

## **Widening ideas on careers in Japan-Korea KJ workshop style mutual direction distance education –using personal computer pull down function-**

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**Abstract:** One of aims of distance classes with students of overseas universities is to widen students' ideas on the topics and cultivate competences to view things from many angles, through exchanging ideas with students who have a different cultural background. This paper reports the practices of distance classes between Josai university Graduate School Business Research Course and South Korea Dongseo University Business Course where students majoring in business were expected to take part in KJ methods workshop, aiming to compare business style of two countries, explore the differences of ideas on careers and widen their perspectives. To conduct KJ methods on personal computers, excel was employed to make information sorted and categorized. The classes were held in Japanese language, so Korean students were allowed to prepare words pulled-down on excel file in advance in order to reduce some difficulties possibly produced by lack of language competences. Students managed to share the whole process of showing each other's ideas, categorizing, mapping, clarifying and naming these ideas, and having presentation and making questions and answers. Data electronically saved were accumulated into e-portfolio to let students reflect changes of their own ideas. Four topics were taken up in the classes: competences needed to make a living; competences needed to work with people who have a different culture; merits and difficulties in working in their own countries and overseas; differences in business style between two countries, as a conclusion.

**Keywords:** *ideas on careers, information sorted; KJ methods, e-portfolio*

## **Introduction**

This study explores the effective way of Japan-Korea KJ methods workshop style mutual direction distance education. The class aims to improve business management majoring students' problem-solving competences which enable them to pursue solutions from multiple angles. Students taking part in the classes are expected to compare the business style of both countries and think of the differences of their ideas and widen their perspectives on careers.

## **Career Education in Japan**

According to survey of Ministry of Education in Japan, the percentage of students having proceeded to higher education institutes including universities, two-year universities and technical colleges in 2002 was over 70%. The Central Education Council proposed in 2005 that one of the aims of higher education should be fostering careers based on specialized knowledge and broad common sense. Thus, given today's economic situation, drastic change of society and diversification of values, it is getting important more and more to foster students' competences and attitudes needed for social and vocational independence. The Central Education Council also proposed in its report in 2012 that so called 'Gakushiryoku', important competences fostered at universities should be as follows.

- 1 Recognition including critical and reasonable thinking power in order to understand complicated problems with utilizing knowledge and skills and explore solutions for the problems which do not necessarily have solitary answer.
- 2 Ethical and Social competences to do individual duty as a human being and perform social responsibilities with considering others and displaying team-work and leaderships.
- 3 Creativity and power for organizing things based on total and sustainable learning experience
- 4 Culture, knowledge and experience which give a base for apt judgment for unexpected difficulties

## **Background as 'Network Era'**

SNS system has rapidly been prevailing by now. The system provides users with opportunities of writing individuals' diaries and schedules, putting messages on notice board, and making a community to share information among those who have the same interests. These opportunities are utilized for not only business purposes but also more individual private base.

Information was previously dispatched through internet on personal computers. However, nowadays, many other digital devices including mobile phones, smartphones, and portable tablets are used for this purpose. This enables users to use SNS system anytime and anywhere.

In 2011 May, LinkedIn, business SNS achieved being a member company of a take-over bid (TOB) with producing profit of 121 million dollars, more specifically speaking, 9.9 million dollars as operating profit by 87 percentage increase than the previous year and 4.5 million dollars, which is highly above analysts' anticipation. The number of users of LinkedIn has rapidly increased recent years. Japanese language version appeared in 2011 October. LinkedIn is used for business purposes where users communicate each other with sharing individual backgrounds.

Facebook is another famous SNS of which main purpose is promoting real communication between individuals. It starts as a communication measure between friends and gradually expands its communication sphere by introducing friends' friends. Users may find a contact route to reconnect with old friends who have not met for a long time. Furthermore, it provides opportunities to know each other among members who have the same interests and themes to discuss.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications announced in its report titled 'Survey for possible change realization of the next generation ICT society might bring' that 42.9 percentage of whole population is currently utilizing SNS. 17.5 % of the whole population is utilizing a single SNS measure; while 25.4 % is utilizing several SNS measures. This means that approximately 60% of SNS users are utilizing several SNS measures. The report also mentions that 71.7% of 10-19 year old children and 63.8% of 20-29 year old young generation are currently utilizing at least a single SNS. Higher usage rate was found in younger age range. Thus, for younger generations, SNS is a vital communication tool. This report mentions that SNS can promote collaborations between individuals and contribute on resolving worries and troubles individuals may have in their social and community life. The number of SNS is supposed to increase in wider age range. Thus, today is a new digital era and wide use of personal computers, portable tablets and smartphone is changing the ways of learning and teaching.

## Features of Classes

### Preparation for workshop

In such digital era, needs to explore new styles of classes will increase more and more. This study employed KJ methods workshop in order to encourage students to have more effective discussion with the counterparts talking through computers set up in a classroom overseas.

Before opening classes of mutual distance education, students of each university prepares the classes in order to conduct KJ methods workshop effectively. At Josai University in Japan, both overseas students and Japanese students learned in the same class but in a group respectively. A Japanese student was dispatched to overseas students group in order to reduce overseas students' difficulties in their language and let them concentrate on tasks. In this preparation time, not PC but papers were used and found that every student went effectively through the whole KJ procedures including categorizing and naming their ideas.



Overseas students

Japanese students

Figure 1. KJ method workshop using papers

### Theme to discuss

Four themes were set up to discuss, aiming to widen students' perspective on careers.

1. competences needed to make a living, including self-employment and establishing a business
2. competences needed to work with people who have a different culture
3. merits and difficulties in working in their own countries and overseas
4. differences in business style between two countries, as a conclusion.

Some of students majoring 'business management' said, their choice of the department was because of their career plan such as succeeding their family business or establishing their own company. The questionnaire survey was conducted with hundred graduates of 2012 March, and found that approximately 10 % of subjects hoped to establish business just after the graduation or within five years from graduation. The rate of students who had a plan of establishing business was much higher than estimation. This is the reason for setting up question 1.

Not a few students in 'business management' department were interested in cultures of other countries and transition of Asian economy, and hoped to study abroad before graduation or find a job at a trading company. Because of this, question 2 and 3 were set up.

In order to let students compare the business style of both countries and think of the differences of their ideas on careers and widen their perspectives on careers, questionnaire 4 was set up as a conclusive question.

### Distance education

In the mutual direction distance class, to conduct KJ methods workshop effectively, students' views were presented on PC. Text elicited by KJ methods were sorted and categorized using excel. The most useful function was list function and sorting. About five words for each question were listed in order to give hints to have image of

answer for the question. In the case students could not find appropriate answer in the lists, they were encouraged to present their views in their own words. The class was held in Japanese language. Overseas students had a good command of Japanese language, but list function seemed to have big effect on them to elicit answers. Questions data was prepared as 50 articles but in practice, 5 articles were taken up at random.

Depending on this function, in the mutual direction distance class, students managed to share the whole process of showing each other's ideas, categorizing, mapping, clarifying and naming these ideas, and having presentation and making questions and answers. Data electronically saved were accumulated into e-portfolio to let students reflect changes of their own ideas.



**Figure 2. Japan-Korea KJ methods workshop style mutual direction distance education**

## **Conclusion**

In order to foster students' communication competences, the way of teaching should not be restricted to one-way information giving. 'Dialogue' should be emphasized. Distance education can give students the opportunities to learn together with students who have different views and culture. These opportunities will foster students' competencies of both presenting their own views and listening to others' views and understanding them. At the same time, students will learn 'patience for difference' when they explore the possibility of collaboration with remaining disagreement as it is and lead to have compromised conclusion over some difference. Non-verbal communication is often considered as a part of Japanese culture; in this workshop, Japanese students engaged well in presenting their views. This was the first time to employ KJ method workshop in distance education, it was time-consuming. Time-setting became a future theme to explore.

Internet is a new measure for communication. Communication on internet requires conversation, not 'virtue of silence'. List function was found as effective to reduce students' difficulties caused by lack of language competences and elicit their own words, furthermore, let them concentrate on the discussion. As a result, communication among students with different cultural background, overall, went smoothly.

The future theme will be exploring effective measures to employ ICT in education, in terms of both new technology innovation and sustainable education. Both good effects and possible problems which might occur when internets are employed in wide range of educational settings should be examined.