

The role of general culture courses in training qualified teachers: The case of the Western music course

Nitelikli öğretmen yetiştirmede genel kültür derslerinin rolü: Batı müziği dersi örneği

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the opinions of pre-service teachers from various disciplines regarding the elective Western Music course, to identify its potential contributions to their professional and personal development, if any, and to interpret these contributions within the framework of general cultural knowledge, which is one of the characteristics of a qualified teacher. A case study design, one of the qualitative research methods, was employed in the study. The participant group was selected through criterion sampling and consisted of pre-service teachers enrolled at Harran University in the departments of Elementary Teacher Education, Primary Mathematics Teacher Education, English Language Teaching, Art and Crafts Teacher Education, Preschool Teacher Education, and Science Teacher Education, who chose the Western Music course as one of their General Culture Elective Courses. A semi-structured interview form was used as the data collection instrument, and the obtained data were analyzed using the descriptive analysis method. In terms of personal development, the majority of pre-service teachers perceived the Western Music course as an opportunity to enhance their aesthetic understanding, familiarize themselves with international music genres and artists, and increase their cultural awareness. Regarding professional development, most pre-service teachers found the course beneficial within the context of general cultural knowledge. It was stated that the course provided valuable contributions in various aspects, such as relating music knowledge to their field of study, enriching lesson processes, conveying different cultural perspectives to students, and incorporating music into classroom activities. The research findings indicate that the Western Music course can contribute to the general cultural framework of pre-service teachers' individual and professional development.

Keywords: music education, elective courses, general culture, qualified teacher, teacher training, Western music

ÖZ

Öğretmenlerin, öğrenciler üzerinde kalıcı ve olumlu bir etki bırakabilmesi, aynı zamanda eğitim süreçlerini etkili, verimli ve yaratıcı bir şekilde yönetebilmesi için çok yönlü bilgi ve becerilere sahip olması gerekir. Alan bilgisi kadar meslek bilgisi ve genel kültür bilgisi de öğretmenlik mesleğinin vazgeçilmez unsurlarıdır. Tüm bu unsurlar, disiplinler arası bir yaklaşımla birleştirilerek anlamlı ve etkili bir bütün oluşturmaktadır. Bu çalışma, müzik dışında farklı branşlarda öğrenim gören öğretmen adaylarının seçmeli Batı Müziği dersi hakkındaki düşüncelerini öğrenmeyi, varsa; dersin mesleki ve kişisel gelişimlerine sağladığı katkıları belirlemeyi, ayrıca nitelikli öğretmenin özelliklerinden olan genel kültür bilgisi çerçevesinde yorumlamayı hedeflemektedir. Çalışmada nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden durum çalışması, iç içe geçmiş tek durum deseni benimsenmiştir. Katılımcı grubu ölçüt örnekleme ile seçilen, Harran Üniversitesinde; Sınıf Öğretmenliği, İlköğretim Matematik Öğretmenliği, İngilizce Öğretmenliği, Resim-İş Öğretmenliği, Okul Öncesi Öğretmenliği, Fen Bilgisi Öğretmenliğinde öğrenim gören ve Genel Kültür Seçimlik Derslerden Batı Müziği dersini seçen öğretmen adaylarından oluşmaktadır. Araştırmada veri toplama aracı olarak, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu kullanılmış, elde edilen veriler betimsel analiz ile yorumlanmıştır. Kişisel gelişim açısından; öğretmen adaylarının büyük bir kısmı, Batı Müziği dersini estetik

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anlayışlarını geliştiren, uluslararası müzik türlerini ve sanatçılarını tanımalarına imkân tanıyan, kültürel farkındalıklarını artıran bir ders olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Mesleki gelişim açısından, öğretmen adaylarının büyük bir çoğunluğu Batı Müziği dersini genel kültür bilgisi bağlamında faydalı bulmuştur. Dersin, müzik bilgisi ile kendi branş bilgilerini ilişkilendirme, ders süreçlerini zenginleştirme, farklı kültürel perspektifleri öğrencilere aktarma vb. değerli katkılar sağladığı ifade edilmiştir. Araştırma bulguları, Batı Müziği dersinin öğretmen adaylarının hem bireysel hem de mesleki gelişimlerine genel kültür çerçevesinde katkı sağlayabileceğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: müzik eğitimi, seçmeli dersler, genel kültür, nitelikli öğretmen, öğretmen eğitimi, Batı müziği

1. INTRODUCTION

Considering its significance for both individuals and society, it is evident that teaching—being the cornerstone of education—is a highly critical profession. In this context, investments in teacher education processes, as well as studies, research, and projects aimed at training qualified teachers, are of great importance. Sustainable success at both individual and societal levels can only be achieved through the well-equipped and competent training of teachers, who are responsible for educating the individuals that constitute society.

In a constantly changing and evolving world, being a qualified teacher is not limited to competence in subject-matter knowledge alone. In order to leave a lasting and positive impact on students and to manage educational processes effectively, efficiently, and creatively, teachers must possess a broad set of knowledge and skills. In addition to subject-matter expertise, pedagogical knowledge, general cultural awareness, effective use of technology, strong communication, and problem-solving skills are indispensable components of the teaching profession. All of these components should be integrated through an interdisciplinary approach to form a meaningful and effective whole.

Article 7, Clause 1 of the Teaching Profession Law No. 7528 states that “Teaching is a specialized profession that requires preparation in terms of general culture, subject-specific education, and pedagogical knowledge” (Teaching Profession Law [TPL], 2024). The effective functioning of educational systems fundamentally depends on the quality of the teachers within the system. Therefore, improving educational outcomes in any country begins with enhancing the qualifications of its teachers. As the initiators, developers, and implementers of education, teachers constitute the most vital element of the education system. Thus, the concern and effort to train qualified teachers has always held a prominent place on the societal agenda (Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2017).

1.1. General Cultural Knowledge in the Teaching Profession

General culture refers to the accumulation of knowledge that individuals acquire from various disciplines. Regardless of their professional field, this accumulation supports individuals in becoming more creative, productive, and successful. Individuals with a high level of general cultural knowledge tend to have a broader perspective, well-developed problem-solving skills, and the ability to think interdisciplinarily and multidimensionally. All these factors hold significant importance in the teaching profession as well.

General cultural knowledge is not an independent domain, but rather the synthesis of the overall learning outcomes of a teacher’s educational process. In addition to subject-matter expertise and pedagogical formation, general culture encompasses interdisciplinary knowledge and skills that contribute to resolving problems encountered during the practice of teaching. General cultural knowledge forms an integral part of teaching competencies by supporting the explanation of events and phenomena related to the field, establishing interdisciplinary connections, and applying instructional principles such as concreteness-abstractness, proximity-distance, and relevance to real life in a holistic manner (Yetim & Göktaş, 2004). General culture signifies a multifaceted development. Skills such as adapting the classroom environment to suit student profiles and learning outcomes, keeping up with changes and developments, and the ability to address diverse segments of society are closely linked with general cultural knowledge (Kesmez, 2016). It is essential that teacher candidates in the course of their education are equipped with broad general culture, sound subject-area knowledge, and adequate professional formation (Oğuzkan, 1971).

In many studies conducted in Türkiye on the qualities teachers should possess, the common view is that general culture and professional teaching knowledge are as important as subject-matter expertise (Çelikten et al., 2005; Doğan & Özçakmak, 2020; Özabacı & Acat, 2005; Özer & Gelen, 2008; Şişman, 2009). Teachers are expected to possess both professional and personal qualities. No matter how positive a teacher’s personal characteristics may be, if they lack professional competencies—namely subject knowledge, general culture,

and pedagogical knowledge—it is unlikely that they will be considered an effective teacher (Erden, 1998). According to Kavcar (2002), a good teacher must possess two fundamental characteristics: professional and personal traits. Professional traits include general culture, subject-matter knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge, while personal traits involve aptitude for the profession and qualities such as being a role model, which teaching inherently requires. In Taşkaya's (2012) research, three aspects stand out: subject knowledge, general culture, and professional skills. The goal of contemporary education systems is to raise individuals who are open to change, creative, and capable of producing and utilizing knowledge. Achieving this goal depends on training well-qualified teachers. A qualified teacher is someone who continually renews and improves themselves in accordance with the advancement of science and technology (Yılmaz, 2007).

In summary, in order to cultivate well-qualified teachers, it is essential to place emphasis not only on subject-area knowledge and pedagogical training but also on the development of general cultural knowledge. In the teaching profession, general culture plays a crucial role in supporting more effective and efficient teaching of subject-related courses by enabling the diversification, exemplification, concretization, and contextualization of topics through connections with other disciplines.

1.2. Western Music as General Cultural Knowledge

Western music offers an intercultural perspective that enables teachers to comprehend various cultural values, events, and phenomena and to convey this richness to their students. In today's globalized world, understanding other cultures is considered just as important as knowing one's own. Acquiring knowledge in diverse disciplines fosters creative thinking skills and helps teachers develop an aesthetic point of view. Moreover, being knowledgeable about the history and repertoire of Western music is beneficial not only in courses related to the arts but also in establishing interdisciplinary connections. In this context, Western music contributes to the development of teachers as well-rounded and well-equipped individuals, serving as role models for their students.

When evaluated in terms of its role and importance within faculties of education, the diversification and enrichment of Western music course content provide valuable contributions both to the personal development of teacher candidates and to the overall improvement of education quality.

In a study conducted by İlhan (2022), university graduates' opinions regarding the elective general university courses (EGUCs) were examined. According to the findings, graduates reported experiencing positive emotions such as happiness and satisfaction before, during, and after the course, and believed that the course contributed significantly to their individual and multifaceted development. The limited number of negative opinions about EGUCs primarily concerned the course process itself and perceptions of ineffectiveness or monotony. Furthermore, participants generally believed that elective courses contributed to their holistic development, and they recommended expanding these courses, increasing their number, and providing better guidance regarding course selection.

In their article, Kaya and Üstün (2013) explored university students' opinions on elective music courses. The majority of participants indicated that they had chosen these courses of their own volition, and many already had an interest in music prior to enrolling. The results showed that interest in music increased significantly due to the course, that students derived greater enjoyment from music, that their musical culture was enriched, and that they developed a more selective and conscious approach to music. Additionally, the course was seen as a valuable opportunity for those without prior music education, with participants highlighting its practical orientation and emphasizing that the course should receive greater attention from universities and relevant departments.

The study by Em et al. (2018) examined the views of university students from various disciplines on elective music courses. The findings revealed that students mostly chose the music course due to personal interest and expected to learn to play instruments and gain cultural knowledge. They expressed a preference for interactive courses involving more student participation and reciprocal engagement, and they anticipated encountering music-related activities. Students also noted that music courses provided a sense of relaxation within their demanding academic schedules and contributed to their cultural accumulation. However, they also remarked on the inadequacy of the course content and learning environment.

According to Karakoç's (2015) study, both instructors and students agreed on the importance and necessity of elective music courses. Instructors believed that the objectives of these courses included helping students

to discover themselves, improve their tastes, gain responsibility, and foster a love for music. These views were shared by students to varying extents.

The findings of the study by Çağlayan et al. (2018), which explored the views of vocational school students on elective music courses, showed that these courses significantly influenced students' perceptions of art and music, altered the majority of students' musical preferences, increased their theoretical knowledge of music, and made them more selective and conscious listeners. Students also stated that the attitudes of instructors played a major role in enhancing their interest in the course, and that they experienced the benefits of music education in their personal lives.

Doğan's (2020) study on university students' expectations regarding elective music courses revealed that the most common expectation was to get to know different musical genres. Other expectations included learning to play musical instruments, doing rhythm exercises, and singing. The three genres students most wanted to be included in the course were Turkish Folk Music, Turkish Classical Music, and rock music. A majority of students supported the introduction of new music courses with diverse content.

In this context, elective general cultural courses offered in faculties of education significantly contribute to the individual and professional development of teacher candidates by enhancing their interdisciplinary thinking skills. Especially in the case of art-based courses such as music, these offerings improve teacher candidates' aesthetic perceptions, enrich classroom experiences, and equip them with the necessary tools to create engaging and creative learning environments for their future students. Therefore, diversifying the range of elective general cultural courses in faculties of education and tailoring their content to meet the needs of teacher candidates play an essential role in the teacher education process.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Ethics

All procedures performed in this study complied with the rules specified in the "Directive on Scientific Research and Publication Ethics of Higher Education Institutions." None of the actions listed under the section "Violations of Scientific Research and Publication Ethics" in the directive were carried out during the conduct of this research. Additionally, informed consent forms were signed by the participants.

Ethics Committee Approval:

Name of the ethics committee that approved the study: Harran University

Date of ethics committee approval: 13.12.2024

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2.2. Purpose

This study aims to explore the opinions of teacher candidates—who are enrolled in disciplines other than music—regarding the elective Western Music course. It seeks to determine whether and how this course contributes to their professional and personal development. Additionally, the study interprets these findings within the framework of general cultural knowledge, which is among the key characteristics of a qualified teacher. From an interdisciplinary perspective, the research also intends to provide an evaluation of the impact such out-of-field elective arts courses have on students' general educational processes.

In line with this main objective, the sub-goals of the study are as follows:

1. How is the elective Western Music course evaluated in terms of students' personal development within the framework of general cultural knowledge?
2. How is the elective Western Music course evaluated in terms of students' professional development within the framework of general cultural knowledge?
3. Do students believe that there are aspects of the course—such as its content, the way it is conducted, or the materials used—that need improvement? If so, what are these aspects?

2.3. Significance

The significance of this study lies in its potential to provide insights into how teacher candidates respond to an interdisciplinary educational approach through the elective “Western Music” course and how this course contributes to their development in terms of general cultural knowledge. Investigating the experiences of students from various disciplines in this course may offer a deeper understanding of the role and impact of elective courses in university curricula. Furthermore, by demonstrating that music education is not only a professional field but also a tool that supports key elements of general education—such as aesthetic awareness, critical thinking, and cultural consciousness—the study can offer contemporary perspectives for educational design.

2.4. Research Design

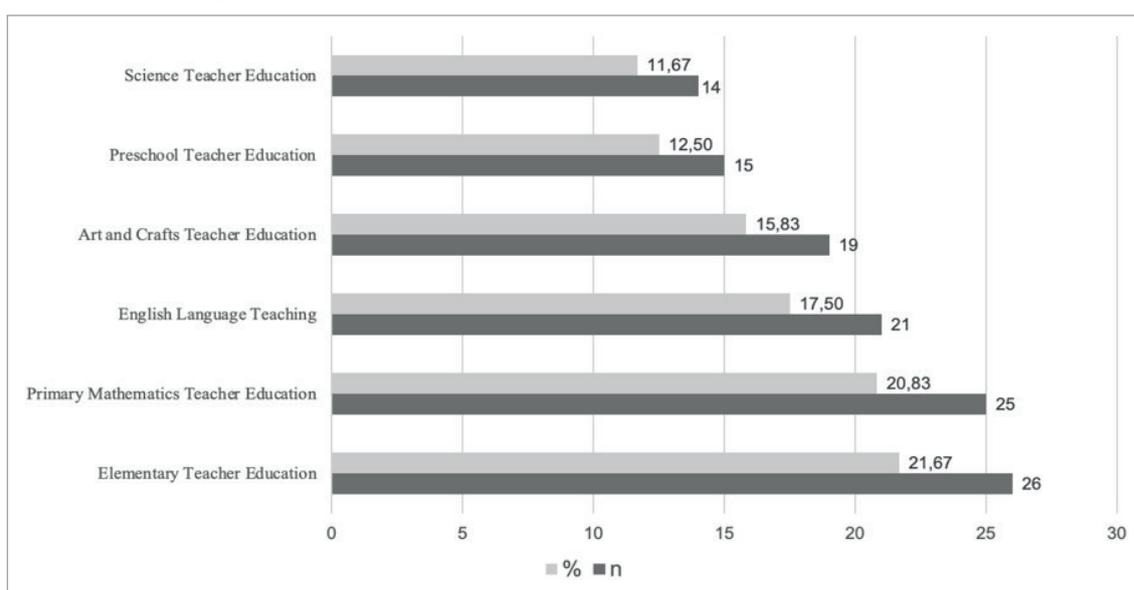
This study employs a qualitative case study design, specifically an embedded single case design. The primary aim of such studies is to reveal the outcomes related to a specific situation. Factors related to the situation (such as environments, individuals, and processes) are examined holistically, with a focus on how they affect and are affected by the given situation (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). In these studies, the researcher seeks to gather detailed information by focusing on a particular case and using descriptive questions (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). When there are multiple sub-units or layers within a single case, the embedded single case design is considered appropriate (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016).

2.5. Participant Group

This research was conducted during the 2024–2025 academic year at Harran University with a total of 120 teacher candidates. These participants were enrolled in the following departments: Elementary Teacher Education, Primary Mathematics Teacher Education, English Language Teaching, Art and Crafts Teacher Education, Preschool Teacher Education, and Science Teacher Education. All participants had selected the Western Music course offered as part of the general elective curriculum. Participants were chosen using criterion sampling, a qualitative sampling method. The main criteria for inclusion were that participants were enrolled in disciplines other than music and had opted to take this particular course. The distribution of participants by academic department is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Distribution of Participants by Academic Department



2.6. Data Collection Tools and Procedure

In this study, a semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher was used as the data collection tool. The semi-structured interview form consisted of the following questions:

1. How do you evaluate the elective Western Music course in terms of your personal development within the framework of general cultural knowledge?
2. How do you evaluate the elective Western Music course in terms of your professional development within the framework of general cultural knowledge?
3. Are there any aspects of the content, delivery method, or materials of the elective Western Music course that you believe should be improved? If so, what are they?

The data were collected during the 2024–2025 academic year based on the responses of teacher candidates enrolled in different departments at Harran University who had selected the Western Music course from the elective general culture course pool. In preparing the interview form, expert opinions were obtained from three specialists in the field of music education. Based on their feedback, some questions were removed from the form, and others were revised for clarity. The data were collected to gain an in-depth understanding of university students' opinions and experiences regarding the elective "Western Music" course. Ethical approval was obtained from the ethics committee prior to the commencement of data collection.

2.7. Data Analysis

The data collected for this study were analyzed using the descriptive analysis method, a qualitative data analysis technique. Additionally, some participant views were presented through direct quotations. In this approach, the obtained data are summarized and interpreted according to predetermined themes. In descriptive analysis, direct quotations are frequently included to strikingly reflect the views of the individuals interviewed or observed. The aim of such analyses is to present the findings in an organized and interpreted form to the reader. To this end, the data are first systematically and explicitly described, and then these descriptions are explained and interpreted. Cause-effect relationships are examined, and conclusions are drawn accordingly (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016).

2.8. Credibility and Transferability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed credibility and transferability as alternatives to the validity criterion in quantitative research. In qualitative research, internal validity refers to the researcher observing the phenomenon as it is and as objectively as possible. In this context, the researcher may use additional techniques such as participant confirmation and peer debriefing. One measure to enhance credibility is to have experts with general knowledge of the research topic and specialization in qualitative research methods review the study in detail (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). In line with this, the data obtained were reviewed by five academic experts in the field, and the analysis results were confirmed.

In qualitative research, external validity is addressed through the concept of transferability (Arslan, 2022). The transferability of qualitative research results depends on the extent to which the underlying data are described in detail. Direct quotations are often used by researchers for this purpose (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). Accordingly, some of the participants' responses to the semi-structured interview questions were quoted directly.

2.9. Dependability and Confirmability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed the concepts of dependability and confirmability as alternatives to the criterion of reliability in quantitative research. Qualitative research does not pursue reliability in the same manner as quantitative research. Instead, it emphasizes dependability, which is also one of the key concerns of internal reliability. To ensure dependability, a "dependability audit" is recommended (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). In this context, particular attention was paid to maintaining consistency in the conceptualization approach during the data coding process, as well as to establishing coherent connections between the data and the findings.

In qualitative research, confirmability corresponds to external reliability. Within this framework, the researcher is expected to continuously verify the findings with the collected data and provide a rational and coherent explanation to the reader (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). Accordingly, an external expert in the field provided an evaluation report to assess whether the findings of the research could be retrospectively confirmed.

3. FINDINGS

3.1. Findings Regarding the First Sub-Objective

This section analyzes the participants' responses to the question, "How do you evaluate the elective Western Music course in terms of your personal development within the framework of general cultural knowledge?" Based on the analysis of these responses, various themes and sub-themes were identified. Some participants provided responses that were categorized under multiple sub-themes, indicating that they contributed to the topic from different perspectives.

Table 1

Evaluations in Terms of Personal Development

	Theme	Sub-theme	%	f	%	f
Positive Statements	General Culture	Awareness of cultural diversity	10.83	13	95.83	115
		Recognition of music from different cultures	65.00	78		
		Understanding international music terminology	36.67	44		
	Interdisciplinary Perspective	Understanding historical facts/events of different cultures through music	41.67	50		
		Understanding the relationship between Western and Turkish music	45.83	55		
		Understanding music's connection to other disciplines	48.33	58		
	Knowledge of Western Music	Recognition and differentiation of classical music genres	37.50	45		
		Recognition and differentiation of classical music composers	42.50	51		
		Understanding musical forms and structures	37.50	45		
	Personal Development	Contribution to general cultural knowledge	79.17	95		
		Integration into daily life	6.67	8		
		Increased academic curiosity in music	45.83	55		
		Development of self-confidence	14.17	17		
	Aesthetic and Artistic Perception	Strengthened musical perception	38.33	46		
		Change in music listening habits	17.50	21		
Enhanced aesthetic appreciation standards		18.33	22			
Negative Statements	Course Ineffectiveness	Ineffective in terms of personal development	4.17	5	4.17	5
Total					100	120

As shown in Table 1, the data collected from the semi-structured interview forms were grouped under various headings and analyzed according to thematic categories. The themes titled Aesthetic and Artistic Perception, Personal Development, Knowledge of Western Music, Interdisciplinary Perspective, and General Culture largely reflect positive feedback, while the theme Course Ineffectiveness includes neutral or negative evaluations. Only a small portion of participants (5.10%) expressed views that could be classified as negative or indicating no perceived impact on their personal development. These responses were grouped under the theme of Course Ineffectiveness.

All themes were divided into sub-themes to elaborate on the findings and enhance clarity. Within the scope of personal development, 94.90% of the responses were classified as positive statements.

According to the findings, teacher candidates indicated that the Western Music course enabled them to recognize music from different cultures, learn about Western musical forms and instruments, identify classical composers and their works, understand the relationship between Western and Turkish music, and grasp international music terminology. They found this knowledge beneficial for their personal development, especially in terms of contributing to their general cultural awareness.

Some teacher candidates expressed their views as follows:

"Thanks to the Western Music course, I learned musical terms I had never encountered before. I can now recognize the most well-known works of classical composers whose names I had heard but never listened to. I feel more confident in terms of general cultural knowledge."

"I had the opportunity to get to know a different culture, and this knowledge became part of my general cultural background."

"I started to approach music more consciously. Additionally, my interest in different cultures increased, and I came to understand better that music is a universal language."

Other findings suggest that exposure to international music during the course changed participants' listening habits, enhanced their musical perception and differentiation skills, and increased their curiosity about Western music. Some participants also attempted to integrate Western music into their daily lives. One participant stated:

"When I hear a polyphonic song performed in the style of Western music, I usually recognize that it's four-part and that it includes sections like soprano and alto—even though I don't fully remember their names, I've started to differentiate them."

On the other hand, some teacher candidates indicated that they did not see any connection between the Western Music course and their personal development. For instance, one participant remarked:

"I don't think taking the Western Music course made any difference in my personal development or in my level of general cultural knowledge."

As seen, only 5.10% of the teacher candidates evaluated the Western Music course as ineffective for their personal development within the framework of general culture. The majority of participants, however, expressed that the course had provided them with a variety of positive contributions in this regard.

3.2. Findings Regarding the Second Sub-Objective

This section analyzes the participants' responses to the question, "How do you evaluate the elective Western Music course in terms of your professional development within the framework of general cultural knowledge?" Based on the analysis of the responses, various themes and sub-themes were developed. Some participants provided answers that were relevant to more than one sub-theme, and thus were included in multiple percentage categories. This indicates that participants contributed to the subject from various perspectives.

Table 2*Evaluations in Terms of Professional Development*

	Theme	Sub-theme	%	f	%	f
Positive Statements	Professional Competence	Being a teacher with strong general cultural knowledge	79.17	95	94.17	113
		Relating music knowledge to one's own subject area	70.00	84		
		Enriching the lesson process	42.50	51		
		Helping students develop an artistic perspective	10.00	12		
	Multicultural Education	Conveying different cultural perspectives to students	39.17	47		
		Introducing students to universal values	11.67	14		
	Classroom Activities	Using music in classroom activities	60.00	72		
Increasing student engagement		42.50	51			
Negative Statements	Course Ineffectiveness	Ineffective in terms of professional development	5.83	7	5.83	7
Total					100	120

As shown in Table 2, the data collected from the semi-structured interview forms were grouped under various thematic categories. Themes such as Professional Competence, Multicultural Education, and Classroom Activities reflect mostly positive feedback, while the theme Course Ineffectiveness includes negative or neutral evaluations. Only 5.83% of the students expressed views that could be categorized as indicating no impact or ineffectiveness in terms of professional development. These responses were grouped under the theme of Course Ineffectiveness.

All themes were further divided into sub-themes to elaborate on the findings and enhance comprehensibility. Within the scope of professional development, 94.17% of the responses were classified as positive statements.

According to the findings, the vast majority of teacher candidates found the Western Music course beneficial for their professional development within the framework of general cultural knowledge. In addition, participants expressed that their knowledge of Western music contributed to their teaching profession by helping them enrich lesson content, relate musical knowledge to their own subject area, convey diverse cultural perspectives to students, use music in classroom activities, and increase student engagement. Some of the participants' views are presented below:

"I believe the Western Music course enhanced my general cultural knowledge and contributed to becoming a more well-equipped teacher. I also think it could help me develop intercultural perspectives in my students."

"...As a mathematics teacher, I realized that there is a connection between music and mathematics..."

"It is especially important for classroom teachers to have a basic knowledge of music. In this regard, I believe the course has positively contributed to my teaching skills."

"...I discovered many areas where I can benefit from music in classroom activities..."

As can be seen from the direct quotations above, the majority of teacher candidates believe that the Western Music course contributes to the teaching profession in terms of general cultural knowledge, for a variety of reasons.

On the other hand, a very small portion of the participants expressed that the Western Music course was ineffective for their professional development within the context of general cultural knowledge. However, these participants did not provide specific reasons for their evaluations.

3.3. Findings Regarding the Third Sub-Objective

This section presents an analysis of the participants' responses to the question, "Are there any aspects of the content, teaching method, or course materials of the elective Western Music course that you believe should be improved? If so, what are they?" Based on the analysis of the responses, various themes and sub-themes were identified. Some participants provided responses that were applicable to more than one sub-theme, indicating that they contributed to the topic from multiple perspectives.

Table 3

Opinions and Suggestions Regarding the Western Music Course

	Theme	Sub-theme	%	f	%	f
Those Who See a Need for Improvement	Practice-Oriented Suggestions	Additional hours for instrument practice	32.50	39	46.67	56
		Performance activities	20.00	24		
		Group work	10.00	12		
	Materials	Increase in digital materials	15.00	18		
		Increase in visual and auditory materials	12.50	15		
	Physical Environment	Availability of various instruments in the classroom	19.17	23		
Those Who See No Need for Improvement					53.33	64
Total					100	120

As shown in Table 3, 53.33% of the participants did not feel the need for any improvements regarding the content, implementation, or course materials of the elective Western Music course, whereas 46.67% offered various opinions and suggestions. In this context, the data obtained from the semi-structured interview forms were categorized under relevant themes and sub-themes.

Accordingly, some teacher candidates emphasized that the course should not be limited solely to theoretical content. Prominent suggestions included adding an additional practice hour, incorporating instrument-playing activities, and ensuring the presence of various instruments in the classroom. Additionally, suggestions were made to enrich the course with digital materials and create a more interactive learning environment. Some sample participant statements are as follows:

"The course should not be limited to a theoretical hour in the curriculum. If a practice hour is added and we have the chance to experience playing an instrument, it could be much more effective."

"Having various instruments in the classroom would make the course more concrete. It would facilitate a more active interaction with music."

"I think the visual materials, videos, and animations used in class increase retention. The number of such digital materials should be increased."

In this regard, the views of some teacher candidates reveal that the Western Music course should not be restricted to theoretical knowledge alone. However, the relatively low number of suggestions can also be interpreted as an indicator of general satisfaction with the current structure of the course.

4. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the effects of the elective Western Music course on the general cultural knowledge, personal and professional development of teacher candidates from various disciplines, as well as their overall evaluation of the course and suggestions for its improvement, based on participant opinions. The findings generally indicate that the course has had a positive impact on teacher candidates from different fields and contributed to their development in various dimensions.

From the perspective of personal development, most of the teacher candidates described the Western Music course as one that enhances their aesthetic awareness, introduces them to international music genres and artists, and raises their cultural awareness. Participants stated that feeling confident in their general cultural knowledge increased their self-esteem and that the course contributed positively to both their individual and social development. In this regard, the results of this study are generally consistent with previous studies in the literature (Çağlayan et al., 2018; Doğan, 2020; Em et al., 2018; İlhan, 2022; Karakoç, 2015; Kaya & Üstün, 2013).

In terms of professional development, the majority of teacher candidates found the Western Music course beneficial within the context of general cultural knowledge. It was stated that the course made valuable contributions to the teaching profession in many areas such as integrating musical knowledge with their own subject areas, enriching the teaching process, transmitting different cultural perspectives to students, and utilizing music in classroom activities. It is widely accepted that a qualified teacher must possess three fundamental competencies: subject matter knowledge, pedagogical formation, and general cultural knowledge. In this regard, Article 7, paragraph 1 of the Turkish Teaching Profession Law No. 7528 also emphasizes the importance of general cultural knowledge in the teaching profession by stating: "Teaching is a specialized profession that requires preparation in terms of general culture, subject-specific education, and pedagogical knowledge." These findings are in line with the earlier research on teacher qualifications by Kavcar (2002) and Taşkaya (2012).

In the analysis of areas needing improvement, suggestions were made to add practical components to the course, such as instrument-playing sessions and performance-based activities, as well as to ensure the availability of various instruments in the classroom. Participants also highlighted the need to increase the use of digital and audiovisual materials. It was emphasized that a more interactive and practice-oriented course design would enhance the overall effectiveness of the course.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Western Music course, by fostering aesthetic sensitivity, enabling the exploration of different cultural perspectives, and facilitating the transfer of these perspectives to students, can contribute to the personal and professional development of teacher candidates within the framework of general cultural knowledge. However, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the role of Western Music in teacher education, it is recommended that future studies validate these findings with a larger sample and support them through broader research conducted in various educational contexts.

In this context, it is suggested that future studies include participants from different universities. Additionally, future research could explore the effects of the course on teacher candidates from different disciplines, allowing for comparative analysis. Such comparisons could help identify the specific areas in which the Western Music course has more prominent effects in terms of general cultural and professional development. Diversifying such studies could provide stronger evidence of the contributions of music education to teacher candidates' general culture and pedagogical skills.

Ethical approval

The study was approved by Harran University Ethics Committee (date: 13.12.2024, number: E-76244175-050.04-403373; 2024/283).

Author contribution

Study conception and design: VÖS; data collection: VÖS; analysis and interpretation of results: VÖS; draft manuscript preparation: VÖS. Author reviewed the results and approved the final version of the article.

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Conflict of interest

The author declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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