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SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS DEVELOP AN  
ONLINE PANEL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

**LEADING INSTITUTION**

Johannes Kepler University Linz,  
Department for Pedagogics and Educational Psychology  
Coordinator: o.Univ.Prof. Dr. H. Altrichter  
Contact: herbert.altrichter@jku.at

**SCIENTIFIC CO-OPERATION PARTNER**

Johannes Kepler University Linz,  
Department of Sociology

**SCHOOLS INVOLVED**

College of Economics, Linz-Auhof  
College of Economics, Steyr



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Austrian Federal Ministry of  
Science and Research

## Secondary school students develop an online panel for young people

„I think it is very important to offer our students real-life exercises in our classes. Thus, collaborating with Johannes Kepler University (JKU) is an appealing opportunity for us.” Mag. Andreas Riepl, a school teacher from Steyr (Upper Austria), now can pursue this objective in the new Sparkling Science Project “StudentOnlinePanel” which will be designed by students from two upper secondary schools for business (BHAK Steyr and BHAK Linz-Auhof) in collaboration with university researchers. The project aims to develop and test the first Austrian online panel targeted primarily towards pupils. This novel research infrastructure will be used for social science studies as well as school projects relating to experiences, attitudes and values of students.

### What is an online panel?

Online panels are used for social science surveys. They consist of a pool of people who agree to participate in internet-based studies on a regular basis. Once the person has registered on the panel website, he or she will be invited by researchers to participate in online research studies. Depending on the specific study design specific sub samples can be selected from the pool of participants. Panel administration and survey participation are realized entirely online via an internet-based web application. Compared to traditional paper-and-pencil surveys, online panel studies are quick, cost-efficient and easy to administrate.

### Sharing experience through collaboration

Collaborations between students, teachers and researchers are to assure an appealing visual design of the panel website for the target audience. Furthermore, important educational objectives such as the competence to understand design and interpret social science studies (which become more and more important in public and economic debates) will be achieved by participating in this project. The combination of the researchers’ academic experiences with the students’ “street knowledge” about current issues to be researched, promises an innovative and interesting project. This opinion is shared by students of a participating school specialising in a course on “marketing and international business operations”, who states: “Up to this point, collaboration with the university has surprised me. I think this type of teamwork is very interesting.”



## First experiences


SchoP started with a kick off workshop in October at which all involved students, teachers and researchers participated. Students of BHAK Steyr presented various proposals for visual website designs and logos. They are responsible for the student-oriented design of the online panel which they will develop in a course on “Software development and network engineering, multimedia and web-design” as a project for their school leaving examination. Likewise, the students of BHAK Linz-Auhof can make use of their knowledge they gained in a course on “Marketing and international business operations”. They developed marketing concepts for the panel to recruit students from all over Austria as panel members during the next few months. Participating in this research and development project offers special learning chances, as Mag.<sup>a</sup> Ziegler, teacher of this course, states. “In this special case students can experience from the very beginning how such a project starts – in a real situation and with real consequences. This is an experience with high practical value.” Up to now, the students involved are enthusiastic about the project and even make plans for future options. “My wish for the future is to be able to continue with the project after this initial phase.” Practical project work has been quite exciting, so the unanimous opinion of the students: “This is a good alternative to normal lessons and definitely very interesting and informative,” a student from BHAK Linz-Auhof thinks. The researchers as well see new potential in the cooperation with secondary school students. Mag. Gnams, project staff at the JKU Linz, commented on the students’ presentations which had compared and evaluated various existing online panels by self-developed criteria: “I was impressed – the students’ results were thoughtful and elaborate. There have been some very good ideas how we can improve our panel. Now, we’ll try to implement them.”

## Next Steps

Once a student-oriented design of the SchOP has been agreed upon and enough students willing to participate as online panel members have been recruited, the project will proceed to next level. Then, the practicability of SchOP for research with students and by students will be evaluated through a series of studies on different topics relevant to today's youth, such as gender aspects in students’ lives, integration of minority groups or experiences with new forms of learning in school. The researchers from JKU Linz will support students and teachers when they design the studies as well as during data collection and data analysis and they will do technical development work. “The basic concept of this project is that researchers will get relevant data about questions regarding adolescents while students will get insight into social research how data are generated and what their worth is,” the project leaders Professor Herbert Altrichter and Professor Bernad Batinic from JKU Linz stated. In the long term, the project aims to test the feasibility of an online panel as an infrastructure for “youth research” – in two meanings: as research about youth and by youth. “I hope that the project continues smoothly after this exciting start-up phase and that we as students can really achieve and effect something,” a student from BHAK Linz-Auhof explains her wishes.







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