Editorial

What Difference Would it Make?
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Imagine for a moment that the March 2000 Issue of the CME journal arrives with an article by the editor, Brian Roberts, splashing the headline over the cover: Music Education Research Stopped by Y2K Bug. The article explains the shocking news that due to a mysterious phenomenon associated with the Year 2 Thousand, music educators are no longer able to do any research. What would change? What difference would it make if there were no more "music education research" done anywhere in the world?

The cynic might argue that there is a backlog of unread and unimplemented research that could keep the profession changing for many years to come, if only someone paid attention. Another might argue that most music education research has little implication for practice anyway, so the only effect would be that music education professors would not get tenure in traditional universities because they would have no "research" publications. Another might accuse music education research of being a field of study (music education) within a field of study (education) and that a return to pure discipline-oriented (psychology, history, sociology, philosophy, etc.) research would be more fruitful anyway.

The apologist could point to the changing contexts and expectations society provides for music educators and the resultant catalogue of questions hounding our professional practice. An end to music education research would leave us with out-moded and inappropriate solutions and explanations. Another could point to the realization that a profession must be in control of the answers to its own professional questions. If it has to look to another "learned caste" or authority for answers it becomes a mere cadre of technicians.

Viewing research as a set of answers, focuses the "loss" stemming from an end to music education research on the absence of "answers" -- the lack of product. Research does produce answers of sorts -- answers to research questions that, if asked out of pedagogical context, have pedagogical and professional implication. But, the relevance is primarily to the researcher. Pedagogical questions tend to be personal and must be personalized. That has been the problem with curriculum prescriptions and university research "answers." However, research is also a process - the very act of asking of relevant questions is an act of analysis, speculation, and explanation. Inherent in a question is an answer. The pursuit of an answer is a process of observation, examination, meaning negotiation, and theory formulation -- in other words, it is learning. The process of inquiry is not an arbitrary and negotiable adjunct or luxury to professional pedagogical practice; it is the central process and essential state of being. To lose this from the profession would be unthinkable. Yet its absence is all too often greater than it should be. We must become and remain a learning, changing, inquiring profession.