HOW TO WRITE A STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM IN FOUR STEPS

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INTRODUCTION

This is a simplified version of my notes on writing a statement of the problem found elsewhere on this website.

 Let€™s define it:

Research can be defined as a systematic investigation into and study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions. It is normally born out of a problem hence the phrase €œstatement of problem€ or €œProblem statement€.

A "Problem Statement" is a description of a difficulty or lack that needs to be solved or at least researched to see whether a solution can be found. It can also be described as either **a gap** between the real and the desired or **a contradiction** between principle and practice.

What is the goal of a statement of problem?

The ultimate goal of a problem statement is to transform a generalized problem (something that bothers you; a perceived lack) into a targeted, well-defined problem€"one that can be resolved through focused research and careful decision-making.

 Writing a Problem Statement should help you clearly identify the purpose of the project you will propose. Often, the Problem Statement will also serve as the basis for the introductory section of your final proposal, directing your reader€™s attention quickly to the issues that your proposed project will address and providing the reader with a concise statement of the proposed project itself.

A statement problem need not be long and windy. One page is more than enough for a good statement of problem.

What are the key characteristics of a statement of problem?

A good research problem should at minimum:

1. Address a gap

2. be significant enough to contribute to the existing body of research

3. be one that will lead to more research

4. renter itself to be investigated via collection of data

5. be interesting to the researcher and suit his/her skills, time and resources

6. be ethical

What is the format (parts of a problem statement)?

A persuasive problem statement consists of three parts: 1) the ideal, 2) the reality, and 3) the consequences.

1.   Part A- the ideal: Describes a desired goal or ideal situation; explains how things should be.

2.   Part B €" the reality: Describes a condition that prevents the goal, state, or value in Part A from being achieved or realized at this time; explains how the current situation falls short of the goal or ideal.

3.   Part C €" the consequences: Identifies the way you propose to improve the current situation and move it closer to the goal or ideal.

Here are your simple four steps to write a statement problem

Step 1 (statement 1)

Construct statement 1 by describing a goal or desired state of a given situation, phenomenon etc. This will build the ideal situation (what should be, what is expected, desired)

Step 2 **(statement 2)**

Describe a condition that prevents the goal, state, or value discussed in step 1 from being achieved or realized at the present time. This will build the reality, the situation as it is and establish a gap between what ought to be and what is

Step 3

Connect steps 1 and 2 using a term such as "but," "however,"

"Unfortunately," or "in spite of";

Step 4 (statement 3)

Using specific details show how the situation in step 2 contains little promise of improvement unless something is done. Then emphasize the benefits of research by projecting the consequences of possible solutions as well.

Examples

Example 1

Part A.   According to the XY university mission statement, the university seeks to provide students with a safe, healthy learning environment. Dormitories are one important aspect of that learning environment, since 55% of XY students live in campus dorms and most of these students spend a significant amount of time working in their dorm rooms.

However,

Part B.   Students living in dorms A B C, and D currently do not have air conditioning units, and during the hot seasons, it is common for room temperatures to exceed 80 degrees F. Many students report that they are unable to do homework in their dorm rooms. Others report problems sleeping because of the humidity and temperature. The rooms are not only unhealthy, but they inhibit student productivity and academic achievement.

Part C.   In response to this problem, our study proposes to investigate several options for

making the dorms more hospitable. We plan to carry out an all inclusive participatory investigation into options for purchasing air conditioners (university-funded; student-subsidized) and different types of air conditioning systems. We will also consider less expensive ways to mitigate some or all of the problems noted above (such as creating climate-controlled dorm lounges and equipping them with better study areas and computing space).

 Example 2

STEP 1 (statement 1)

The government of Kenya has a goal to industrialize by the year 2030 (quote). In this regard it has encouraged growth oriented micro and small enterprises (MSEs) that should graduate into medium and large enterprises capable of contributing to the industrialization goal. There are several sessional papers (quote/cite) that contain specific measures to encourage and support MSEs.

 Step 2 and 3 (STATEMENT 2)

Despite the said government efforts there is slow growth of micro into small enterprises and even slower growth of small into medium scale enterprises(quote, show statistics). The government has officially acknowledged that there exists a €œmissing middle€ in Kenya meaning that there is a gap between small and large enterprises in the country (cite, quote).

STATEMENT 3

Should the €œmissing middle€ gap persist then the industrialization goal may be difficult to achieve. Need therefore arises to investigate why despite government efforts there is a persistent €œmissing middle€.

Example 3

 STATEMENT 1

 In order to accomplish their missions public universities need motivated workforces.

 STATEMENT 2

There are however frequent and severe disciplinary actions, absenteeism as well as various forms of unrests in public universities which affect the accomplishment of the set missions. Our preliminary investigation reveals that both non-management and management staff are not adequately motivated.

STATEMENT 3

Without effective motivational packages and procedures the said vices are likely to continue and retard the achievement of the universities€™ missions

Need arises to examine the public universities€™ motivation systems and procedures hence this proposed research

Example 4

STATEMENT 1

The Ministry of Youth is dedicated to allocating enterprise development funds to both the youth and women. These funds are made available in order to start entrepreneurial ventures that create and expand employment. (provide relevant statistics and quote)

STATEMENT 2

One of the main focuses of the ministry is consistency. Unfortunately, consistency in allocating funds to the next generation of recipients requires prior knowledge of previous allocations and established practices. The current continuous disbursement method does not allow for adequate analysis of previous disbursements before a current disbursement is done.

STATEMENT 3

Continuing with this current disbursement method prevents consistency and causes decisions to become grossly political, which in turn inhibits the achievement of the goals of the funds. Developing a more informed disbursement system could help better implement the consistency focus of the ministry and at the same time help the ministry better monitor and evaluate its funds.

STATEMENT 4

This proposed research aspires to explore options for a new funds disbursement system that would focus on consistency. To do this, the researcher will carry out a full stakeholder analysis and use it to propose appropriate policy interventions.

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