

# TOKYO KEIZAI UNIVERSITY'S PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

## Executive Summary

Incorporating competency development into university education, especially through project-based learning (PBL), remains a challenge due to the lack of practical frameworks for skill development and reflection. Tokyo Keizai University aimed to bridge this gap in its PBL seminar, which involved 52 students participating in diverse projects. The lack of structured methods to evaluate and improve individual competencies hindered effective learning outcomes.

Tokyo Keizai University integrated WIAL Action Learning and AI-driven coaching into the seminar to enhance collaborative problem-solving and self-reflection. Action Learning sessions, led by student coaches, encouraged critical thinking and teamwork, while AI tools provided personalized feedback to foster self-awareness and growth.

The program achieved significant improvements in critical thinking (71.2%), problem-solving (50%), and teamwork (32.7%). AI coaching supported reflection, with 96.2% of students reporting better organization of thoughts. Combined, these methodologies bridged the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, creating a holistic learning environment that better prepared students for real-world challenges.

## About Tokyo Keizai University

Tokyo Keizai University, located in Tokyo, Japan, is a leader in higher education focused on business, economics, and social sciences. Committed to developing 21st-century competencies among its students, the university integrates innovative learning methodologies into its curriculum. Through programs like project-based learning (PBL), Tokyo Keizai University strives to cultivate critical thinking, adaptability, and leadership skills, equipping students for success in an evolving professional landscape.



## The Challenge

Competency development in university education often faces significant barriers, including:

- Lack of structured frameworks for skill development within PBL programs.
- Limited opportunities for students to reflect on their learning and identify areas for growth.
- Challenges in fostering teamwork, critical thinking, and problem-solving in diverse project settings.

For Tokyo Keizai University's PBL seminar, involving six distinct projects such as regional revitalization and business development, these gaps became apparent. Without structured methods for reflection and competency evaluation, students risked missing the full potential of experiential learning. Addressing this issue was essential to ensure meaningful learning outcomes and prepare students for professional challenges.

## Solution: Applying WIAL Action Learning

### Approach and Implementation

Tokyo Keizai University introduced WIAL Action Learning and AI-driven coaching as a dual-method strategy to enhance the competency development of students in its Project-Based Learning (PBL) seminar. This approach focused on fostering critical thinking, teamwork, and self-reflection. The implementation involved structured Action Learning sessions and AI coaching tailored to complement the PBL framework.

### Action Learning Integration

- **Student-Led Sessions:** Students were trained as Action Learning coaches under the guidance of faculty mentors. These student coaches facilitated monthly Action Learning sessions, focusing on addressing challenges within their respective projects.

- **Collaborative Teams:** Teams of students worked on six diverse projects, ranging from regional revitalization to business development and school improvement initiatives. Each session emphasized collaborative problem-solving and structured inquiry.
- **Mentorship:** Faculty mentors provided oversight and feedback to the student coaches, ensuring adherence to Action Learning principles.

### **AI Coaching Implementation**

- **Weekly Reflections:** Students used the AI platform Reflect to input their weekly learnings, challenges, and actions. The AI provided feedback, advice, and prompts to guide self-reflection.
- **Instructor Support:** Faculty members monitored the AI feedback and added comments to support students in their growth journeys.

### **Goals**

The initiative aimed to:

- Equip students with critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Enhance teamwork and communication within diverse project teams.
- Promote self-awareness and continuous improvement through AI-driven reflection.

### **Key Activities and Milestones**

The program was structured around key phases and activities that demonstrated the effectiveness of combining Action Learning and AI coaching to foster collaborative and reflective learning.

### **Action Learning Sessions**

Monthly sessions provided students with a structured environment to address project challenges. Key milestones included:

- Refining problem statements through open-ended questioning.

- Identifying core issues in projects (achieved by 50% of participants).
- Improving teamwork dynamics (reported by 32.7% of participants).

### **AI Coaching Reflections**

Weekly AI feedback facilitated continuous learning and self-assessment. Milestones included:

- 96.2% of students reported improved organization of thoughts.
- 59.6% observed growth through regular reflection.

### **Combined Impact**

The integration of Action Learning and AI created breakthrough moments where students applied insights from coaching to their projects, achieving measurable improvements in execution and collaboration.

### **Adaptations**

To ensure the program's success, Tokyo Keizai University customized the Action Learning and AI coaching approaches:

- **Student Coaches:** Training students as Action Learning coaches allowed for peer-led facilitation, making the process relatable and accessible.
- **AI Personalization:** Reflect was tailored to provide context-specific prompts that aligned with project goals, enhancing its relevance to students' experiences.
- **Flexibility in Application:** Faculty adjusted the frequency of Action Learning sessions and AI reflections based on project demands, ensuring students could balance the program with their academic workload.

Through these strategies, Tokyo Keizai University successfully integrated WIAL Action Learning and AI coaching, creating a dynamic and impactful learning environment that addressed the challenges of competency development in project-based education.

## Results

The integration of WIAL Action Learning and AI coaching at Tokyo Keizai University's PBL seminar produced significant outcomes, enhancing student competencies, teamwork, and learning effectiveness. These results reflect the power of combining collaborative problem-solving with reflective AI coaching to achieve measurable improvements.

## Operational Impact

The initiative significantly improved students' problem-solving efficiency, critical thinking, and learning effectiveness through structured methodologies and consistent feedback.

- **Improved Problem-Solving Efficiency**
  - 50% of participants successfully identified and clarified core issues within their projects through Action Learning sessions.
  - Students applied these insights to develop actionable strategies, leading to more effective project execution.
- **Enhanced Critical Thinking**
  - 71.2% of students reported gaining diverse perspectives through team collaboration, strengthening their ability to analyze complex challenges.
  - AI coaching helped 96.2% of students organize their thoughts better, leading to clearer and more structured problem-solving approaches.
- **Increased Learning Effectiveness**
  - The combination of monthly Action Learning sessions and weekly AI coaching provided consistent feedback loops, improving students' ability to address challenges in real-time.

## Cultural Shift

The program fostered a culture of collaboration and inquiry, empowering students and coaches to embrace teamwork and reflective practices for shared growth.

- **Improved Team Dynamics**

- 32.7% of participants noted enhanced teamwork, citing better communication and collaboration within their project teams.
- Action Learning encouraged students to actively listen and engage in inquiry-based discussions, fostering mutual respect and understanding.

- **Empowered Leadership**

- Student coaches developed facilitation and leadership skills, demonstrating confidence in guiding their peers through Action Learning sessions.
- Faculty mentors observed increased ownership among students, as they took charge of their learning and project outcomes.

## **Strategic Benefits**

The integration of Action Learning and AI coaching created a scalable, competency-driven framework that bridges theoretical learning and practical application.

- **Holistic Skill Development**

- Students demonstrated significant growth in critical competencies, including situational awareness, adaptability, and communication.
- The dual-method approach bridged the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, better preparing students for professional challenges.

- **Scalable Learning Model**

- The program showcased a replicable framework that can be applied to other courses or institutions seeking to enhance competency-based education.
- By integrating AI tools like Reflect, the university ensured that self-reflection became a central component of the learning process, fostering continuous improvement.

- **Broader Institutional Impact**

- The success of this initiative highlighted Tokyo Keizai University's commitment to innovation in education, strengthening its position as a leader in competency-based learning.

## **Quantitative Highlights**

The measurable outcomes reflect the program's success in achieving significant improvements in critical competencies, teamwork, and reflective learning practices.

- **50%:** Participants clarified core project issues through Action Learning.
- **71.2%:** Students gained diverse perspectives, enhancing critical thinking.
- **32.7%:** Reported improved teamwork and collaboration.
- **96.2%:** Found AI coaching helped better organize their thoughts.
- **59.6%:** Observed personal growth through reflective practices.

These results demonstrate the success of Tokyo Keizai University's program in fostering collaborative, reflective, and competency-driven learning, paving the way for long-term educational innovation.

## **Participant Insights**

Students and faculty involved in the program shared reflections on the transformative impact of combining WIAL Action Learning with AI coaching:

- "The Action Learning sessions challenged us to think beyond the obvious. The open-ended questions helped me uncover the real root of our project challenges." – PBL Student
- "Working with my team in the sessions made me realize how much we can learn from each other's perspectives. It wasn't just about solving the problem—it was about growing together." – Team Member

- “Reflect helped me understand my learning process. The weekly feedback showed me areas I didn’t even notice I needed to improve, and it motivated me to do better.” – PBL Participant
- “Leading the Action Learning sessions taught me how to listen and guide rather than dictate. It’s a skill I’ll carry with me in my future career.” – Student Action Learning Coach

These testimonials highlight the program’s success in fostering personal growth, teamwork, and leadership among participants.

## **Future Plans**

Building on the success of integrating Action Learning and AI coaching, Tokyo Keizai University plans to expand its competency-based learning initiatives. The university’s forward-looking strategies include:

### **1. Scaling the Program**

- Extend the integration of Action Learning and AI coaching to other courses, particularly those focusing on experiential and project-based learning.
- Increase the number of trained student coaches to facilitate more sessions across diverse programs.

### **2. Enhancing AI Coaching Tools**

- Collaborate with developers of the Reflect platform to further customize feedback for students’ learning contexts.
- Introduce additional AI features to support goal setting, progress tracking, and in-depth reflection analysis.

### **3. Faculty Development**

- Train more faculty members to incorporate Action Learning principles into their teaching methodologies.



- Develop workshops to familiarize instructors with AI tools, ensuring seamless integration into courses.

#### **4. Strengthening Partnerships**

- Partner with other universities to share best practices and promote the adoption of Action Learning and AI-driven coaching globally.
- Collaborate with industry professionals to align learning outcomes with workplace competencies.

Tokyo Keizai University envisions a learning environment where Action Learning and AI coaching are foundational elements of its educational strategy. By fostering critical competencies, the university aims to prepare students to thrive in an ever-changing professional landscape while setting a benchmark for innovative education.

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