materials, the author must pay attention to the combination of points and planes to comprehensively and deeply reflect the appearance of things. Appropriate statistics and charts help to accurately reflect the true state of things. In the process of writing, the author should further review the investigation process, analyze the investigation results, carefully arrange the expression structure based on the investigation materials, and strive to present the investigation results with rich and detailed materials, accurate and vivid language in a complete and scientific way.

Investigation data are important materials for deducing investigation conclusions and play an important role in the analysis stage of the investigation. “Precise data can accurately reflect the changes and development of the quantities and quality of things, enhance the credibility and persuasion of the article and clarify the problems practically” [6]. Selective and focused use of data for quantitative analysis will help the author to expound his views intuitively and specifically. But the excessive use of data is not definitely good. Excessive concentration of data will make the readers overwhelmed and fail to grasp the focus of the report.

For example, Cai Jianhua & Xu Caihong, describe their investigation results in the article of An Empirical Study on the Status of School-based Mathematics Courses in Rural Primary Schools - Based on Questionnaires and Interviews with Teachers in County M [7]:

“26.9% of the teachers investigated believe that their schools have set up school-based mathematics course. Among the course name they listed, non-school-based mathematics courses like math stories, calculation contests and “Math Week” are excluded. Statistics show that about 12% of schools have opened school-based mathematics course activities, and mathematics club activity is closest to the school-based course form. Some primary school principals said in interviews that the top considerations for schools to develop school-based courses are course resources, teachers’ abilities and the way to integrate with the development of school characteristics. Therefore, it is generally no longer to develop the school-based courses like Chinese, mathematics, English and other disciplines that are already in the national course framework but to develop school-based courses in combination with regional
course resources or art course resources. This lowers the difficulty of course development and is easy to form school characteristics. In this case, it is an unavoidable result that the school-based mathematics course of primary schools is disesteemed.”

In this analysis, the author not only used statistical data to reflect the investigation status but also cited a typical example—an interview with a school principal to further enrich the investigation content and present the investigation results in many ways.

Therefore, the author can choose a variety of appropriate methods for analysis and explanation according to different investigation topics and materials, so that the readers have a complete and clear understanding of the status of the entire investigation.

4. Conclusions & Recommendations

This part is the focus of the investigation report. It is to make conclusive answers to the questions to be solved through investigation and research, to provide a theoretical interpretation of the investigation results, and more importantly, to put forward the author’s own suggestions and opinions.

Investigation conclusions refer to the substantive opinions based on the investigation facts in accurate, objective and concise language expression. Main conclusions must come from real materials and the accurate analysis and research of factual materials and are scientific conclusions formed by making a general summary of similar phenomena. While refining the conclusions, it is necessary to analyze the reasons for the research results and conclusions or give theoretical explanations and suggestions. The investigation recommendations should be realistic and can be extended to a larger scope to guide practice.

The conclusion part of an investigation report can also review the investigation process, reflect on the deficiencies in investigation and research and put forward with suggestions and thoughts for improving the investigation and research. Finally, according to the actual situation, auxiliary materials of the investigation report can be attached, such as literatures, questionnaires and scoring standards, for the researchers to refer to.

In short, a good investigation report is “a process of speaking with facts based on a large number of factual materials. It does not rely on lyrical description to infect people nor use pure theoretical speculation to persuade people but explains
problems with a large number of data and fact materials and promotes problem solving on the basis of analyzing, summarizing and synthesizing the materials obtained, so the writing of investigation report must be based on facts” [8], use research throughout the entire process of writing and let the evidence speak for itself.

**Works Cited**


