

1-1-1984

Internal Motivation and Feelings of College Students in the Developmental Program

Anne M. Ferguson
Southeastern Louisiana University

Joe Bitner
Southeastern Louisiana University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons



Recommended Citation

Ferguson, A. M., & Bitner, J. (1984). Internal Motivation and Feelings of College Students in the Developmental Program. *Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts*, 24 (2). Retrieved from https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol24/iss2/4

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Special Education and Literacy Studies at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.

INTERNAL MOTIVATION AND FEELINGS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS IN THE DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRAM

Dr. Anne M. Ferguson, Dr. Joe Bitner
SOUTHEASTERN LOUISIANA UNIVERSITY, HAMMOND, LA

Because Southeastern Louisiana University employs an open-door policy of admissions, it traditionally has enrolled students of widely ranging abilities. In recent years, the number of students without the basic skills required to be successful in regular university work has increased dramatically.

Although Louisiana has recently raised standards required in high school, the problems of underprepared students will exist because the first class to meet the new standards will not enroll in college until the fall semester of the current year. At that time there should be an increase in the proportion of students properly prepared for college. However, there will still be many underprepared students, since there will continue to be those who do not follow a college-preparatory curriculum but who do attend college. Approximately one-third of the entering college freshmen follow a college-preparatory curriculum.

About forty percent of the college-bound high school graduates in Louisiana are not fully prepared for college-level work. It is hoped that this figure will be reduced significantly by the fall of the year, and be further reduced as social promotion is eliminated from the elementary and secondary schools. During the interim, the colleges and universities of Louisiana will be faced with the need for comprehensive developmental education programs.

The purpose of the Developmental Education Program at Southeastern Louisiana University is to provide a program to meet the needs of students who enter the University with inadequate school preparation. One major problem facing the entering college student is a lack of basic reading skills which hampers the student's ability to follow classroom presentations, read required materials, organize and summarize content information, and interpret examination instructions and questions. Student deficiencies in the area of reading include low word recognition, poor meaning vocabulary, inadequate reading comprehension and slow rate of reading. The other pressing problem is the students' lack of confidence in a competitive classroom setting caused by low academic skills and low self-concept.

The major objectives of the Developmental Education Program are as follows:

1. Building a positive self-concept and a sense of motivation.

2. Building effective study habits to support academic progress.
3. Improving reading comprehension and reading vocabulary to college survival levels.
4. Increasing reading speeds to efficient rates for college assignments.

ACT composite scores are used for placement. All students with composite scores of fourteen or below are involved in parts or all of the program, which includes developmental English, mathematics, academic skills, and reading. One thousand out of the two thousand first semester freshmen were placed into developmental reading as a result of substandard ACT scores.

The purpose of this research was to determine self-concept levels, attitudes toward reading, and basic learning styles of developmental reading students as compared to regular entering freshmen.

The population of the study had the following makeup:

Sex: 41% female, 59% male
 Race: 72% Caucasian, 26% Black, and 2% other
 Age: 81% 17-18 years, 13% 19-20 years, 6% 21 or older

Total Enrollments of High Schools of origin:

200 or below	12%
200 to 400	21%
400 & above	67%

The Developmental Reading group was compared with a group of regular entering freshmen, using the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS). Students responded to items pertaining to perceptions of their physical self, moral-ethical self, personal self, family self, social self, self identity, self satisfaction, self behavior and self criticism. The only area in which a significant difference appeared was in the area of self criticism (Buros, 1978). This area was significant at the .01 level.

The generalizations generated from the TSCS scores are as follows:

1. Developmental students seem to be more openly critical of themselves as seen in the self criticism scores.
2. Possible reasons for non-significance of other scores:
 - a. Since the test was administered during the first week of school, all students may have been apprehensive, bringing about low self-concept scores of all students.
 - b. Students may not see the developmental program as failure since so many students are enrolled (about half of the class).
 - c. Students are realistic about their ability but feel they can compete if given an opportunity.
 - d. Many students are coming to school because they cannot get a job and success or failure is unimportant.

The Mikulecky Behavioral Reading Attitude Measure was administered to determine difference in attitudes of both groups toward reading (Smith, 1978). This scale is a twenty-item measure which describes various stages an individual passes through in developing attitudes toward reading. The measure reflects the stages of Krathwohl's Taxonomy—Attending, Responding, Valuing, Organization and Characterization. Both groups responded similarly to most items on the attitude measure. For the attending stage, both groups' responses indicated they were aware of reading and tolerant of it. The valuing stage for both groups were primarily similar except for two items of the six. It seems that neither group would have as a priority the locating of a library if they moved to a new city. Giving special books to friends or relatives is a very unlikely behavior for both groups. Even with these differences, both groups' responses indicated that they are beginning to accept the worth of reading as a value to be preferred.

Both groups had similar responses for the organization and characterization stages. Attitudes reflected that reading is a part of life that both the reader and others see as crucial.

Differences between these two groups were overtly indicated by their responses concerning the responding stage. Regular freshmen seem to be willing to read under various circumstances and they are choosing and enjoying reading. The inverse was indicated by the developmental reading group. They are not necessarily willing to read. They do not choose to read nor do they enjoy reading. Generally speaking, it seems that the developmental students intellectually realize that reading should be valued as important, but when it comes to responding to the process, the developmental reading students avoid reading.

The "Learning Style Indicator" (Lapp and Flood, 1978) was administered to both groups to determine modes and habits relating to the intake of information. This is an informal instrument that is comprised of ten paired statements to which one is to respond. The instrument helps to assess students' perceptions of their "preferred" learning style.

The major difference between the two groups on the "Learning Style Indicator" were on three of the ten paired items. First, the regular freshmen read the written part before looking at charts and diagrams whereas the developmental reading groups preferred to look at charts and diagrams before reading the written part. Second, the regular freshmen memorized things by writing them out. However, the developmental reading group memorized things by repeating them aloud. Third, the regular freshmen preferred working quickly, which the developmental reading group preferred working more slowly.

The three item Self Report Inventory (SRI) dealt with students' feelings toward being forced to enroll in developmental education and reasons for their lack of sufficient reading skills. The students' responses can be seen in the following graphs. As seen in the first table, about 30% of the students expected to be placed in developmental reading while a similar number were upset. Additionally, about 12-14% were either surprised, angry or didn't care.

Figure 1
Feelings Toward Scheduling Developmental Reading

—How did you feel when you realized you had to schedule developmental reading?

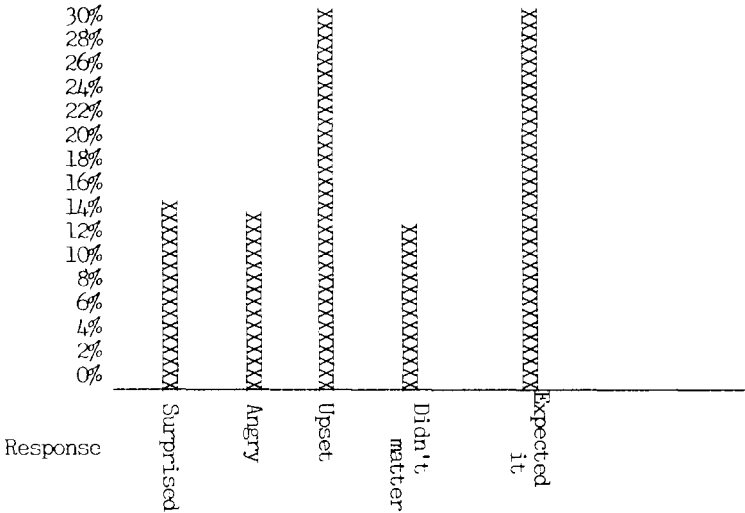


Figure 2
Feelings Toward Scoring Below Average in Reading

—How did you feel when you saw that you scored below the eleventh grade in reading?

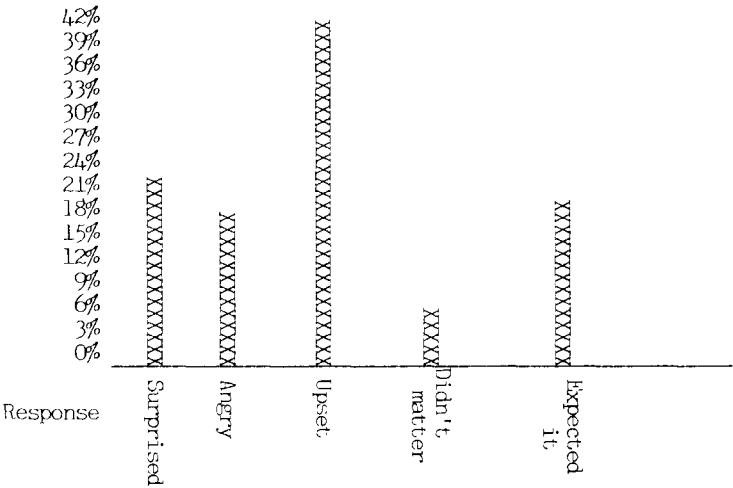
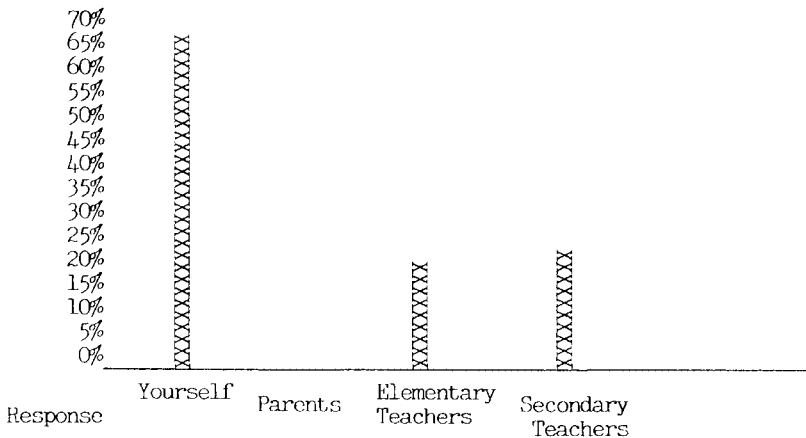


Table 2 shows the majority of the students to be upset by the fact that they had poor reading scores. Other responses ranged from 4% who didn't care to 21% who were surprised.

Figure 3
Reason for Below Average Reading Skills

—Who do you think is most responsible for your not being able to read as well as is expected?



This table indicates one of the more dramatic findings the study offered. Sixty-four percent of the developmental reading students blamed themselves for their poor reading ability while a total of thirty-six percent blamed their teachers, and none blamed their parents.

Summarizing, developmental reading students seem to have a similar self-concept level as that of regular entering freshmen. The developmental students also appear to be more openly critical of themselves.

Comparing the developmental students' attitudes toward reading to those of regular entering freshmen, the developmental students revealed a major difference primarily in one area. The responding stage responses showed that they were not willing to read and they would not select to read, nor did they particularly enjoy reading.

Learning style differences were noticed. The developmental reading students preferred memorizing things by repeating them out loud as opposed to writing them out. They also preferred to look at charts and diagrams prior to reading the written part. Generally, they preferred working slowly.

In reporting their feelings about being placed in developmental reading, a majority of the students either were upset or expected it. Many of the students were either upset or surprised when learning of their low reading scores, which may indicate

that a large number of students do not realize that they cannot read well. All students blamed either themselves or their teachers for their poor reading ability.

The major thrust of this research was to investigate some aspects of the academically unprepared entering university students. Although the research is not comprehensive, perhaps it sheds some light on the problems confronting poorly prepared students in the competitive university setting.

REFERENCES

- Buros, O.K. (editor) The Eighth Mental Measurements Yearbook, Vol. I. NJ, Gryphon Press, 1978, pp. 692-695.
- Lapp, Diane (editor) Making Reading Possible Through Effective Classroom Management. DE: IRA, 1980.
- Lapp, Diane, and James Flood. Teaching Reading to Every Child. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1978, pp. 115-146.
- Mikulecky, Larry J. "The Developing, Field Testing, and Initial Norming of a Secondary/Adult Level Reading Attitude Measure That Is Behaviorally Oriented and Based on Kratwohl's Taxonomy of the Affective Domain," Unpubl. Doct. Diss., U of WI, 1976.
- Smith, Carl B., et al. Teaching Reading in the Secondary School Content Subjects: A Bookthinking Process. Texas: Dallas, Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1978, pp. 84-104.