

“STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM”

Alternatives from Indigenous
Research Methodologies

THE HEART OF RESEARCH

- Statement of the research problem [or research opportunity] is the heart of the research process. (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005, p. 43).
- The object of the Statement of the research problem [or research opportunity] is to:
 - “see the problem [opportunity] with unwavering clarity and to state it in precise and unmistakable terms” (Leedy and Ormrod 2005, p. 43).
 - “pitch and communicate [research ideas] in ways that are simple, clear and compelling”
(http://incubatorschool.org/mission_and_vision.html)

“STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM”

- **The home of “statement of research problem” or “problem statement” is Western academia.**
 - **Western academia is steeped in the “adversarial dialogue” that challenges professors and students to find fault, to find the missing link or the weak link in work done by others. They are expected to question, argue, challenge, critically critique and use these adjectives in their dialogue about the work of others. The assumption is that if one can find fault with others, then one’s own work will look better. There must be a winner and a loser (Dr. Manu Meyer, an Indigenous Hawaiian scholar, cited in Wilson 2008, p. 57).**
- **Indigenous philosophies and research paradigms use a different approach, an approach that does not critique, but rather build on, the works of others. Put differently, the Indigenous approach focuses on existing works as a resource to create different [not better] resources:**
 - **“Use what you have to create what you desire but don’t have” (Lutaaya Abdul, Executive Director, African Hearts, Senge in Uganda, May 2013**

“Use what you have to create what you desire but don’t have” (Abdul, May 2013)



Mr. Lutaaya Abdul, Executive Director, Senge Junior school, presenting to Francis & Camosun field school students in Uganda, May 2013

- INDIGENOUS PRINCIPLES OF THE STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY:
 - Desire/Hope-Centered; Not Problem-focused

Desire/Hope-Centered; Not Problem-focused

- Principle #1:
- Identify an Indigenous community desire or goal and create research proposal that when implemented will contribute to the achievement of this community desire or goal (Chilisa 2012).

Desire/Hope-Centered; Not Problem-focused

- Principle #2:
- Be “guided by affirmative assumptions about the researched people or communities” (Chilisa 2012, p. 244).
- Focus on the best within the community and create a research proposal which when implemented will enrich the community by informing and driving new desired changes/goals (ibid.; Sara Michael 2005).

Desire/Hope-centered; Not Problem-focused

- Principle #3:
- Name damage/problem only to refute it and paint another world that shows resistance, defiance, survivance, hope, desire, and possibilities (Tuck 2009 cited in Chilisa 2012, p. 246).

Desire/Hope-centered; Not Problem-focused

- Principle #4:
- Avoid “scientific vocabularies of deficit” (Chilisa 2012, p. 243).
- Move “away from deficit-focused modes of inquiry using deficit-based questions” (Chilisa 2012, p. 244, cited from Ludema et al 2006).

SAMPLE #1: Shawn Wilson:

Problem-Focused; Deficit-Thinking

- There were at this time plenty of Indigenous people questioning mainstream research methodologies, whose colonial and oppressive underlying beliefs were being exposed. There was a general call for decolonization of research methodologies and a great need expressed for research that followed an Indigenous worldview. The problem was that even though many of us Indigenous researchers were facing this same problem, few people had yet explained or written about an Indigenous view of research that we could use (Wilson 2008, p. 30).

SAMPLE #2: Shawn Wilson

Desire-Centered; Enhancement-Thinking

- Talking with the people who were helping me with my research made me realize that they all agreed with my assessment of the situation. They thought that it would be great if I could articulate an Indigenous research paradigm in my thesis and that doing so would be of great practical assistance to themselves and other Indigenous researchers (Wilson 2008, pp. 31-32)

SAMPLE #3: Margaret Kovach:

Problem-Focused; Deficit-Thinking

- Regardless of the origin of the research question, it ought to respond to a need. Furthermore, the researcher should be able to show [through the research purpose statement] that there is a gap in the knowledge that the proposed research can assist in filling (Kovach 2009, p. 114).

ACTION-ORIENTED

- Principle # 5:
- Research Statement in the context of Indigenous Research Methodology should have a built-in action.

Community/Culturally Connected

- Principle #6:
- Research Statement in the context of Indigenous Research Methodology should have built-in community active participations in all the stages of the research.

REPLACING

“RESEARCH PROBLEM STATEMENT”

- Often, in research textbooks, the section on developing research questions is situated by the purpose statement (Kovach, 2009, p. 114)
- Deciding upon a research direction after having examined one's purpose makes its utility transparent and the research strong from day one (ibid., p. 115).

IRM's ALTERNATIVES TO RESEARCH PROBLEM STATEMENT

- From the content analysis of quotes from Kovach in the previous slide:
- “Research Purpose Statement”
 - Not good enough
- “Research Utility Statement”
 - Better
- “Statement of Research Opportunity”
 - Best

REQUIRED CRITERIA FOR THE STATEMENT OF RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY

- 1. Desire/Hope-centered
- 2. Action: Provides a service or product
- 3. Participation: Active participation of the community members
- 4 Cultural Connection: Fits into the culture of the community
- 5. Community Connection: Research is located in a specific community and community has ownership of research results
- 6. Community Capacity: Community has resources to carry out the research program.