
The Developmental Education Reform Movement and the Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

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This Presentation

Argues that most of the major criticisms of developmental education are either based on seriously flawed research or have been misrepresented by advocacy groups to support their agenda.

the Thomas theorem

*“If men define situations as real, they
are real in their consequences”*

W. I. THOMAS

The ***self-fulfilling prophecy*** is, in the beginning, a false definition of the situation evoking a new behavior which makes the originally false conception come true. The specious validity of the self-fulfilling prophecy perpetuates a **reign of terror.**

R. K. Merton (1948), p195.

Self-Fulfilling Prophecy # 1

The purpose of developmental education is to make underprepared students perform better in college level courses than prepared students.

Self-fulfilling Prophecy # 2

Remedial courses are the cause of student attrition.

Self-fulfilling prophecy # 3

Remedial and developmental education are the same thing.

Developmental education is the integration of courses and services guided by the principles of adult learning and development.

Remedial education is the provision of stand-alone courses delivered to provide pre-college content.

Studies Contributing to the Self-Fulfilling Prophecy Include...

Bailey, T., Jeong, D-W., Cho, S-W. (2009). *Referral, enrollment, and completion in developmental education sequences in community colleges*. Community College Research Center.

Complete College America (2012). *Remediation: Higher education's bridge to nowhere*.

Martorell, P., & McFarlin, I. (2007 and 2010). *Help or hindrance: The effect of college remediation on academic and labor market outcomes*. RAND Corporation.

CCRC Research: Bailey, Jeong, and Cho

- Entitled: *Referral, enrollment, and completion in developmental education sequences in community colleges.*
- Published in 2009. A widely disseminated brief was published in 2010.
- Led to the contention that a traditional sequence of courses (developmental/remedial) “causes” attrition.
- This argument later morphed into the “remediation is a barrier to student success.”
- CCRC’s “heart is likely in the right place” but could do better at calling out misinterpretations.

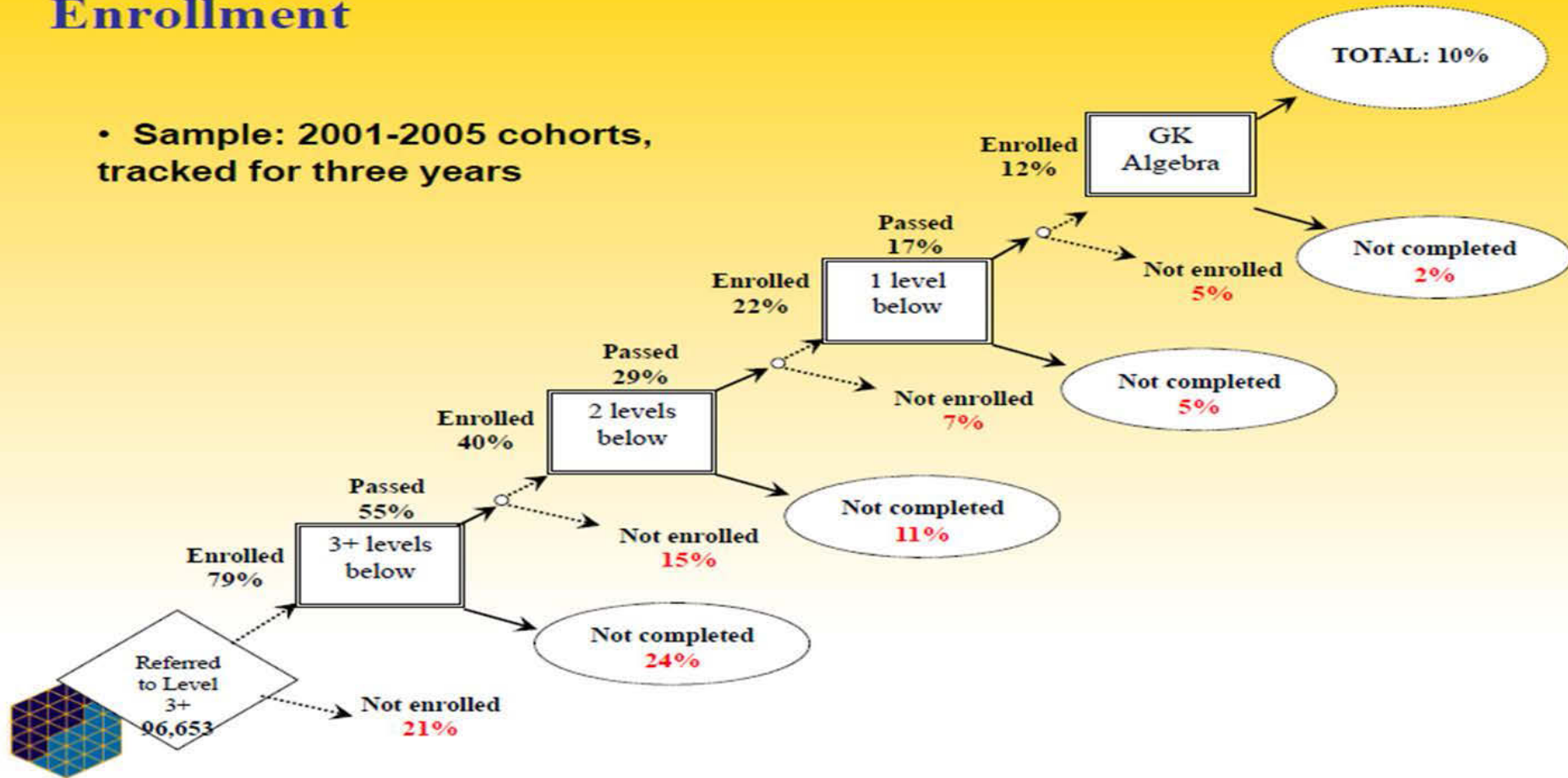
Bailey, Jeong, and Cho: Flaws in Methodology

- ✓ Sample was not representative
- ✓ Offered no assertion that problematic placement protocol and student withdraws are not failures of dev. courses
- ✓ Did not follow students outside of sequence, therefore: Students could have succeeded elsewhere (time and/or place)

Bailey, Jeong, and Cho

Math In-Order Course Completion and Enrollment

- Sample: 2001-2005 cohorts, tracked for three years



Bailey, Jeong, and Cho: Misinterpreted Findings

- About 30% referred to dev. ed. never enrolled.
- Only 60% enrolled in the dev. ed. course to which they were referred.
- More students were unsuccessful because they did not enroll rather than earning F's or W's.

Bailey, Jeong, and Cho: The Likely Fallout

- The challenges are more related to the enforcing of placement protocol and typical first-year attrition
- Assumes that failure to enroll = dev. ed. failure
- Does not take into account the commonality of part-time/stop out students

What About Open Access, Stop-outs, and Completion?

- At 4-year open admit colleges, 32% of students completed a bachelor's degree within 6 years. (NCES, 2018)
- At 2-year colleges, 39.3% completed a credential (AA or bachelor's – includes transfers) or were still enrolled after 6 years (National Student Clearinghouse, 2016)
- Though the average time of enrollment for AA earners was 3.4 years, the elapsed time to completion of an AA was 5.6 years.
- For nontraditional-aged students, it was 6.9 years.
- 52% of AA degree earners have at least 1 stop out. 27% have 2 or more. (Dev. Ed. likely gets blamed for much of this)

Bailey, Jeong, and Cho: More Likely Fallout

- Enabled charlatans to label developmental education a “Bridge to Nowhere” in order to perpetuate the 501c3 funding cycle
- Led to elimination agenda in Florida
- Subsequently led to a \$30.2 million budget cut to Florida CC budget

What Can Be Done?

- **Develop an effective means of encouraging and enforcing mandatory placement based on comprehensive skills and affective assessment process**
- **Recognize, accept, and be encouraged by the National Clearinghouse data on “persistence” and completion**
- **Do not hold courses/instructors/programs/disciplines responsible for students who did not take them**
- **Emphasize the importance of attendance**
- **Study and implement effective retention and support programs**

Remediation: Higher Education's Bridge to Nowhere

A STUDY IN CASE



Complete College America

Prophets or Grifters?

Dropout Exit Ramp #1: Too many students start in remediation

CCA Remedial Recommendation - Strengthen high school preparation

1. Adopt and implement CCST

- Align high school courses and first year of college

- Develop bridge courses

- Create transitional support programs

2. Align requirements for entry-level courses with requirements for high school diplomas

3. Administer college-ready anchor assessments in high school

4. Use these on-track assessments to develop targeted interventions

5. Use multiple measures of student readiness

Dropout Exit Ramp # 2: Remediation doesn't work

CCA Remedial Recommendation: Start students in college-level courses with built-in, co-requisite support

1. For students with few deficiencies

Redesigned first year courses with co-reqs, just in time tutoring, computer labs, etc.

2. For students needing more help

Redesign full-credit courses with co-reqs but with two semesters (more time...same content)

3. For students with the most significant academic needs

Provide alternate pathways to career certificates using the I-Best model

Dropout Exit Ramp # 3: Too few complete gateway courses
CCA Remedial Recommendation: **Embed needed academic help in multiple gateway courses**

1. Academic programs should build in extra supports around all of the early gateway courses necessary for success in students' fields of study.

2. Students should have built in tutoring and/or additional instructional time.

Dropout Exit Ramp # 4: Too few graduate CCA Remedial Recommendation – Encourage students to enter programs of study when they first enroll

- 1. Get students to commit to programs of study ASAP**
- 2. Create clear, limited, and structured program pathways from which students must choose**
- 3. Establish “default” programs for students not ready to commit**
- 4. Place students in the right math**
- 5. Expand co-requisite supports for additional college-level courses (high failure courses)**

Was this document

A Piece of Scholarship or A Marketing Document?

The Nature of Professional Literature

The published research, book, or unpublished technical report had impact and should have had impact	The published research, book, or unpublished technical report should have had impact but did not have impact
The published research, book, or unpublished technical report should not have had impact but did have impact	The published research, book, or unpublished technical report should not have had impact and did not have impact

Merton (1948) would be in line with current literacy researchers as he discussed the impact

The question is always was the impact positive or negative?

However...

The answer to this question is always a negotiation of text, context, and positionality between the author and the consumer(s) of the document.

The question then is What was the Anticipated Consequence and was there an Unanticipated Consequence?

Robert K. Merton. (Dec., 1936). The Unanticipated Consequences of Purposive Social Action, *American Sociological Review*, 1 (6), 894-904.

The notion of *unintended consequences* and *unanticipated consequences* are subtly but significantly different, despite being deeply connected

Unintended consequences refer to those not intended by a purposeful action.

Unanticipated consequences are those with outcomes that were not those that were foreseen.

It follows then that an unintended consequence might/might not have been anticipated.

It is also important to state that **unintended consequences can have positive, negative, or even perverse impacts** on individuals, groups of people, or society at large.



Unintended Consequence Types

- Unexpected Benefits
- Unexpected Damages
- Perverse Effects

The origin of self-fulfilling prophecy # 1.

Martorell, P., & McFarlin, I. (2007 and 2010). *Help or hindrance: The effect of college remediation on academic and labor market outcomes*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

Martorell and McFarlin Study Shortcomings

- ❑ The original study was not formally reviewed.
- ❑ It only looked at math and reading remediation.
- ❑ The sample of remedial students included more minority, more lower income, and lower achieving students.
- ❑ The study only included students 10 points above or 10 points below cutoff (some students were within 2-5 points of being placed in one group or another).

Findings

- **Students who just missed college placement and took remedial math did no better than students who just missed placing into remediation and took college level math.**
- **“We find no effect of remediation on the likelihood of graduating within 6 years”**
- **“Our results do not support the hypothesis that remediation increases the time needed to finish a degree.”**
- **“Math remediation increases the likelihood of passing a college level math course by 5 percentage points.”**
- **There is no difference in labor market outcomes for those who placed into remediation and those who placed into college level math.**

Bailey, Jaggars, & Scott-Clayton (2013)

“We do not advocate -nor do we believe that the results of our research support- the elimination or reduction of developmental education, the placing of all students into college courses, or the wholesale conversion of developmental education into a co-requisite model.

Panel Discussion



Questions...
Comments...
Observations...



Have a Good Afternoon!



References

Bailey, T. R., Jeong, D.W., & Cho, S.W. (2009). Referral, enrollment, and completion in developmental education sequences in community colleges. *Community College Research Center*. Retrieved from https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/remedial/k2attachment/referral-enrollment-completion-developmental_V2.pdf

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