

# e-Portfolio Way: PBL-based Field Study through the Interaction/Collaboration with the Local Community

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this part of the workshop is to share with the audience our experience about the implementation of an e-Portfolio system to foster the fundamental academic or social skills that will blossom in a few years after the graduation. Especially, the e-Portfolio was crucially used as the incubator for learning space to develop college students' problem identifying/solving skills, self-actualization skills for establishing identities as an adult as well as effective communication skills as a member of the society. Here, our experience in the curriculum design, the course operation strategies, and the course design are presented. This application of e-Portfolio is unique in that all levels of students as well as the local community members work in tandem to achieve their goals through the Problem-Based Learning approach.

**Keywords:** Field Study, fundamental academic skills, social skills, e-Portfolio, curriculum design, Problem-Based Learning

## 1. Course Design: PBL Field Study

The course design for the Field Study to foster such skills as the problem-based learning involving students as well as the local community is elaborated here. First, our definition of Field Study at Kobe-Shinna Women's University is stated. Second, the course operation and the learning activities are given.

Field Study at Kobe-Shinna Women's University is to offer students with the opportunity to learn and think about the relation between each member of the society and the various aspects of the society as a whole. It is intended that the students will come to be aware of being members of the society and that they will have the vision for the future of the society. After all, upon graduation, the students will bear the responsibility to maintain the good values and to build new beneficial aspects in life. While attending the university, the students will develop the awareness of such responsibility as a full-fledged adult member in the society.

The course for the Field Study was designed with the intention of having our students think and tackle with faced problems proactively in groups. In other words, in the course, the students first feel the need for discussion skills, better communication skills not only among the group members but with the people in the local community, project design and planning skills, teamwork and leadership skills, and the project management skills, and then they realize that those skills can be developed while trying to pursue for the goal that they set by themselves. Indeed, the course is the learner-centered problem-solving one. The design of the course is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. The Course Operation Procedures for the Field Study  
at Kobe-Shinna Women's University**

Categories of Learning Activities	Activities in Detail
Preparation, Orientation	Safety Checking for Learning Environment Networking in the Local Community by Instructors Research of the Local Community by the Students in the Course
Field Work	Field Work by the Class Students' Interviews to the Local Community
Field Work: Reflection Session	Brain Storming, Extracting Needs and Problems in the Local Community & Prioritizing them Realm and Mission (Goal) Setting
Planning	Discussion, Additional Research, Planning for the Project
Presentation Prep.	Preparing for Presentation: The Students' proposal to the Local Community Rehearsal
Presentation to the Community Members	Presentation Session Exchanging Ideas and Opinions with the Local Community
Reflection Session of Presentation	Reflection Session Brain Storming, Incorporating overlooked Needs and Problems in the Local Community & Prioritizing them Modified Realm and Mission (Goal) Setting
Execution of the Chosen Plan	Agreed Plan by the Local Community Designing the Execution Plan along the Time Line with the collaboration by both the Students and the people in the community

In order to visually demonstrate a learning activity in the course, a prominent and successful project is highlighted. See Figure 1 for a scene of a brain storming session. In this project, a group of students worked together with a local sake brewery company in a team to develop a new type of alcohol drink targeting at young adults. The photo in Figure 1 shows a scene of a brain storming discussion in the meeting to propose a new product design and exchanging opinions. Figure 2 demonstrates a scene of promoting the product in the exhibition for the promotion of new products and sales. Here a new product called “New Half” in the dark pink bottle is promoted to potential distributors. The promotion booth was also designed and set up by the project team. Through actively involving in the project, the students will develop the fundamental skills and gain the feeling of achievement as well as confidence to tackle with a project as a team member.



**Figure 1. Discussion with  
Local Community**



**Figure 2. Promotion for  
New Product Promotion**

The Field Study course was launched in the academic year of 2011. About fifty students including freshmen, sophomore, and juniors enrolled in the Field Study course. They were grouped in eight to ten projects. Thus, each project consisted of three to twelve students with one or two instructors and the office staff on the university side. The students' activities were logged and written in the reflection sheet and then feedback to the artifact of the proof of growth was given by the instructor in charge. In the following section, the roll of e-Portfolio in the Field Study is elaborated.

## 2. Roll of e-Portfolio in Field Study

The purpose of e-Portfolio was to centralize the archived information related to the Field Study course including the logs from the learning process, artifacts of learning and development, activity photos, the communication logs including meeting logs, memos and minutes, feedback from the instructors in charge, the results and evidence of the project. Here the archived collection of information was most in writing (word-processed or hand-written). See Figure . 3 for the reflection log by the students.

Figure . 3. The Reflection Sheet Filled by a Student

It should be noted that the purpose of the use of e-Portfolio is not for warehousing all information in one place. But it is rather for demonstrating and presenting in visualization the progress as well as the growth of the involved students. In other words, the e-Portfolio offers a place for the longitudinal research in assessment, where the traditional evaluation method of focusing on the artifact or the result from the learning is no longer applicable. In the following section, our new assessment method for the Field Study is elaborated.

## 3. How to Assess Students' Growth and Visualize the Learning Effect

M-GTA is based on the theory that the major conceptual components are buried in the written data and that such conceptual components are minable through a certain procedure. Each mined conceptual component evidenced by concrete examples in the data in the e-Portfolio are first categorized, then compared and related to other components. Finally, the all conceptual components are mapped on a sheet for the holistic view.

Due to the lack of the studies on the qualitative assessment for PBL of the fundamental skills targeting the students of the liberal arts majors, a new assessment method to text-mine, probe, and analyze the written data in the e-Portfolio. We employed an assessment technique for analyzing the result from the survey by interviewing, i.e. Modified Grounded Theory Approach, (henceforth M-GTA).

Our analysis proved that the student's motivation is increased by realizing the status of the university student being different from the full-fledged members in the society, i.e., self-actualization and self-identification, on the one hand, and the desire to interact with them, i.e., finding a role model as adult, on the other. Further the student's stick-to-it-iveness to the project is nurtured through the process of reflection sessions while working with the e-Portfolio.

## 4. Summary & Conclusion: Learning Outcome

In the Field Study, it was found that students develop their meta-cognition and self-actualization skills effectively, which are the fundamental survival skills as an adult. This study also proved that the course e-Portfolio for academic fundamental skills and the career e-Portfolio, which are independently operated on campus, can be united with the newly defined educational goal or the school-wide mission and its vision.

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