

Jere Brophy: The Texas Years

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It is a pleasure to have this opportunity to share some stories related to my career-long experiences with Jere Brophy. Besides pointing out his pioneering contributions to research on teaching and learning, I will offer a few personal reflections about what it was like to work with Jere. I also want to tell a never-before-told story about how his works had a direct impact on my opportunity to conduct some of the early research and initial verification of the Diagnostic Dimensions of the Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) (Hall, Wallace & Dossett, 1973; Hall & Hord, 2015).

This narrative is centered on the early days of our careers, which took place at The University of Texas at Austin. The story illustrates what can happen through systemic interactions between strategic national policies, thoughtful leadership, sharp colleagues, good ideas, funding continuity, and intellectually honest politics. Jere and I began our academic careers at a time when these forces merged to support well-developed scholarship with the expectation that different research groups would exchange ideas and early drafts of their works. In addition, there was cross-project collaboration with national leaders to develop and address a national education research and development (R&D) agenda.

At the time this was called “programmatically R&D.” The expectation was that researchers at different universities that received federal funding would meet regularly, share insights, and explore together their developing understandings. The leadership for this approach came from the funding agency which, in the 1960s, was the U.S. Office of Education. Beginning in the early 1970s, federal leadership came through the National Institute of Education. Our Washington, D.C. project officers, such as Gary McDaniels, Virginia Koehler Richardson, and Joe Vaughn, were scholars in their own rights. They facilitated continued networking and exchange of ideas across the various research projects.

One outcome of the programmatic R&D strategy was a national consensus about education research priorities, with targeted funding and built-in collaboration. Another result was that a number of young scholars, such as Jere Brophy and his colleagues, had the opportunity to conduct major multi-year studies.

The real beginning of our story was the initial passage of the Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965 (Clark, 1976; Simon-McWilliams, 2007). As part of President Johnson’s Great Society program, ESEA was the largest and most expansive education statute ever in the U.S. Although most parts of ESEA addressed schools and

states, one part provided major, multi-year funding for programmatic R&D. Two new types of education organizations were funded: 1) University based R&D centers and 2) Regional Education Laboratories. In combination, these new agencies were known as the “labs and centers.” For the first time in the U.S., there was major, systematic, multi-year funding for education R&D.

The grant competitions used to establish the university-based centers were tied to a set of national priorities. Winning universities included the Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburg, the Center for the Study of Evaluation at UCLA, and the R&D Center for Teacher Education at The University of Texas at Austin.

In its beginning years, work of the R&D Center for Teacher Education (UTR&D) included development of a Personal Assessment System that was to be used in initial teacher education programs to assess “personalogical” aspects of future teachers. Another major outcome was Frances Fuller’s work (1969) on the Concerns of Teachers (there is no Jere Brophy yet, but this is where our story about the systemic intersection of policies, politics and scholarship gets better).

In 1967, the U.S. Office of Education’s review of UTR&D resulted in the directive to move to field testing the products that had been developed. The charge was to develop an experimental teacher education program that used the Personal Assessment System and was based on Fuller’s Concerns Model. There also was pressure to study teaching in schools.

The University of Texas administration and the R&D Center’s co-directors made a strategic decision that, in today’s world, was unimaginable. The decision was made to dedicate a set of new faculty tenure lines to the Center and hire several assistant professors in the Departments of Educational Psychology and Curriculum and Instruction to staff the new directions. These tenure lines were half-funded by the grant and half-funded by the University.

In the fall of 1968, Jere Brophy was hired as an Assistant Professor in Educational Psychology and as a researcher in UTR&D. Bill Rutherford and I were hired to join the faculty that was developing the experimental Personalized Teacher Education Program (Fuller and Bown, 1975). As the saying goes, *the rest is history*; but there is another twist to the story, which I will tell in a moment.

First, we need to highlight some of the foundational research that emerged over the next decade through Jere’s efforts and that of his growing list of collaborators. Note that his record of scholarship was done with co-authors, each of whom became significant scholars in his or her own ways. First was the two-year Texas Teacher Effectiveness Study of second and third grade teachers who were consistent in producing student learning gains (Brophy & Evertson 1975, 1976). Then came the First-Grade Reading Group Study (Anderson, Everston & Brophy (1979), which was followed by the Texas Junior High School Study (Evertson, Anderson, Anderson, & Brophy 1980; Evertson, Emmer, & Brophy, 1980). There was also the Teacher Expectations and Student Attributes studies (Good & Brophy, 1971). Along the way Jere and his colleagues developed rigorous measures for making classroom observations (Good & Brophy, 1970). Each of the studies established correlates between teacher practices and student test scores. These “process-product” studies were foundational and led to many of the effectiveness studies that have followed.

A special strength of Jere as a scholar was his way of working with colleagues and developing strong doctoral students. Unlike many, he was not always the first author, nor was he often the sole author. As can be seen in the various citations, Carolyn Evertson was a continuing colleague. Ed Emmer was a regular contributor to these studies, while Tom Good was another significant collaborator. This talented set of young scholars also brought along many doctoral students, such as Linda Anderson and Julie Sanford, who went on to have strong careers in their own rights.

At that time in the 1970s, the federal stance on R&D centers was that each was a place with a resident staff that had the capacity to conduct well designed multi-year studies. There also was an expectation that there would be widespread dissemination of the findings. The centers also were places that other researchers, doctoral students, policy makers, and practitioners could turn to learn about the most recent findings from research.

UTR&D was a very special place. The founding co-directors, Ollie Bown and Bob Peck, were counseling psychologists and senior faculty. They were comfortable in hiring young faculty, including newly-graduated doctoral students, who came from research universities and appeared to have the potential to become strong scholars. As a result the center housed several major projects, each of which had a talented PI. Each of these projects made very significant contributions through research and development activities.

In addition to Jere, UTR&D was home for the foundational studies of Tom Good. Walter Doyle grappled with learning to teach while Gary Borich engaged in work on program evaluation. Another project team, led by Gary Griffin and Susan Barns, examined clinical aspects of teacher education. UTR&D became so well regarded internationally that scholars from other countries, including Australia, Belgium, the U.K., and Israel, would visit for periods ranging from a few days to a year.

Clearly, Jere Brophy's works were a main draw and source of stature for UTR&D. At the same time, I will acknowledge that he did not always like taking time to talk with the many visitors. To better protect him, I would schedule "two bit" and "four bit" tours. Visitors making the rounds of the centers and labs, and only visiting for a day or so would find that Dr. Brophy was unavailable. Jere did take time for the long term visitors who were genuinely interested in his research. However, sometimes the courtship took awhile to develop.

Jere Brophy also played a direct role in our continuing development of the Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM). The Correlates of Effective Teaching studies were precedent-setting in several ways. The studies were well-designed and were early exemplars of the way programmatic R&D works. In addition, these studies established the UT R&D Center as a place where well-conceptualized and carefully conducted classroom research was taking place. There was an organized culture of high expectations in relation to rigor and doing quality work. My emerging ideas about change processes in schools and universities were able to develop under the umbrella of all that Brophy and the other classroom researchers were accomplishing at UTR&D, which was a very unusual place in terms of internal politics. With so many emerging super stars it could easily have been a rat's nest of rivalries and internecine warfare. But it wasn't! In hindsight, I think this was due in large part to Jere and the others being so fully consumed in advancing teaching and teacher education research. There were sufficient resources, nurturing support from the co-directors, and with five year contracts, no one had a need to undercut what another was doing. Together, we had a critical mass of mutually supportive research programs.

There were times, however, when the national politics did consume our attention. This was particularly true at the times for submitting new five-year proposals, and when the funding office in Washington would be undergoing a policy change. One of these times was an epoch for the Center and illustrates how politics, academic review, track records of success, and the promise of possible interesting futures can come together.

In the early 1970s, there was another major review of the centers by the federal government. We went through these high stress experiences from time to time. It became clear this time that behind the public talk, a major part of the political agenda in the review process was to reduce the number of national centers. One item behind this pressure was that the continuing funding commitment to the Labs and Centers was so

large that newcomers to the policy arena could not see any way to make funds available for their new initiatives, unless the number of Labs and Centers was reduced. So there was a review of the labs and centers. As the “do or die” review process unfolded, it became clear that UTR&D was on the target list for closing.

We had submitted the proposal in response to the RFP. The proposal was reviewed favorably, but there seemed to be some sort of continuing uncertainty. The obligatory panel reviews were mixed. In the end, the future of UTR&D was left to what would be recommended by two well-regarded scholars following their site visit. The end of the story is that the recommendations of the two scholar reviewers were favorable, and the UTR&D with its many talented personnel had another fifteen years of productive projects.

Enough time has passed so it is okay now to tell the rest of the story. The two scholars who made the do-or-die site visit were Barak Rosenshine and Ken Howey. Each of these scholars approached that site visit with professionalism. As the site visit unfolded and they came to understand the promise within the proposed programs of research, each of them came to believe that there were promising directions within the Center’s proposal and staff. One of the scholars was very supportive of the set of studies Jere had proposed related to Research on Classroom Learning and Teaching. The other consultant thought there were some promising possibilities within our proposed studies of implementation using CBAM constructs. The two reviewers agreed to make the consensus recommendation that UTR&D should receive continued funding.

The outcome of their site visit was UTR&D being funded for another fifteen years. Jere and the rest of us got to engage in more of the major studies that produced many of the significant findings that are now widely cited. In hindsight, think about the names associated with the Center’s work on teaching and teacher education over that fifteen year period: Brophy, Good, Emmer, Everston, Griffin, Borich, and Doyle. In addition are names associated with CBAM and implementation research including Hord, Loucks-Horsely, Rutherford, Stiegelbauer, George, and Hall. Today, each of these names is well established within the field of education research.

All that was accomplished during those years most certainly justified the reviewers’ recommendations. Each of the research projects provides a strong case for the importance of programmatic R&D, the importance of having a critical mass of staff in one place, sufficient resource support to develop and sustain the capacity to conduct multi-year studies, and that high quality research can take place in real world schools. All of Jere Brophy’s work at UTR&D and after was strong, done with colleagues, grounded in real classrooms, and foundational. In addition to being an outstanding scholar, he was a mentor to many, empowered others, and always saw the humor in what was happening.

One final thought has to do with what it was like personally to have Jere as a colleague. He was confident and comfortable in his academic work. I always appreciated his willingness to support other center projects and to help with the politics when needed.

Following his very productive years at UTR&D, Jere moved to Michigan State University. He continued to be a scholar, took on more leadership roles including his time with the Invisible College, and worked with many more graduate students. Clearly his career is an archetype of all that we envision for research university scholars.

On a more personal level, since our Texas days, I have always looked forward to seeing Jere at the annual meetings of the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Classroom Interaction*. He always attended and would have some new insights to share. If you knew him, he also had a warm personal side. As soon as I would inquire about his grandchildren, he would light up, display his big smile, and tell an anecdote about what he was doing with them.

Jere was a special person. Those of us who were fortunate enough to launch our academic careers at UTR&D benefited from having him as a colleague. He held all of us to high standards and was a strong and effective team player when the chips

were down. His career-long record of scholarship is significant and precedent-setting. Throughout, he mentored colleagues and students. He enjoyed his family and saw the humor within much that is the silly politics of academe. He will be missed by all of us. His scholarly contributions will live on. ■

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