

TEACHER AND STUDENT PIP JOURNEY REFLECTION

Sophie Harper & Alice Morgan

The PIP journey is often rewarding and challenging for both student and teacher. The critically reflective dialogue between teacher and student can play a considerable role in cultivating a positive research experience that supports the development of lifelong learners. In an effort to support both teachers and students in the navigation of the PIP research process, teacher Sophie Harper and student Alice Morgan from Ryde Secondary College share their experiences.

Reflections on the PIP journey from teacher – Sophie Harper

1. Context/background to your context. i.e. how long have you been teaching, how many years have you been teaching, what had you heard about the PIP process.

Ultimately I came to Society and Culture unknowingly through my love of social sciences and a little bit of luck. While I didn't choose Society and Culture as a teaching methodology at university, I unknowingly chose all the undergraduate arts units that provided me with the ability to teach it. I have now been teaching for four years and two of them have been running Society and Culture. I was introduced to Society and Culture by friends at uni. Prior to this, I wasn't familiar with the course, as my high school didn't offer it. The first time I heard about Society and Culture and the PIP was at university when other students discussed it in relation to assessment tasks. I thought it was fantastic that they were already familiar with a lot of the things I was grappling with: research, referencing, synthesis and organising themselves for a big assessment.

2. How did you assist your students in planning out their PIP journey?

In my opinion, helping students plan their PIP takes, from the beginning of Year 11. In order to familiarise students with the idea development process, I spend a lesson going through the requirements of the PIP when they begin the preliminary course. We discuss the basic structural elements, like the word count and how long it takes, along with the vast array of topics they can choose. I spend time doing this early because I want them to begin thinking about their ideas. My students and I regularly discuss if something could be made into a PIP topic when we cover content in class. I remind them that if they're particularly interested in something we cover, they should take note of that for later. As well as this, students complete assessment tasks that build skills and understanding relevant to the PIP research processes. Lastly, I have past students come in to discuss their PIP journey and provide advice to the cohort just about to begin Year 12.

When Year 12 begins we spend a minimum of one week on the PIP. We take time to look at past PIPs, refine ideas, consume media that relates to their area of interest and reflect on the major events of the past year. During the first term of Year 12 students need to complete a proposal that requires them to commit to some ideas. This is followed by a 'PIP day' where students spend a whole day on various workshops that will assist them in starting their PIP. Finally, I'll take them on an excursion to the State Library to learn about researching for their PIP. The aim of the first term is that they have clear guidance to go into the holidays ready to finish at least one primary research method and begin consuming secondary sources.

3. What do you believe is the role of the teacher in the PIP process?

Completing my honours really helped me understand the pressure of planning and organising a big research project. As well as this, I learnt about open communication and how it plays a key role in the success of the project. As such, I think the role of the teacher is to be a facilitator in planning and communication.

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Reflections on the PIP journey from teacher – Sophie Harper

I provide students with consistent working timelines, expectations and reminders. One thing I picked up from the Society and Culture community that my class loves is a visible timeline on the wall in our classroom. They love the visual display of their progress and feel pride when they move through the tasks. Along with this, the PIP is chunked into manageable steps with clear scaffolding for each task. This helps to approach the bigger components and not get overwhelmed.

As for communication, I maintain that I am at school to facilitate the success of students in the HSC. As such, they need to tell me if they need help and we can find a solution together. I use Google Forms a few times a term to survey student progress and how they are feeling about upcoming deadlines. Showing students that by communicating with me I can be flexible in PIP dates and provide additional support is necessary so they do not become overwhelmed.

4. What has been the biggest challenge when guiding students through their PIP journey?

Certainly the biggest challenge for me has been the additional time outside of class that I have to give to the PIP. This includes running one afternoon session a week during term and a one day workshop in some holidays. As well as this, I constantly have to provide constructive feedback on their writing and ensure students are on track. While this is a lot of extra work, it is worth it when students finally get to submit their PIP and get their marks back.

Another challenge of being a Society and Culture teacher is keeping students on task outside of the classroom. You have to balance support with keeping firm deadlines. I have to ensure I am listening to students if they are having problems, but still maintain that there are expectations of completing such a huge project. Talking to parents helps with this, but ultimately it is the student's project to finish.

5. What was your biggest success in guiding students through their PIP journey in 2020?

We went through a lot of additional stress as teachers and students in 2020. The pandemic made it difficult because I couldn't have regular in person meetings with students about their PIP. I ran classes on Zoom, but this wasn't the same as having classes in person.

Ultimately, my biggest success was the use of technology to ensure that student PIP's were staying on track. I used Screencastify to record audio and video feedback for students. This is a really helpful tool because you can talk and annotate in real time, then send it to students through Google Drive. I also used a lot of the Google Suite - Docs, Forms, Classroom, Drive – to keep open communication. In 2021 the success will obviously be different and I look forward to taking my current cohort through to submission.

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Reflections on the PIP journey from student – Alice Morgan

DISTINCTION PIP:

Born on the Wrong Side of the 38th Parallel: *A case study of the effects of the process of acculturation on cultural identity formation of North Korean defectors living in South Korea.*

1. Firstly, Alice could you please explain the focus of your PIP research investigation.

My PIP investigation focussed upon the empirical data collected from the experiences of North Korean refugees living in South Korea in order to come to conclusions regarding refugee naturalisation, socio-cultural adaptivity and sociological theory put into practice.

2. What inspired you to select the above topic?

North Korean refugees that have migrated to South Korea are in an exceptional, yet increasingly common, situation. Social theories of migration, communication and adaptation do not encompass circumstances we are destined to face for decades to come in light of the refugee crisis. Specifically, I have met many people originating from North Korea in their lifetime. Others struggled, without this experience, to humanise what had been a media spectacle to them their entire lives and to identify the issue with their objectification and generalisation.

3. What was the most challenging aspect of the PIP research process?

Researching my PIP was, at times, very emotionally taxing due to the nature of my research. I struggled with the necessitated summarisation of North Korean experiences in the last 50 years, which have been very painful. I definitely mis-calculated the amount of work I was going to put into my PIP, which I did very willingly.

4. How did your teacher, Ms Harper, assist you in navigating the challenges of the PIP?

Ms Harper often reviewed my writing remotely (especially throughout COVID distancing periods) and sat down to contemplate the direction of my work. She always suggested ways to structurally improve the piece, prompted ideas I hadn't considered and found further ways in which my research could stem from the Society and Culture syllabus.

5. If you could offer any advice about the PIP to current or future Society and Culture students what would it be?

I would encourage students to consider the ways in which fundamental topics and evidence included in the syllabus could be used to examine areas they are interested in. As well as this, reading secondary material is invaluable to the improvement of your own work and provided me a framework to incorporate themes and ideas of my writing into a succinct report.