

# PROBLEM STATEMENT

## Formats 1 & 2

# “PROBLEM STATEMENT” or Statement of the Research Problem

- **FORMAT 1:**
- 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).
- **FORMAT 2:**
- Indigenous philosophies and research paradigms use a different approach, an approach that does not only critique, but also build on, the strengths of 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)

- PROBLEM STATEMENT: FORMAT 1  
Problem-Focused; Deficit-Thinking

# PROBLEM STATEMENT: FORMAT 1

## Problem-Focused; Deficit-Thinking

- **FORMAT 1**
- The statement should be able to show that there is a gap in the knowledge that it can assist in filling (Kovach 2009, p. 114: *Indigenous Research methodologies*).
- Focuses only on hypercriticism: that is, negative features of the work or just weaknesses; what does not work (Stella Cottrell 2011, p. 8: *Critical Thinking Skills*).

# PROBLEM STATEMENT FORMAT 1:

## Example #1

- As we approach the 100th anniversary of the start of World War 1, we're barraged with stories about how and why the war began. Media and politicians repeat the predictable accounts about the alliances and the political and military arrogance that launched WW1. Rarely do we hear about how and why WW1 ended. And when we do, it's a worn-out tale about decisive military actions, new weapons like tanks or the involvement of new allies such as the USA. Conveniently, these narrators ignore the most important reason why WW1 ended – people's courageous determination to end not just the war but the very rule of the warmongers (Larry Hannant, November 2013, Humanities Department, Camosun).

# PROBLEM STATEMENT FORMAT 1:

## Example #2

- Globally more women have been diagnosed with HIV/AIDS and are more likely to be stigmatized than men, especially in male dominant societies. Gender differences in the experience of HIV-related stigma, however, have not been extensively explored (GLADYS B. ASIEDU and KAREN S. MYERS-BOWMAN, School of Family Studies and Human Services, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas, USA: *Health Care for Women International*, 35:703–727, 2014)

# PROBLEM STATEMENT FORMAT 1:

## Example #3

- Since the colonial times African societies or countries have pursued education and job training programs that equip graduates for African worlds that do not exist. At the interface of the globalization – indigenization dialectic of Africa have been the unsustainable undercurrents of postcolonial African lifeworlds. These include rural agricultural and extractive industries, traditional and collectivistic cultural systems, small-scale entrepreneurship, and informal economic sectors that need human factor competency (HFC) to work optimally. Another dimension of the undercurrents consists of lifeworlds of extreme poverty, unemployment, underemployment, broken democracies, vampire states, failed states, unsustainable connections to globalization, infrastructural decay, deteriorating environments, unsanitary conditions, low productivity, marketing challenges, materialistic rather than service oriented prestige system, deep and widespread corruption, human factor decay (HFD) and so on, that HFC can help to minimize, if not eliminate. Ironically, Africa's education system and its job training component do not engage these issues in the postcolonial African lifeworlds (*The Review of Human Factor Studies Volume 20 Number 1, 2014, pp. 30-72*).

# PROBLEM STATEMENT FORMAT 1:

## Example #4

- Little research has been conducted on the employment experiences and vocational training of visible minority offenders. Given that visible minority groups comprise an increasing proportion of the population within the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC), more information is needed on this group (<http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/research/005008-rs13-04-eng.shtml>).



# PROBLEM STATEMENT FORMAT 1:

## Example #5

- A problem I identified was that on p.31, the statement “The Natives of Canada don’t want the whole country back”. It is likely true, but the author fails to identify at least one source to ensure that the readers believe this statement (2007 Sociology 106 student).

# PROBLEM STATEMENT FORMAT 1:

## Example #6

- Little information is offered in regards to First Nations attempts to gain substantial amount of traditional territory in chapter two of Adu-Febiri, evidence is needed to show the desire of First Nations people to regain a piece of what was for thousands of years rightfully theirs (2007 Sociology 106 student).

# PROBLEM STATEMENT FORMAT 1:

## Example #7

- In the article there is no clear definition of what a Metis person's ethnic background is (i.e., French/First Nations, Scottish/First Nations, etc,) (2009 Sociology 106 student).

- PROBLEM STATEMENT: FORMAT 2  
PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT or Statement of  
the Research Problem

# PROBLEM STATEMENT: FORMAT 2

## PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT or Statement of the Research Problem

### Desire-Centered; Enhancement-Thinking

- **FORMAT 2:**
- Indigenous philosophies and research paradigms use a different approach, an approach that does not only critique, but also build on, the strengths of the works of others. Put differently, the Indigenous approach focuses on existing works as a resource to create different [not better] resources; an Appreciative Inquiry.
- Analyzes the positive features as well as negative ones of the selected works/readings.
  - “It is important to identify strengths and satisfactory aspects rather than just weaknesses, to evaluate what works as well as what does not. Good critical analysis accounts for *why* something is good or poor, *why* it works or fail. It is not enough merely to list good and bad points” (Stella Cottrell 2011, p. 8: *Critical Thinking Skills*).

## FORMAT 2: PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

### Example #1

- 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)

# FORMAT 2: PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

## Example #2

- If current views on globalization hold a Western bias, what can be done to change that to accommodate countries in the global South? I think this question is justified because while the chapter thoroughly covers how globalization is capitalism-based and holds a very Western bias and how a capitalistic economy just doesn't work with some Global South countries, it doesn't cover how we can change things to accommodate these societies to lift them out of poverty and attempt to give them greater economic and political stability without completely destroying their own cultures (Patricia Cooper, Sociology 100 student, Fall 2014).

## FORMAT 2: PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

### Example #3

- The strategies to achieve equity in the diverse workplace have focused on diversity management, that is, the imposition of legal control and provision of human capital tools for managers to control diversity at the expense of developing diversity leadership with human factor competency (HFC). This paper claims that these managerial strategies may be necessary but insufficient ways to positively transform the workplace for the benefit of all (Francis Adu-Febiri and Jacqueline M. Quinless, *The International Journal of Diversity* Volume 10 Issue 4, 2011)



## FORMAT 2: PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

### Example #4

- Diversity in the workplace has been the trend in postmodern society and this trend is not about to change. In fact, the future of the workplace is diversity. However, the challenge is to reconstruct the workplace to make it demographically, culturally, socially, emotionally, politically, morally, spiritually, and structurally more inclusive and accommodating of difference (Francis Adu-Febiri and Jacqueline M. Quinless, *The International Journal of Diversity* Volume 10 Issue 4, 2011).