Beyond a Buzzword: Student Perspectives on what Contributes to Engaging Educators and Classroom Experiences

Lesley Irvine and Sam Cunningham
Queensland University of Technology, Australia

Abstract

In a changing educational landscape, student engagement remains a prominent issue in research and practice. This study explores engagement from the student's perspective across multiple disciplines, year levels and delivery modes. It draws on 13,125 Student Evaluation of Teaching survey comments where students have used the word "engage" (or derivative) in response to individual educators. Part of speech tagging was used to identify surrounding words that helped to contextualise the inclusion of the term. Through content analysis, key words were then grouped into six themes (approachability; synonyms for good; clarity; enjoyment and enthusiasm; relevance; and subject matter expertise) that highlighted both individual educator attributes and the overall learning experience. This research provides practical considerations for educators and administrators in relation to what students find engaging and how to support such positive environments. Additionally, it reinforces the role students play as major stakeholders in their learning and ongoing discussions around engagement.

Introduction

Current world events continue to challenge our understanding of effective learning and teaching practices from the perspective of both student and educator. Following COVID-19 lockdowns, an Australian tertiary education report mentioned lack of engagement and lack of interaction with academics and peers as the main concern of students when universities were required to move to online learning (Martin, 2020). Most recently, embracing technological advancements is one of many recommendations noted in the Australian Universities Accord Report (2024). Another focus is on offering personalised and inclusive learning opportunities for maximum engagement by diverse student cohorts. Overall, the report highlights many ambitious goals to ensure "affordable and equitable opportunity for all Australians to access and participate in high-quality, engaging and transformative tertiary education programs" (Department of Education, 2024, p. 16). A key component centres on engagement[1] which is mentioned over 100 times in the body of the report. While this includes broader stakeholder engagement, there are references to engagement in a learning and teaching context.

Student engagement remains a pivotal and pressing issue in all educational sectors. For this reason, it is a hot topic at higher education conferences and within university learning and teaching groups. Despite continued discussions, and frequent usage, it is an elusive term. A simple definition of student engagement, "involving students in learning" (Headland, 2021); suggests

---

[1] Including the words engage, engaged and engaging.

that it is an important concept for both students and educators. While much has been written from an academic standpoint – including numerous recommendations on how to foster engagement – an under-researched area is how students perceive an engaging educator and learning experience. Addressing this gap, this study explores educator characteristics and classroom experiences that students associate with engagement when providing feedback on learning and teaching. This study contributes to broader conversations about student engagement. More specifically, it offers practical considerations for educators from the student's perspective.

Background

Student engagement is a much-researched area covering both conceptual and practical implications. Early research used the term "student involvement" to define "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (Astin, 1999, p. 518). Following this definition, various researchers have emphasised the role of the student with reference to "participat[ion] in educationally purposeful activities" (Coates, 2005, p. 26); "time and effort" (Kuh, 2009, p. 683) and interest and connection (Axelson & Flick, 2010). Engagement is also seen as cyclical in that the more engaged a student is with their studies, the more effort and energy they will exert leading to a sense of empowerment (Bond et al., 2020). In higher education literature, it is recognised as a key factor in furthering "academic success and personal growth" (Kahu & Nelson, 2018, p. 61). Overall, student engagement is linked to "positive social, cognitive, emotional, and behavioural investments" (Bowden et al., 2019, p. 1209). This latter definition connects to earlier research describing engagement as a multifaceted construct comprising behavioural, emotional [affective] and cognitive dimensions (Fredricks et al., 2004). These dimensions, including if and how they interact, are at the core of many engagement research studies.

A more recent dimension is agentic engagement, which considers the role students play in creating an effective and personally fulfilling learning environment (Reeve & Tseng, 2011). This type of engagement supports a social constructivist view of learning where students are active participants in their learning (Hanson & Sinclair, 2008). The educator's role is to provide opportunities for such meaning-making. At the core of agentic engagement is student agency. For Bandura, agency is the "power to originate action" (2001, p. 3). While agentic engagement aligns with active learning strategies where students are encouraged to participate in, think about and reflect on their experiences; it goes further to support the co-creation of learning experiences. As Reeve et al. (2020) suggest, agentic engagement focuses on the relational aspect of learning and teaching through "constructive, reciprocal, and collaborative social interactions" (p. 2).

Researchers have also conceptualised student engagement through frameworks such as the educational interface (Kahu & Nelson, 2018) and engagement interface (Trowler et al., 2021). In focussing on the student experience, Kahu and Nelson's framework includes four mechanisms to mediate student engagement, namely self-efficacy, emotions, belonging and well-being. However, Trowler et al. (2021) suggest six pathways to engagement: emotions, motivations, resilience, reflectivity, self-efficacy and belonging. The proposition of different mechanisms, or pathways, stresses the "contextual and dynamic nature of engagement" (Kahu et al., 2020, p. 657) and that it can "shift and change over time" (Trowler et al., 2021, p. 762).

While each pathway or mechanism contributes to engagement discussions, there are clear connections between them. For example, self-efficacy is identified as a pathway to engagement in the study by Trowler et al. (2021). Support tactics include "building students' awareness of their internal and external resources" and "fostering reappraisal to engender positive emotions" (pp. 772-773) which also relate to resilience and recognising the emotional impact of studying. Bowden et al. (2021) found that behavioural engagement significantly influences a student's sense of self-worth, including their self-efficacy beliefs. This extends behavioural engagement from matters of attendance or participation only, to include a student's sense of capability in relation to learning and learning potential. There are also ties to other key constructs in the educational literature. For example, self-efficacy supports self-regulated learning where students "set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation, and behavior" (Pintrich, 2000, p. 453). Similarly, the provision of feedback, or opportunities to ask for feedback, may foster a sense of belonging (Peacock et al., 2020) as well as boost self-efficacy beliefs (Kahu & Nelson, 2018). Throughout the literature, individual differences are noted. That is, student perceptions of their emotions, self-efficacy beliefs and sense of belonging are subjective and can change over the course of their academic career (Kahu &Nelson, 2018). These broader relationships, and differences, accentuate the multifaceted or multidimensional nature of the term engagement (Bowden et al., 2021; Fredricks et al., 2004).

Overall, the concept of an educational interface (Kahu & Nelson, 2018) or an engagement interface (Trowler et al., 2021) highlights the many stakeholders involved in creating proactive learning and teaching spaces (Kuh et al., 2008). These stakeholders include governments, institutions (including administrators and educators) and students (Kahu & Nelson, 2018). Beyond conceptual understandings of engagement, both frameworks offer general practical ideas:

> For example, feedback on a student's work increases the student's self-efficacy which then improves their engagement on future tasks. Or staff getting to know a student gives them a sense of belonging that then facilitates engagement in the classroom. (Kahu & Nelson, 2018, pp. 67-68)

This study focuses on the pivotal role of the educator in student engagement. Student engagement and teacher effectiveness are often connected in the literature. For example, when exploring student experiences and expectations around effective teachers, Chuyun Hu (2020) offers three themes: "teacher-student relationships, engagement and real-world experience" (p. 326). From the student's perspective, educators contribute to engagement through, facilitating discussions, using time wisely, being well prepared, sharing knowledge, accommodating different needs and continuing to learn alongside students (Chuyun Hu, 2020). Meanwhile, Delaney et al. (2010) concluded that effective educators are: 1) respectful, 2) knowledgeable, 3) approachable, 4) engaging, 5) communicative, 6) organized, 7) responsive, 8) professional, and 9) humorous (p. 5). From their study "engaging" was the fourth most mentioned attribute. Additional adjectives that described an engaging educator included: enthusiastic, interesting, passionate, motivating, creative, positive, charismatic, stimulating, interactive, energetic, and assertive (Delaney et al., 2010). Attributes mentioned in both studies support educator credibility. Drawing on Aristotle's persuasive appeal of ethos, McCroskey and Teven (1999) suggest this type of credibility is based on student perceptions of an educator's competence, trustworthiness and goodwill (caring). Student motivation to engage increases when educators are perceived as credible across all three dimensions (García et al., 2023).

However, it is important to emphasise that most of these previous studies do not focus on student engagement and in some cases (Chuyun Hu, 2020; Delaney et al., 2010;) rely on relatively small numbers of student opinions to explore teacher effectiveness. There is opportunity to delve deeper into how students associate educator characteristics and classroom experiences with engagement from a larger dataset, which this study explores.

A common mechanism for students to provide feedback on their learning experience is through Student Evaluation of Teaching surveys (SETs) (Spooren et al., 2013). While acknowledging concerns about the usefulness and fairness of SETs (Kreitzer & Sweet-Cushman, 2022), they provide an opportunity for students to offer feedback on their experience, in their own words. SETs generally include both quantitative questions (via a Likert scale) and qualitative questions (via open-ended responses). Open-text feedback in SETs has been shown to improve teaching quality and assessment (Marsh, 2007). SETs also provide an opportunity to analyse large quantities of qualitative feedback, which is less frequently explored in the literature (Cunningham-Nelson et al., 2021). This study draws on an extensive number of open-ended responses to further consider engagement through a student lens. Therefore, the research question is: *What characteristics do students associate with the term engage (or derivative) when providing feedback to individual educators via SETs?*

Methods

This research was undertaken at a large metropolitan university in Australia. This university teaches with a hybrid of face-to-face and online modes. At the end of each semester, students are encouraged to complete a SET survey consisting of two components. The first covers several questions about the subject, and the second focuses on teaching within the subject. Both components use a combination of closed questions (using a Likert scale) and open-text responses. This study focuses on de-identified, open-text student comments within the teaching section of the survey across four semesters (2021 and 2022) from the whole university. The open-ended survey question in the teaching component of the survey used for this study is: *Please provide feedback to [Educator Name]. This may include affirmations of their teaching or suggestions for improvement.*

Large amounts of text data provide the opportunity to identify patterns and themes from many participants. However, the challenge is doing this in a systematic way. Text analysis, or text mining methods can address this. These types of data analysis methodologies have been applied to understand student feedback previously (Cunningham-Nelson et al., 2019; Zaitseva et al., 2021). To begin the analysis process, student feedback was initially filtered from four semesters to one for ease of theming. As this study's focus is on what educator characteristics and classroom experiences students associate with the word engage, the data was further filtered to comments that included the word engage or derivative. From an initial pool of 19,402 comments, this left 3,350 pieces of text mentioning this term in a single semester, totalling 17% of the comments. This points to the prevalent use of the word in student comments, and its importance to students, despite it not being included as part of the initial survey question or prompt.

Next, automated part of speech (POS) tagging was used to identify the distinct types of words in each student comment. POS tagging aims to assign grammar categories to each word in a comment and is trained from larger text datasets (Petrov et al., 2011). This method of text analysis was chosen as the researchers wanted to further understand the ways in which students used parts of speech to form their responses. For example, the following sentence includes corresponding speech tags: The

(DETERMINER) tutor (NOUN) was (VERB) engaging (ADJECTIVE) and (CONJUNCTION) knowledgeable (ADJECTIVE) in (ADPOSITION) class (NOUN). In isolating these parts of speech, key elements of each response can be identified, and others ignored.

This study initially focussed on adjective tags as they represent words students used to contextualise the word engage or derivative. A frequency count was completed of the top 100 adjectives identified through POS tags which were further filtered to 48 words following an additional investigative process. Words that could not be used to describe a person or experience were excluded from the list, for example, *entire*, *general* and *few*. In some instances, the base word[2] was included in the frequency count expanding the grammar categories from adjectives only. This was an intentional decision to address the research question. For example, in the following two comments, both supportive and support help to contextualise the words engaging and engaged: 1) [This tutor] was "supportive [ADJECTIVE], engaging, happy and encouraged our learning". 2) "You kept me engaged … your support [NOUN] of students has been hard to match". It is also important to note that some words had the potential to fit into several themes. In these instances, the researchers explored how the term was most often used in student comments. Overall, the focus of this study was on general meaning rather than grammar categories.

The 48 words were then grouped through content analysis, validated by two researchers. Emergent content analysis allowed for the researchers to explore the words and develop themes initially independently, and then jointly to develop an agreement (Stemler, 2000). The themes were chosen not to be of equal size, but to bring together similar ideas. Once the themes had been decided, the dataset was expanded to include four semesters. Of the 81,700 student comments across four semesters, 13,125 included the word engage or derivative (16%). Human research ethics approval for this research (Approval No. 6203) was obtained through Queensland University of Technology (QUT).

Results

The study explored how students used the term engage or derivative in their feedback comments addressed to individual educators. To do this, it focused on surrounding words that helped to contextualise the inclusion of the term. Keywords were grouped into six themes presented in Table 1 using content analysis. This table also includes how many times identified words were used within each theme as well as the overall percentage for all six themes.

Table 1

Themes of Engagement and Theme Counts

	Theme	Theme count	Theme percentage
	Approachability	7,987	24.6%
	Synonyms for good	7,942	24.4%
	Clarity	5,102	15.7%
	Enjoyment and enthusiasm	4,595	14.1%
	Relevance	3,618	11.1%
	Subject matter expertise	3,296	10.1%

---

[2] The decision to include base words depended on usage (e.g., students only referred to amazing rather than amaze or amazed) and meaning (e.g., relate, related and relatable considered overall connection, whereas "a friendly tutor" is different to "I made friends in this class").

The next section unpacks each theme including counts for each theme, words within each theme and example student comments, or excerpts, chosen to represent each theme.

Theme 1: Approachability

This theme considered attributes about the educator, "great engaging and *encouraging* teacher who was not judgmental" as well as the type of learning environment that was created, "I enjoyed engaging in tutorials as you created a space that felt *safe* and *comfortable*". Table 2 lists each word and the number of times it appeared. The most used word was *help* which made up 39.9% of the total words in this theme. The second was *approach* at 13.2%.

Table 2

Words Within the "Approachability" Theme

Word	Word count	Word	Word count	Word	Word count
help	3,187	friendly	382	happy	263
approach	1,054	relate	315	open	260
support	1,032	positive	305	available	132
encourage	643	comfort	286	safe	128

Theme 2: Synonyms for Good

This theme included positive descriptors about the educator, "[This tutor] is *awesome*, very helpful and engaging" and the learning experience, "[This tutor] has given me by far the *best* tutorials I've ever had in my degree ... constantly makes an effort to engage and motivate students". Table 3 lists each word and the number of times it appeared. The most used word was *great* which made up 30.6% of the total words in this theme. The second was *good* at 16.1%.

Table 3

Words Within the "Synonyms for Good" Theme

Word	Word count	Word	Word count	Word	Word count
great	2,433	excellent	528	nice	285
good	1,281	super	517	favourite	284
best	737	fantastic	396	wonderful	252
amazing	634	incredible	387	awesome	208

Theme 3: Clarity

Clarity was used in many ways about the educator's ability to communicate in the classroom, "*Clear*, concise and engaging tutorials. Setting *clear* expectations for the tutorials was beneficial" as well as progression of content, "Considering this unit is mostly an online unit [this tutor] does well to keep the content engaging and *easy* to watch". Table 4 lists each word and the number of times it appeared. The most used word was *understand* which made up 32.1% of the total words in this theme. The second was *easy* at 26.5%.

Table 4

Words Within the "Clarity" Theme

Word	Word count	Word	Word count
understand	1,640	hard	542
easy	1,351	difficult	432
clear	1038	complex	99

Theme 4: Enjoyment and Enthusiasm

This theme broadly included student comments about an educator's ability to create an enjoyable learning environment, "You are always *enthusiastic* and make lectures and workshops *fun* and engaging" as well as an educator's enthusiasm for the subject matter and teaching, "Highly engaging ... very *enthusiastic* and *passionate* about what she was teaching". Table 5 lists each word and the number of times it appeared. The most used word was *enjoy* which made up 43.9% of the total words in this theme. The second was *fun* at 24.7%.

Table 5

Words Within the "Enjoyment and Enthusiasm" Theme

Word	Word count	Word	Word count
enjoy	2,015	passion	952
fun	1,136	enthuse	492

Theme 5: Relevance

This theme included student perceptions of the overall usefulness of the subject for their studies and future career, including the educator's real-life industry experiences. "[This tutor] is highly engaging and provides *relevant* industry insights and great examples in the lecture." Table 6 lists each word and the number of times it appeared. The most used word was *interest* which made up 35.7% of the total words in this theme. The second was *useful* at 11.7%.

Table 6

Words Within the "Relevance" Theme

Word	Word count	Word	Word Count
interest	1,292	value	267
useful	424	benefit	252
interact	373	effective	211
practical	357	constructive	118
relevant	324		

Theme 6: Subject Matter Expertise

In the main, this theme referred to the perceived competence of the educator in relation to content and presentation of content. "[This tutor] is very *knowledgeable*, *professional* and able to deliver tutorial classes in an engaging and *insightful* way." Table 7 lists each word and the number of times it appeared. The most used word was *knowledge* which made up 45.4% of the total words in this theme. The second was *inform* at 32.1%.

Table 7

Words Within the "Subject Matter Expertise" Theme

Word	Word count	Word	Word count
knowledge	1,496	professional	222
inform	1,057	important	182
insight	339		

Discussion

Drawing on an extensive number of qualitative comments, this study adds to engagement discussions from the student's perspective. Firstly, it recognises that engagement is a high priority for students as it was frequently referred to in end-of-semester feedback without prompting (16% of comments). Secondly, it provides a list of student-led considerations about what contributes to an engaging learning environment facilitated by an educator. To do this, it highlights the interconnectedness of educator and learning experience in the eyes of students. While students were encouraged to comment on a specific educator, they included what this meant, and how it affected their learning, in the subject or class overall. Furthermore, the six themes offer a more in-depth look at what students find engaging or not engaging as identified words in each theme offer both positive and negative associations, which will be discussed shortly.

On its own, Theme 2 (synonyms for good) is of limited use to this study. For example, the comment "[This lecturer] was *excellent*" does not offer any explanation beyond a positive sentiment. However, as these words were part of a longer comment, they provide additional information about how the word was used:

> An excellent lecturer. She was incredibly explicit about what content she was delivering each week and how it fits within the unit ... I felt like I could reach out to her for further support at any time. She also presented learning content in a very engaging way, clearly explaining everything and providing great examples.

For this student, an *excellent* lecturer was also a supportive one (approachability). In addition, the ability to clearly explain content (clarity) was seen to contribute to engagement. Students regularly mentioned multiple themes in a single comment suggesting that students also view engagement as multi-faceted or multidimensional (Bowden et al., 2021; Fredricks et al., 2004;). Additionally, this theme emphasises the nature of engagement being a positive aspect for students. This mirrors the literature in which engagement is given high priority by multiple stakeholders including institutions, academics and students (Kahu & Nelson, 2018; Trowler et al., 2021).

Theme 1 (approachability) recognises the relational aspect of learning and teaching. In highlighting positive attributes, numerous comments related to a supportive classroom setting that encouraged questions. Such environments not only promote deeper understanding of subject content but also empower students to get involved and stay involved, a key consideration of early engagement research (Astin, 1999). This also links with agentic engagement and an emphasis on "open and supportive communication styles" between educators and students (Reeve et al., 2020).

As previously mentioned, student feedback offered perspectives on both positive and negative experiences and what this meant for their ability to engage. For example, with Theme 1, the following two comments consider what students found *helpful* and *unhelpful*:

> One of the best tutors I've had. Very engaging in class, makes sure no one is left behind or confused, and so helpful! Very knowledgeable on the subject.

> [This tutor] was not able to engage with the students very well, the workshops frequently ran overtime, and the responses provided in the workshops were sometimes unhelpful … I suggest being more giving with advice … and staying on topic to avoid confusion.

In terms of what was perceived as unhelpful, the second comment relates to themes 3 and 5 (clarity and relevance). Relevance suggests connection to both the content and learning experience and relates to behavioural engagement (time and effort); emotional engagement (interest) and cognitive engagement (deeper learning) (Kahu & Nelson, 2018). Connections to an educator's 'real-world experiences' (Chuyun Hu, 2020) were also highly valued, as with:

> The way you taught during the live lectures was extremely engaging. It was always really helpful when you would provide examples from your experience. It helped to see how the content applied in the real world.

Clarity includes effective pedagogical practices as well as sharing knowledge in a clear and organised manner. Specifically, the scaffolding of content was frequently mentioned in comments where students referred to clarity. For example:

> [This tutor] made understanding this unit easy. Her ability to create discussions within zoom was amazing! There was not one tutorial where I lost focus or got lost in the content and even if I simply listened, I was still interested and engaged. The pacing was fantastic and the delivery excellent.

The opposite was also mentioned:

> The prac classes are engaging and fun however the lectures … are not easy to follow. [It] is unrealistic to complete 80 slides per lecture.

Scaffolding also supports self-regulated learning, equipping students to keep up with unit material and expectations (Pintrich, 2000). Another positive attribute connected to clarity was providing feedback to further explain material, for example:

> Very engaging, thorough, and easy to follow … provides very good feedback on assessment and answers all questions regarding assessment well.

Provision of feedback, and opportunities to ask for feedback, are mentioned in the literature as concrete ways of building a sense of belonging (Peacock al., 2020) and as a source of self-efficacy beliefs (Kahu & Nelson, 2018). Feedback channels and frequency of replies extends this study to broader considerations of an educator's role and responsibilities considering workload implications, which is identified as a psychosocial influence within the educational interface (Kahu & Nelson, 2018).

Themes 4 (enjoyment and enthusiasm) and 6 (subject matter expertise) help to create worthwhile and positive learning opportunities highlighting overall educator credibility and appeals to competence, trustworthiness and goodwill (McCroskey & Teven, 1999). For example:

> You have always been so supportive, warm and caring … You made our online lessons fun and engaging which resulted in positive contributions from the students. Thank you also for always getting back to us so promptly … which made us want to learn more about the subject.

> I found your tutorials very helpful and enjoyable as you were very engaging, and you didn't overcomplicate the content.

As with clarity, references to competence included an understanding of subject matter as well as an ability to share that content in an educational setting. Again, this underlines the myriad of influences that surround Kahu and Nelson's (2018) educational interface which includes broader curriculum decisions as well as training opportunities and workload expectations for educators entrusted to deliver the curriculum. As the above quotes suggest, students provided similar feedback regardless of whether the class was in person or online, reinforcing the importance of specific educator attributes or teaching approaches rather than mode of delivery.

It is possible to map five of the six themes from this study to the nine themes identified by Delaney et al. (2010): **Approachable** (Approachable, Respectful and Responsive); **Clarity** (Organised, Communicative); **Enjoyment and enthusiasm** (Engaging, Humorous). **Relevance / Subject matter expertise** (Knowledgeable, Professional). This suggests that students continue to value specific attributes of an educator and learning experience. One of the characteristics that Delaney et al. (2010) identified was the word engaging. As the literature review highlights, this is a nebulous term, which this study helps to address. Without prompting, students rarely use terms such as "sense of belonging" or "self-efficacy beliefs" as part of SET responses. Yet, a significant number chose to include the word engage or derivative in their comments highlighting that it is a meaningful term

for both students and educators. This study gives further voice to the student's perspective offering a more comprehensive understanding of what students find engaging and not engaging through their own words and experiences.

Potential limitations of this study involve the use of SET survey comments. The percentage of students who fill in these surveys does not capture the opinion of most students (often between 20-25% response rates). For this study, it could mean that only engaged students were included in the first place which may narrow the relevance of findings. However, the size of the dataset (13,125 comments mention the word engage or derivative) still provides a substantial and diverse pool of responses. In assigning words to different themes, the researchers considered context. For example, 'constructive' was most often associated with feedback and therefore aligned to Theme 5 (relevance). It is possible that different researchers could assign specific terms to other themes. However, even if some individual words were assigned differently, the six themes would remain, and likely occur in the same frequency order.

Conclusion

This study suggests that students associate engagement with the following themes: approachability; synonyms for good; clarity; enjoyment and enthusiasm; relevance; and subject matter expertise. As data came from multiple faculties and schools within one university, findings can be extrapolated for broader consideration. Therefore, the results of this study offer two main insights: 1) The way students refer to engagement relates to key concepts discussed in the broader literature. As indicated throughout the discussion section, both students and researchers draw on similar ideas, if not language choices, when discussing engagement and, 2) While the six identified themes appear broad and almost nebulous – as with the term engagement – extra words inside each theme, along with student quotes, offer more in-depth and practical considerations of each theme.

These insights benefit both educators (an overview of student expectations about what contributes to their engagement) and decision-makers (a better understanding of what is required to create an engaging classroom experience). For example, from the student's perspective, using the six themes from this study, engaging educators are *Approachable and knowledgeable while presenting good learning experiences that are clear, relevant, and enjoyable.* Finally, student comments about the importance of ongoing feedback and responsiveness connects with workload expectations in an industry that relies heavily on sessional staff. This is timely research considering calls to provide personalised and inclusive learning opportunities for more students (Australian Government, 2024). The main takeaway is that students offer a critical voice in any discussion around what they find engaging.

References

Astin, A. W. (1999). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Development*, *40*(5), 518–529.

Axelson, R. D., & Flick, A. (2010). Defining student engagement. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, 43*(1), 38–43. https://doi.org/10.1080/00091383.2011.533096

Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *52*(1), 1–26. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.1

Bond, M., Buntins, K., Bedenlier, S., Zawacki-Richter, O., & Kerres, M. (2020). Mapping research in student engagement and educational technology in higher education: A systematic evidence map. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, *17*(1), 1–30. https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-019-0176-8

Bowden, J. L.-H., Tickle, L., and Naumann, K. (2021). The four pillars of tertiary student engagement and success: A holistic measurement approach. *Studies in Higher Education*, *46*(6), 1207-1224. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2019.1672647

Chuyun Hu, C. (2020). Understanding college students' perceptions of effective teaching. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, *32*(2), 318-328.

Coates, H. (2005). The value of student engagement for higher education quality assurance. *Quality in Higher Education*, *11*(1), 25-36. https://doi.org/10.1080/13538320500074915

Cunningham-Nelson, S., Baktashmotlagh, M., & Boles, W. (2019). Visualizing student opinion through text analysis. *IEEE Transactions on Education*, *62*(4), 305–311. https://doi.org/10.1109/TE.2019.2924385

Cunningham-Nelson, S., Laundon, M., & Cathcart, A. (2021). Beyond satisfaction scores: Visualising student comments for whole-of-course evaluation. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 46*(5), 685-700. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2020.1805409

Department of Education. (2024). *Australian Universities Accord: Final report* https://www.education.gov.au/australian-universities-accord/resources/final-report

Delaney, J. G., Johnson, A., Johnson, T. D., & Treslan, D. (2010). *Students 'perceptions of effective teaching in higher education*. https://research.library.mun.ca/8370/1/SPETHE_Final_Report.pdf

Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, *74*(1), 59–109. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543074001059

Garcia, A. J., Froment, F. A., & Bohorquez, M. R. (2023). University teacher credibility as a strategy to motivate students. *Journal of New Approaches in Educational Research*, *12*(2), 292-306. https://doi.org/10.7821/naer.2023J.1469

Hanson, J. M., & Sinclair, K. E. (2008). Social constructivist teaching methods in Australian universities – reported uptake and perceived learning effects: A survey of lecturers. *Higher Education Research & Development, 27*(3), 169–186. http://doi.org/10.1080/07294360802183754

Headland, C. (2021). What does 'student engagement' mean to you? And you? And you? *Times Higher Education*. https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/what-does-student-engagement-mean-you-and-you-and-you

Kahu, E. R., Picton, C., & Nelson, K. (2020). Pathways to engagement: A longitudinal study of the first-year student experience in the educational interface. *Higher Education*, *79*(4), 657–673. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-019-00429-w

Kahu, E. R., & Nelson, K. (2018). Student engagement in the educational interface: Understanding the mechanisms of student success. *Higher Education Research and Development*, *37*(1), 58–71. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2017.1344197

Kreitzer, R. J., & Sweet-Cushman, J. (2022). Evaluating student evaluations of teaching: A review of measurement and equity bias in SETs and recommendations for ethical reform. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, *20*(1), 73–84. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10805-021-09400-w

Kuh, G. D. (2009). What student affairs professionals need to know about student engagement. *Journal of College Student Development*, *50*(6), 683–706. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.0.0099

Kuh, G. D., Cruce, T. M., Shoup, R., Kinzie, J., & Gonyea, R. M. (2008). Unmasking the effects of student engagement on first-year college grades and persistence. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *79*(5), 540–563. https://doi.org/10.1353/jhe.0.0019

Marsh, H. W. (2007). Students' evaluations of university teaching: Dimensionality, reliability, validity, potential biases and usefulness. In R. P. Perry & J. C. Smart (Eds.), *The scholarship of teaching and learning in higher education: An evidence-based perspective,* (pp. 319-383). Springer.

Martin, L. (2020). Foundations for good practice: The student experience of online learning in Australian higher education during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Australian Government Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency*. https://www.teqsa.gov.au/guides-resources/resources/sector-updates-and-alerts/foundations-good-practice-student-experience-online-learning-australian-higher-education-during-covid-19-pandemic

McCroskey, J. C., & Teven, J. J. (1999). Goodwill: A reexamination of the construct and its measurement. *Communication Monographs*, *66*(1), 90–103. https://doi.org/10.1080/03637759909376464

Peacock, S., Cowan, J., Irvine, L., & Williams, J. (2020). An exploration into the importance of a sense of belonging for online learners. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, *21*(2), 18–35. https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v20i5.4539

Petrov, S., Das, D., & McDonald, R. (2011). *A universal part-of-speech tagset*. arXiv:1104.2086. https://doi.org/10.48550/arxiv.1104.2086

Pintrich, P. (2000). The role of goal orientation in self-regulated learning. In M. Boekaerts, Pintrich, P. R, & Zeider, M. (Eds.), *Handbook of self-regulation,* (pp. 451-512). Academic Press.

Reeve, J., & Tseng, C.-M. (2011). Agency as a fourth aspect of students' engagement during learning activities. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *36*(4), 257–267. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2011.05.002

Reeve, J., Cheon, S. H., & Jang, H. (2020). How and why students make academic progress: Reconceptualizing the student engagement construct to increase its explanatory power. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *62*(July), 101899. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2020.101899

Spooren, P., Brockx, B., & Mortelmans, D. (2013). On the validity of student evaluation of teaching: The state of the art. *Review of Educational Research*, *83*(4), 598–642. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654313496870

Stemler, S. (2000). An overview of content analysis. *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation, 7*(1). https://doi.org/10.7275/z6fm-2e34

Trowler, V., Allan, R. L., Bryk, J., & Din, R. R. (2022). Pathways to student engagement: Beyond triggers and mechanisms at the engagement interface. *Higher Education*, *84*(4), 761–777. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-021-00798-1

Zaitseva, E., Santhanam, E., & Tucker, B. (2021). *Analysing student feedback in higher education*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003138785