

EXPLORING THE NEEDS OF AN ESP COURSE IN THE MUSIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

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Abstract

English for specific purposes has been highlighted for its importance in enhancing specialized language skills for university students, including those in the music education department. This study aims to determine music education students' characteristics, target needs, and learning needs for an ESP course. The data were collected by distributing a questionnaire to students of the music education department and conducting an interview with a graduate of the music education department. The findings show the music education students' characteristics, what they need in the target situation, and what they need to learn in the ESP course. Most students had positive attitudes towards English, realized the importance of English, and had been using English in some daily activities. Regarding the target needs, most students wanted the ESP course to help them learn English in music contexts and learn music from various English resources. Related to learning needs, some points about materials delivery and assessment were found. The results of this study can be used as the foundation for developing an "English for music education students" course.

Keywords: English for specific purposes, music education, needs analysis

INTRODUCTION

As higher education has shifted towards a more international orientation, there is an increasing demand for professionals with expertise in specific fields and English (Mao & Zhou, 2024), which has also driven the rising demand for ESP course design implementation in higher education (Iswati & Triastuti, 2021). English for Specific Purposes (ESP) refers to the teaching and learning of English aimed at students in particular academic, professional, or occupational domains (Pleşc, 2016). It equips learners with specific language skills and linguistic elements that can be tied to their occupational or educational contexts (Day & Krzanowski, 2011; Richards, 2015).

University students from various disciplines require different language competencies for their studies and future careers. For example, students in the music education department need to use English related to music theory, performance, and pedagogy to support their learning in the music education field. However, an issue related to the use of English in the music department was identified. Students from the music education department at one university in Indonesia shared their perceptions during the preliminary study. The responses show that most students (80%) found it challenging to learn music theory when they encountered English terms in their learning materials. The reason was that they were not familiar with the English music terms. Music-related content was also not integrated into their English course. Thus, they had difficulty understanding the English music terms in their music book, which also affected their understanding of music theory. This implied a need to integrate music-related content into their English learning materials to support their music theory learning.

Providing an ESP course for music education students is beneficial for several reasons. First, music has specific English terms that differ from General English. For example, the

general meaning of ‘staff’ in Indonesian is *pegawai*, while in the context of music, it means *garis paranada*. Second, English music terms cannot be avoided when learning music. These terms are often used when the lesson is delivered in Indonesian; for example, ‘beat’ is often used to refer to *ketukan*. In addition, common software for music production also uses English as its interface. Thus, music education students must be facilitated by a specific English course, as Gaffas (2019) suggested that ESP could enhance students’ knowledge of technical terms.

It is known that ESP takes a learner-centred approach, aiming at meeting specific requirements that target learners need to complete their professional or occupational requirements (Ghafar, 2022). To achieve this objective, the ESP course must be designed based on the target learners’ needs, as needs analysis is the starting point or guide for course design (Astika, 1999). This process identifies the language and skills that learners will use in their study area (Basturkmen, 2010). Hutchinson and Waters (1987) propose two aspects to be analysed before designing an ESP course: target and learning needs. These two aspects shall answer the questions about what learners need to do in the target situation and what they need to learn.

A needs analysis process can take several forms, such as questionnaires, interviews, observations of interaction and language use analysis, performance tests, and observation of ESP learners doing tasks similar to those in the target situation (Basturkmen, 2010). Long (2005) suggested that triangulations, both triangulation by sources (documents, scholars, domain experts, and company representatives) and by methods (questionnaires, structured and unstructured interviews, introspections, and non-participant observation), can generally improve the reliability and validity of needs analysis findings by comparing data from two or more different sources or methods.

While a few studies have explored the English learning needs of music students, little is known about the needs of Indonesian music education students in learning English. Hapsari (2015) proposed a project-based approach that uses songwriting as a technique to support English learning in the music department at the university level. She identified ten points regarding music learners needs for learning English, including building networks and sharing ideas with others, getting more opportunities to develop talents and expertise, developing critical thinking, communicating with foreigners, studying abroad, bringing more opportunities to create potential worldwide, helping to ease the communication and learning, broadening and strengthening knowledge and understanding in music, understanding global and broad music, and reading books as well as English literature in music. While these findings highlight the learners’ target needs, especially necessities, the information about their learning needs is limited.

To fill the gaps, this study aims to determine the characteristics, target needs, and learning needs of students in the music education department for an ESP course. The results of this study provide data as the foundation for designing a specific English course for music education department students in the Indonesian context.

METHOD

Participants and Settings

Two types of participants were involved in this study: active students and a graduate of the music education department at one university in Indonesia. These two groups were selected to

enable triangulation by source as suggested by Long (2005), allowing for a comparison of perspectives from active students and professionals in the music-related field. Among 40 students, 29 returned the questionnaire (72.5%). All students were enrolled in an English course during this study. They were Indonesian L1 speakers aged 18–20; 18 were male, and 11 were female. One graduate from the same department was selected due to their active involvement in international music competitions and communities, implying a rich experience in using English in music-related contexts.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

This study used triangulation to collect the data by involving two different sources and two different methods. A questionnaire was distributed to active students of the music education department, and a semi-structured interview was conducted with a graduate from the same department.

This study utilised two instruments: a questionnaire and an interview guideline. Both instruments were developed based on aspects of needs analysis by Hutchinson and Waters (1987). The questionnaire included questions with multiple choices and multiple responses. The organisation of the needs analysis questionnaire is provided in the appendix.

The data from the questionnaire were analysed by calculating the percentage of each statement to see the frequency of participants' views on their target and learning needs. The interview was transcribed, and these two data sets were compared.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Learners' Characteristics

Learners' characteristics included the information related to their age, attitude towards English, learning background in English, and learning background in music. They were obtained from the questionnaire and interview results. The English course was offered in the first semester, and learners' ages ranged from 18 to 20. The analysis showed that they tended to have a positive attitude towards English. Most of them (90%) stated that they liked English, while 10% of them expressed their dislike of this subject. However, they all realised the importance of English as they stated that English was important (59%) and very important (41%).

Regarding their learning background in English, they had different experiences. All of them have been learning English for more than 9 years since they were at the elementary school level. However, they could be divided into two categories: beginner level, or can understand simple texts (76%), and intermediate level, or can understand more complex texts (24%). They also use English for different purposes in their daily lives, as stated in the following figure.

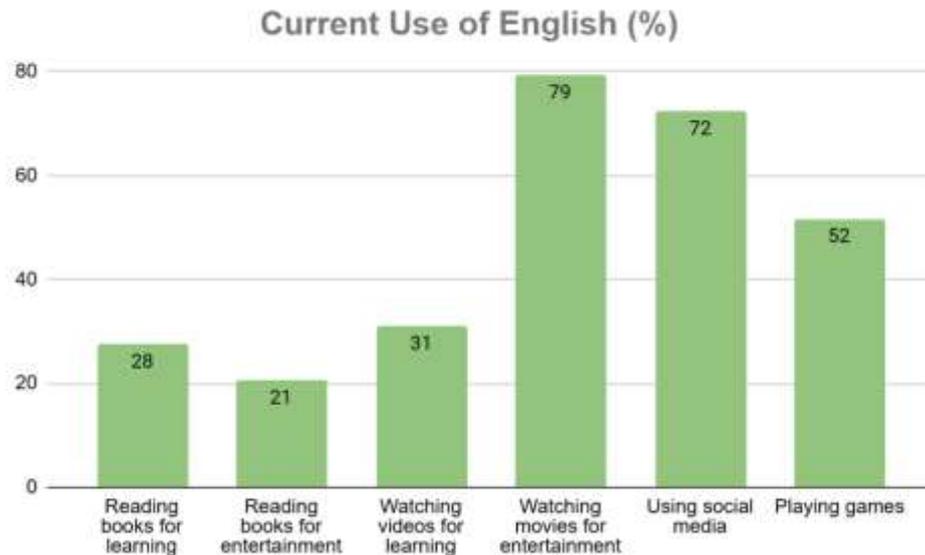


Figure 1. Current use of English

It was also found that they had different experiences regarding music learning. They have learnt music for less than 3 years (48%), 3–6 years (24%), 6–9 years (7%), and more than 9 years (21%). Interview results added information that these various experiences in music learning were due to not all students attending music academies or music high schools before going to this university. Some of them learnt musical instruments by themselves, causing them to lack knowledge about music theory. The following table shows the interview excerpt regarding this aspect.

Table 1. Interview excerpt about learners' profiles

Original Script (Indonesian)	English Translation
<i>Tidak semua mahasiswa di sini lulusan SMM. Ada yang dari SMA atau SMK. Jadi, kebanyakan mahasiswa baru memang bisa main musik, tapi kalau untuk teori musik ya masih kurang.</i>	Not all students here have graduated from the music school. Some are from senior or vocational high schools. So, most first-year students can play musical instruments, but they do not understand music theory.

Target Needs

Information related to students' target needs included necessities, lacks, and wants. This information was obtained from the questionnaire and interview results. Necessities in this context refer to what music education students have to know to perform effectively in the music field. This study gathered two pieces of information for necessities: students' goals in learning English and the situations in which they need to use English. Students in the music education department have various opinions about their expected goals for learning English at university. The result shows that the top three goals were to prepare for their future career, communicate daily in English, and read English references related to music. The following figure shows the detailed information about their goals.

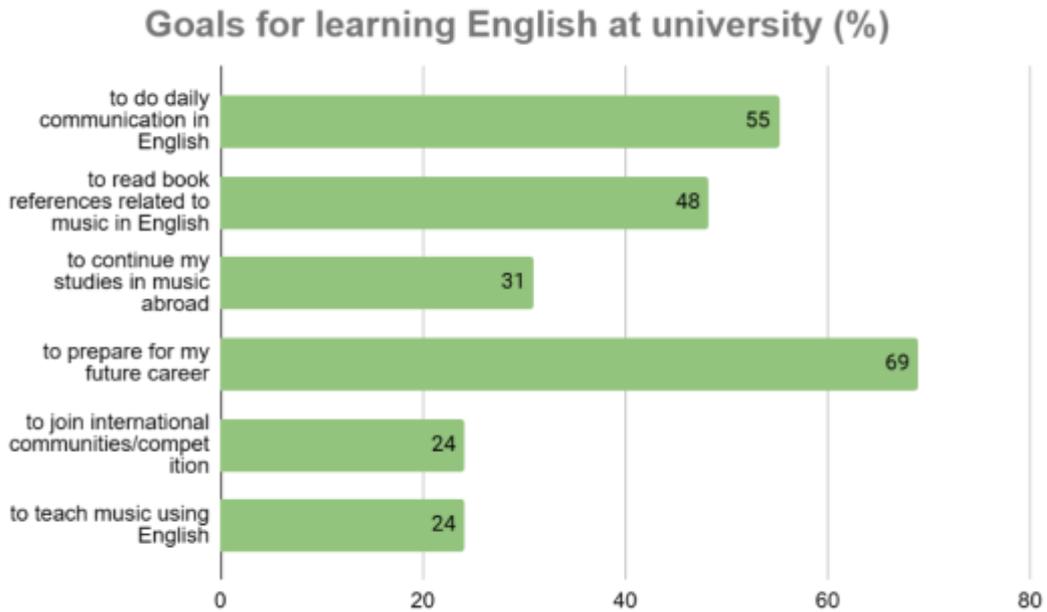


Figure 2. Goals for learning English at university

Some situations require music education students to use English. According to the questionnaire results, these include socialising with other music practitioners from different countries and watching videos to learn music. The following figure shows detailed information about these situations.

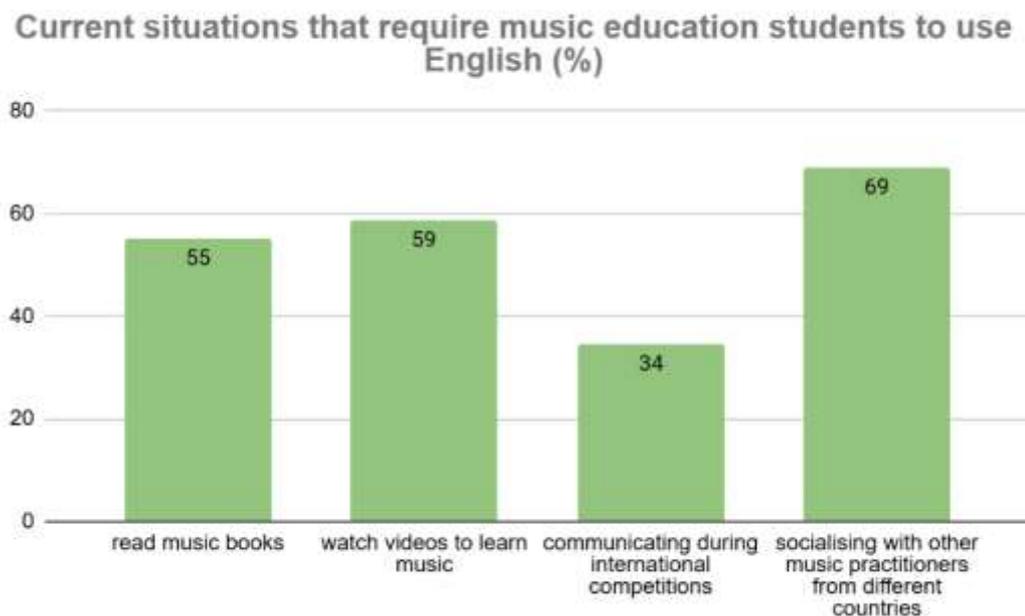


Figure 3. Current situations that require music education students to use English

In addition to the two previous data points, interview results show that an English course for music education students is expected to help them communicate their ideas related to music knowledge, which they will need when they are involved in international activities like forums, workshops, and presentations, both as students and for work. An excerpt of the interview about this issue is shown below.

Table 2. Interview excerpt about situations to use English

Original Script (Indonesian)	English Translation
<p><i>Kapan perlu pakai bahasa Inggris? Ketika mereka ada di level internasional entah itu di kompetisi atau workshop dengan orang luar. Karena kan bahasa Inggris sebagai alat komunikasi, kalau dia nggak paham bahasa Inggris. Ya gimana mau nangkap? Gitu. Adanya miss terus begitu.</i></p> <p><i>Jadi memang penting karena satu untuk komunikasi secara internasional ya. Yang kedua untuk mempelajari istilah-istilah musik dalam bahasa Inggris. Karena kalau kita tidak tahu istilah itu dalam musik, jangan-jangan kita malah menangkapnya istilah pada umumnya. Kayak gitu-gitu. Misalnya note itu catetan, kalau di musik padahal notasi. Jadi kita harus tahu lebih dalam. Gitu.</i></p>	<p>When is it necessary to use English? When they are at the international forums, whether in competitions or workshops with foreigners. English is a communication medium; how will they communicate if they do not understand it? There will be a miscommunication if they do not understand the language.</p> <p>So, English is important for international communication. The second is to learn music terms in English. If we don't know the terms in music, we might catch them as general terms. For example, note usually means <i>catatan</i>; in music, it means <i>notasi</i>. So, we have to know more about it.</p>

The next aspect of the target needs is “lack”. In this context, lack refers to the gap between music education students’ current proficiency and the targeted one. As stated previously in the learners’ characteristics, most students are at the beginner level or are able to understand simple sentences and phrases used in daily life. On the other hand, their targeted level after learning English at university varied, including an intermediate level (41%) or understanding more complex sentences, and an advanced level (59%) or understanding implicit meanings in sentences.

Students also shared their opinions about why English was difficult for them. They stated that it was because they had limited vocabulary (72.4%), limited knowledge of grammar (72.4%), and limited knowledge of text structure (58.6%). This point implies the importance of vocabulary learning for an ESP course for music students, which also aligns with the interview results in Table 2.

The last aspect of target needs is “wants”. In this context, it refers to what music education students need to learn in the English course based on their point of view. In terms of language skills, most of them preferred to focus on speaking (86.2%) and listening (75.9%). They also noted their interest in reading (69%) and writing (58.6%). Regarding text types, they wanted authentic texts found in daily life (79.3%) and academic texts related to music topics (58.6%). These data can be connected to their goals in learning English, which include daily communication in English and reading books about music written in English.

The interview results show that what the students want aligns with what they need, according to the graduate. The music education graduate also claimed that speaking, along with listening, is the most essential skill to learn for them. In addition, vocabulary learning should be highlighted. The following is the interview excerpt.

Table 3. Interview excerpt on students' wants

Original Script (Indonesian)	English Translation
<p><i>Iya, berbicara. Berbicara. Terus ... hearing? Oh, listening. Listening sama speaking itu paling dibutuhkan. Satu hal karena ini ya, untuk komunikasi. Jadi harus bisa itu. Apa sih skill lainnya? Reading. Writing. Kosakata. Ya, kita juga butuh itu. Gak begitu kalau grammar. Reading juga butuh untuk memahami teks lagu-lagu atau belajar teori. Tapi biasanya kalau kita keluar itu lebih ke ... komunikasi ... speaking ya. Sama listening ya. Karena speaking sama listening ini kan dua arah ya. Maksudnya speaking sama listening itu satu pasang. Satu pasang itu.</i></p> <p><i>Betul. Yang pertama, jelas, penting karena kita butuh untuk komunikasi sama orang. Kita butuh ... daily communication. Yang kedua, tentang istilah-istilah musik. Ya, mereka harus paham. Gitu.</i></p>	<p>Yes, speaking. Speaking. Then ... hearing? Oh, listening. Listening and speaking are most needed. Firstly, because this is for communication. So, you have to be able to do that. What are the other skills? Reading, writing, and vocabulary. Yes, we also need them. Grammar is not that necessary. Reading is also important for learning songs or theories. But usually, when we are at the international level, it's more about ... communication ... speaking. The same goes for listening. Because speaking and listening are two-way, I mean speaking and listening are one pair. That's one pair.</p> <p>That's right. The first one, obviously, is important because we need it to communicate with people; we need daily communication. Second, about music terms. Yes, they have to understand the terms of music.</p>

Learning Needs

Information about learning needs included how learning materials will be delivered, how assessment will be conducted, and how the lecturer will act. These data were obtained from the questionnaire and interview results.

Most students preferred their materials to be delivered first, followed by practice (97%). Learning through projects was also selected by 21% of them. As for the lecturer's role, students preferred the lecturer to act as an organiser or to direct the activities that will be carried out by students (41%), as a facilitator or to provide resources that make learning easier (38%), and as an observer or to monitor students' progress (21%). As for the learning resources, the following figure shows their preferences.

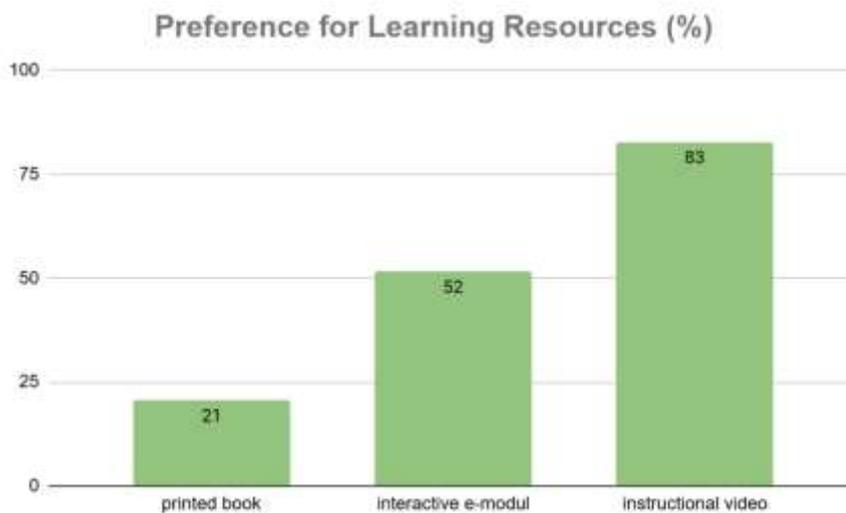


Figure 4: Students' preferences for learning resources

Regarding the assessment, most of them preferred to do it in small groups (55%) and individually (38%). Some also preferred to do it in pairs (21%) and large groups (24%). Interview results supported the findings about assessment in small groups, as the graduate

stated that working in teams would likely have positive impacts on students' learning process. The following is the interview excerpt on this issue.

Table 4. Interview excerpt on assessment

Original Script (Indonesian)	English Translation
<p><i>Mahasiswa baru biasanya nggak terlalu aktif atau malu-malu. Kan ini nanti focus buat komunikasi. Penilaiannya bisa dibuat macam-macam, misalnya ada yang project mandiri, ada yang di grup. Tapi jangan terlalu banyak anggotanya kalau di grup. Soalnya ada potensi mereka mengandalkan orang tertentu dan nggak berkontribusi apa-apa.</i></p>	<p>First-year students are usually not very active or shy. This course will focus on communication, right? The assessment can be done in various ways, such as independent projects and in groups. But there shouldn't be too many members in the group. Otherwise, they may rely on certain people and not contribute anything to the group.</p>

Discussion

The findings from this study highlight learners' characteristics, target needs, and learning needs. Regarding their characteristics, it was known that the first-semester students in the music education department who enrolled in the English course came from various academic and cultural backgrounds. This variation implies that the ESP course needs to be relevant to their prior knowledge and real-life language use. For example, many students had limited knowledge of music theory and only used English for daily communication.

A recent study suggests that professional and cultural factors should be considered in designing CLT-based ESP courses to make the learning environments more inclusive and engaging (Li & Xu, 2025). Thus, a course designer can select materials related to general music terms and beginner music theory to match students' current knowledge of music. By considering this information for the course design, the learning process would be more inclusive and meaningful for music education department students.

The findings on students' target needs offer some implications for the English for Music Education course design. Their necessities are connected to their academic and professional expectations and language requirements. English is not only used for daily communication for them, but also for engaging with international music resources and global music communities. Their goals, which include communicating effectively, preparing for future careers, and accessing music literature, align with a previous study by Mohamed, Aljadaan, and Al-Ani (2024), which suggests that students' goals in learning ESP include preparing for their future career and interacting with people in their specific field. This illustrates the importance of aligning English language instruction with specific-field contexts, or in this case, music-related contexts.

From the aspect of lacks, the results show a gap between students' current English proficiency, mostly at the beginner level, and their target, ranging from intermediate to advanced levels. The music students' major challenges in learning English, including vocabulary, grammar, and text structures, align with a previous study by Kamila (2020), suggesting that a lack of vocabulary and grammar became the major difficulties for students in the Sendratasik (dance and music) department. This implies that the ESP course for the music education department needs to prioritise selecting the difficulty level of materials, teaching methodology, and course duration.

The data on students' wants shows a clear preference for and importance of developing speaking and listening skills in real-world music-related contexts. This aligns with a study by

Buakhman (2020) suggesting that speaking and listening skills were the most prioritised skills needed by Lana musicians. Additionally, interest in reading and writing demonstrates music education students' desire to be competent in all four language skills. Further, their preference for authentic and academic texts related to music was also implied in their goals for communication and accessing English-language music literature.

To sum up, the results on target needs suggest that the English course for music education students needs to facilitate their goals for daily communication, enable them to read music books in English, and prepare them for their future careers related to music. While focusing on listening and speaking skills, the course should also add some portions for reading and writing skills with input texts sourced from authentic texts and academic texts of music.

The analysis of students' learning needs provides meaningful enlightenment for the development of an effective ESP course for music students. Their preference for learning the materials first, followed by practice, suggests that a flipped classroom can be considered an approach, as students have the chance to preview the materials before the class (Dou, 2024). Their preference for learning through projects also aligns with Dou (2024), suggesting that a project-based learning method is helpful to create a learning environment similar to professional settings.

Students' preference for assessment aligns with a study by Harmandaoğlu Baz (2023), which recommends pair or small group activities for an ESP course for music students. In addition, individual assessment is still essential to evaluate the students' personal language proficiency development.

Their preferences for audiovisual and interactive media over printed materials indicate the need to integrate digital and multimodal learning resources. This aligns with some previous studies suggesting that the integration of technology, such as multimedia, videos, and applications, can make the ESP class more enjoyable and fruitful, stimulate students' creativity and engagement with others, and be useful in vocabulary learning (Khalili & Tahririan, 2020; Lesiak-Bielawska, 2015; Dashtestani & Stojković, 2015).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Music education students require a specific English course to support their current academic and future career development. This study emphasises music education students' characteristics, target needs, and learning needs in an ESP course, which offers a foundation for designing an ESP curriculum for music education students. As the first step in designing the ESP course for music students, this study suggests several points to consider when designing an English course for music education students. This study is also expected to be followed by numerous studies in the future, including syllabus design, materials development, and media development. As the results of this study are based on a survey of students and a graduate, further exploration involving the available learning sources related to music content may also be necessary to add more information about music education students' learning needs.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: The organisation of the needs analysis questionnaire

Aspects	Number of Items	References
Learner Profiles/Characteristics	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	
Target Needs	6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11	Hutchinson & Waters (1987)
Learning Needs	12, 13, 14, 15	Hutchinson & Waters (1987)