

The Problem and Purpose Statement

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What is a Problem Statement?

A good problem is an issue or difficulty of some significance, urgency and priority whose investigation will make a useful contribution to knowledge. If you already know the answer, if the answer can be found by a simple search of existing studies, or is totally predictable, there is no need to do the study.

Problem Statement

- ▶ WHAT IS THE PROBLEM? Not "question", "topic.", or "lack" of something. *Just state what is wrong or needs to be addressed, not WHY it's a problem, nor how you plan on addressing it.*
 - ▶ WHY IS IT A PROBLEM? Reason for and significance of problem. These could be the "LACK" of something
 - ▶ PROOF? Show the reader evidence that the problem actually exists
 - ▶ Who has done what about research on this problem?

Using a Matrix to Help you Frame out the Problem and Purpose

- ▶ It gives you a visual representation of the process
 - ▶ Problem Statement  Goal
 - ▶ Evidences  Outcomes
 - ▶ Possible Causes  Proven Solutions
- ▶ Shows alignment between Problem and Purpose Statements
- ▶ Helps you to plan for the lit review
- ▶ Helps you align the problem and purpose with your research questions



Let's look at the Matrix
One Step at a Time

Problem Statement:  Goal:

Students in high school Spanish 4 and 5 Classes are not passing the Advanced Placement (AP) test in Spanish

Students will pass the AP Spanish test

Creation of the Purpose Statement

- ▶ Based on goals to alleviate or reduce the problem, you can create your Purpose Statement

“The purpose of this study is to discover what tools are needed to better prepare high school students for the AP Spanish exam and to measure the level of efficacy of those tools.”

Hypothesized Causes lead to Hypothesized Solutions

Hypothesized Causes → Hypothesized Solutions

- ▶ Lack of teacher training in advanced conversational Spanish language
- ▶ Lack of test-prep materials
- ▶ Too much time spent on reading Spanish, rather than natural conversation in class
- ▶ Students are not invited to share what they feel is missing in the Spanish 4 and 5 curriculum
- ▶ Have teachers attend AP training provided by the College Board
- ▶ Incorporate AP test-prep materials into the curriculum
- ▶ Add daily conversation time to lesson plans
- ▶ Students are encouraged to share their own experiences about learning Spanish



REMEMBER!

The **LACK** of something
is **not** a problem.

It's what's happening **because** of that
lack that is the problem

PLANNING THE LIT REVIEW

- ▶ Take some keywords you used in the *Causes and Solutions* and use them to start your preliminary lit review
- ▶ Make sure the lit review has both of the following:
 - ▶ What the Literature Says May Have Caused the Problem
 - ▶ What the Literature says are proven Interventions to Solve the Problem

Your next step:

Create a matrix of your own using the following blank template

Problem
Statement:

Goal:

Decide if your study might be quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods and complete one or both sections below

Evidence
Quantitative

Evidence Qualitative

Objectives
Quantitative

Objectives
Qualitative

Create Your Purpose Statement

Hypothesized Causes

1

2

3

Hypothesized Solutions

1

2

3

REMEMBER: the LACK of something is not the problem. The problem is what is happening BECAUSE of the lack of something!!!

List at Least 5 Keywords you Could Use to Start your Literature Search from the Cause/Solution Chart.

Research Questions

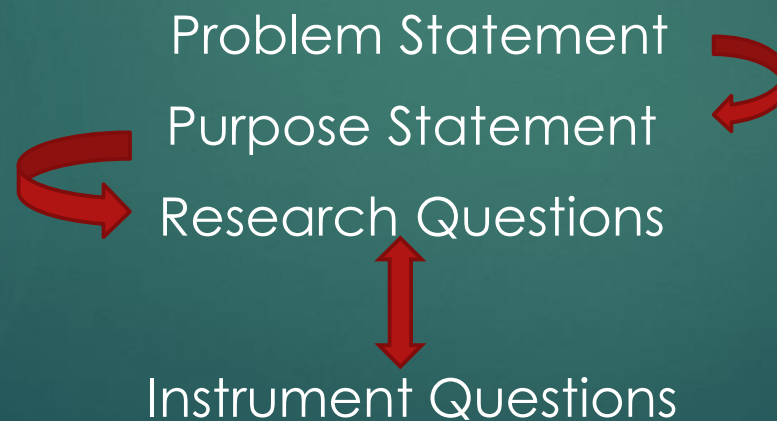
- ▶ Taking your problem and purpose statements, let's create at least 3 research questions (RQs):

- ▶ HINTS:

- ▶ The RQs should be something you can only answer by conducting the local study. If the answer can be found in the literature, you don't need to do the study
 - ▶ Note whether the questions are qualitative or quantitative.

Creating Questions to Answer those Research Questions

- ▶ Once you have your RQs, it's time to design (or use another's) instrument to get the needed quantitative or qualitative data.
- ▶ IT'S CRITICAL THAT THAT WHAT YOU HAVE ALIGNMENT:





▶ For more info

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