



Sparkling Science >

Science linking with School  
School linking with Science

**Final Report, October 30<sup>th</sup> 2010**

**Opinion Corner – Your Opinion Counts  
Secondary School Students Develop an  
Online Panel for Young People**

**LEADING INSTITUTION**

University of Linz, Department of Education and Psychology  
Coordination: o. Univ.Prof. Dr. Herbert Altrichter,  
Univ.Prof. Dr. Bernad Batinic  
Contact: herbert.altrichter@jku.at, bernad.batinic@jku.at

**SCIENTIFIC CO-OPERATION PARTNERS**

University of Linz, Department of Sociology  
University of Linz, Department of Statistics  
University of Education, Vienna

**SCHOOLS INVOLVED**

Secondary Business School Linz-Auhof,  
Upper Austria  
Secondary Business School Steyr, Upper Austria  
Informatikhauptschule Steyregg, Upper Austria  
Adalbert Stifter Praxishauptschule, Upper Austria



**BM.W.F<sup>a</sup>**

[www.bmwf.gv.at](http://www.bmwf.gv.at)

Austrian Federal Ministry of  
Science and Research

## Opinioncorner – Your Opinion Counts

For two years, students of two business and two secondary schools collaborated with researchers from the Johannes-Kepler-University Linz in the project Opinion Corner. Their common goal was the development and testing of an online panel for youth research which may be used by students, teachers and scientists. Furthermore, students were supposed to actively participate in empirical social research – in this case online surveys – and, thus, develop a critical and reflexive understanding of this type of scientific activity.

How should an online panel be designed to make it attractive for young people? How can adolescents be motivated to participate in the surveys? How can the selected research question be operationalized? What factors have to be considered when creating a questionnaire? How can survey data be analyzed and interpreted? These and similar questions addressed 102 students: “Equally interesting, we found the meeting with professors and university students, who showed us the university campus. But then the work began. And it was really work. It was informative to learn about how to develop a questionnaire, how many mistakes you can make and how careful you have to phrase your questions, to make sure all survey participants understand it“, a student noted at the end of the project. The fact that the work has paid off, the student noticed especially near the end of the collaboration, when they had the survey results, as a student put it, “I think, the most interesting part was the interpretation of the data, to know what really results and what one can read from it, that was really exciting.“

Overall, due to the large interest seven – instead of the originally planned four – surveys were conducted by the students. From the selection of a topic, on the development of the questionnaire to the analysis of the results, the students conducted all steps of an online survey on their own, supported by the scientists. The topics the students worked on were rather diverse in range. For example, they included topics regarding their schools, such as the adoption of new forms of learning in the classroom, and also everyday topics such as the use of mobile phones in school. Other students wanted to learn more about “how girls and boys tick“ or whether adolescents buy fair trade products. At the end, the results were presented to colleagues, teachers, parents and other interested audience.

The students had several benefits from conducting their own surveys. The focus of the project was on the acquisition of methodological and critical-reflexive skills of social research. By creating an online



survey the students, however, also acquired various other professional proficiencies and experiences in project management. As a result of the cooperation with the scientists the students overcame potential inhibitions toward the university and the students gained a realistic insight in an integral part of many social science studies and many other professions. Furthermore, they were also able to develop and improve their social skills and gain new knowledge in subject areas of social relevance.


The teachers involved also benefited from the cooperation, "Above all of course, the research about what is already known in an area and the implementation of marketing concepts on the one hand. On the other hand, I was taught a lesson again, you only know a small fraction of something, as I have learned a tremendous amount about survey research. I really learned a lot." Teachers had the opportunity to provide their students with a glimpse in an otherwise not easily accessible area of work and carry out project oriented lessons based on real life issues. However, they even were able to enhance their own knowledge on the subject. In a workshop for teachers and by developing the surveys they learned more about statistics and social science research methods. They were also introduced to a new tool for social science research, which can also be used for other education issues and even for students' final papers.

From a scientific point of view, the incorporation of the subject knowledge of the students permitted a target group-oriented development of the online panel and a greater validity of the survey results. The results of the project demonstrate very clearly the importance and profitability of including students in the development, operation and maintenance of a student online panel and for the design of questionnaires. In addition to powerful software, an efficient online panel requires targeted marketing and panel maintenance strategies and, thus, ensure a high panel quality. Supported by students of two business schools first steps in this direction were made and an attractive online panel for adolescents was created, which can be used for youth-related survey studies.

At the brink between science and education, the project Opinion Corner contributed to ensure that students acquire and exercise a variety of academic and social skills by conducting social science research studies. Under the supervision of scientists, the project offered the students the opportunity to learn more about socially and personally relevant topics, secondly, about the design of research processes, and thirdly, about quantitative surveys as a research method. The project's success is further reflected in numerous requests from teachers who are interested in further co-operations within the project Opinion Corner, even after the end of the project.







Sparkling Science >  
Science linking with School  
School linking with Science

oead'  
OeAD-GmbH

[www.bmwf.gv.at](http://www.bmwf.gv.at)

BM.W.F<sup>a</sup>

Austrian Federal Ministry of  
Science and Research