

Faculty Impact on Persistence and Success in
Developmental Writing Courses

by

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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Approved March 2012 by the
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2012

ABSTRACT

In the next decade, community college English departments will expand their developmental course offerings. The students who take these developmental courses generally have higher incidence of diagnosed learning

disabilities, bleak economic circumstances that require them to work full time, greater dependence on public transportation, and some level of frustration and confusion about being placed in a non-credit course despite graduating from high school.

Using a qualitative approach, this action research study articulates the faculty behaviors, classroom environments, and faculty-student interactions that help developmental writing students succeed. The researcher interviewed successful students about what the faculty members did that helped them succeed in developmental writing classes.

Then the researcher created and tested a checklist to help writing instructors conform their practices to best practices identified in published research and interviews with successful students. Instructors found the checklist useful in evaluating their own practices in relation to the current research.

DEDICATION

To my God-given husband, W. David Bixler, P.E., S.E. Your support and encouragement makes me a better person, a better scholar, and a better teacher. Because of you, I am able to be me. Throughout this process, you have been there with listening ears, hot dog dinners, flower bouquets, much-needed laughs, and open arms. Most of all, you have given me the gift that is you.

To my big brother, William H. Holbert, II, M.S. When things got off track, you stayed behind me and watched out for me like a big brother. Your phone calls and texts reminded me that the journey is larger than the people involved.

To my parents. Cdr. W. H. Holbert USN Ret., DAV and Patricia Anna Holbert, FNP. Teaching me that education is the foundation of everything else has carried me through my career and my academic endeavors. Dad, I remember when you moved me into Greene Dorm at East Carolina University, and, at 17, I turned to you and said, "I am going to get a bachelor's, then a master's, then a doctor degree right here!" You laughed and reminded me that it all starts with the bachelor's degree. I have now come full circle, and it is because of my parents' example.

To educators. We are fortunate because our life's work is the foundation of democracy, peace, and civil discourse. Let us continue to work together in finding ways to help each other help students.

To my students. I honor your journey and thank you for letting me be of service.

To my teachers. I remember many of the teachers who touched my life. Mrs. Dezeletz in the first grade at Shelton Park Elementary, Mrs. Weber at Bayside High School, Luke Whisnant at East Carolina, Dr. Kimble from Norfolk State, and Dr. De Los Santos, Dr. Clark, Dr. Rund and Dr. Turner from ASU. Every day, I carry with me something that you taught me.

To my fellowship. You laid out the steps I needed to take in order to get where I was supposed to go. Then, you took my hand and walked with me through it all. Your message of hope is found in the following pages.

To God. Thank you for sustaining me through the storms and the sunshine; everything has been both a lesson and a blessing. I am grateful for the gifts you have given me, and I want to use them to serve You by helping others.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation has been a joint venture with generous professionals who mentored me and encouraged me to do my very best. My committee chair, Dr. Christopher Clark, has been a kind and encouraging leader who helped me see the transforming potential of action research and pointed me in the right direction and helped me see the possibilities. Dr. Jim Rund taught me about the history of higher education and the role of higher education in our democracy. He challenged me to make my research relevant. Committee member Dr. Donna Young has been there for me throughout the entire process. She let me vent when needed and gave me helpful advice when I need that as well. Her research on developmental reading students opened the door for this dissertation on developmental writing. Dissertation advisor, Dr. Michele Mosco, continued to remind me that I could do this, and she gave me the support to make it from one phase to the next.

For the “Lessons Learned” section of this dissertation, I could add an entire section about how the research process has taught me the meaning of true friendship. Most people go through life merely thinking that their friends have their backs; as a result of this dissertation process, I am fortunate enough to know for sure. While it would be impossible to name everyone who supported me, I want to acknowledge my corner crew: Ms. Kat Shevlin, Dr. Rhonda McDonnell, Dr. Anabel Aportela, Dr. Larry Tualla, and my fellow cohort members who helped make this dissertation possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF FIGURES	x
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
Researcher's Journey	1
Problem Statement	2
Role of Community Colleges	3
Policy Changes Increasing Enrollment	3
Increasing Developmental Course Enrollment.....	5
Pedagogical Challenges	7
Student Perceptions	7
Research Question	8
2 REVIEW OF SUPPORTING SCHOLARSHIP.....	10
Overview	10
Key Terms	10
History of Developmental Education	11
Politics of Developmental Education	13
Meritocracy	13
Egalitarian	13
Bureaucratic	14
Community Colleges	14
Developmental Education Policies.....	14

CHAPTER	Page
Testing Policies	15
Policymakers	15
Maricopa Community College Policies.....	16
Funding Developmental Education	16
Cost-Benefit Analysis of Developmental Education.....	17
Increased Cost of Social Programs	17
Retention in Community Colleges	18
Interventions.....	18
Developmental Education Theory	19
Effective Developmental Education Programs	19
Program Policies	20
Program Components.....	20
Effective Instructional Practices.....	21
Instructor-Student Interactions.....	21
Instructor Behaviors	21
Validation of Students	11
Varied Learning Strategies	23
Encouraging Classroom Environments	24
Checklists as Practical Tools	25
Researcher's Community of Practice.....	25
Researcher's Leadership Responsibilities	26

CHAPTER	Page
3 RESEARCH DESIGN.....	27
Purpose of the Study and Research Questions	27
Action Research.....	27
Research Design Process.....	28
Theoretical Orientation.....	30
Institutional Review Board	31
Pilot Study.....	31
Student Participation Recruitment	33
Student Sample.....	34
Student Interview Data Collection	35
Pilot Interview	35
Study Interviews	36
Interview Data Management	37
Determining Solutions.....	37
Instructor Participant Recruitment	38
Instructor Sample.....	39
Instructor Data Collection	39
Instructor Data Management	39
Summary	40
4 ANALYSIS AND ACTION.....	41
Thematic Analysis of Student Interviews	41
Transcript Review.....	41

CHAPTER	Page
Coding Data	42
Confirmations from Student Interviews	45
Surprises from Student Interviews	46
Instructor Evaluation of Checklist Use	47
Usability	47
Helpfulness	48
Suggestions	48
Researcher Bias	49
Qualitative Validity	49
5 CONCLUSION	52
Summary of the Study	52
Lessons Learned	52
Faculty Reflections	53
Researcher Reflections	54
Implications	55
Future Research	55
REFERENCES	57
APPENDIX	
A ACTION RESEARCH SPIRAL	68
B INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARDS APPROVAL	70
C STUDENT INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE	74
D RECRUITMENT SCRIPT	76

APPENDIX	Page
E EMAIL RECRUITMENT LETTER	78
F DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION SURVEY	80
G INFORMATION LETTER - INTERVIEWS	85
H PILOT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	87
I UPDATED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	89
J RECRUITMENT EMAIL- ACTION PHASE	91
K RECRUITMENT LETTER- ACTION PHASE	93
L FACULTY SELF-REFLECTIVE PLANNING GUIDE	95

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1.	Effects of developmental education on student success	6
2.	Faculty influence on student success	23
3.	Criteria for effective comlists	25
4.	Action research timeline	29
5.	Planning checklist for developmental writing instructors	38
6.	Data analysis process	44

Chapter 1 Introduction

“To be a teacher in the right sense is to be a learner.

I am not a teacher, only a fellow student.” Soren Kierkegaard

Researcher’s Journey

My journey began when I decided that I wanted to choose a topic that was important to me, and I wanted to write a dissertation that would help faculty to help students. If a democracy depends on a well-informed citizenry, then it stands to reason that educating students and teaching them to communicate effectively are patriotic endeavors that strengthen our nation. During the first stages of this process, I learned just how many people lack the basic skills required to effectively participate in their government; as I began to research the professional educators who dedicate their careers to helping these students bring their writing skills up to a functional level, I saw an opportunity to be of service to students and to my country.

When I got the opportunity to talk with developmental writing students who had transformed their writing from paragraph-level developmental skills to college-level essay writing, I realized that these students really benefitted from their developmental writing classes. Because four of these students took the time to speak candidly with me about their experience, I was able to elucidate ways that faculty can help the students help themselves. I translated the research and the students’ voices into a tool that could help faculty improve their instructional practices.

I then employed the tool to help writing instructors as they planned for the spring 2012 semester at Scottsdale Community College. Through their feedback, I was able to identify ways that educators could use current research and student feedback to improve instructional practices in community college writing classes.

Problem Statement

A nationwide survey of college administrators, instructors and business leaders revealed that the largest problem colleges face today is the increasing number of students who need developmental coursework (Crews, 2004; Immerwahr, 1999). This new generation of under-educated learners lacks the qualifications to enter the workforce (Seaman, 2007) and includes older adults with families, first-generation college students, minority and foreign-born students, socioeconomically disadvantaged and part-time students (Crews, 2007).

Developmental students enter college lacking specific skills or abilities to participate in college-level coursework and need additional preparation in a particular subject such as reading, writing, and mathematics (Moss & Yeaton, 2006; Perin, 2006). They are generally characterized by social, personal, and academic frailties; they are non-traditional students with families, first-generation learners, and minority students (Jenkins & Boswell, 2002; Roueche & Roueche, 1999; Russell, 2008). Only 70% of public 4-year universities offer developmental courses while 99% of community colleges provide developmental coursework (Boylan & Bonham, 2007) and 10 states discourage public four-year universities from offering remedial education (Jenkins & Boswell, 2002).

Role of community colleges. In light of this, community colleges are filling the gap for students who lack both the academic preparation to matriculate through higher education and the skills they need to remain in a degree-granting institution (Hoyt, 1999; Kreysa, 2007; Levey, 2006). Between 2005 and 2016, total enrollment in all post secondary degree-granting institutions is projected to increase by 19% to 20.4 million students (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2007). About 40% of those students will begin their post-secondary education at community colleges, and 60% of these students will enroll in at least one developmental course (Bailey, Leinbach, & Jenkins, 2005). Thus, developmental education will be the gateway for almost 25% of the 2.9 million first-year community college students in the United States (Milliron, 2004; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2000, 2007), yet less than 25% of these developmental education students will complete a degree or certificate within eight years of entering college (Adams, 2010; Bailey, 2009) compared to 40% of students who do not enroll in developmental courses (Bailey, 2009).

Policy changes increasing enrollment. From 2000-2006, public 2-year degree-granting institutions saw a 10% increase in enrollment (U.S. Department of Education, 2008); this increased enrollment of community college students brings an increased number of students needing remediation. Policies aimed at increasing access have helped more students begin college, but those same policies seem to hinder completion in many instances (Shulock & Moore, 2007). Students who are unprepared for college work are more likely to drop out (Boughan, 1998; Hoyt, 1999; Lanni, 1998). Additionally, the more

developmental courses a student must take, the less likely the student is to finish a college-level course. In fact, only 24% of reading students placed three levels below 100-level courses end up passing one college level course (Adelman, 1996; Hern, 2010; Hoyt, 1999). On average, only 29% of students in public two-year colleges pass their developmental writing course (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1996). Furthermore, only 44% of students placed in developmental courses complete their full sequence of prescribed developmental courses, and less than one fourth of community college developmental education students complete a degree or certificate within eight years (Bailey, 2009).

To determine the academic preparedness of entering students, colleges require placement tests for new students (Prince, 2005). While some states are attempting to standardize the testing and scoring methods, only 11 states legislate which assessment should be used (Prince, 2005). Nine states legislate mandatory placement policies that require developmental course placement for students who do not meet certain cutoff scores (Jenkins & Boswell, 2002). For example, in Arizona, the Maricopa County Community Colleges District has changed from a suggested placement policy to a mandatory placement policy (Maricopa County Community College District, 2010). Before 2009, students who failed community college placement tests were encouraged to take developmental courses. Today, students are no longer allowed to choose whether or not they will take the developmental courses indicated by their test scores (Maricopa County Community College District, 2010). The policy change has put more

underprepared students into developmental courses, which requires more faculty to teach developmental students.

Increasing developmental course enrollment. Developmental English courses include noncredit courses in reading and/or writing that are designed to prepare students for freshman composition courses (Crews, 2004). At Scottsdale Community College, one of ten Maricopa County Community Colleges, enrollment in Developmental English classes increased from 62% in fall of 2008 to 66.2% in fall of 2009 when the mandatory placement policy was put into effect.

Matriculation and academic course completion depend on the extent to which students are integrated into educational communities in college (Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000). For many community college students, the classroom is the only place they interact with other students and faculty, so increasing the course completion rates for developmental writing students lies with the faculty who play a key role in student retention (Tinto, 2007).

Scottsdale Community College experienced a 43% attrition rate in their 2009 developmental English classes (Scottsdale Community College Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Development, 2010); this is slightly above the national attrition rate of 40% (Boylan & Saxon, 2009). While only 29% of students in public two-year colleges pass their developmental writing course (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1996), developmental students who do complete the required developmental classes are four times more likely to earn a degree or certificate (Russell, 2008). For example, Kreysa (2007) found no difference in the graduation rates between students who received remedial

coursework and their counterparts who did not need remediation, thus concluding that the developmental courses helped remedial students “catch up” to their peers.

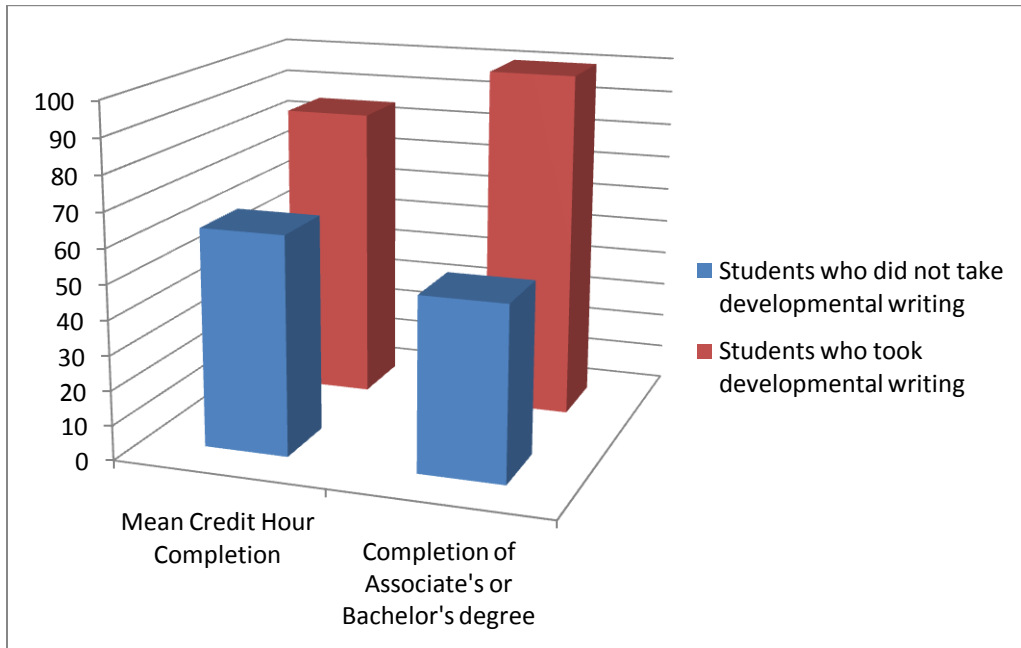


Figure 1. Effects of developmental education on student success

Successful completion of developmental writing courses increased the mean credit hour completion from 63% for students who did not take developmental writing to 85% for students who participated successfully in developmental writing courses. Also, the participants’ grade point averages increased as a result of completing their developmental writing coursework as shown in Figure 1 (Aragon & Crews, 2004) and increased grade point averages prove to be an accurate predictor of graduation rates (Kreysa, 2007). Compared to students of equivalent preparation who did not take developmental writing courses, the students who took developmental courses indicated by their

placement scores were twice as likely to graduate with either an associate's or bachelor's degree (Levey, 2006).

Pedagogical challenges. Developmental education instructors face pedagogical challenges that exceed those faced in traditional courses (Kozeracki, 2005; Smittle, 2003). Students in developmental courses generally have higher incidence of diagnosed learning disabilities, bleak economic circumstances that require them to work full time, greater dependence on public transportation, and some level of frustration and confusion about being placed in a non-credit course despite graduating from high school (Kozeracki, 2005; Maxwell & Kazlauskas, 1992; Piper, 1998). An instructor can respond to the needs of the developmental students to the extent that the instructor has the knowledge and training specific to the best practices for developmental education; thus, for the developmental student, access to higher education is dependent on the training of a dedicated faculty (Casazza, 1999; Kozeracki, 2005).

Student perceptions. Faculty is only one element of a class; however, the other elements of a class include the student, the curriculum and the institution (Cox, 2004; Grubb & Cox, 2005; Lampert, 2001). The more these elements are aligned with each other, the more effectively course objectives are met (Grubb & Cox, 2005). Curricular alignment with course objectives in developmental writing courses requires collective action between the faculty and the institution (Grubb & Cox, 2005). Aligning the pedagogy with the students' needs, on the other hand, requires collaborative action between the faculty and the students (Grubb & Cox, 2005). For instance, research on community college writing

classes reveals that students are vocationalists who use college as a means of gaining employment (Cox, 2001, 2004); they are more focused on earning credits than on learning to improve their writing skills (Grubb & Cox, 2005). In contrast, their instructors are focused on helping students develop the writing skills they will need in future courses and in the workplace. This misalignment between the students' views and the instructor's intent is counterproductive (Grubb & Cox, 2005). Thus, research that connects developmental students' perceptions with quantitative research on access and retention will improve teaching and learning in community colleges (Higbee, 2005).

A 2009 Noel-Levitz benchmark poll shows that only 15.1% of public two-year degree granting institutions considered their development of faculty instruction skills to be very effective. Furthermore, the same poll results show that 12.9% of those two-year institutions found learning outcome measurements to be very effective at making changes while 94.2% found student interviews to be minimally to very effective in retaining students. This critically reflective practice of using information gained from students can help instructors ground their practices in an informed understanding of the students' perceptions of effective teaching (Angelo, 1998; Brookfield, 2002; Brookhart, 2000).

Classroom research allows instructors to determine whether students are interpreting their teaching as the instructors intend and what level of subject matter mastery the student has achieved (Brookfield, 2002). By looking at instruction through the learners' eyes, the faculty can teach more responsively to how the students experience learning and make more informed choices about

methodological approaches (Brookfield, 2002). Students' learning experiences are complex and multi-faceted, so listening to students' voices can strengthen the work of developmental educators (Higbee, 2005). Because developmental students arrive academically unprepared with myriad social and economic issues, learning more about the nature of the developmental students' classroom experience can produce insights into improving performance (Higbee, 2005). Thus, qualitative research values students' voices and helps practitioners understand and respond to key issues that developmental students bring into the classroom (Higbee, 2005).

Research Question

- How can taking account of successful student experiences help shape effective practices for developmental education faculty?

Chapter 2 Review of Supporting Scholarship

Overview

The review of literature begins with a broad overview of developmental education including a review of key terms and a brief discussion of the current state of developmental education, including the history of developmental education, political issues, and current policy discussions. Once the context of community college developmental education has been established, the literature review details the specific institutional issues within developmental education such as the costs, student retention, and attrition rates. The review then moves into the interventions: the components of developmental education programs and specific instructional policies and techniques. The intent of this organizational structure is to lead the reader from a broad discussion of developmental education to the specific classroom interventions that are informed by this study.

Key terms

- Developmental education--Used interchangeably with remedial education. Developmental education is a comprehensive process that focuses on the intellectual, social, and emotional growth and development of all students. Developmental education includes, but is not limited to, tutoring, personal/career counseling, academic advisement, and coursework (National Association of Developmental Education, 2010).
- Developmental writing courses--According to the Scottsdale Community College Catalog, ENG 071, ENG 081, and ENG 091 are stipulated to be developmental courses. The students receive three hours of course credit

for each course, but they do not receive an English credit (Scottsdale Community College, 2010).

- Freshman composition--Students can take this course if they score high enough on the placement test or if they earn a C or better in their developmental writing course. This course includes skills required to convey information in writing at a college level. This level includes skills in grammar, sentence structure, organization, voice and a broad vocabulary to demonstrate understanding and articulate meaning (Arendale, 2007).

History of Developmental Education

For 200 years, American institutions of higher learning have been designing ways to meet the needs of students who were accepted without meeting applicable standards (Casazza, 1999). In 1879, Harvard conditionally admitted the 50% of incoming students who failed the written composition entrance exam; this led the university to develop curriculum to meet the needs of these underprepared students (Casazza, 1999; Weidner, 1990). During this same time, other schools were creating preparatory departments that were exceeding the enrollment of their collegiate curriculum; these preparatory departments were actually secondary schools within colleges (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997).

At the end of the 19th century, the federal government partnered with higher education by passing the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890, which created a place for agriculture and mechanical arts, and encouraged states to end discrimination in higher education (Casazza & Silverman, 1996). Harvard began

documenting a crisis in rhetoric and composition skills among freshmen and formed a committee to respond. *The Harvard Reports* blamed the secondary education system and called for more time, labor, and money to be spent teaching English (Casazza & Silverman, 1996; Eliot, 1969).

The 20th century saw an explosion in developmental education programs with 350 colleges offering study courses for underprepared students, and Harvard's remedial reading course had grown from 30 freshmen to hundreds of freshmen (Casazza, 1999; Wyatt, 1992). By the mid 20th century, the G.I. Bill of Rights of 1944 brought over one million veterans to the doorstep of America's colleges and universities (Wyatt, 1992). This influx of students included more students with special needs and more underprepared students; to meet their needs, colleges developed comprehensive support systems that included guidance centers, reading programs, and tutoring (Casazza, 1999). The 1970's saw a new generation of community college students who were typically first-generation students who saw education as a way to a better life; unfortunately, these students were scoring in the bottom third of academic ability tests (Casazza & Silverman, 1996; Casazza, 1999).

Thirty years ago many institutions wanted to ignore developmental education, but states are now taking remediation seriously and encouraging institutions to provide effective interventions. The current trend is for legislators to work with higher education leaders to develop comprehensive programs to meet the students' needs (Boylan & Bonham, 2007). Thus, it is important for practitioners to determine what students need to succeed.

Politics of Developmental Education

The political forces surrounding developmental education are rooted in ideologies about education itself: meritocratic, egalitarian and bureaucratic.

Meritocracy. Within the meritocratic ideology, Regents exercise considerable power with regard to entrance standards and graduation requirements. Within this achievement-oriented ideology, students get four attempts to pass remedial courses and pass an exit exam before moving from remedial coursework to mainstream for-credit classes (Shaw, 1997). When students do not succeed, faculty members point to weaknesses in student preparation or work ethic. (Shaw, 1997). In meritocracies, developmental education is usually a separate department, implying that students must qualify to participate in the mainstream academic departments.

Egalitarian. In contrast to the test-based environment of the meritocracy, the egalitarian campuses focus on affective aspects of the college experience (Chace, 1998; Shaw, 1997). The egalitarian philosophy attempts to “soften the blow” of test-based ideologies (Sacks, 2003). The faculty assume responsibility for student success and point fingers at high schools and the inequity of local school systems. Faculty from egalitarian campuses have been known to encourage students by calling them and visiting them in their homes (Shaw, 1997). The college’s hiring policies require that applicants demonstrate proficiency in teaching both remedial and college-level courses, and the placement policies are designed to reduce the stigma of developmental education.

Additionally, students are allowed to take college-level courses concurrently with remedial courses.

Bureaucratic. Somewhere between the standards-based meritocracies and the nurturing egalitarian campuses, is the bureaucratic campus that focuses on serving its students. These multi-purpose colleges focus on providing a broad array of student support services along with vocational and academic curricula (Douthat, 2005; Shaw, 1997). While the bureaucratic campus is subject to state-level policies with regard to immigrants, articulation agreements, and graduation requirements, the faculty see student success in large part a function of formal support services (Douthat, 2005; Shaw, 1997).

Community colleges. A backdrop for these ideologies is the dynamically evolving mission of community colleges, institutions that are tasked to be all things to all people. They are facing classrooms of students who are less prepared academically and more burdened socially, public misconceptions about job loss as opposed to a lack of trained workers, public school dropouts, and undereducated Americans (Roueche & Roeche, 1999). The open-access tradition of community colleges has created a niche, whether it is desired or not, for community colleges to prepare students for college-level work (Shults, 2000).

Developmental Education Policies

A broad survey of state higher education officials by Jenkins and Boswell (2002) revealed myriad policies on developmental education. Policy considerations include determining who sets the policy, which tests can be used, which specific scores indicate a need for remediation, which students must be

tested, whether remedial course placement is mandatory, and how to assign credit for remedial courses (Jenkins & Boswell, 2002; Merisotis & Phipps, 2000).

Twenty states determine placement policies via statute or state board, but Arizona does not legislate developmental education policies; no state has statutory exit benchmarks for moving into college-level coursework (Jenkins & Boswell, 2002). Although a quarter of states have debated developmental education policies in the past couple of years, little policy action has been taken.

Testing policies. Testing policies generally apply to students taking credit courses. Currently, 28 states have state-mandated policies requiring placement testing and 22 of those states go on to mandate that students take the courses indicated by their placement test scores (Dougherty & Reid, 2007). Testing instruments include standardized tests taken at the college's testing center as well as college entrance exams such as the ACT; some schools will use high school grade point averages to determine if remediation is needed (Shults, 2000). Of the community colleges that require assessment, only 75% require students to take the courses indicated by their assessments (Prince, 2005).

Policymakers. Determining which leadership source sets the policy is of particular interest in developmental education. If states set testing policy via statute, then a common definition of academic proficiency can be established. This also removes barriers for students who move around the state but still plan on transferring to a four-year institution (Prince, 2005). State-mandated placement testing allows states to track K-12 success in preparing students for college-level work and creates a goal for all districts to achieve. In addition to

satisfying students' needs and helping K-12 districts find benchmarks, state-mandated placement policies reduce the legal challenges such as the one by the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) in 1988. MALDEF challenged entrance testing on the grounds that it disproportionately placed Latino students into remedial education and impeded their access to college-level work (Shulock & Moore, 2007). By creating a uniform standard, colleges will conform to national trends to help under-prepared students earn college degrees.

Maricopa Community Colleges policies. The Maricopa County Community College District requires all new students to take placement tests (Maricopa County Community College District, 2010). Before February 2010, students had been allowed to opt-out of developmental courses, but the District policy now says that students will be “placed into courses based on their highest test or retest scores” (Maricopa County Community College District, 2010).

Funding Developmental Education

When students have been allowed to graduate from high school without basic writing skills, they have been devalued by the very professionals responsible for teaching them those skills (Jacobson, 2000; Shaughnessy, 1976) . With regard to funding, all states allow for funding of developmental education in community colleges, but no state earmarks funds for developmental studies. Most states discourage developmental education in four-year institutions, and all states are expecting the next few years to bring a dramatic increase in developmental education programs (Jenkins & Boswell, 2002).

Cost-benefit analysis of developmental education. Providing developmental education costs roughly \$20,000 per pupil in 2009 dollars (Breneman, 1998). Thus, remedial education would cost 0.4 percent of the total K-12 budget as opposed to 0.9 percent of the overall higher education budget for public institutions (Breneman, 1998). Considering that 60% of incoming community college students take at least one remedial course, this suggests that a small percentage of revenue is currently being spent on the most vulnerable student population and even that funding is stagnant (Saxon & Boylan, 2001).

Increased cost of social programs. Spending roughly one percent of the higher education budget (\$1 billion annually) on developmental education is a good investment for America, however, because educating the workforce gives the nation a more skilled and productive workforce (Boylan & Saxon, 2009; Breneman, 1998; Saxon & Boylan, 2001). Students who lack basic skills and do not persist in college show lower self-esteem, encounter barriers in the workplace, and miss out on opportunities for employment and advancement (Beal & Noel, 1980; Congos & Schoeps, 1997). In Florida, an investment of \$720 per student can negate the much higher cost of social welfare programs that await uneducated citizens who lack basic English and math skills (McCabe, n.d.). A 2004 study of California's CalWorks initiative, a program that provides community college coursework to welfare recipients, showed that CalWorks students were twice as likely to work year round. Also, the CalWorks students who complete associate degrees showed higher earnings than those with vocational certificates or high school diplomas (Mathur, Reichle, Strawn, & Wisely, 2004).

Retention in Community Colleges.

Much of the research on student retention focuses on how academic and social systems affect student retention, specifically student engagement and interaction during the first year (Tinto, 1975; Tinto, 2007). Much of this research, however, was geared toward traditional students in residential university settings (Crawford, 1999; Rendon, 1994). Compared to traditional university students, community college students have limited social connections to the campus as most come to campus only during class hours; for them, the academic social systems occur within the classroom (Tinto, 1998).

For many community college students, the classroom is the only place they interact with other students and faculty (Tinto, 2007). Students who are not socially connected with the greater campus can persist if they have academic ties (Porter, 1990). A professor's pedagogical assumptions help shape the classroom environment, which frames the nature of the classroom community; it is this community that can contribute to a student's persistence and success (Tinto, 1997).

Interventions. Meeting the needs of academically under-prepared students "requires that we do more than simply tinker at the margins of our educational practice" (Tinto, 2007, p. 13). To meet the needs of the underprepared, community colleges will need to create purposeful developmental education programs that are holistic and provide a seamless web of resources (Roueche & Roueche, 1999).

Developmental education theory. Knowledge of relevant theory helps educators create prescriptive developmental education programs to meet the specific needs of their students. Most of these developmental education theories distill current theory from other disciplines such as psychology and education. Transformative theories insert the affective domain into the discussion while Student Development Theory helps educators understand student behavior (Higbee, 2005). Collins and Bruch (2000) call for a combined, interdisciplinary approach that integrates human development theory with other sub-disciplines of developmental education (Collins & Bruch, 2000) .

Wambach and Brothen (2000) draw on the work of developmental psychologists to create a new theory of self-regulation. The authors claim self-regulation is critical for the development of independence, self-direction, and maturity, which are keys to students' success (Wambach & Brothen, 2000). Self-direction relies on two dimensions: demandingness and responsiveness, and Wambach and Brothen (2000) claim that these concepts explain why some developmental education programs are more successful than others.

Effective developmental programs. A 1996 National Association of Developmental Education (NADE) monograph suggests applying current pedagogical approaches to developmental education programs. Nominated pedagogical approaches include cooperative learning (Myers, 1996), mastery learning (Stratton, 1996), and constructivism (Caverly & Peterson, 1996; Wambach & Brothen, 2000). Hern (2010) suggests that accelerated developmental sequences help students persist; she found that students who

finished their developmental courses in one semester were twice as likely to pass college English than students who took two semesters to complete the developmental coursework (Hern, 2010).

Course delivery methods should be flexible, and several methods can be used to determine a student's exit from remedial programs (Shults, 2000). To determine a student's exit point, Kallus (2008) found that the community college district's outcomes assessment was the best predictor of student success in gateway courses. Thus, the learner-centered outcomes assessment was more accurate than traditional standardized testing such as COMPASS. The implication, of course, is that faculty should create relevant assessment tools that match the curriculum (Kallus, 2008).

Program policies. Perhaps the most important developmental education policy is mandatory assessment and placement of all incoming students (Boylan & Saxon, 2005; McCabe, n.d.; Parke, 1997). Additionally, students who test into developmental courses should be required to take developmental courses immediately upon entry; a study by the California State University system found that 70% of students who did not complete developmental coursework in the first year never graduated, while almost the same percentage (69%) of students who did take developmental classes in the first year did graduate (Stuart, 2009).

Program components. Developmental education department leaders and faculty members should continually evaluate their own programs and look for ways to improve their service to students (Boylan & Saxon, 2005; Parke, 1997; Stuart, 2009). Developmental students arrive at college with many academic and

social deficits; thus best practices in developmental education include combining multiple services and courses. Tutoring is a keystone feature of strong developmental programs (Boylan & Saxon, 2005; Parke, 1997). Also, pairing developmental courses with college success classes shows positive effects for students enrolled in developmental education (Boylan & Saxon, 2005). Research also supports the use of learning communities within developmental education to promote engagement and social integration, two mainstays of student retention (Boylan & Saxon, 2005; Tinto, 2007).

Effective Instructional Practice

Researchers have begun to link pedagogy and faculty actions to student retention (Demaris & Kritsonis, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Sullivan, 2000; Tinto, 2007). According to the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), faculty can promote student success by discussing readings outside of class, providing prompt feedback on academic success, and discussing grades and assignments with students (Kuh, Schuh & Whitt, 2010).

Young (2008) validated the importance of quality instructors and the instructors' interactions with students, the instructor's use of varied learned strategies. Most importantly, an instructor's willingness and/or ability to manage classroom behaviors was critical to a student's perception of success in the course.

Instructor-student interactions. Student development is a person-centered, interactional experience that depends on a social compact between the student and faculty (Sanford, 1966). For developmental students, this interaction

must begin at the earliest stage of the academic program because they often enter college with doubts about their ability to succeed and their place in the academic community (Evans, Forney & Guido-DiBrito, 1996; Rendon, 1994). For underprepared students, the academic program begins in the developmental writing class.

Instructor behaviors. Even if a student has a low level of academic and social integration with the campus, positive contact with instructors can compensate (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1979). These behaviors can include calling students by name, showing enthusiasm for the course, speaking in expressive tones, and varying body position and vocal tones (Silverman & Casazza, 2000). Other behaviors that influence student success include allowing students to call the instructor by first name, engaging in casual conversations outside the classroom, and demonstrating an interest in students (Komarraju, Musulkin & Bhattacharya, 2010), including frequent informal contact with students, expressing concern for students, and showing an interest in teaching (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1979) .

Validation of students. The specific classroom manner of an instructor can have a strong influence on academic success in the class as well as a student's enrollment in more courses in the same subject area (Murray, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Faculty can also influence students by validating them; this helps students trust themselves as learners and become confident in their role as college students (Rendon, 1994).

Faculty behaviors that validate students

Demonstrate a concern for teaching

Appear approachable and personable

Treat students equally

Create lessons that allow students to see themselves as capable

Work with students individually as needed

Provide meaningful feedback

Figure 2. Faculty influence on student success

Adapted from “Validating culturally diverse students: Toward a new model of learning and student development” by Rendon, 1994, *Innovative Higher Education*, 19, p. 33.

Varied learning strategies. Active learning is positively associated with student persistence, and, with regard to student success, the academic involvement of a student matters more than the social involvement (Tinto, 1997). Developmental students do better in courses where a variety of teaching methods are employed based on students’ specific learning styles (Boylan & Saxon, 2005; Casazza & Silverman, 1996; Chickering & Gamson, 1987). After reviewing best practices from the last 30 years of developmental education, Boylan and Saxon (2005) found that mastery learning was most effective in helping students pass the course. In a writing course, instructors need to evaluate students’ grammar and writing early in the semester and discuss these with students as soon as possible (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Jacobson, 2000). Developmental writing courses help students to succeed in writing because they generally focus more on the

mechanics of writing, emphasize sentence structure, paragraph formation, and essay development; they also provide one-to-one tutoring (Jacobson, 2000).

Writing teachers should also make evaluation meaningful for students. With regard to evaluating their writing, students said that they learned best when teachers not only pointed out what need to be improved but also gave specific suggestions on how to change it (Jacobson, 2000). Feedback should be specific and thorough so that students can build on the skills they bring to the class, and evaluation should be clear and consistent (Jacobson, 2000). Not all evaluation must come from the instructor; however, peer-to-peer feedback and collaboration help developmental writing students become independent learners (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Jacobson, 2000).

In addition, instructors should provide opportunities for students to revise writing and retake tests (Boylan & Saxon, 2005). To increase instructor feedback, colleges need to enroll a smaller number of students in each developmental writing section (Boylan & Saxon, 2005).

Encouraging classroom environments. The educational setting has a powerful effect on learning outcomes (Silverman & Casazza, 2000). In addition, supportive environments that enhance student success are characterized as environments where individuals are valued and feel comfortable to express themselves freely (Moos, 1979). A safe learning environment requires instructors to encourage students to ask questions and help students learn from their own mistakes (Jacobson, 2000; Smith, 1980). Even a student's incorrect answers can help the instructor decipher his/her thought process (Jacobson, 2000).

Checklists as Practical Tools

Using a checklist can help instructors synthesize core instructional concepts into operational tools that reinforce specific instructional practices (Rowlands, 2007). Using a checklist over a period of time can create a pattern of behavior that influences an instructor's behavior (Gruninger, Kehler, & Buone, 2010). Specifically, a Criteria of Merit checklist (COMlist) allows instructors to identify performance areas that need continuing attention (Scriven, 2007).

The Key C's of Comlists

- Conspicuous indications of merit
 - Complete with no significant omissions
 - Contiguous with no overlapping criteria
 - Commensurable items with no hierarchy
 - Clear statements that apply to the phenomenon
 - Concise listing that can be easily integrated
 - Confirmable or reliably affirmable from available data
-

Figure 3. Criteria for effective comlists

Note. Adapted from "The logic and methodology of checklists" by Scriven, 2007.

Researcher's Community of Practice

Teaching writing classes in a community college gives me a front row seat in the conflict of access versus success for the developmental students. I teach developmental English classes and work with the Developmental English

Committee. This study will inform my practice as an English professor and will inform the developmental faculty about how to help students pass developmental writing courses and prepare for freshman composition courses.

Researcher's Leadership Responsibilities

As an experienced instructor, I am an instructional leader, and I work with English faculty members to build courses that meet students' needs and help them succeed. In order to effect instructional change, I must foster a collective passion for creating relevant educational experiences to equip students for a global economy (Intrator, 2006). This requires faculty to define desired educational outcomes that predict what a graduate will need so that he/she can contribute to a new economy. For example, as a leader of the Developmental Assessment Grant team, I helped English faculty define specific exit exams for developmental writing courses. The faculty collaboration contributes to the vertical administrative structures of the organization. By specifying student outcomes for developmental writing classes, we specifically articulated expectations for student writing. This transformative environment created a horizontal force that produced an element of accountability for the grant team (Keeling, 2007). Backwards mapping begins with the desired outcomes and progresses through learning styles, teaching strategies, school organization, leadership, management, resources, and institutional culture (Stewart, 2006). To help students pass the exam exams, English faculty master new technologies, seek updated instructional methods and work together to determine best practices for developmental writing courses.

Chapter 3 Research Design

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

This Action Research study was designed to explore the academic experiences of successful community college developmental writing students in an effort to determine specific ways community college faculty can help to decrease the attrition rate in developmental writing classes. The goals of the study are: 1) to describe beneficial academic experiences that community college students report helped them succeed in developmental English, and 2) to create, implement, and measure the short term benefits of using a checklist tool by four community college writing instructors. In part one of the study I developed the content of the checklist by interviewing students who succeeded in passing developmental English and going on to pass English 101. In part two of the study, I condensed the lessons learned from successful students into a checklist format that community college writing instructors can use in planning their interactions with students and in responding systematically to their written work.

As an educator, I used action research to document the instructional experiences of students who had passed developmental writing classes with a C or better and had also passed English 101, college-level composition. By compiling and analyzing commonalities of their experiences, I could communicate common experiences and themes to developmental writing faculty who could, in turn, use the information to decrease attrition in developmental education (Herr & Anderson, 2005).

As a pragmatist, Action Research allowed me to research in a “spiral in which each cycle increases the researcher’s knowledge of the original question, puzzle, or problem and, it is hoped, lead to its solution” (see Appendix A, Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 5). Herr and Anderson (2005) acknowledge that differing views of action research exist saying that some researchers claim that action research develops individuals while others see it as something that is transforming practice (McNiff, 2002; McNiff, Lomax, & Whitehead, 2003). Either way, action research can allow the students’ voices to inform instructional practice in community colleges (Herr & Anderson, 2005).

Action Research

Action research combines research methods such as interviewing, focus groups, and social network data gathering to work with people to address significant problems (Bradbury, 2003; Bradbury & Reason, 2007). In this study I used surveys and interviews and participated with the students to prescribe actions that could help faculty increase student success rates in developmental writing classes. Semi-structured interviews gave the respondents an opportunity to describe their experiences in developmental writing classes at SCC (Fontana & Frey, 2000; McKenzie, 2006).

Research Design Process

This study employs the action research cycle (Figure 4) of research, reflection, and action combined with qualitative research methodologies, specifically semi-structured interviews, with community college students who had passed English 101 after passing a developmental writing class with a C or better.

I used the interview process to explore the students' perspectives on how the faculty impacted their success in developmental English (Patton, 2002). These interviews allowed me to see developmental writing courses from the worldview of students who had successfully completed those courses; this, in turn, offered new ideas for developmental writing instructors (Merriam, 2009).

After analyzing the interview data, I reflected on how I could combine the findings from published research with the student interview data to bring improved practices into the SCC developmental English environment. I decided to use the information to create a planning tool for community college writing instructors. The planning tool is a checklist of best practices that could help writing instructors apply lessons from research to their instructional practices. At the beginning of the spring 2012 semester, four community college writing instructors and I reviewed the checklist and reflected on their own practices. After applying the checklist to their own practices, the instructor participants provided feedback on the checklist as a planning tool for writing instructors.

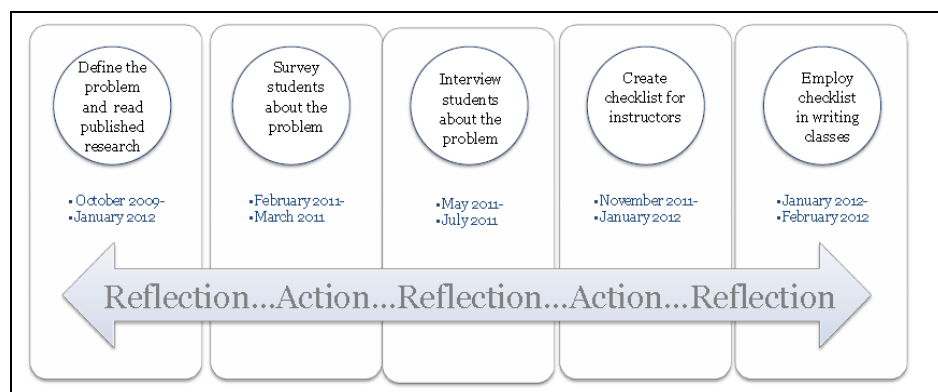


Figure 4. Action research timeline

Theoretical Orientation

The elemental philosophy of action research is pragmatism (Baskerville & Myers, 2004). Pragmatism allows a researcher to choose the appropriate methods, data collection, and analysis that fit the purpose of the study (Creswell, 2008). By interviewing freshman composition students who took English 091, which is a developmental writing class, I could assess instructor qualities and instructional methods that helped the successful developmental students prepare for English 101 (Creswell, 2008).

The study design allowed me to get developmental students' perspectives on common problems with developmental writing instruction as described in Chapter 1. Using a pragmatic orientation, I was able to focus my interview questions in the search for empirical answers (Baskerville & Myers, 2004). I attempted to understand the research problem, then I gathered information relevant to the problem, what works, and solutions (Creswell, 2008; Morgan, 2007; Patton, 1990). I looked for instructional practices that helped developmental writing students improve their writing skills (Creswell, 2008).

Interviews provided me the students' nuanced views of their educational experiences, which cannot be captured or defined through quantitative methods (Higbee, 2005). Becoming familiar with these students' interview answers describing their experiences in developmental writing classes can help practitioners understand the key ways faculty can impact the developmental students' classroom experience (Higbee, 2005).

Institutional Review Board

Before collecting any data, I applied to the Arizona State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Because I wanted to recruit participants at Scottsdale Community College, I was also required to get approval from the Maricopa Community Colleges IRB. In order to get approval to collect data, I successfully completed Human Subjects Testing certification and submitted an application to the ASU IRB and the Maricopa IRB. Both were approved (Appendix B).

Pilot Study

In February 2011, I reviewed the SCC English Department course schedule and found 18 on-campus sections of English 101 and 102. Honors sections of English 101 and 102 were excluded because the instructor reported no students who had previously taken developmental writing. During the week of February 21-25, 2011 I emailed the instructors of those classes and asked permission to visit their classes for 10 minutes at the beginning or end of the class. Seven instructors emailed me with convenient dates and times when I could visit.

Between February 28 and March 2, 2011, I visited nine English 101 and English 102 classes at Scottsdale Community College to personally invite students to participate in an online survey. I did not invite my own English 101 or English 102 students to participate. Before I spoke to students, I asked the classroom teacher to leave so that she would not be able to identify any students who did or did not agree to participate. After the classroom teacher left, I

explained that I am an English instructor at SCC who is conducting research and I read the recruitment script to the class (see Appendix E) and students were asked to fill out an invitation to participate. I assured students that their instructor would not be able to identify who agreed to participate and who did not.

Students were not required to receive or to return the invitation. Of the 135 students who returned the survey, 100 indicated that they would be interested in participating in an online survey; of those 100, 21 students self identified that they had taken developmental writing at SCC. I emailed the 21 who indicated that they had taken at least one developmental writing course. The email invited them to participate in an online survey that would take approximately ten minutes; the email invitation contained the email recruitment letter (see Appendix E). To encourage students to return the survey, the first 20 students to respond to the survey were placed in a lottery to receive a \$25 Visa gift card; one email address was drawn for the prize. The winning participant was notified by email to report to the Language and Communication Division secretary to receive the gift card. Fourteen students completed the survey (see Appendix F).

Survey data quality is often assessed by response rate (Lombard, 1999; Truell, 2003). My 66% response rate was much higher than the 17.1% response rate reported by Sax (2003) for web-based surveys with response incentives (Sax & Gilmartin, 2003).

The intent of the pilot study was for the researcher to test closed-ended questions with a random purposeful sample of adult students who had taken English 101 after taking English 091. I examined the survey responses to

determine if participants were able to articulate their experiences in developmental writing courses. The responses revealed that of 14 completed surveys, only two participants answered “Don’t Remember” to questions about their experiences in developmental writing class; thus, I concluded that English 091 completers would be able to recall their experiences in developmental writing classes.

After careful review of the survey answers, I determined that the survey instrument did not provide sufficient detail to determine a set of best practices that I could articulate to developmental writing instructors. For example, all respondents indicated that the developmental writing instructor gave students an opportunity to give and receive feedback on their writing. From the answer, however, I was unable to determine (a) if students found this helpful in building their writing skills, (b) what types of feedback the teacher provided, and (c) what types of feedback the student found most helpful.

In order to determine a set of best practices that could be articulated to other developmental faculty members, I determined that I needed to interview survey participants.

Student participant recruitment. The last item on the survey asked to indicate if they would like information about participating in a follow-up interview with the researcher. Prospective participants were informed that interview participants will receive a \$25 Visa gift card. Six survey participants indicated that they would be interested in receiving information about face-to-face

interview. I emailed (Appendix G) all six prospective interview participants and set up appointments with the first four who returned the email.

Student sample. Purposeful sampling allowed me to interview participants who could best help me understand the problem (Creswell, 2008). I interviewed students who had passed English 091 with a C or better and who had also passed English 101, which is college-level composition. By limiting the study to students who had passed English 101 as well as English 091, I was able to interview students who not only passed developmental writing as described in Chapter 2, but, by virtue of passing English 101, had demonstrated the ability to complete college-level writing assignments.

By randomly selecting four interview participants from the six who indicated an interest in being interviewed, I was able to get a typical sample. A typical sample is a particular type of purposeful sample that includes the average person in the phenomenon of interest (Merriam, 2009). It is not uncommon for inductive research and exploratory studies to have small samples (McKenzie, 2006; Morse, 1999). A small sample was warranted because the selection criteria provided participants whose experiences in developmental education could contribute to the emerging theory (Cutcliffe, 2000; Morse, 1999)

Four adults from Scottsdale Community College agreed to be interviewed. Two participants were male and two were female. One male and one female had just graduated from SCC; the female graduate is Native American and is pursuing her bachelor's degree via the 20/20 program at the Salt River Pima Indian Tribe. This program allows her to be paid as full time employee while working 20 hours

in the casino and attending Arizona State University full time to complete her bachelor's degree. The male graduate is continuing his studies at Northern Arizona University. The other male and female participants are continuing their studies at SCC. By limiting the sample size to four participants, I was able to focus on collecting rich data (Patton, 2002).

Student interview data collection. Before meeting with participants, I provided them the "Email Recruitment Letter" (see Appendix G), which described their rights, the topic of the study, and the purpose to my research (Creswell, 2008; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Cannella, 2009). At the beginning of each face-to-face interview, I reviewed the "Student Interview Consent Letter" with the participant and reminded them that I would not use their names; each participant signed the form and kept a file copy (Appendix H). I reminded students that they could stop the interview at any time.

Pilot interview. My first interview was a pilot that allowed me to gauge the quality of the questions and to practice my interviewing skills. Before the audio-taped pilot interview, I described the study in detail and the pilot participant signed the interview consent form (see Appendix H). Then, I reminded the participant that he/she could stop the interview at any time and that the transcripts would be prepared by a professional transcriptionist and kept in a locked cabinet and a password-protected file.

During the interview, I took notes on the respondent's reactions, and after the interviews, I used memoing to clarify my thoughts and explore meaning in the

answers to the pilot questions (Chapman, 2008). Based on my analysis of the pilot interview, I updated the interview questions (see Appendix I)

Study interviews. Before the audio-taped interviews, I described the study in detail and participants signed the interview consent form (see Appendix H). I did not ask for participants' names and used a pseudonym for each participant as required by Maricopa IRB. Before questioning participants, I explained that the results of the interview may be published but individual participants will not be identified. Then, I reminded the participant that he/she can stop the interview at any time and that the transcripts will be kept in a locked cabinet and a password-protected file.

During the interview, I took notes on participants' reactions, and after the interviews, I used memoing to clarify my thoughts and explore meaning in the participants' answers (Chapman, 2008). The digital recording files were sent to a professional transcriptionist who did not have access to the participants' names or any identifying information.

Because the researcher and the participants were members of the Scottsdale Community College campus community, the interviews took place in a neutral area including a department conference room and a local coffee shop. By conducting interviews in a neutral environment, I could mitigate any sense of authority the students may have seen in me as a community college instructor. I began the interviews with general questions to help students feel at ease with the interview process.

Interview data management. Interviews were recorded with a digital audio recorder and have been stored on an external file storage system as .mp3 files. I employed a professional transcriptionist to type the interview transcripts. I then saved as document files on an external drive. The professional transcriptionist knew only the participants' pseudonyms. All audio and document files as well as external storage devices are kept in password-protected folders and locked file drawers. In accordance with Maricopa IRB requirements, the transcripts will be destroyed after one year.

Determining Solutions

After reviewing the literature and interviewing students with regard to best practices, I created an instructor planning tool (Figure 5) from the main themes. I executed the solution by recruiting four community college writing instructors using the checklist (Appendix J) to reflect on the practices as they planned for the spring 2012 semester. After the first two weeks of the semester, the instructor participants reflected on the following questions:

- Is the checklist helpful? Why?/Why not?
- Is the checklist usable? Why/Why not?

The instructors provided their feedback in reply emails.

Planning and In-Class Framework
How do I provide <u>guided feedback during class</u> ?
How do I provide opportunities for <u>group peer-review</u> as opposed to single-student pairing during peer review?
How do I maintain classroom control so that students are free from distractions? How do I refrain from relying on students to “police” their classmates?
How often do I call on/address students by name?
How do I include learning games and repetition strategies such as acronyms and mnemonic devices?
How do I offer positive reinforcement to students who ask questions? How do I foster an environment where students are comfortable asking questions?
How do I offer several opportunities for grade improvement?
How do I allow students opportunities for revision?
Establishing an Out-Of-Class Framework
How often am I available to students outside of class? Do students report that it is hard to find me?
How do I make students feel comfortable in my office?
Do I call students by name and speak to them about hobbies and interests?
When reviewing their drafts, how do I give specific suggestions for correcting errors and problem areas?
How often do I prescribe independent computer activities to meet a student’s individual needs?
How do I communicate to students that I believe they can succeed?

Figure 5. Planning checklist for developmental writing instructors

Instructor Participant Recruitment

After creating the checklist, I sent the “Recruitment Letter-Action Phase” (Appendix K) to six community college writing instructors within my community of practice and asked them to use the checklist (Appendix L) as they planned for the spring 2012 semester and then to provide feedback after two weeks.

Prospective participants were also given the “Recruitment Letter-Action Phase” (Appendix J).

Instructor sample. Using a purposeful sample, I was able to collect data from four instructor participants who were in a position to help with the problem (Creswell, 2008). All of the instructor participants had at least five years of experience teaching writing at the community college level. They had experience teaching developmental writing classes as well as college-level writing. One instructor was male and three were female; they were given the pseudonyms Charlie, Mira, Jay and Ronnie.

Instructor data collection. When recruiting instructor participants, I provided them the “Recruitment Letter-Action Phase” (see Appendix J), which described their rights, the topic of the study, and the purpose to my research (Creswell, 2008; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Lincoln & Cannella, 2009). Participants were given the option to make their answers anonymous by mailing their feedback to my home address or returning it to me via an anonymous email address. Four community college instructors sent feedback on the checklist as a planning tool.

Instructor data management. Upon receiving the instructor responses, I saved them in password-protected folders on the computer. I printed copies for analysis and kept them in a locked cabinet. In accordance with Maricopa IRB requirements, the files and paper copies will be destroyed after one year.

Summary

This Action Research study explored the academic experiences of successful developmental writing students at SCC. The semi-structured interviews gave me an opportunity to see the developmental writing classes from the students' viewpoints (Merriam, 2009). I coded the data manually and used constant comparative analysis to elicit themes from the interview transcripts (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Creswell, 2008; Merriam, 2009).

The next chapter describes the results of the student interviews. In Chapter 4, I present my analysis and interpretation of the data. Then I describe the instructor planning checklist that I created based on the review of literature and student interview data.

Chapter 4 Analysis and Action

Thematic Analysis of Student Interviews

An inductive approach allowed me to use a detailed reading of the interview transcripts to see themes that emerged from the raw data (Thomas, 2006). I used a general inductive method for analyzing interview responses, which included a detailed reading of the transcripts allowing the raw data to drive themes (Thomas, 2006). For an interpretation to be valid, it must be supported by the data (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Specifically, I used constant comparative analysis to translate qualitative data to a semi-quantitative form (Glaser, 1965). Comparison is the principal tool researchers have to inductively categorize data then look for any connections (Boeije, 2002). This inductive approach allowed me to discover links between the research objectives and the data and to ensure that theory building is grounded in the data (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Boeije, 2002; Glaser, 1965; Thomas, 2006).

Transcript review. First, I reviewed each interview and checked for accuracy in the transcription. The transcriptionist was not familiar with instructional terms, so this allowed me to correct any terms she may have mislabeled and to fill in any sections that she reported as indiscernible. I employed a color-coding system to connect data to the respective respondent (Creswell, 2008). I changed the text color of each transcript so that each respondent's words had a different color text. For example, I used purple text and the pseudonym Paige; blue ink with a pseudonym Brendon; red was Ruby; green was Gerald. After coloring the text, I began looking for units of data that

responded to my research question; this data is referred to as relevant text (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Merriam, 2009).

Coding data. Coding is the process of segregating the text into identifiable portions so that the researcher can begin to find meaning and answer the research question (Creswell, 2008; Merriam, 2009; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The first step was open coding where I read the data, my notes, and the literature related to the research question; at this point, I was open to any data that could have meaning (Merriam, 2009). I began open coding by reading all of the interview transcripts several times looking for relevant text; after reducing the data to relevant text, I began looking for similar words and phrases that expressed the same ideas (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). These became repeating ideas in separate transcripts of three or more participants (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Merriam, 2009).

After identifying repeating ideas, I created a document labeled “Repeating Ideas” and began listing repeating ideas that seemed to go together (see Figure 6) (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Merriam, 2009). The repeating ideas that seemed most relevant to the research question were: Placement Attitudes, Outside Resources, Instructor Relations, Instructor Feedback on Writing, Instructional Strategies, Editing and Revising Strategies, Grade Improvement, and Classroom Environment. I also had an “orphan” category that included respondents’ specific suggestions for faculty to consider when planning developmental writing classes (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

Data saturation was achieved by bringing all interview transcripts into the relevant text data set and gathering repeating ideas until no new relevant repeating ideas could be found (Bowen, 2008; Charmaz, 2006). This gave me a composite list of repeating ideas found in the interviews: Instructor Communication, Outside Resources, Classroom Environment, and Instructional Strategies (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). I then reviewed the composite list of repeating ideas and went back to the data to make sure that no new repeating ideas arose and that each repeating idea was well established with relevant text (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Bowen, 2008; Charmaz, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

After printing the color-coded lists of repeating ideas, I read through the list of repeating ideas and began axial coding, an interpretive process where the researcher funnels open codes into a classification system by looking for commonalities among the repeating ideas (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Merriam, 2009). From these groupings, I created a new document with a list of categories (see Figure 6) that organized the common ideas found in the “List of Repeating Ideas” into specific categories (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Merriam, 2009). For each category, I added participants’ color-coded comments and continually went back through the data to compare the data with the emerging categories: Instructor Leadership, Student Controls Learning, Repetition, Collaboration (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Creswell, 2008; Merriam, 2009). Again, I achieved data saturation by determining that each category was well supported by data and also making sure that no new categories could be determined from the ideas (Lincoln & Guba, 1991; Merriam, 2009).

After creating the “List of Categories” that captured patterns found across the “List of Repeating Ideas,” I looked for relationships among categories in an attempt to discern concepts that linked categories (Merriam, 2009). From the conceptual links, I was able to identify abstract ideas that could be grouped into a first draft of a grounded theory (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Merriam, 2009; Nash, 1991) .

I focused on the data that was most relevant to student reports about the ways faculty impacted their ability to pass English 091, and thus limited theory building to the presentation of the most important categories (Thomas, 2006). The outcome was the development of underlying themes that maximized the similarities and differences in the data (see) that are most relevant to the research objectives (Creswell, 2008; Thomas, 2006).

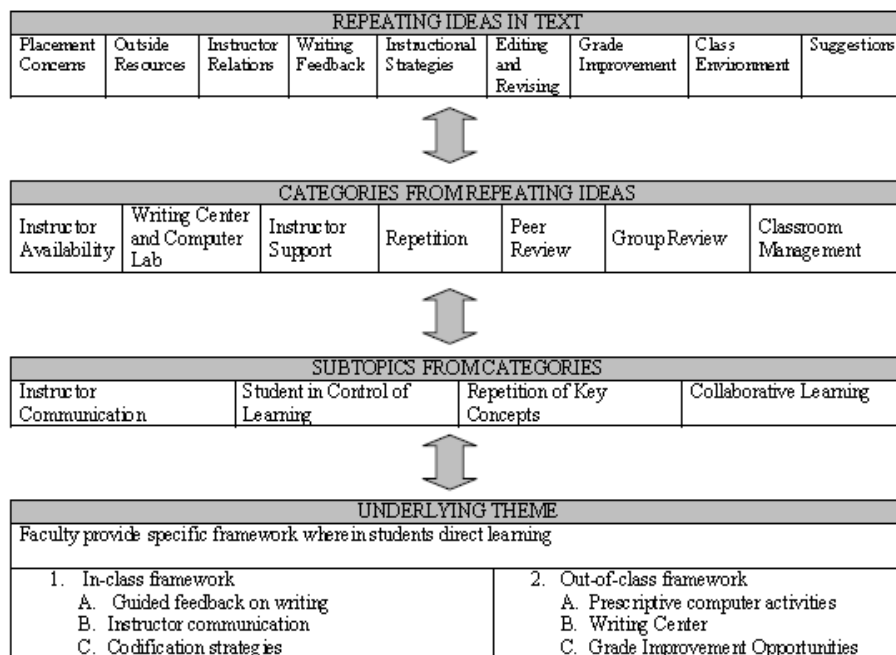


Figure 6. Data analysis process

Confirmations from Student Interviews

The student interviews confirmed the published research on faculty behaviors that validate students (Figure 1). All of the student participants reported that instructor communication played a role in their success, and four specifically stated that the instructor was readily available outside of class and that the instructor was easy to talk to. Brendon stated “she made me feel better cuz (sic) she didn’t give up on me. She knew I had it in me.” Student participants also reported that their instructors provided meaningful feedback on their writing. This included instructor prompts for more specific examples and descriptions as well as prompts to revise words and organization.

Published research suggests that effective instructional practice includes varied learning strategies, and students confirmed this as well. Student participants stated that an instructor’s use of learning games helped them remember key concepts, and the use of acronyms helped students organize their writing. Two students who had graduated from SCC before our interview, remembered the PIE acronym for paragraph support (Point, Illustration, Explanation).

Creating encouraging classroom environments was reported to have a powerful effect on student outcomes (Silverman & Casazza, 2000), and the student participants confirmed this as well. Student participants preferred smaller class sizes because students received more communication. In addition, the students reported that they performed best in an environment where they felt comfortable asking questions. Paige reported that “People ask questions that

some people would laugh at and think are stupid, and he (the instructor) tells them ‘that’s an excellent question’ and answers it.”

Surprises from Student Interviews

Published research points to a safe classroom as an environment where students are encouraged to learn from their own mistakes (Jacobson, 2000; Smith, 1980). The student respondents also mentioned that a comfortable environment is free from behavioral disruptions. Students reported that they learn best when the classroom is free from distractions such as whispering and talking among other students. The student respondents unanimously report that the instructor must be the one to control student behaviors. Ruby reported that she once asked an instructor to make another student to be quiet, and the instructor responded “go ahead.” Ruby answered with “Oh, no, thank you, I have my kids at home.” Some instructors believe that college students are adults and can police each other, but the students reported that they prefer that the instructor police classroom behavior.

In addition to the student responses on this item, one instructor responded to this item on the checklist. Jay reported that she always considered instructional distractions to be behaviors that were distracting to her as the instructor. After reviewing the planning checklist, she decided that she needed to check with students about classroom distractions.

Peer review is tool that instructors use to help students identify excellent writing and to apply that description to peer writing. The most common peer review model includes students pairing up and exchanging drafts then commenting on each other’s drafts according to set criteria. The student

participants reported that paired peer review is not helpful because it is dependent on the expertise of a single student partner. Gerald referred to paired peer review as “the blind leading the blind”, and Paige said that “it depends on who’s grading your paper and you don’t know what their grade in the class is, so it kind of makes you question what you should believe and what you shouldn’t believe.”

This does not mean, however, that all forms of peer review are useless. The student participants reported that group peer review was helpful. This involves students bringing multiple copies of a draft and allowing a group of peers to read it and give feedback. Paige reported that group peer review helped her see what other people are doing and to ask questions of a group of students. She also reported that she benefitted from other people’s feedback. Ruby stated “I could see what they were writing and I’d say oh, ok I get it now”.

Instructor Evaluation of Checklist Use

Four community college writing instructors returned the checklist with their reflections. The two main questions instructor participants answered were:

- Is the checklist usable?
- Is the checklist helpful?

After reading the reflections and writing my own reflections on the planning tool (Appendix L), I used an inductive analysis to determine links between the research and the instructor reflections (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Boeije, 2002; Glaser, 1965; Thomas, 2006).

Usability. All of the instructor participants found the checklist usable for both experienced and novice instructors, but Charlie stipulated that the usefulness

of the checklist would depend on the context in which it was used. Instructor participants noted that the checklist items were both varied and comprehensive in scope and included both the cognitive and affective domains. Furthermore, the instructor participants determined that the checklist helped writing instructors focus on those best practices that support student success. One instructor participant reported that this reflection tool allows these elements of practice to become transparent.

Helpfulness. While all of the instructor participants found the checklist helpful, they had different ideas about how it could help instructors. Three instructors reported that the checklist delineates those specific criteria that most effective instructors do automatically. Two instructors believed that the checklist would not be helpful as a planning tool as much as a self-evaluation tool. All instructor participants reported that the checklist would help novice instructors identify and incorporate best instructional practices.

Suggestions. Based on their use of the checklist, instructor participants offered a few insights and suggestions. Where the checklist asks, “Do students report that it is hard to find me?”, instructors were not sure that they would be aware of students’ report about them. In addition, the instructors thought the checklist should further describe prescriptive independent computer activities because different campuses have different resources available and not all instructors are familiar with prescriptive offerings that are available to instructors. Instructor participants also reported that the phrase “opportunities for grade improvement” could be confused with revision opportunities. Some writing

instructors give several students several opportunities to revise before putting a grade on a writing assignment. On the other hand, some instructors grade several drafts of an assignment. Both methods allow students to improve an assignment before assigning a final grade to that paper even though only one method allows for changes in the actual grade. Lastly, instructor participants reported that an area could be added at the bottom wherein instructors could reflect on their own goals or strategies for improvement in specific areas.

Researcher Bias

I was a faculty member who was researching faculty practices and policies. In addition, the students were giving feedback about classes that were taught by my colleagues and friends. To keep me from inserting my own biases, I maintained a neutral tone no matter how the respondent answered the questions, and I did not give any feedback to their answers. For example, when Ruby began describing her concern that the instructor expected students to police each other during class, I resisted offering a justification as to why an instructor might encourage students to speak up when their peers are being disruptive. I remained in the role of researcher who was receiving Ruby's account without judgment or qualification.

Qualitative Validity

Validity refers to whether a study measured what it claimed to measure and whether the findings make sense in relation to the data collected (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Merriam, 2009). Validity influences the extent to which the reader can trust the researcher's conclusions (Bailey, 2007; Creswell, 2008). In

Action Research the validity is “defined by the context of the researcher/participants, as opposed to (so-called) independent group of scientists” (Bradbury & Reason, 2003, p.172). As a result, this makes it inappropriate to generalize the results of the study because action research bypasses the customary separation between researchers and participants--the boundaries can be blurred (Bradbury & Reason, 2003). To increase the study’s trustworthiness, I employed three methods: peer review, triangulation, and researcher reflexivity (Merriam, 2009).

Throughout the study, I used peer review to assess the relationship between the research and authentic experiences (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). As I developed surveys and interview questions, I consulted a developmental education scholar and two educators with experience in creating reliable research instruments. As the data emerged, I discussed my analysis and interpretations with experts in developmental education and experts in qualitative research.

I triangulated the data by looking at different sources of information (Creswell, 2008). I compared the respondents’ interview answers to syllabi from SCC English 091 courses. Using multiple methods of data collection allowed me to crosscheck the students’ perceptions of English 091 class policies with actual policy documents (Merriam, 2009).

Researcher bias is an inherent concern in Action Research because it employs practitioners as researchers within their own communities of practice. Reflexivity, which reflects on the human instrument, clarifies the researcher’s assumptions and prior experiences with the topic (Creswell, 2008; Guba &

Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 2009). Acknowledging researcher biases and limitations helps the reader understand the researcher's interpretations of the data (Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 2009).

Chapter 5 Conclusion

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to use student voices and published research literature on helpful instructor behavior to improve instructional practices in community college developmental writing courses. The published research literature provided scaffolding for interview questions, and students' insights confirmed the research and added other setting-specific items to consider. Three main areas of concentration emerged from the data: Faculty-Student Interaction, Classroom Environment, and Varied Learning Strategies. The planning checklist delineated all three areas in both the classroom environment and the out-of-class contact arena where instructors and students reinforce classroom instruction.

Lessons Learned

First and foremost, I learned that students can make relevant contributions to instructional practices. After exhaustive research into effective instructional practice, I found that most of the published data is from instructors' perceptions or institutional data with regard to quantitative indicators of success. The students' voices were noticeably absent from the published information on instructional practices that impact student success. After interviewing the students in this study, I found that the students were able to describe instructional practices that helped them succeed.

Secondly, I learned that students and teachers want the same things from writing instruction. The students acknowledged an overarching concern for their ability to write effectively, and, at the same time, they are keenly aware of the

importance of writing to academic and professional success. Writing instructors acknowledge that learning to write effectively is one of the pillars on which a student can springboard to success. Thus, combining the published research literature with the students' voices gives both the students and the instructors a role in improving instructional practice in Scottsdale Community College writing classes.

Faculty reflections. The instructor participants found the planning checklist usable and helpful, but they indicated that it would be best used as a self evaluation tool rather than a planning tool. Jay stated that the checklist could be used for new faculty orientation or by experienced faculty for self reflection. She reported "This is a nice way to step back from the doing for some reflection." Mira suggested that the checklist be incorporated into a 360 degree evaluation process; she reported that the checklist would be effective at "prompting faculty to reflect on their own practices and then, perhaps, discuss that reflection with a peer evaluator, mentor, or coach." All instructor participants reported that the checklist would be a valuable addition to a professional development program. Ronnie summed up the overarching sentiment from the faculty participants by stating, "This document provides clear and relevant questions that related directly to what needs to be part of engaged classrooms of the 21st century." Charlie extended his reflection to include students' responses when he stated "The language is very helpful in moving instructors from 'sensing' their self-reflective assessment to more specifically articulating their assessment. Once instructors

identify gaps or areas of need improvement the language could easily be modified to be an assessment tool that students could answer.”

Researcher reflections. My own reflections are not unlike those of my colleagues. The checklist brought together all those things one learns from experience but may not remember every semester. While planning my course outline for spring 2012, I deferred to the students’ preferences and created opportunities for group peer review. In the “Course Materials” section of my syllabus, I noted that students will need to bring multiple copies of their drafts to class; this allows students to prepare for the group review sessions that may be new to some of them.

Along with planning for group review sessions, I created more opportunities for students to improve their grades. Instead of one draft and one final, I added points for students to visit the tutoring center, and I added a “wild card” assignment at the end of the semester. Students may choose one assignment from the semester and revise it for a better grade before the final exam.

My interaction with students is naturally hospitable, so I did not incorporate any changes to my approach to the classroom environment. I did, however, make a note that I need to police classroom distractions more assertively. In light of this, I added a section on the syllabus that discusses participation points and how students can lose them for disrupting class or distracting others.

All-in-all, the checklist challenged me to bring my instructional methods in line with current research and students’ voices.

Implications. Perhaps the biggest implication of this study is the confirmation that students can have a positive impact on instructional practices. Creating more opportunities for students to inform faculty or publishing current student reports on instructional practices can benefit both faculty and students.

Another consideration is the impact this study can have on professional development programs. By giving instructors a research-based evaluation tool and teaching them how to use it, educators can help each other improve instruction and classroom environments.

Lastly, this study can have an impact on teacher evaluation methods. Teachers who use end-of-term student surveys can incorporate items from this study into their surveys. In addition, institutional evaluation plans can incorporate the checklist as a self evaluation tool that allows instructors to conform their practices to the latest research.

Further Research

The results of this study suggest that students can play an active role into researching instructional improvement issues. Students benefit from opportunities to improve their grades, but we need more information about the best ways to give feedback and revision policies that reinforce the writing process. Perhaps future studies could answer the following:

- What types of instructor feedback do students find most helpful when revising writing assignments?
- How can writing instructors create grading systems that encourage review and revision?

- What specific group peer review activities do students find most helpful to improve their writing?

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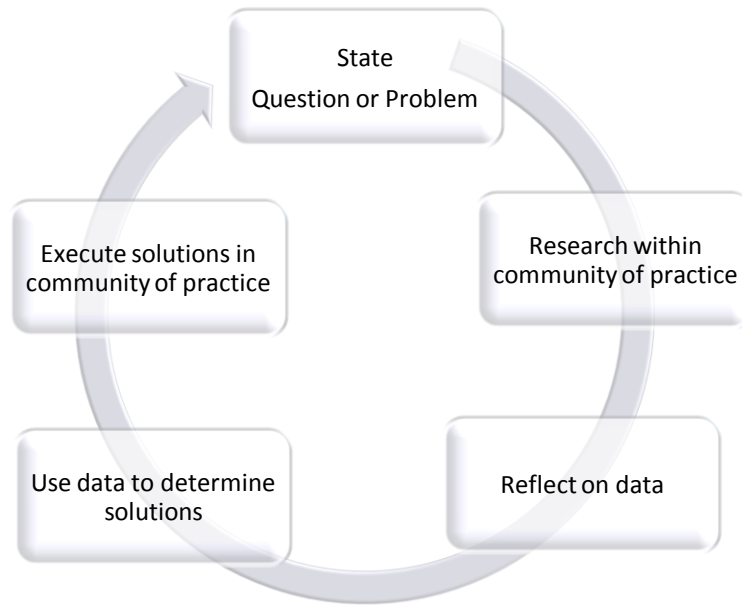
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APPENDIX A
ACTION RESEARCH SPIRAL



Adapted from *The Action Research Dissertation* by K. Herr and G. Anderson.

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APPENDIX B
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARDS APPROVAL

From: laurie.cohen@sccmail.maricopa.edu [mailto:laurie.cohen@sccmail.maricopa.edu]
Sent: Thursday, February 10, 2011 10:30 AM
To: ann.bixler@sccmail.maricopa.edu
Subject: IRB Protocol Approved: 2011-01-097, Bixler, Ann

IRB has approved the protocol with the following details.

Protocol ID: 2011-01-097
Principal Investigator: Bixler, Ann
Department: English
Protocol Title: Student Perspectives on Success and Persistence in Developmental Writing Classes
Review Type: EXEMPT
Approval Date: February 10, 2011

To: Kris Ewing
ED

From:  Mark Roosa, Chair 
Soc Beh IRB

Date: 02/25/2011

Committee Action: **Exemption Granted**

IRB Action Date: 02/25/2011

IRB Protocol #: 1102006081

Study Title: Faculty Impact on Student Success in Developmental Writing Courses

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(1) (2) .

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.

CITI Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Human Research Curriculum Completion Report Printed on 10/8/2010

Learner: Laura Ann Bixler (username: labix)

Institution: Arizona State University

Contact Information: Kris Ewing

Department: Higher Education

Email: ann.bixler@scomail.maricopa.edu

Group 2 Social & Behavioral Research Investigators and key personnel:

Stage 1. Basic Course Passed on 10/08/10 (Ref # 5078169)

Required Modules	Date Completed	Score
Introduction	10/08/10	no quiz
History and Ethical Principles - SBR	10/08/10	4/4 (100%)
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBR	10/08/10	5/5 (100%)
The Regulations and The Social and Behavioral Sciences - SBR	10/08/10	4/5 (80%)
Assessing Risk in Social and Behavioral Sciences - SBR	10/08/10	4/5 (80%)
Informed Consent - SBR	10/08/10	5/5 (100%)
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBR	10/08/10	3/3 (100%)
Research with Prisoners - SBR	10/08/10	4/4 (100%)
Research with Children - SBR	10/08/10	4/4 (100%)
Research in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools - SBR	10/08/10	4/4 (100%)
International Research - SBR	10/08/10	3/3 (100%)
Internet Research - SBR	10/08/10	4/4 (100%)
Research and HIPAA Privacy Protections	10/08/10	5/6 (83%)
Workers as Research Subjects-A Vulnerable Population	10/08/10	4/4 (100%)
Conflicts of Interest in Research Involving Human Subjects	10/08/10	1/2 (50%)
Arizona State University	10/08/10	no quiz

For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be affiliated with a CITI participating institution. Falsified information and unauthorized use of the CITI course site is unethical, and may be considered scientific misconduct by your institution.

Paul Braunschweiger Ph.D.
Professor, University of Miami
Director Office of Research Education
CITI Course Coordinator

APPENDIX C

STUDENT INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

APPENDIX D
RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Kris Ewing in the College of Education at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to faculty impact on student success in developmental writing classes at SCC.

I am recruiting individuals to take an online survey which will take approximately 20 minutes. Of all the surveys returned within the first three days, one will be drawn to receive a \$25 visa gift card. After the surveys have been analyzed, I will ask survey participants if they want to participate in follow-up interviews; the interviews would take about an hour, and participants will receive a \$25 visa gift card. Please fill out the invitation to participate if you would like more information about participating.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me at (480) 423-6454.

APPENDIX E
EMAIL RECRUITMENT LETTER

**FACULTY IMPACT ON STUDENT SUCCESS AND RETENTION IN
DEVELOPMENTAL WRITING COURSES**

Date

Dear Student

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Kris Ewing, Ed. D. in the Department/Division/ College of Education at Arizona State University.

I am conducting a research study to how faculty may have affected student success in developmental writing courses. I am inviting your participation, which will involve taking an online survey about your experiences in developmental writing courses; the survey should take less than 20 minutes.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can skip questions if you wish. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty, and no affect on your academic performance. You must be at least 18 years old to participate in the study.

Although there is no benefit to you possible benefits of your participation are that you will better understand the role faculty plays in student success, and you will help faculty improve the success of students in developmental writing courses at SCC. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

No information that could identify you will be published. The researcher will have access to your email address. Your responses will be anonymous. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be known.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the researcher: Laura Bixler, 9000 East Chaparral Drive, Scottsdale, AZ 85256, 480-423-6454. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

Return of the questionnaire will be considered your consent to participate.

Sincerely,

Laura Ann Bixler

APPENDIX F

BIXLER DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION SURVEY

Directions: Think about the most effective developmental English classes you took at SCC. This includes English 061, 071, 081, and 091. Please answer the questions below based on your experiences in your developmental English class.

1. My Developmental Writing Instructor called me by name.
 - A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Disagree
 - C. Don't Remember
 - D. Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree

2. My Developmental Writing Instructor showed enthusiasm for the course.
 - A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Disagree
 - C. Don't Remember
 - D. Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree

3. My Developmental Writing Instructor spoke to me about my interests outside of the classroom.
 - A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Disagree
 - C. Don't Remember
 - D. Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree

4. My Developmental Writing Instructor showed interest in the students.
 - A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Disagree
 - C. Don't Remember
 - D. Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree

5. My Developmental Writing Instructor was not approachable or friendly.
 - A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Disagree
 - C. Don't Remember
 - D. Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree

6. My Developmental Writing Instructor treated students fairly.
 - A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Disagree
 - C. Don't Remember
 - D. Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree

7. My Developmental Writing Instructor showed me that I am a good learner.
 - A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Disagree
 - C. Don't Remember
 - D. Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree

8. My Developmental Writing Instructor gave me relevant feedback on my work.
 - A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Disagree
 - C. Don't Remember
 - D. Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree

9. My Developmental Writing Instructor was not willing to work with me individually.
 - A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Disagree
 - C. Don't Remember
 - D. Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree

10. My Developmental Writing Instructor respected students' questions.
 - A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Disagree
 - C. Don't Remember
 - D. Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree

11. Students were free to call the Developmental Writing Instructor by his/her first name.
 - A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Disagree
 - C. Don't Remember
 - D. Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree

12. My Developmental Writing Instructor allowed students to express their own views freely.
 - A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Disagree
 - C. Don't Remember
 - D. Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree

13. My Developmental Writing Instructor used a variety of different types of activities in class.
 - A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Disagree
 - C. Don't Remember
 - D. Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree

14. My Developmental Writing Instructor did not give me specific suggestions on how to improve my writing.
 - A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Disagree
 - C. Don't Remember
 - D. Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree

15. My Developmental Writing Instructor's grading methods were clear.
 - A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Disagree
 - C. Don't Remember
 - D. Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree

16. My Developmental Writing Instructor's grading methods were consistent.
 - A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Disagree
 - C. Don't Remember
 - D. Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree

17. My Developmental Writing Instructor did not give me opportunities to revise my work.
 - A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Disagree
 - C. Don't Remember
 - D. Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree

18. My Developmental Writing Instructor gave tests and quizzes often.
- A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Disagree
 - C. Don't Remember
 - D. Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree
19. My Developmental Writing Instructor allowed students to retake tests.
- A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Disagree
 - C. Don't Remember
 - D. Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree
20. My Developmental Writing Instructor allowed students to retake quizzes.
- A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Disagree
 - C. Don't Remember
 - D. Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree
21. My Developmental Writing Instructor began new lessons before I had mastered the current lesson.
- A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Disagree
 - C. Don't Remember
 - D. Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree
22. My Developmental Writing Instructor encouraged students to work alone.
- A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Disagree
 - C. Don't Remember
 - D. Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree
23. My Developmental Writing Instructor gave students opportunities to get peer feedback.
- A. Strongly Disagree
 - B. Disagree
 - C. Don't Remember
 - D. Agree
 - E. Strongly Agree

APPENDIX G
INFORMATION LETTER-INTERVIEWS

FACULTY IMPACT ON STUDENT SUCCESS IN DEVELOPMENTAL
WRITING CLASSES

Date _____

Dear _____:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Kris Ewing in the College of Education at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to determine if faculty members impact student success in developmental writing classes.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve a one-hour interview with me; I will ask you questions about your experiences in developmental writing courses at SCC. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop the interview at any time.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. You must be 18 or older to participate in the study. At the conclusion of the interview, you will be given a \$25 visa gift card.

Although there is no benefit to you, possible benefits of your participation include improving developmental writing courses at SCC. In addition, your insights could help determine what types of training to offer teachers. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

Your responses will be anonymous; you will choose an alternate name that will be used to report your interview responses. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used.

I would like to audiotape this interview; you can change your mind after the interview starts, just let me know. The audio files will be transcribed so that I can read and study the responses. Audio files and transcript copies will be kept in a locked drawer or password-protected folder. After one year, all physical copies will be destroyed and computer files will be destroyed with file-shredding software.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact me at 9000 E. Chapparal Dr., Scottsdale, AZ 85256, (480) 423-6000. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the Maricopa IRB Office, Maricopa Community Colleges, 2411 W 14th St. Tempe, AZ 85281 and ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788. Please let me know if you wish to be part of the study.

APPENDIX H
PILOT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Note: The interviewer will use the following questions to guide the interview, which is designed to be interactive. Specific questions will depend on how the discussion proceeds.

Background:

- Why are you going to college?
- What are your academic goals?
- What are your career goals?

Developmental Education:

- Before you came to SCC, what were your experiences in other writing courses?
- How did you feel when you found out that you would need to take Developmental Writing classes before you could take English 101?
- Thinking back to your English 091 class, did your teacher take an interest in you as a student? If so, how?
- How did your English 091 teacher treat students in the class?
- What kind of feedback did you receive from your English 091 teacher?
- In your English 091 class, what opportunities did you have to improve your grade?
- What classroom activities helped you improve your writing?
- What resources outside of the classroom helped you improve your writing?
- How did your English 091 teacher make you feel about yourself as a student and/or a writer?
- What kinds of things helped you succeed in the developmental writing class?
- What tools, techniques, or strategies did you learn in developmental writing courses that helped succeed in English 101 or English 102?
- How did the use of computer software impact your success? (Connect Comp, My Comp Lab, Catalyst, Grammar Tools)
- How did the Writing Center impact your success?
- Have you been inspired or encouraged by any faculty or staff members? If so, how did they impact your success in English 091?

APPENDIX I
UPDATED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Background:

- Why are you going to college?
- What are your academic goals? What are your career goals?
- Before you came to SCC, what were your experiences in other writing courses?
- How did you feel when you found out that you would need to take Developmental Writing classes before you could take English 101?

Developmental Ed Questions

- Did you visit your 091 instructor's office? Can you tell me about how the teacher invited students to her office and how you felt the first time you went? How did you feel during your visit? (Otherwise, Why didn't you visit the instructor's office?)
- Did your teacher make comments that helped build your confidence as a student and as a writer? In the classroom? In her office? On your papers?
- When you spoke to your instructor, did your instructor listen to what you were saying? What makes you believe this?
- During class, did you feel comfortable asking questions? Can you explain why/why not?
- Did your instructor do anything to help you feel comfortable asking questions?
- When your instructor spoke to the class, did he/she make references to what students may have learned in high school? Did your instructor seem to value students' prior learning experiences? Can you tell me what make you believe that?
- What types of comments did your instructor make on your paper? Which comments were most helpful?
- Can you talk about specific activities that the instructor taught/used in 091 that you continue to use in your writing?
- Many survey participants indicated that their instructor used learning games. Did you experience these? Did they help you learn the techniques and concepts? Why/why not?
- Did your 091 instructor encourage students to work alone or in groups? Which did you prefer and why?

APPENDIX J

RECRUITMENT EMAIL-ACTION PHASE

I am working on the last phases of my doctoral dissertation at Arizona State University and would like to request your help with my research. For the past year, I have researched specific ways that faculty can impact student success in writing classes. Then, I created a planning checklist that instructors can use to help them prepare for the semester. Each item on the checklist is based on research and student interviews, and the checklist is a tool that would allow faculty members to reflect on their own practice as they prepare for the coming semester.

If you would like to participate, please review the attached checklist and consider the items in relation to your own practice. Once you have reviewed and reflected on each item, please answer the following questions:

1. Is the checklist usable? Why/why not?
2. Is the checklist helpful? Why/why not?

I am NOT asking for reflections of your own practice on each item as this is meant to be a self-evaluation tool to inform instructional practices. I would like your feedback on the items and the checklist as a tool that could inform instructor practices. Please provide as much detailed feedback as you can and email me your feedback by Sunday, February 5, 2012 . I will not publish your name or any identifiable information. To further protect your identity, you may choose to send me your feedback from an anonymous email, or you can mail responses to Ann Bixler, 9532 E Whitewing Dr., Scottsdale, AZ 85262.

I appreciate your time and consideration. If you choose to participate, further information about your rights can be found below.

Laura Ann Bixler

APPENDIX K

RECRUITMENT LETTER-ACTION PHASE

FACULTY IMPACT ON STUDENT SUCCESS IN DEVELOPMENTAL
WRITING CLASSES

Date:

Dear Participant _____:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Dr. Christopher Clark in the College of Education at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to determine how faculty members impact student success in community college writing classes.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve providing anonymous written feedback on the attached Faculty Self Reflective Planning Guide. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. You must be 18 or older to participate in the study. Although there is no benefit to you, possible benefits of your participation include improving community college writing instruction. In addition, your insights could help determine what types of training to offer teachers. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

Your responses will be anonymous. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used. Your responses will be kept in a locked file drawer and on a password-protected computer storage device. All originals and copies of printed responses and computer files will be destroyed after one year.

Return of the completed questions indicates your permission to participate in the study according to the terms herein.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact me at 9532 East Whitewing Dr., Scottsdale AZ 85262, (480) 423-6000. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788. Please let me know if you wish to be part of the study.

Laura Ann Bixler

APPENDIX L

BIXLER FACULTY SELF-REFLECTIVE PLANNING GUIDE

Planning and In-Class Framework	Faculty Reflection
How do I provide <u>guided feedback during class</u> ?	
How do I provide opportunities for <u>group peer-review</u> as opposed to single-student pairing during peer review?	
How do I maintain classroom control so that students are free from distractions? How do I refrain from relying on students to “police” their classmates?	
How often do I call on/address students by name?	
How do I include learning games and repetition strategies such as acronyms and mnemonic devices?	
How do I offer positive reinforcement to students who ask questions? How do I foster an environment where students are comfortable asking questions?	
How do I offer several opportunities for grade improvement?	
How do I allow students opportunities for revision?	

Establishing an Out-Of-Class Framework	Faculty Reflection
How often am I available to students outside of class? Do students report that it is hard to find me?	
How do I make students feel comfortable in my office?	
Do I call students by name and speak to them about hobbies and interests?	
When reviewing their drafts, how do I give specific suggestions for correcting errors and problem areas?	
How often do I prescribe independent computer activities to meet a student's individual needs?	
How do I communicate to students that I believe they can succeed?	