



The Mediascout Project

1) Project Background

Cyberbullying via Facebook, pornographic images and decapitation videos within the WhatsApp group chat, the upload of proprietary clips on YouTube or the illegal download of music or film files – media use of children and adolescents, also in its problematic forms, does not stop for school as an institution. Media is omnipresent; children and teenagers quite naturally grow up with them. It is not merely about discovering the chances of media offers, but rather about the risks that the use of media entails. To be able to choose between the different media forms and use them in an autonomous, critical and creative way, young learners require support, qualification as well as media literacy skills.

Researches illustrate that therefore the approach of “peer-education” is particularly useful. The results state that at the one hand young learners prefer learning from peers of the same age and on the other hand that these peers are eminently suitable to inform their schoolmates, due to their similar media consumption behaviour.

2) Project realisation

Within the last months the Regional Institute for Media North Rhine-Westphalia (LfM) has initiated and implemented the project “Mediascouts NRW”. Therefore, we have been supported by different councils. The project aims at students from years 7 to 9 in secondary schools and qualifies them as so-called “Mediascouts”. The LfM assigned the Grimme Institute in Marl with the organisational realisation of the project.

The results show, qualification of a comparatively small group of students can result in far-reaching effects, because the students that once have been trained are able to act as referees afterwards. This means that they can qualify their classmates and serve as contact persons for media-related questions and problems.

Adolescents should support their classmates and younger students in terms of media use and provide advice for topics like Social Web, Internet & Co.

Therefore, the Mediascouts should mainly:

- enlarge their own media literacy
- establish an understanding of the chances and risks involved with new media. This information can be used afterwards to equip classmates with theoretical and practical knowledge and support
- stay in contact with other Mediascouts after the qualification measure, so they are able to pass on their ‘expert-knowledge’



At the same time internal and external advisory structures were established. One has to keep in mind that the qualified Mediascouts are still growing up and therefore need a stable contact person, who they can talk to in terms of upcoming questions about contents and interaction with others. For this reason the establishment of school counsellors is an important part of the project. The teachers that were trained for this position learned about media topics, legal principles and practical support. To give the school counsellors a sense of security a third party then was installed. This group exists out of experts from different areas that are able to support the teachers in terms of legal, psychological and organisational questions.

On the basis of the prior positive experiences and insights as well as the positive resonance and major interest to participate in the project, the LfM decided to expand their project “Mediascouts NRW”, so that other communities and different school types get the chance to qualify new Mediascouts and school counsellors.

The implementation of the project should be realised in close coordination with the individual education authorities so that requirements of the individual councils can be adequately taken into account.

3) Responsibilities within the project

Services provided by the LfM

- We qualify Mediascouts and their school counsellors within four workshops. Those workshops take about one to two days and focus on topics like Social Communities, Internet security, Mobile phones, Computer games and the Peer-Education approach.
- We assume the fees for our referees that are selected by strict quality standards
- We offer a huge variety of publications and materials to choose from. These can be used to work with in the qualification workshops as well as for advisory practice
- To serve school counsellors with a sense of security in their role, we associate them with a team of experts. With the expert team they have a partner they can contact in terms of questions regarding legal and organisational problems.
- We support the participants in the organisational implementation of the project. Therefore we set up a Mediascout office.



Contributions of the local school authorities

- The local school authorities in North Rhine-Westphalia are in the position to nominate up to ten school from different school types out of their area
- To take all requirements into account qualifications are supposed to take place in the respective council. Therefore the local school authority supplies the participants with premises and is responsible for the coordination of the qualification dates.
- The local school authorities care for the required exemptions of the students and teachers that need to be qualified.

4) Facts and figures

- 37 out of 53 councils already participate in the project which corresponds to the participation rate of 70 %.
- In total:
 - 37 councils
 - 444 schools
 - 1.741 Mediascouts
 - 877 school counsellors
 - 18 referees
 - 19 co-moderators

