

Facilitating Self-Regulated Learning: An Exploratory Case of Teaching a University Course on Japanese Society

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This paper explores practical strategies that can be used by university teachers to facilitate student-centered, self-regulated learning. My primary objective as a university teacher is to be directly involved in my students' efforts by connecting my teaching expertise with their self-regulated learning process. I have developed a strategic alignment model of teaching and learning, which is a practical instructional model that can be applied regardless of the academic discipline. Locating university teaching as a collaborative process of knowledge production between teachers and students, this paper presents an exploratory case wherein the teacher supports his students by providing them with a well-programmed teaching schedule. The students respond to their teacher's efforts by showing a high level of commitment. Ultimately, this paper claims that such collaboration contributes significantly to the creation of a dynamic research culture at a university.

Self-regulated learning is, in general, "a process in which an individual plans, organizes, self-instructs, self-monitors, and evaluates at various stages of the learning process" (van den Hurk, 2006, p. 156). This learning model emphasizes the notion that students are active, constructive participants in the learning process and that they learn by constructing their own meanings, goals, and strategies on the basis of the availability of internal and external information. I am a university teacher, and I have often reflected on the role of university teachers in the above context, namely, how can we play an effective part in the self-regulated learning process that our students will be undergoing? What attitudes can we expect from our students? Ultimately, how can we facilitate self-regulated learning activities? Self-regulated learning is indeed presumed to play an important role in the development of lifelong learning competencies, one of the key skills in surviving dynamic changes in contemporary society. Meanwhile, how can I develop my teaching expertise in a professional way?

My introductory course on Japanese society starts with understanding the concepts of *emic* and *etic*. *Emic* is the perspective of the local participant; in other words, it is a term that denotes a local participant's comprehension of a local situation. *Etic*, on the other hand, is the perspective of the outsider, often more analytical, abstract, and possibly, objective. In order to help my students understand contemporary society, I ask them to try and blend the *emic* and *etic* perspectives by contextualizing the "outsider" perspective within the subjective experiences of the "insider" point of view and vice versa. In addition, the goal of our research must be the acquisition of both *emic*- and *etic*-knowledge, since the reality we are trying to grasp is typically the result of the intersection of these two perspectives. This concept is the key analytical tool toward understanding society as a general concept; I would say that *emic* and *etic* represent the "threshold

concepts" (Meyer and Land, 2003, p. 1) of my course. Further, developing these perspectives is a key to avoiding ethnocentrism, the tendency to believe that some or all aspects of one's culture are superior to those of other cultural groups.

I started teaching this introductory course shortly after I assumed my current position at a university in Sweden. Over the last three years I have taught the course four times. The teaching, on all four occasions, involved talking to nearly 70 students, mostly freshmen (second-semester students of Japanese studies), packed into a large lecture room. Inevitably, and regrettably, my students became passive: their sole function was to listen to my lectures and take notes. Owing to the large class size, they did not have a chance to raise any questions, thoughts, or ideas—which in any case, I did not expect them to want to do. Either way, they had to remain seated for 90 minutes, which, for some, might have been an ordeal. What I was trying to do was to make sure that these young people were being put through the paces of an "active listenership" routine; I was expecting my students to understand my teaching and use it within their own learning mechanisms—a theory termed "self-regulated learning." I did not use the term in class as I thought it would not elicit a favorable response from my students. However, at the beginning of the course, I clearly stated the following: "I might not be the conventional teacher you imagined. I will try and facilitate your study of Japanese society in any way that I can. However, at the same time, I expect you to fulfil all your study-related responsibilities: completing the assigned reading, attending lectures, self-assessing your knowledge through multiple-choice questions available on the course website, and writing your final essays. All these should be undertaken as part of your independent intellectual exploration of Japan. Through my teaching, I hope to

contribute to your process of generating new knowledge.

This paper argues an exploratory case related to my approach to lecturing on Japanese society, which encourages self-regulated learning while carrying out the course work. It is important to change the popular perception of a university teacher as a person who just delivers lectures with the primary objective of transmitting knowledge. Instead, university teaching should lead to a collaborative process of knowledge production. The teaching process should promote active, self-regulated learning on the part of the students. In the light of this approach, not only was it important that I, as a university teacher, facilitate my students' learning but it was also vital that my students, on their part, remain committed to my challenge. This argument is in line with Ramsden's comment (1994, p. 21) that teaching means more than instructing and performing, that it extends over a wider realm by providing a context in which students engage productively with the subject matter. Even in a large class, strong efforts should be invested in creating a positive environment that is conducive to generating and supporting self-regulated learning through the medium of course lectures and assignments. Furthermore, as this paper is based upon the premise that university teaching aims to generate a collaborative knowledge production through the joint efforts of teachers and students, it also aspires to directly combine self-regulated learning with the development of teaching expertise by the introduction of a strategic alignment model of teaching and learning. Such development plays a significant part in shaping the careers of university teachers, junior faculty members in particular. In fact, the above model could serve as a practical instructional model and provide us with an applicable technique to enhance our teaching skills, regardless of the academic discipline.

In the following sections, I first present a strategic alignment model of teaching and learning with a brief but relevant literature review on the relationship between self-regulated learning and the teacher's role as a facilitator; second, I analyze an exploratory case of my teaching on Japanese society, linking the lecture contents with the required learning activities as well as student responses; third, I present my reflections on what a teacher's role in the context of self-regulated learning should be. Empirically, I rely on two qualitative sources: (1) student responses submitted during card activities conducted in my introductory course on Japanese society (384 cards were collected from students; I taught this course four times, but introduced the card activities in the last two times). These cards are the primary source for this paper. These card activities were originally introduced to enhance the self-regulated learning of students by helping me gauge

what they were learning. At the same time, I considered the cards as an important communication tool with the students; I clearly told them that the card activities were not a part of their individual assessment. I also explained to my students that the cards would possibly be used as an empirical source for this kind of paper in an effort to enhance the general quality of teaching (I did not receive any particular objections to this suggestion from my students.); and (2) three open-ended interviews with students taking the course after announcing the course grades. In the content below, no identifying information, such as personal names, has been provided so as to protect the identities of my students.

Strategic Alignment Model of Teaching and Learning

How should teachers work toward facilitating their students' self-regulated learning? The conceptual model, which I call the strategic alignment model of teaching and learning (as shown in Table (1), was geared by two classics: Ramsden (1992) and Zimmerman (1998). While teaching my introductory course on Japanese society, I tried to align two events in the classroom—the development of my teaching expertise with the three steps advocated by Ramsden and the three major phases of self-regulated learning proposed by Zimmerman.

First, the model referred by Ramsden (1992, p. 116) describes three generic steps that teachers should follow vis-à-vis higher education. They should progress from (1) transmitting knowledge, e.g., providing a clear explanation of complex subject matter, to (2) organizing student activities, e.g., introducing activities that encourage student independence, control, and active engagement, and finally to (3) making learning possible, e.g., setting clear goals and intellectual challenges. Such hierarchical or progressive development actually corresponds to the three different domains of teaching knowledge that were described in a later account by Kreber and Cranton (2000). More specifically, the first domain, instructional knowledge, comprehensively covers all the aspects of the instructional process: preparing syllabi, defining learning objectives, selecting reading materials, planning lecture schedules, preparing PowerPoint presentations, framing examination questions, and so on. The second domain, pedagogical knowledge, is concerned with ascertaining how students absorb the essence of discipline. This domain is concerned with student responses to different learning styles and approaches to studying, methods for facilitating critical

Table 1
Strategic Alignment Model of Teaching and Learning

	Teaching Expertise	Self-Regulated Learning
Stage I	Transmitting knowledge	Forethought
Stage II	Organizing student activities	Performance control
Stage III	Making learning possible	Self-reflection

thinking and self-management in learning, and approaches toward influencing students' motivation to learn. The third domain, curricular knowledge, is concerned with the reasons due to which the teaching curriculum matters. This domain comprises knowledge about the goals, purposes, and rationales of educational courses; it also justifies how a particular course fits into the larger curriculum and how teachers, through their teaching, contribute to fulfilling the university's social and cultural roles. This hierarchical approach should be, as Biggs and Moore (1993) suggest, a qualitative one wherein teachers work toward facilitating an understanding of the course material as well as an intrinsic change in the learner, instead of a quantitative approach that would merely involve the transmission of knowledge. In other words, learning should be student-centered, where it is the result of interaction between teachers and students, and the teacher's role is to "engage the student in effective learning activities" (Biggs & Moore, 1993, p. 25).

Second, these aspects of teaching could be tightly connected to the student-centered, self-regulated form of learning. Zimmerman (1998) views student learning as a process that occurs in three major phases, identifiable as (1) forethought, (2) performance and volitional control, and (3) self-reflection (cf. Kreber, Castleden, Erfrani, & Wright, 2005). Zimmerman (1998) argues that the forethought phase "refers to influential processes and beliefs that precede efforts to learn and set the stage for such learning" (p. 2). Learners are expected to build a hierarchy of specific learning goals and have high self-efficacy to perform at certain designated levels. The second phase "involves processes that occur during learning efforts and affect concentration and performance" (Zimmerman, 1998, p. 2). While managing to focus on their learning performance, learners are expected to use self-instructional techniques that involve guiding oneself during a learning task. This process also involves self-monitoring, a vital part of the self-regulatory process, because it keeps learners updated on their progress. The third phase "involves processes that occur after learning efforts and influence a learner's reactions to that experience" (p. 2). Self-evaluation is a key reflective process employed by self-regulated learners; such evaluation primarily attributes success or failure to the

learning strategies employed rather than to the learners' own abilities.

By combining the two important theories of Ramsden (1992) and Zimmerman (1998), this strategic alignment model could prove to be a powerful tool for teachers seeking to achieve both teaching expertise and self-regulated learning, regardless of academic discipline. Meanwhile, the teaching expertise was strongly supplemented by a well-known instructional model- Gagne's Nine Events of Instruction (Gagne, 1965). It describes a dynamic interaction between instructional events and the internal mental process. The instructional events correlate with and address the conditions of learning. The linear nine-step process-gaining attention, describing the goal, stimulating recall of prior learning, presenting the material, providing learning guidance, eliciting performance, providing feedback, assigning performance, and enhancing retention and transfer- serves as the backbone of my teaching strategy. Furthermore, the model is also conceptually strengthened by the 5-step framework proposed by Duron, Limbach, & Waugh (2006, p. 161-163) to encourage students to develop critical thinking; a vital part of university education. In the strategic alignment model of teaching and learning, Stage I corresponds to Step 1: Determine learning objectives, which indicates that teachers should define the behavior they expect from their students during the course introduction phase itself. Stage II corresponds to Step 2: Teach through questioning, and also to Step 3: Practice before you assess. The latter stage facilitates self-regulated learning among students; however, it heavily depends on teaching skills: the formulation of appropriate questions, employment of questioning techniques, encouragement of interactive discussions, and selection of activities that promote active learning. The last stage, Stage III, matches Step 4: Review, refine, and improve, in addition to Step 5: Provide feedback and assessment of learning. This stage sets an environment for self-reflection, as teachers provide students with sufficient opportunities for feedback as well as self-assessment. The following section contains narrative accounts of my engagement in my students' self-regulated learning process while simultaneously attempting to develop my expertise as a university teacher.

An Exploratory Case

Course on Japanese Society

Each spring semester, I teach an introductory social studies course on Japanese society. Over the two months of its duration, the course is co-taught by three other researchers. The course targets second-semester students of Japanese studies. Every year for the past three years, nearly 70 students have chosen this course as their elective subject. With the interest that Japanese pop culture has generated in recent times, the number of students registering for this course has risen dramatically. This year (2010), for example, a total of ten sessions were held—five on society, three on politics (both domestic politics and international relations), and two on economics. Each lecture was 90 minutes long and comprised introductory information on the abovementioned aspects of Japan. The teachers were collectively responsible for deciding the course content and placing requisitions for reading material. I was in charge of teaching the five sessions on the subject of Japanese society. The goal of the course was presented as part of my syllabus; it was announced again at the beginning of my sessions. This is reproduced below.

Course Aim: This is an introductory course on contemporary Japanese society for undergraduates who are broadly interested in Japan. We will primarily examine the social, political, and economic contexts of pertinent issues in present-day Japan. The goal of the course is to help students gain an understanding of life as it is actually lived in Japan and acquire the analytical ability to view it in a comparative context. In addition to assigned readings, information that includes articles from Japanese newspapers and magazines as well as short video clips will be presented in class.

I introduced the social and cultural contexts of five topics pertinent to contemporary Japan: (1) conceptual foundation, (2) family and gender, (3) education, (4) work and the youth, and (5) minorities. Three expected learning outcomes (ELOs) that conformed to the course aim were presented. It was my intention to gradually stretch the knowledge levels of the ELOs by using the hierarchy of verbs found in the SOLO Taxonomy (Biggs & Tang, 2007, p. 79).

Expected learning outcomes (ELOs). Students are expected to accomplish the following:

1. Identify key theorists and debates on the social science scholarship on Japan
2. Compare perspectives on Japan and Sweden

3. Theorize individual opinions on current affairs

Further, I arranged three teaching and learning activities (TLAs) that would enable the students to achieve the ELOs in an effective manner.

Teaching and learning activities (TLAs). The following were described at the teaching and learning activities:

1. Solving multiple-choice questions on the course website upon completion of the assigned reading
2. Participating in card activities aimed at organizing knowledge
3. Writing an analytical essay

Solving multiple-choice questions on the course website was the primary means available to the students for checking their knowledge levels vis-à-vis the first ELO- the identification of key theorists and debates among the scholars on Japanese studies. The second and third ELOs were tested through the card activities and the final essay. Subsequently, the assessment was made on the basis of two components: a written assignment (80%) and attendance (20%). The written assignment was comprehensive, covering the three focus areas discussed in the lectures—society, politics, and economy. However, the major emphasis was on the social aspect; I required each student to write a long essay focusing on Japanese society (1,000 words). The questions posed in both the politics and economy sections required short answers (300 words).

Facilitating Different Kinds of Knowledge Production

As mentioned earlier, my teaching strategy is based on the Strategic Alignment Model of Teaching and Learning (as shown in Table (1), which is primarily an integration of Ramsden's (1992) and Zimmerman's (1998) learning theories on higher education. The strategy is also theoretically supported by Duron et al. (2006) toward the promotion of critical thinking. Each phase of the Strategic Alignment Model of Teaching and Learning engages in a different type of teaching and learning activity and aims to produce different kinds of knowledge. In order to ascertain the progress of the students and their responses to my teaching, I would assign the students a card activity. For this purpose, I used small (A7-sized) white cards; the collected cards are primary empirical sources for this paper. The major intention of the card activity was to be directly involved in the students' efforts to enhance the ELOs by connecting

my teaching expertise with their self-regulated learning process. Given below is an account of the process I designed to facilitate the production of different kinds of knowledge.

Stage I. transmitting knowledge: forethought.

In the first stage of the Strategic Alignment Model of Teaching and Learning, students are expected to map out the phases of their self-regulatory learning process, according to Zimmerman (1998, p. 2). They are also expected to set “specific hierarchical learning goals” (Kreber et al., 2005, p. 80), as this is considered to be the next logical step after the basic stage of “being intrinsically interested” (p.80.) in Japanese society has been established. To respond to these demands, I explicitly present the following before commencing with the lectures: course aim, the ELOs, the TLAs, and the major groundwork that sets the stage for the students to begin their study of Japanese society. This exercise is a part of the primary task for a teacher: to ensure the transmission of knowledge, as Ramsden (1992, p. 16) points out. The clear specification of the learning objectives indeed helps students initiate critical learning; Duron et al. (2006, p. 161) describes this as an important part of Step 1 for enhancing critical thinking. In addition to announcing the course syllabus, I tell my students that I will never “describe” a phenomenon on Japan while teaching them; instead, I will try to “analyze” the phenomenon through the use of three analytical tools. The first of these tools is the use of the *etic/emic* perspectives, as introduced in the beginning of this paper; the second tool is the group model, which is primarily advocated by Japanese anthropologist Chie Nakane and which sees the collective orientation as a basic philosophy governing Japanese society (Nakane, 1970). The Japanese tend to accord greater importance to “frame” (a term of reference denoting a locality, institution, or particular relationship) than to “attribute” (a reference term for an individual’s occupation), and that this modern tendency is a carryover from the traditional familial structure known as *ie*. The third tool is the cultural production theory, propounded by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, which deals with the process of passing various aspects of a culture from one person to another or from one society to another. According to Bourdieu (1973), the ability of obtaining or conferring particular kinds of cultural capital can be converted into social class, and social class confirmed by cultural capital also generates conditions through which particular kinds of cultural capital can be obtained or conferred. Touching upon the themes of gender and education—two subjects of my forthcoming lectures— I explain the Japanese process of socialization through the lens of cultural production. I expect my students to feel free to employ these tools in the course of their efforts to

understand Japanese society. In fact, in my lecture, I always tried to introduce and explain the tools I would use to understand a certain phenomenon in Japanese society; I would clarify that using these tools would be a conscious process in organizing knowledge. Furthermore, I expect them to realize that they can also apply the very same tools to gain a sharper understanding of their own societies, a process that would lead them to the next phase of the self-regulated learning process. At the end of the session, I try to ascertain their understanding through a card activity. I raise the following question in the first card activity: Write what you think was the most important point in today’s lecture.

My practical objective in conducting the card activities is to monitor the development in my students’ understanding of the subject matter. Below, I have included several of my students’ responses:

- I think today’s lecture as a whole was very important as it gives us an understanding on how to approach future research on the topic.
- *Emic* and *etic*; where they meet is where you find the true society.
- The most important thing was that you told us not to stereotype a culture, but to look at both sides—the *emic* and the *etic*—of it. I think that this is a great way to understand a culture.
- One should be careful not to let stereotypes guide your learning; the attempt, instead, should be to approach a different culture from a perspective that tries to accommodate both the *emic* and *etic* viewpoints, and to equip oneself with the proper intellectual tools for such an analysis.
- The most important thing, in order to analyze properly, is to avoid stereotypes. To understand a reality, you have to try to mix an *etic* and *emic* perspective. By doing that you can minimize ethnocentrism.
- I think that getting a picture of what this course is going to be about and what the goal should be was the most important item in today’s lecture.

Most of the students showed an interest in the first tool, *emic/etic*; an admittedly simple yet significant strategy toward understanding a foreign society. In addition, in the interviews that I conducted after the course, all of the students appreciated the explanatory power of the first tool. One of the students, who later enrolled in another one of my courses, came to my office and stated

that the tool had stimulated her way of thinking. In the beginning of the second session, I identified the major points in the first lecture on the basis of what was written on the cards; I repeated several key theories of Japanese studies as well as the three analytical tools. In particular, I also encouraged the students to make active use of the three tools when reading the assigned material for the upcoming lectures.

Stage II. Organizing student activities-performance control. In the second stage of the Strategic Alignment Model of Teaching and Learning, students are expected to develop “performance and volitional control” (Zimmerman, 1998, p. 2) in their self-regulated learning activity. Meanwhile, my agenda as a teacher is to directly cater to the second ELO- developing a comparative analysis of Japan and Sweden. In an effort to connect the students’ needs and my teaching goals, I programmed a well-organized card activity, hinted by Ramsden (1992, p. 16), for organizing the students’ activity: I brought into my class a Japanese lunch box, an *obentō*. I proceeded to help students develop a comparative analysis by “managing to focus on their performance” (Kreber et al., 2005, p. 80), which is a key component in self-regulated learning. Toward this purpose, students were expected to spend time on reading an article titled “Japanese mothers and *obentō*s: The lunch-box as ideological state apparatus” by Anne Allison (Allison, 1991) before coming to class.

Here are the key points from my lecture notes: in Japan, the aesthetic value or visual appeal of food is deemed as important as its taste. This is true even for meals prepared for Japanese preschoolers, most of whom take an elaborate- and much-fussed-over- mom-made meal called *obentō* to school every day. The tradition has become part of the social education of both parents and children, and it acts as a connection between the home and the school for children during their first, potentially stressful experience of being away from home. A typical mother spends almost an hour crafting each lunch into a healthful, captivating blend of, say, cartoon characters; anything that will make the food appealing to her child. The teacher judges whether a lunch box is prepared according to the established *obentō* rules, e.g., the food should be, as far as possible, handmade and must be appetizing and aesthetically appealing to the child. In the course of my lecture, I mentioned a particular comment of an *obentō*-maker: “I have memories of my mother making *obentō* when I was little. I fortunately have a child that eats anything and everything. Hopefully, when she grows up, she’ll make *obentō* with the same kind of love for her children too” (a mother, an informant). To help students understand the subject, I showed them a short video clip, which I had found on YouTube, on what *obentō* looks like and how it is made.

Obentō is a distinctive feature of Japanese culture and thus alien to the Swedish people. Referring to the combination of the cultural production theory and the *etic/emic* perspective, I raised two questions through the card activity. At this stage, my key position corresponds with Step 2 of Duron et al.’s argument, teaching through questioning, to stimulate students’ critical thinking process (Duron et al., 2006, p. 162).

The second card activity was as follows: What does *making* the box lunches teach the mothers who *produce* them? What does *eating* the box lunches teach the preschoolers who *consume* them? Some of the students’ observations were as follows:

- The *obentō* phenomenon is shocking to me. To make food look so decorative is something that people in bakeries do, not mothers. In Sweden we would even go so far as to term this as “playing with your food,” which is not considered a good thing. But I think that this is way over the edge. It’s cool and I’m very impressed with their fantastic creations. However, I would never do it myself.
- I guess it is a competitive thing, like whoever makes the best *obentō* is termed the best housewife; we have no such practice in Sweden.
- From the *etic* point of view, we have a similar trend in Sweden regarding mothers of infants, where the assumption is that a mother who doesn’t cook her own food but buys pre-made food from a store is a bad mother. And the food she makes is required to be as complex and traditionally Swedish as possible. I think that making an *obentō* could possibly be a way of expressing creativity and could teach a mother to have a good relationship with her child.
- It teaches the mothers to be creative. Even if it takes a long time, they may be enjoying themselves more while making this sort of *obentō* than they would have had they been making regular sandwiches. Children also enjoy seeing food shaped in nice patterns and cartoons. They may learn to eat this sort of food faster. In addition, they feel their mothers’ love in the food. The mothers who make these lunch boxes have probably grown up eating from lunch boxes such as these. Their children will probably do the same.

This exercise was geared toward encouraging comparative analysis. It was a direct manifestation of the second ELO, i.e., presenting comparative perspectives on Japan and Sweden with respect to the

Japanese *obentō* as a medium, an objectified allegory of cultural capital (to use Bourdieu's terminology). As most of the students have yet to visit Japan and gain a deeper understanding of Japanese culture, one observes that their comments are based on their own value judgments, which stem from their daily experiences as Swedes. However, I was satisfied, since some comments, like the last comment mentioned above, were clearly successfully locating the analysis in the cultural production theory. Meanwhile, I also expected students to apply the same exercise during the performance control phases of their self-regulated learning and hoped that they would deepen their understanding of the subject by doing so. I continued with setting similar activities in the third session (on education) as well as the fourth (on work), combining card activities with required readings and visual presentations. Further, this kind of comparative analysis between Japan and Sweden was tested in the final essay.

Stage III. Making learning possible: self-reflection. The third stage of the Strategic Alignment Model of Teaching and Learning proceeds to "self-reflection" (Zimmerman, 1998, p. 2), a stage that is representative of an attempt on the teacher's part to facilitate the further learning of her or his students. One of the significant aspects of self-reflection is "seeking self-evaluation" (Kreber et al., 2005, p. 80). As mentioned previously, my role as a teacher is to create a setting wherein my students can continue their learning of the various facets of Japanese society that interest them; such practice has been encouraged by Ramsden (1992, p. 16). In order to support their learning, I need to ascertain the issues that have stirred the intellectual curiosity of my students. Here is my final card activity: What area(s) would you want to study more, if this course was expanded?

Given below are some of the students' responses:

- I would like to study more about how foreigners and minorities are integrated in the society.
- I would like to study more about the job market and business life in Japan, especially for foreigners.
- I want to learn more about the youth and the subcultures; in particular, about their lives, what they have to live with, the expectations of their families, etc. Can they become what they want, say rock stars or models, for example? I'd like to know more about their family lives, social structure, social codes, everyday life, and so on.

A student also expressed an interest in pop culture by saying, "It would be interesting to know more about the youth subculture, the so-called "kawaii" phenomenon, and what the general views

on this are among the adult population." Meanwhile, another student, stepping outside the majority mindset of his classmates, was evidently trying to develop his own interests as a political science major:

I want to know more about (1) the steps that the Japanese government will take in response to the demographic changes, (2) the identity of the Japanese people as members of the state- their national identity, their identity as owners of land, cultural identity, and so on.

I observed that my introductory lectures were able to trigger the intellectual curiosity and learning motivation of the students as far as their study on Japanese society was concerned. Some of them, in fact, mentioned several topics that were not covered (in sufficient detail) in the course curriculum, but which they apparently felt were relevant to their study subject.

To further advance my students' attempts at self-regulated learning on Japanese society, I compiled a list of books on Japanese society and put it up on my website. The list covered more than 100 books pertaining to many subfields. Further, some of the students chose to take my other course, Japan in Asia. The course was designed to offer an understanding of contemporary Japan from a broader, namely Asian and global, perspective. The series of lectures that this course comprises focus on a variety of topics, including Japanese pop culture, transnational peace movements, development, security, trade, and so on. Meanwhile, the ideas of the students that touched upon additional topics in the final card activity were significant because they formed the basis of the changes to be implemented in the following year's course content.

Concluding Reflection

My experiment, testing the relevance of the Strategic Alignment Model of Teaching and Learning, can, at this juncture, be deemed successful. The card activity at each stage, which aimed to generate different kinds of knowledge within the well-programmed teaching schedule, proved to be a very effective tool for enhancing self-regulated learning. Some students pointed out in the course evaluation held by the department that the card activity made them reflect on the lectures, a key purpose in the self-regulated learning. These activities also enabled me to ascertain my students' progress and comprehension of the course material before I proceeded to the next stage of the curriculum. Meanwhile, in addition to monitoring the students' progress through the curriculum, this experiment provided me with a concrete opportunity to develop my expertise as a teacher. The experience

can be summed up as a collaborative problem-based learning activity jointly undertaken by me and my students. Locating university teaching as a collaborative process of knowledge production, I developed this exploratory case wherein the teacher supported his students by providing them with a well-programmed teaching schedule. On their part, the students matched their teacher's efforts by exhibiting a high level of commitment. The teacher responded by showing a higher level of commitment to the students. It should be noted that all the students participated in the activities and there were no blank cards. They all wrote, at the very least, a few sentences. Furthermore, this case experiment confirmed the presence of a generation characterized by independent constructive learning, which include "the way that students acquire data and relate it to existing knowledge, the ways in which students process the knowledge to gain understanding, and finally how the students demonstrate the quality of what they have learned" (Cuthbert, 2005, p. 235-236); this is a crucial purpose of self-regulated learning. Two of the three students with whom I conducted open-ended interviews claimed that they considered the attainment of such constructive learning as a major outcome of participating in my classes, and they mentioned that they could not expect to achieve this objective through the conventional lecture-based format.

Fully mobilizing the *emic/etic* perspective, I strongly encouraged my Swedish students to understand a foreign culture, namely, Japanese society. During the course of my lecture series, I made it a point to reiterate the phrase "*emic/etic*" as often as I could. It allowed the students to formulate a comparative understanding of Japanese studies and theorize their own unique perspectives on the basis of their personal experiences of society and thoughts. I based the above on the fact that the development of a comparative perspective was advocated as one of the learning outcomes of my course. Meanwhile, for me, a native Japanese individual, this teaching experience was a precious source of gaining knowledge on Japan from the *etic* perspective, and it significantly contributed to my own understanding of Japanese society. As an anthropologist, furthermore, I had an underlying interest in observing the manner in which the students (mostly Swedes) dealt with foreign cultures by mobilizing the *emic/etic* perspective. My students' perspectives indeed gave me a fresh insight into my own society, forcing me to see familiar aspects in a new light. I experienced this several times over the course of my lecture series, and I tried to share these experiences with my students at the beginning of each class, when I gave feedback on the card activities. This outcome should

definitely be located as a significant part of the collaborative knowledge produced by me and my students in the classroom. I myself actually learned a lot from my students.

Nowadays, higher education is undergoing a dramatic shift, as undergraduate education increasingly takes on the form of a mass system and focuses more on the development of lifelong learning competencies, including generic employment-related skills, rather than on preparing research elites. By developing problem-based, self-regulated learning, university teachers can help their students cultivate lifelong learning skills, which in turn will increase their employability. In fact, as Yorke and Knight (2006, p. 2) point out, employability and good learning can be viewed as closely aligned, as against oppositional, constructs. Furthermore, given the increasing effectiveness of the knowledge produced in collaboration between academic staff and students in facilitating self-regulated learning, this could be a key to changing the role of university education in contemporary life. Such collaboration indeed generates a dynamic research culture at a university. It enhances the conventional role of the university as a place of knowledge transfer by encouraging dialogue between students and teachers.

Knowledge production in the course of higher education ought to be student-centric. Ramsden (2001, p. 4) argues this point by saying that "the main hope for realizing a genuinely student-centred (*sic*) undergraduate education lies in re-engineering the teaching-research nexus." In fact, Chang (2005) reports that several (more advanced) trials are being carried out in an effort to create a "directed community" model of teaching-research integration. In this model, undergraduate university students are expected to play a more active role in the education process. Currently, although they admittedly take ownership of their research projects, they are nevertheless strongly directed by the teacher. While the students undertake individual projects and work independently, they are formed into a research community.

The integration of information technology into the course activities would be a key to achieving such a dynamic research community. One possible way is to utilize the course website to a greater extent in order to achieve enhanced communication and facilitate self-regulated learning on a regular basis. Whereas this year in my course, the co-generative knowledge production was organized such that it took place between me (as a teacher) and each individual student, it is possible to extend this activity by setting up an interactive forum on the course website, where a group of students could discuss the course material and learn from each other. Students could facilitate their own self-regulated learning, thereby enhancing the value of student-centered learning in higher education. An active involvement of the students in the

education process could contribute crucially to constructing a positive learning climate in higher education.

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