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Preparing And Nurturing Music Education Researchers

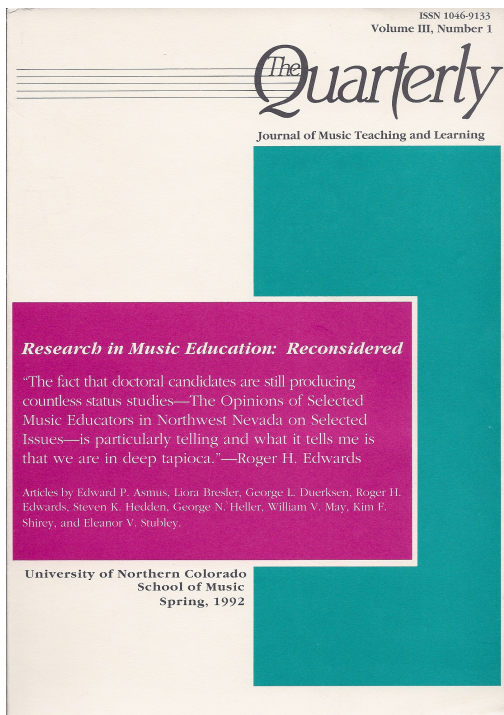
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It is with pleasure that we inaugurate the reprint of the entire seven volumes of The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning. The journal began in 1990 as The Quarterly. In 1992, with volume 3, the name changed to The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning and continued until 1997. The journal contained articles on issues that were timely when they appeared and are now important for their historical relevance. For many authors, it was their first major publication. Visions of Research in Music Education will publish facsimiles of each issue as it originally appeared. Each article will be a separate pdf file. Jason D. Vodicka has accepted my invitation to serve as guest editor for the reprint project and will compose a new editorial to introduce each volume. Chad Keilman is the production manager. I express deepest thanks to Richard Colwell for granting VRME permission to re-publish The Quarterly in online format. He has graciously prepared an introduction to the reprint series.

Preparing And Nurturing Music Education Researchers

By George L. Duerksen

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Although music education research has difficulties in some cases, these problems are shared with research in education and in other social science and behavioral science fields. Music education research, however, is prospering in many ways, and several of the positive aspects deserve mention.

The increasing number of journals that publish music education research is impressive. The field's traditional journals, such as the *Journal of Research in Music Education* and the *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, have been joined by other quality serials such as the *Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning*, *Update*, *Psychology of Music*, the *Bulletin of Historical Research in Music Education*, the *Missouri Journal of Research in Music Education*, the *Contributions to Music Education*, and the *Southeastern Journal of Music Education*. In addition, research of pertinence to music education continues to be published in journals of related fields such as music therapy, psychology, special education, and other fields.

Thus, a substantial amount of music education research is being done, and in fact the major research journals typically have a backlog of accepted articles waiting to be published. The *Journal of Research in Music Education* recently changed type style so that more information could be printed in its quarterly publications, but the editor still advises authors that potential time from submission to publication of accepted articles may approximate two years. The amount of worthwhile

research being done seems to exceed the various journals' capacity for dissemination.

The work being published in the profession's major research journals reflects several encouraging trends. Although dissertation research continues to be a major source of submitted manuscripts, many articles published in the refereed journals report other research as well. Many individuals who earn music education doctorates continue doing research beyond their dissertations, and often seek to disseminate their findings. Other research reports describe studies done prior to dissertation work. The fact that Master's level and pre-dissertation doctoral students are doing research substantial enough to warrant publication reflects improvement in the field. Individuals outside higher education are also doing and reporting research. K-12 music education practitioners and others are doing worthwhile investigations, some of which are finding their way into the dissemination chain.

Moreover, there seems to be substantial interest in music education research at national, divisional, and state conventions and conferences. The "poster session" format for dissemination at conventions has proved popular and may be attracting a wider audience than paper-reading sessions might. At the same time, interest in the Special Research Interest Groups (SRIGs) that were founded in the late 1970s continues unabated.

Journal article and poster presentation formats seem to attract different groups of researchers. Although some researchers disseminate in both formats, each seems to serve a somewhat different group. This diversity promises to encourage increasing breadth of interest in research among a larger group of music educators.

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The support from the Music Educators National Conference and the Macmillan Publishing Company for the forthcoming *Handbook on Research in Music Education* (Colwell, 1991), was developed with the contributions of a broad array of research leaders and points to belief that a substantial research interest exists and can be developed in the profession. The handbook's development promises to help define the parameters and evaluate limitations of research in the field.

Likewise, the recent Music Educators National Conference publication, *What Works: Instructional Strategies for Music Education*, (Merrion, 1989) demonstrates interest in using the growing body of research knowledge to improve practice in the field. MENC's recent acquisition and continuing support of the research dissemination journal, *Update*, also demonstrates this interest.

Another encouraging sign is the number of persons prepared through doctoral study to do research. Steinel (1984) reports that 418 music education doctorates were conferred in the United States in the five academic years ending in 1978 through 1982. Data taken from National Association of Schools of Music reports indicate that during the five academic years for which information was available, those ending in the springs of 1984, 1985, 1988, 1989, and 1990, 390 music education doctorates were conferred.

Estimating that about 75 music education doctorates were awarded each of the years for which data are missing (1986, 1987, and 1991), about 1,030 individuals have completed music education doctorates since 1978. These graduates, in combination with those who had finished music education doctoral study in the prior two or three decades, add up to a substantial number of individuals who have the preparation and potential to do significant music education research.

These individuals represent a substantial human resource for the profession. Study for the

Ph.D., the Ed.D., the Mus.Ed.D., and the D.M.A., along with doctorates with other names, includes some amount of research emphasis and some component of actual doing of research. If the individuals holding these advanced degrees can be motivated to do research on major topics, there is the promise of substantial progress in the development of music education's knowledge base.

Another encouraging trend is taking place parallel to, but outside of, the profession. Some industries that simultaneously depend on and support the profession—instrument manufacturers, music publishers, music computer software and hardware developers and manufacturers, audio equipment and recording manufacturers, synthesizer manufacturers, and the like—are developing research arms of their own and encouraging music educators to be involved in cooperative research. It may even be that such firms will provide employment for some professional music education researchers.

A substantial number of institutions prepare doctoral level music education researchers, but a declining trend during the past decade gives some concern. The Council for Research in

Music Education annually lists the United States and Canadian schools granting doctoral degrees in music education. In the 1981-82 school year, this list had 58 institutions; the 1988-89 list has 56, and the 1990-91 list has 55. While these data, like graduation numbers, sometimes seem to vary unpredictably, they may indicate a gradual decrease in the number of institutions that prepare new music education researchers at the doctoral level. If this trend truly exists, the field may need to look for other institutions to prepare its researchers and do its research.

Music education has little research industry beyond that provided by music educators themselves. Although some "outsiders" do research that contributes to the knowledge

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base that underlies professional practice in music education—musicologists, ethnomusicologists, psychologists, special educators, and the like—music education has no research arm that parallels the pharmaceutical research that supports medical practice, or the research establishments in business and industry that support engineering practice.

Music educators themselves are nearly the entire personnel resource available to do music education research. The primary focus of this research seems to be in the research universities and a few other higher education institutions, with a smaller amount being done elsewhere.

Preparing Music Education Researchers

Preparing music education researchers takes time. Researchers are not trained overnight. The development of research attitudes, skills, and knowledge is a complex, long-term process. For most music education researchers, this development occurs partly in parallel and partly in competition with the strong positive attitudes, skills, and knowledge that accompany interest in making music. Making music demands time, attention, energy, skill, and knowledge. It also may demand equipment.

The music educator often is attracted to music because it rewards those who meet its demands with strong positive affect (including aesthetic feelings), strong feelings of self esteem, and often strong approbation from others. Most music educators began experiencing these rewards early in childhood.

Doing research also demands time, attention, energy, skill, and knowledge. Although research may ultimately have similar affective payoffs, for many music educators these reinforcers have less power than the immediate rewards that may have seemed intrinsic to musical activity ever since their childhood. Thus the idea of investing time to develop research skills and conduct research may have difficulty competing with the idea of

investing time to develop musical skills and make music. Motivating music educators to change the distribution of their time and energy from music making to things such as research is one of the challenges of preparing music researchers.

Colleagues in physical, biological, social, and behavioral sciences sometimes speak of their work as “doing good science.” This phrase is not typically used by music education researchers. “Good science” does not seem to be a process that attracts overriding focus among this group. Helping music educators develop such an attitude is another challenge of research preparation.

Research preparation begins very late in the preparation of music educators. Few K-12 music programs engage their students in research activity or refer them to research-based musical knowledge. Although these students may learn and do research concerning other subjects during the school day, music classes usually do not engage in such activity. Moreover, very little happens to encourage students to use or value research as a method of seeking solutions for problems that arise in their music pursuits.

The situation does not change appreciably at the college undergraduate level. Music education teacher preparation programs typically do little to develop positive attitudes toward research or research skills among undergraduate students. They share this characteristic with other teacher education programs. The research base concerning music perception, development, learning, and instruction, is mentioned rarely if at all. The idea of replicating classical research studies underlying the field’s professional practice is rarely suggested.

At the Master’s level, research typically receives somewhat more attention. Many Master’s programs include a course “about” research. Such courses may focus on library resources, some help students become knowledgeable readers and users of research done by others, a few focus on helping students become researchers, and some have

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multiple goals. Few Master's students, however, actually engage in productive research that contributes to the profession's knowledge base. If they do attempt research, it is often the first time they have ever engaged in such activity. First attempts are likely to be practice attempts, and often do not achieve substantial results. It is interesting that a field that puts strong faith in practice as being essential to develop high level musical performance skills does not exhibit the same faith in practice as necessary to develop high level research skills.

Cursory observation indicates that the greatest focus on preparing music education researchers occurs in doctoral programs. Not all doctoral programs, however, emphasize research to the same degree. That is, different doctoral degrees exist and use different degree titles to reflect “professional” degrees and “research” degrees. There seems to be little uniformity among degree titles, and titles such D.A., D.M.A., Ed.D., D.Mus.Ed., and Ph.D. must intend to mean different things. The D.A. description often requires little research activity; the D.M.A. often requires a “document” which may or may not be based on research.

According to the Council of Graduate Schools (1990), “The Doctor of Philosophy degree is the highest academic degree granted by North American universities. It is a research degree and is to be distinguished from other doctorates such as the M.D., J.D., or Ed.D. Degrees, which are designed for professional preparation or which focus on applied rather than basic research.” The same publication goes on to say, “The Doctor of Philosophy program is designed to prepare a student to become a scholar, that is, to discover, integrate, and apply knowledge, as well as communicate and disseminate it.” (p. 1)

Even in programs that emulate this Ph.D. model, music education Ph.D. dissertation research rarely is the work of an experienced researcher. The music education system's

lack of prior attention to research means that the dissertation research will typically be an early attempt in the researcher's career.

An additional concern stems from the profession's lack of a strong research problem-solving tradition. There is relatively little vision of those problems the profession “really needs to do the research to solve.” As a result, the main “problem” of an individual's dissertation research sometimes seems to be “finding a researchable topic” rather than “solving a problem important to music education.” This is not surprising in view of the lack of attention to research-based information throughout the system for preparing music teachers and the everyday practice of music education.

In those research institutions that offer music education doctorates, graduate faculty are often engaged in doing research. In doing so, they can serve as models for students being trained as researchers. Their activities and attitudes have the potential to affect the research attitudes of their students. If the apparent main purpose of an individual's research is to gain tenure, and research activity slows appreciably or stops once tenure has been gained, students may learn to perceive research in the same way.

Perhaps greater potential for good research attitude development comes from faculty members who “mentor” rather than simply supervise students' learning of research techniques. Good mentoring provides strong support and frequent interaction focused on the student's development; good modeling is a part of good mentoring. Excellent research mentoring might be provided by the faculty member who has an ongoing program of research in which students can be inducted gradually, without being expected to become immediately expert in all aspects of the research process as they would need to be to do good research independently.

Such research mentoring should be possible at undergraduate and master's degree levels as

well as in doctoral study. If it were, music education students at the doctoral level might have had appreciable prior experience doing research and thus developed high level research skills. Doctoral dissertation research might then be viewed more as a challenge to create valuable knowledge and less as another hurdle on the way to a degree.

A question arises concerning who would be appropriate mentors. The Council for Research in Music Education annually compiles a list of music education doctoral advisors at North American universities. It is instructive to compare the list of doctoral advisors with the names of individuals who seem to have been active in doing and disseminating music education research. While some of the advisor's names appear frequently in the research journals, on research programs at national, regional, and state conferences, in the special research interest groups (SRIGs) within the Music Educators National Conference (MENC) and in other research activities, others do not.

Some of these others may be leaders in research in related music areas — musicology, music theory, and the like — that are not mainstream “music education.” Others are performers, conductors, and experts in areas other than research. From the view of preparing researchers, identification of such individuals as music education doctoral advisors may contribute to the lack of research focus in the doctoral program and provide models that discourage rather than develop the attitudes and skills needed to support improved research preparation.

Research virtuosity provides a model with both positive and negative aspects. The goal, to become a highly skilled “virtuoso researcher,” provides a worthy challenge for the student. The demonstration of research virtuosity, however, may give the impression of using techniques “for their own sake” or to demonstrate the investigator’s skill rather than being used to create knowledge. The phrase “empty technique” can describe research activity just as it can describe performance.

At whatever level the research preparation may occur, a social science model is typically used. Students take a course about research. This course often intends to teach students how to design, conduct, and report research,

how to understand, interpret, evaluate, and apply the results of research done by others, and help them develop positive attitudes toward research. This seems a difficult objective for a single course which is typically taken by students whose other professional degree coursework rarely refers to research, let alone engages them in active research that replicates demonstrations of the field’s basic principles.

As a result, the research course must introduce the entire universe of research techniques “all at once.” This content typically includes bibliographical resources, research designs, measurement techniques, analysis methods, internal/external validity assurance, dissemination concepts, and the like.

With all this content, the course often emphasizes lectures and discussions about research, rather than having students practice doing research. Such a course structure seems to parallel Professor Harold Hill’s “Think” system of teaching music in Wilson’s *The Music Man*. After passing through this “think” portion of research preparation, the music education researcher is expected to be able to go forth and practice research with substantial independence. A structured transition designed to induct the student smoothly into the activity of doing or interpreting and applying research seems rare in music education degree programs.

The context of the “introduction to research” course contributes greatly to the challenge the course faces in achieving its goals. The rarity of engagement in and reference to research in the rest of the music education curriculum may encourage students to see the research methods course to be about “something different and not closely related” to the field.

The “introduction to research” course is typically very crowded with content, attempting to cover the entire field. Thus priorities are set, some areas are emphasized, others receive less attention, and some may be ignored. The priorities may come from a variety of sources. Preferences of the instructor, the textbook(s) selected, and mores of the music education research community and the individual institution as well as other factors may affect the choices.

As a result of these choices, developing researchers tend to be channeled into focus-

ing on one or another research methodology and, subsequently, into focusing on the sorts of research problems for which that methodology might be particularly appropriate. In a sense, this may “put the cart before the horse” by focusing on a method looking for a problem to solve rather than a problem needing solution. An argument could be made, of course, that particularly important research problems for music education have been identified, and that research methods course content tends to focus on the techniques especially appropriate for seeking solutions to those problems.

Whatever the sources of priorities chosen, those choices may be reflected in the sorts of research currently reported in the profession’s major journals. Large-sample descriptive and experimental research and historical studies seem to predominate, with fewer single/small-sample experiments, philosophical or theoretical studies, naturalistic studies, and research case studies reported. Music educators work with professionals in other fields that find these latter research techniques useful; it might be valuable for music education researchers to have these techniques in their repertoire.

Nurturing Music Education Researchers

Preparation of researchers, at whatever level it is accomplished, does not in itself seem adequate to support the music education profession’s research needs. After they have been prepared, researchers apparently need to be nurtured, encouraged, and sustained in their enterprise if they are to continue their work creating new knowledge for the field.

Data cited earlier indicated that over 1,000 music education doctorates have been earned since 1978. The individuals who earned these degrees, as a group, probably comprise the bulk of the trained music education researchers in North America. They are the individuals on whom music education depends for the creation of new knowledge essential to improvement of professional practice.

Clearly not all of the research these individuals carried out for their degrees has been disseminated widely—either through refereed journal publication or through poster sessions

at conferences and conventions. As a result, the knowledge these individuals developed is not easily accessible to the profession.

Many reasons underlie this lack of dissemination. Not all of the doctorates were truly research doctorates, so there may have been little to disseminate. As noted earlier, documents completed for D.M.A. degrees may not report research results and D.A. degrees may not have substantial research components. Dissertation-based articles may have been submitted for consideration by journals, or for conference poster sessions, but not passed refereed review. Authors may not have been motivated to disseminate their results. Additional reasons undoubtedly exist.

Not all the individuals who earned these doctoral degrees have continued research activity beyond their dissertations. Although all have had some amount of research preparation, some probably gained more skill than others. Some, even though skilled, may not enjoy doing research. Some may be in jobs that do not allow time for research. Some may work in situations that reward other activities more than research. Still others may work in situations that do not reward research activity at all. A multitude of explanations can be hypothesized.

Whether or not a trained music education researcher continues research activity probably depends upon both internal and external factors. Affective, economic, environmental, situational, and other factors may be influential. Among the affective factors may be (a) enjoyment—“doing research for the fun of it” or “doing research for research’s sake,” (b) motivation to contribute to knowledge, (c) belief that research needs to be done to help the profession, and (d) gaining recognition and approbation from others. Like other areas of affective behavior, these factors are not easily influenced through instruction. Effective and reliable ways to instill these attitudes as part of research preparation have yet to be developed.

Economic factors vary with the trained researcher’s employment situation. Most persons trained at the doctoral level are employed in higher education; a smaller number of this group are employed as administrators in K-12 situations; a still smaller proportion is

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engaged in K-12 music classroom instruction. A few are engaged in other ventures.

For those engaged in higher education, the nature of the setting may have a primary influence on the economic benefits of continued research activity. These benefits include merit salary levels, promotion, and tenure awards. The trained researchers might be more interested and enthused if the reward system were better at recognizing research activity and achievement.

Many music educators in higher education are housed in college or university departments of music, schools of music, schools of fine arts, and similar units. These units are populated by individuals with traditional arts preparation, background, and attitudes about research. The music education research enterprise is sometimes viewed as being lower in the value structure than music performance, music history scholarship, music composition, and the like.

Perhaps music educators should be in the vanguard to change this value structure. They may need to teach their colleagues about the values of research inquiry, the values of music education itself, and the like. But whether or not they should try to do this, major attitude change is difficult to control. Colleagues may perceive music education as relatively low on the value continuum, and music education research may be low among those things that may be valued about music education.

As a result, the music educator is faced with the necessity of emphasizing those aspects of the job that have the greatest probability of resulting in merit salary increases, promotion, and the award of tenure. Even the person who has particularly positive attitudes toward research, the skills, knowledge, and facilities needed for research, may find it necessary to devote appreciable time and effort to those non-research activities that the system rewards more strongly. The major “research university” program that strongly rewards the music edu-

cation researcher—with salary, promotion, or tenure, or any combination of these—is not common. Among the colleges and universities that regard themselves as teaching institutions rather than major research institutions, substantial reward for the faculty member who focuses primarily on the production of research knowledge seems even more uncommon. Some sort of restructuring of the priority system for faculty rewards in higher education may be needed if additional music education research is to be nurtured in these institutions.

Opportunities for K-12 music educators to do research as part of their jobs traditionally have been limited. The job typically has not included any research assignment nor time to do it. In this way the practicing teacher’s role has paralleled the practicing physician’s—the demands of professional practice allow little time to engage in research.

Current moves to restructure education, and particularly the several styles of “professional development schools” being formed with impetus from the Holmes Group of teacher education institutions, provide the potential for K-12 music educators to join those in higher education for collaborative research. Music education research trainers might find value in preparing individuals to work collaboratively as well as individually. The reward structure in professional development schools might be designed to encourage research activity among K-12 teachers.

When an individual has acquired some sufficient amount of economic security and well-being, other motivations and reinforcers sometimes become more powerful. Affective rewards—both positive and negative—may have powerful influence on the amount and quality of research done by trained music education researchers.

At present, the most highly structured system for external affective reinforcement of music education research activity seems to be designed for those who have recently com-

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pleted doctoral dissertations. Positive reinforcers include local dissertation fellowships and “outstanding dissertation” awards at individual institutions and the Council for Research in Music Education’s award for outstanding dissertation work.

Dissertation critiques in the *Bulletin of The Council for Research in Music Education* cover the gamut in the reinforcement structure, varying from strongly positive to strongly negative. The critiques originally were intended to help meet the purposes described by Colwell (1963): “A need exists, therefore, for a means through which interest may be stimulated, guidance may be given, and some actual assistance offered to would-be researchers. In addition, a need of utmost importance is that of disseminating information concerning research which has already taken place, whose findings the teacher may utilize in teaching, this being, after all, the basic purpose of such research.”

Thus a basic thrust of the *Bulletin*’s dissertation critiques was intended to stimulate interest, give guidance, and assist would-be researchers. The affective outcomes, however, vary appreciably among the critiques. Some of the critiques are written positively, offering constructive criticism which focuses upon the dissertation’s research process and presentation. Such critiques may provide positive reinforcement, stimulate interest in doing further research, and provide guidance for improving that research.

Other critiques are written more negatively, offering criticism that is not basically constructive. These parallel the musical tradition of focusing as much on the performer as on the performance. A performance is judged, in part, on the basis of who did it rather than on its own merits. This tradition seems to carry over into the research enterprise, and results in critiques that sometimes seem to focus on the researcher rather than on the research. Such negative criticism is not likely to be a positive reinforcer and may discourage rather than encourage further and improved research activity.

Development of intrinsic affective reinforcers should be part of the process of developing and nurturing music education researchers. This development seems most likely to happen through actual ongoing involvement in successful research activity. The involvement during research preparation needs to blend as seamlessly as possible with continued involvement after the individual has left the institution.

Those who do music education research seem to constitute an in-group; this in-group seems to help sustain and motivate them. The expansion and democratization of the research in-group over the past decade or so has informally enhanced the preparation and nurturing of music education researchers.


Attitudes seem to be changing gradually. Research activity seems to be growing at the “grassroots” level. The view that only persons trained at the doctoral level are competent to do research seems to be breaking down. K-12 music educators are doing and disseminating research. The MENC, through its journals, other publications, regional and state organizations, the Society for Research in Music Education, and the SRIGS, are supporting research. These changes, along with the national ferment in education, with moves to restructure education, the schools, and teacher preparation, provides fresh opportunity and challenge for those who prepare and nurture music education researchers.

Preparation and nurturing of music education researchers might be enhanced if there were better defined boundaries to identify the field’s core and peripheral areas. Music education, being both multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary has not defined its main focus and boundaries. As a result, the field has little specific research focus.

Exact boundaries are not likely to be agreed upon. The *Journal of Research in Music Education* in the early 1980s asked for manuscripts that “...clearly make a contribution to a theory of instruction” while the 1991 version seeks reports that “enhance

knowledge regarding the teaching and learning of music." Nevertheless, some boundary identification of the music teaching/learning process, the process of helping others learn to use music effectively, might provide an area of knowledge in which music education research and research preparation might focus. It might help identify those major problems that truly require solution. Identification of those problems might illuminate the need to train and nurture researchers to try to solve them.

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The Fulbright Scholar Program for 1993-94 includes some 1,000 grants for research, combined research and lecturing, or university lecturing in over 120 countries. Opportunities range from two months to a full academic year; as many assignments are flexible to the needs of the grantee. Nearly one-third of Fulbright grants are targeted for research and many lecturing awards offer research opportunities; multicountry research is also possible.

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