

Engage the Sage: Using Trickle-Down Engagement to Maximize Both Teacher and Student Engagement

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The experiences of students in class have been common topics in the scholarship of teaching and learning (e.g., Schaufeli et al., 2002; Steele & Fullagar, 2009). I will present research investigating the under-appreciated focus on faculty's experience in teaching. Applying the perspective of positive psychology (e.g., Fredrickson, 2001; Sheldon & King, 2001), the theoretical foundations of self-determination theory (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 1985; Eisenberger & Cameron, 1996), and research on intrinsic/extrinsic motivation (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2000), our trickle-down engagement model predicts more teacher engagement will be associated with more student engagement, which will ultimately be associated with better student learning. Our findings, from several studies, supported our trickle-down engagement model. Levels of teacher engagement, student engagement, and student performance were positively related, and the effect of teacher engagement on student performance was mediated by student engagement. Further, teacher engagement was associated with better subjective experiences in class. As teachers reported more belief in trickle-down engagement and more self-efficacy in being engaging, they reported more positive (e.g., inspired), and less negative self-directed (e.g., anxious) and other-directed (e.g., annoyed), emotional experiences in class. Finally, we identified specific strategies teachers use prior to (e.g., contextualize the content) as well as during class (e.g., manage their own emotions and behaviors) to maximize the collective engagement of teachers and students in class. I will discuss practical strategies teachers may employ to optimize their engagement in teaching, which may then "trickle down" to optimize the engagement (and learning) of their students.