Culturescope Resources: Personal Interest Project

Guide to Addressing the PIP

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Choosing Your PIP Topic

The following exercises will help you to choose and refine a suitable PIP topic as well as develop appropriate research questions and methodologies.

Remember, to be successful at this exercise, you must carefully work your way through the set questions and guidelines in an honest manner. Don't fool yourself by answering half-heartedly! Once you have done this, a PIP topic will emerge that:

- is of interest to you,
- has a high degree of socio-cultural relevance,
- has clear micro-focus.

Where Do You Start?

Most Year 12 Society & Culture students are faced with the following concerns:

- I need to undertake a social investigation
- I don't know where to begin
- I have no skills or training in research
- I am a little frightened by the task.

Throughout the first few weeks/months of Year 12, you will think of many possible topics for your PIP. Most of these will be discarded as you realise that your chosen topics:

- are too broad
- are not really related to Society and Culture concepts
- pose difficulties in research.

Selecting a Research Question

If you haven't already selected a research topic, you might like to begin by jotting down some of your ideas. This is called brainstorming. When you brainstorm you jot down ideas as they occur to you.

The important thing is to think of as many ideas as possible. The sorting out and organising of ideas comes later when you have finished brainstorming. Even during the sorting and organising process you will get more new or linked ideas. It is all part of the process of building on what you know from personal experience and public knowledge.

Make sure that you talk to your family and friends about topics you would like to study - add their ideas in as well. The next step will be to work out which of your ideas have social and cultural significance. Select those ideas (which could be suitable topics) and jot them down.

How Suitable Are These Topics?
To determine whether your topic is suitable, you will need to ask the following questions:

- Is it relevant to Society and Culture?
- What fundamental course concepts does it relate to?
- What other important concepts are involved?
- Does it have a cross cultural dimension?
- Can it easily be turned into a research question?
- Will it be possible to obtain research data during the year?
- Do I have access to sufficient resources to carry out the research?
- Is the activity I am investigating legal?

Now, select the topic which you think is most suitable.

Write it down.

State the reasons why you want to undertake this research.

The topic you have chosen might well become the basis of your research. Look at your research topic and ask yourself:

- Is the topic too broad, or too narrow?
- Are resources available to research it?
- What are the key ideas?

Remember that a resource for Society and Culture students can be any one of the following:

- a person
- library
- book
- a website
- data gathered from questionnaires
- Government publications (eg Australia Bureau of Statistics)

In order to develop your study topic you must draw a mind map of headings that could prove to be useful include:

- How useful is my research?
- What conclusions can I draw?
- How will I present data? (graphical/statistical/pictorial etc)
- How will I organise data? By what method? (eg chapters/headings etc)
- How will I collect and record information? (methodologies)

Remember that when you draw a mind map, you start at the centre of a blank page. That is where you place your central idea - in this case it would be your research question or hypothesis.

**Turning Your Research Topic Into An Enquiry Question**

An enquiry question can take several forms:

- descriptive - eg what is?
- explanatory - eg why are?
- predictive - eg what might?
- evaluative - eg what are the merits of?

Whatever form the question takes it must be in a form which it is practical to research.
Write your research topic in the form of an enquiry question.

What are your reasons for doing this study?

- Is my topic an important issue?
- Will it be of benefit to other people?
- Does it interest me?

What are your reasons or reasons for selecting this research topic?

Now, let's get back to your PIP topic. Write down your statement of interest.

Now write your statement of interest as a question.

Now turn your question into a hypothesis.

Reasoning behind the hypothesis?

In this section you state why you came up with this hypothesis.

**Information Required**

When you have worked out the key questions you need to decide what information is required to answer each of the subsidiary questions. But before you do that you might need to find specific information about key words in your statement. Are there any problem words in your statement? What are they? Write down the dictionary definitions.

**Conclusion**

If you have reached this stage in conjunction with your teacher, you should have developed a viable PIP topic and a blueprint for the research and writing of your first PIP draft. Make sure that you consult very closely with your teacher as you do so! Remember, the more often you show your teacher what you've have written, the greater is the chance that a quality PIP response will emerge.