

Research Article

Cite this article: Tran, M. N., & Nguyen, B. T. (2025). Research on The Current State of Competency-based Pedagogical Training at Universities with Teacher Education Programs in The Southwest Region of Vietnam.

Educational Process: International Journal, 16, e2025241.

<https://doi.org/10.22521/edupij.2025.16.241>

Received April 5, 2025

Accepted May 4, 2025

Published Online June 10, 2025

Keywords: Current state, pedagogical training, competency-based, teacher education, universities, Southwest region of Vietnam

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Research on The Current State of Competency-based Pedagogical Training at Universities with Teacher Education Programs in The Southwest Region of Vietnam

Minh Nhut Tran , Bach Thang Nguyen 

Abstract

Background/purpose. The quality of pedagogical training in universities is critical to preparing future educators who can meet the demands of contemporary educational reforms. In the Southwestern region, challenges persist in managing pedagogical training programs, particularly in aligning learning outcomes with competency-based standards. This study aims to analyze and evaluate the current state of pedagogical training management to propose solutions that enhance training quality and ensure graduates possess the necessary pedagogical competencies.

Materials/methods. The study employed a mixed-methods approach to assess the management of training outcomes, the implementation of competency-based evaluation standards, and the effectiveness of output information management in teacher education programs.

Results. Findings indicate that the management of training outcomes has not been effectively based on competency standards, limiting its role in assessing and improving pedagogical training quality. Furthermore, output information management remains insufficiently emphasized, leading to gaps in the evaluation process. These shortcomings hinder the ability of graduates to meet the evolving requirements of primary and secondary education systems.

Conclusion. To enhance the quality of pedagogical training, universities must adopt a competency-based approach in managing learning outcomes and establish a structured, closed-loop process for output information management. Strengthening these aspects will enable training institutions to align their programs with contemporary educational reforms, improve graduate readiness, and contribute to the overall development of the education sector.

1. Introduction

With a core mission of training and providing high-quality human resources to meet societal needs and contribute to local and national socio-economic development, multidisciplinary universities affiliated with provinces or cities in the Southwestern region of Vietnam and worldwide have been rapidly developing. The majority of the provincial multidisciplinary universities have educational science programs and originated from Teachers' Colleges that were upgraded to university status, transitioning from single-discipline teacher training to multidisciplinary, multi-field education. (Nguyen and Le, 2014).

In multidisciplinary universities located in the Southwestern region of Vietnam, where teacher education remains a core and long-standing academic focus, the shift toward a multidisciplinary model introduces both significant opportunities and complex challenges. While subject-matter expertise forms the bedrock of teacher training programs, the true effectiveness of future educators is largely determined by their pedagogical competencies—the practical "know-how" that directly influences classroom success or failure (Nguyen, 2010). As the educational paradigm evolves from a traditional knowledge-transmission model to one centered on developing learner competencies, it becomes imperative to restructure teacher education to prioritize pedagogical skill development through a competency-based approach.

Achieving this transformation is not merely a matter of curriculum redesign; it demands strategic vision and unwavering commitment from university leaders and educational managers. It also requires the implementation of comprehensive and contextually relevant management solutions that directly impact the organization and execution of teacher training programs—particularly in the domain of pedagogical training. Recognizing this need, our study focuses on the topic: "Managing Competency-Based Pedagogical Training for Students at Universities in the Southwestern Region." Through this research, we aim to propose practical, evidence-based, and context-appropriate management strategies that can enhance the quality and effectiveness of pedagogical training in teacher-education institutions in the region. Ultimately, the study aspires to contribute to broader efforts in improving the overall quality of teacher preparation, aligning with the current demands of educational reform and the urgent need to elevate teaching standards across the country.

2. Literature review

2.1. International Research

2.1.1. Pedagogical Training

In any country worldwide, to become a teacher, learners must attend a teacher training course (Michel Develay 1998). This course equips learners with a system of fundamental and necessary competencies that help them perform a teacher's teaching-educating and scientific research tasks. Each country's teacher training courses vary; however, they all include pedagogical training content that provides teachers with the specific skills required for their profession.

Regarding pedagogical training, there are many research conducted on this topic globally, which can be summarized into two main trends:

The first trend involves research on the integration of theory and practice in the professional training of teachers. In developed countries such as Canada, the USA, the UK, and Australia, scientists often rely on the achievements of behavioral psychology and functional psychology to organize practical training of professional skills for students, including those in teacher education programs. Since the late decades of the 20th century, a new research direction has emerged: developing various teacher training models. These models aim to guide students in practicing according to these frameworks and bridging the gap between theory and practice to achieve high training outcomes

within educational institutions. Author Apdulinna O.A., in her research "Pedagogical Skills Regarding the Content and Structure of Pedagogical Practice in Teacher Training Universities in the Current Period," highlighted the role of pedagogical practice activities in the professional training of students in teacher training institutions. She also outlines a system of skills that need to be developed, described in detail and hierarchically, suitable for training at different stages of the educational process (Apdulinna, 1978). Among foreign literature, a notable work is a scientific study titled "Teaching Practice: A Guide for Teachers in Training" (Roger Gower et al., 2005). This book holds practical value regarding the practicum for students. It summarises the role of teaching practice in teacher training and describes the steps of teaching activities, including the orientation and guidance provided by teachers within teacher training institutions (Roger, Diane, and Steve, 2005).

Author Michel Develay (1998), in his work "Some Issues on Teacher Training," focused on the professional activities of teachers, which are manifested in the following aspects:

(1) The close integration of the knowledge to be taught with other knowledge and the necessary skills to facilitate effective teaching for learning,

(2) The close combination of pedagogical practice with theoretical explanations to underpin practice, ensuring the connection between the teaching profession and its essential characteristics, meaning what they must perform later in their professional career

(3) There is an emphasis on enriching human personality, enabling education students to perceive and assert themselves based on cooperation and the recognition of values (Michel, 1998).

Addressing professional activities in teacher training, authors Kevin and Len (1993) in "Beginning Teaching: A Developmental Text for Effective Teaching" and Michael and Bruce (1974) in "The Studying of Teaching" also discuss the process of pedagogical training for students and the guidance and practicum provided by teachers. These works highlighted the importance of practical training and the role of instructors in mentoring education students (Kevin & Len, 1993). The Second Trend: Competency-Based Vocational Training: In the current context, with the rapid development of science, technology, and knowledge (global connectivity and the Internet of Things), merely mastering knowledge is insufficient, as what was once new knowledge quickly becomes outdated. Therefore, the trend in training is increasingly focused on enabling learners to master knowledge and use it to solve problems in specific situations. Competency-based training is an approach that focuses on the outcomes of the training process, emphasizing the skills and competencies learners need to acquire by the end of the program (Nguyen, 2015).

Regarding competency-based pedagogical training, foreign research focuses on several key aspects: professional competencies and the structure of teachers' professional competencies. It also addresses these competencies through the analysis of the structure of teaching activities and training programs aimed at developing professional skills. A notable example is the scientific work "Forming Pedagogical Competencies" by Kuzmina N.V. The author identified the essential pedagogical competencies a teacher must possess and explores the relationship between professional competencies and pedagogical skills, as well as the development of pedagogical talent into fully-formed competencies. In the study, Kuzmina (1961) clearly outlined the stages necessary for nurturing pedagogical competencies in students during their training at teacher education institutions (Kuzmina, 1961). In the book "Handbook for Developing Competency-Based Training Programs" by William (1982), the content provides guidance on how to develop competency-based training programs. It includes clear descriptions of learning outcomes, identifies program objectives focusing primarily on the learner's education, and emphasizes individualized programs that allow each person to understand and propose solutions to problems. Additionally, it enables learners to self-assess their progress relative to the program's objectives (William, 1982). A review of the above studies reveals that competency-based vocational training is a trend receiving significant attention

from many countries and researchers across various aspects. This approach is widely studied and applied in teacher education programs at a range of universities around the world.

2.1.2. Teacher Professional Development Management

Educators and researchers worldwide consistently focus on studying professional practice models in teacher education, developing programs, and enhancing pedagogical competencies for graduating students to improve the quality of teacher training in both subject matter expertise and pedagogical skills. There is no research on professional practice models in teacher education. Specifically, authors Matts Mattsson, Tor Vidar Eilertsen, and Doreen Rorrison (2011) have listed 9 professional practice models currently implemented in teacher education globally: Teacher training models include the Master-Apprentice Model (learning under experienced teachers), Laboratory Model (practicing in demonstration schools), and Partnership Model (collaborations with selected secondary schools). The Community Development Model immerses candidates in rural education, while the Integrated Model shares training responsibility with local communities. The Case-Based Model builds skills through real cases, the Platform Model offers flexible practice options, and the Community of Practice Model emphasizes collaborative learning. The Research and Development Model links universities and communities for educational research (commonly seen in the Netherlands and Scandinavian countries) (Matts, Tor, and Doreen, 2011).

According to the authors, those models can be combined in various ways. What is crucial is that based on practical conditions, managers should build and apply suitable models to ensure that students have ample opportunities to participate and practice in professional activities. This approach aims to enhance the vocational skills and professionalism of future teachers. Research on the management of pedagogical training programs in teacher education primarily emphasizes the organization and development of content, knowledge, and duration of pedagogical training within teacher education programs. Specifically, a balance is highlighted between educational theory, subject-specific knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge, and the significant focus is on applying these in teaching at secondary schools, as well as the duration and format of pedagogical internships.

According to UNESCO, university teacher education programs typically consist of five components: general education, specialized subjects, foundations of education, subject-specific studies, and pedagogical practice and internship. Wilson and colleagues (2001) underscored the necessity of establishing a relationship between subject-specific training and practical implementation in secondary schools as part of vocational training for teachers to fulfill their responsibilities effectively (Wilson et al., 2001). Darling-Hammond (2006) identified that within teacher education programs, the framework of knowledge includes knowledge of learners, theories of learning and human development, content-related knowledge for the curriculum taught in secondary schools, and a block of knowledge concerning pedagogical methods within specific contexts. According to her, the critical role of practical experience is to direct the content and methods of training for students (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Research on teacher training management, as well as vocational pedagogical training management, is consistently demonstrated in vocational pedagogical training programs. Along with varying durations of vocational knowledge blocks in each country, the duration of teaching practicum (practical teaching training) also differs. It can span an entire academic year or be concentrated within 8 weeks. The timing of these practicums is not fixed and can occur during any academic year or in the final year. Most studies indicate that the duration and timing of teaching practicum are not adequate or appropriate. New teachers often encounter numerous difficulties in teaching. Research consistently suggests the need to increase the duration, improve the format, and enhance the effectiveness of the connection between universities and secondary schools (Hoang, 2013).

2.1.3. Research on pedagogical competence for graduating students - future teachers

In recent decades, in many countries with advanced education systems, teachers' training focused on developing competencies has been implemented to ensure the quality of teacher education. Training based on competencies emphasizes the abilities that graduating individuals can demonstrate in practical work environments. For instance, the competency standards for graduating teacher students in Germany encompass four domains with eleven competencies: Teaching Competence - teachers as experts in teaching and learning; Educational Competence - teachers fulfill their educational responsibilities; Assessment Competence - teachers execute assessment tasks fairly and responsibly; Innovation Competence - teachers continuously develop and enhance their competencies (Nguyen, 2009). According to the standards set for 21st-century teachers training in Singapore, competencies are presented through an approach that integrates constituent elements, including values, skills, and knowledge. Values are identified as the core element, guiding the accumulation of knowledge and professional skills of teachers, demonstrating an organic unity between values, knowledge, and skills in the characteristics of the teaching profession in modern society.

From an international perspective, pedagogical competencies encompass values toward learners, professional identity, and a sense of responsibility to the profession. These are reflected in self-awareness, understanding of students, pedagogical knowledge, familiarity with education policies, multicultural competence, and a range of skills such as communication, management, technology, emotional intelligence, leadership, and innovation. Ernesto et al. (2011) proposed a framework of 12 core teacher competencies grouped into professional, instructional, and school-based domains. These include analyzing subject knowledge, engaging in professional development, designing and implementing instruction, assessing students, handling diverse situations, and collaborating with colleagues and the broader educational community. The authors emphasize that these competencies should be developed throughout all stages of teacher education: initial training, induction, and ongoing professional development. A review of international studies highlights that effective teacher education programs should integrate subject expertise, pedagogical training, and practical teaching experiences in secondary schools. Strong collaboration between universities and secondary schools is essential to ensure graduates meet program learning outcomes and professional standards.

2.2. Vietnamese researchers

2.2.1. Teacher Training

The research primarily focuses on two main aspects: the current status of teacher training in vocational skills at teacher training institutions, and proposals for improving the quality of such training. Most studies identify several shortcomings in the current vocational skills training at teacher training institutions and highlight deficiencies in forming a competency system for teacher candidates. Specifically:

Lacking integration of practical teaching skills with theoretical knowledge; Inadequate emphasis on hands-on teaching experience and classroom management techniques; Insufficient preparation for using modern teaching aids and technologies effectively; Challenges in adapting to diverse classroom environments and student needs; Issues with evaluating and assessing student learning outcomes effectively. The studies generally advocate reforms aimed at enhancing the practical aspects of teacher training, improving curriculum design to meet educational standards better, and strengthening partnerships between teacher training institutions and schools to bridge the gap between theory and practice in teacher education. The team of faculty teaching teachers vocational skills is crucial for enhancing the quality of education. However, the current situation indicates that a portion of teachers teaching vocational subjects do not fully meet the standard criteria for university

teachers or societal demands. This includes limitations in subject expertise, inadequate mastery of teacher vocational skills, and limited practical experience and understanding (Tran, 2006). **Teacher Vocational Skills Training Organization:** The organization of teacher vocational skills training overly emphasizes basic and specialized sciences rather than focusing sufficiently on teacher vocational skills. Teaching vocational subjects to teachers is fragmented and without cohesive integration. Each subject lacks a clear structure in terms of theoretical instruction and practical application. The scheduling of teacher vocational subjects is not arranged correctly, and there is inadequate financial investment. Training in teacher vocational skills often concentrates heavily on the final years and during internships in secondary schools, whereas developing these skills should ideally begin early in teacher candidates' education. This crucial aspect receives little attention and emphasis (Le & Nguyen, 2012).

The Relationship between Teacher Training Institutions and Secondary Schools in Teacher Vocational Skills Training: The connection between teacher training institutions and secondary schools where teachers are recruited is not closely integrated and frequent enough. Teacher training institutions typically engage with secondary schools only when students undertake practical teaching internships. Secondary schools often provide guidance and assistance to teachers, mostly in obligatory situations. The interaction of students with secondary schools is infrequent and insufficient, which limits their ability to identify and resolve issues arising from teacher practice situations. Moreover, internship content often emphasizes teaching activities while undervaluing educational administrative tasks. Consequently, the quality of these internships fails to meet professional practice requirements as students lack adequate preparation to meet secondary education demands. Students have limited time to familiarize themselves with practical teaching, and by the time they do, they often lack the resources to resolve complex educational situations effectively. Therefore, the lessons drawn from practical experience for students are limited (Pham, 2012). **Proposals to Enhance the Quality of Teacher Vocational Skills Training:** The majority of studies advocate that solutions should begin with enhancing awareness and professional development of participants involved in teacher vocational skills training, including administrators and teacher vocational skills instructors. This involves innovating curriculum, content, and organizational processes towards increased duration and practical application, closely integrated with secondary education. This includes integrating teacher vocational skills within program content and organizing practical teaching internships to establish a system of professional skills for students. Particularly, there is a need to establish standards for teacher vocational knowledge and skills based on teacher professional standards at different educational levels. The knowledge and skills standards for teacher vocational skills training discussed by the authors include understanding the target audience, specifically understanding learners; teaching ability; educating students; social and pedagogical communication skills; social engagement skills; self-learning and research skills for personal, professional development; and establishing regular collaboration between teacher training institutions and secondary schools (Nguyen, 2015).

2.2.2. Management of Pedagogical Training

Research on the management of pedagogical training from a competency-based approach in Vietnam focuses on the following aspects: evaluating learning outcomes and managing the practice of pedagogical skills.

Evaluating Learning Outcomes in Competency-Based Pedagogical Training

Evaluating learning outcomes in competency-based pedagogical training involves gathering the opinions of graduate students regarding their employment after graduation and their professional competencies when engaging in real-world teaching environments. This research focuses on the pedagogical competencies that students need to develop. The knowledge and skills in pedagogical

practice that need to be developed by students, as identified by research, include the following competencies: understanding the target audience (i.e., understanding students), teaching competencies, student education competencies, social and pedagogical communication competencies, social activity competencies, and the ability for self-study and self-research to advance personal professional development. Research on the professional competencies of final-year students at pedagogical universities identifies several weaknesses during their teaching internships, highlighting the responsibility of current training management practices at these institutions. These weaknesses include students' insufficient understanding of secondary school curricula, resulting in confusion when creating exams and grading. Students struggle with asking questions that reinforce basic knowledge, have poor classroom management and organizational skills, and demonstrate weak classroom management capabilities (such as engaging with and understanding students). Additionally, their communication abilities are limited, and professional skills have not been adequately emphasized in their training (Le & Nguyen, 2012). Studies on graduates' knowledge, skills, and pedagogical competencies reveal that, although students are equipped with a solid foundation of fundamental and specialized knowledge and have developed some essential qualities of future teachers, applying this knowledge in practice is lacking. The curriculum is overly theoretical, and the knowledge taught at pedagogical universities does not closely align with the realities of secondary education. Students have limited practical experience in secondary education, and their skills in organizing educational activities for students in the classroom are inadequate. Consequently, many graduates face significant challenges in performing their duties and professional activities in secondary schools (Nguyen et al., 2009).

Management of Pedagogical Skills Training Activities in Teacher Training Institutions

Research on the management of pedagogical skills training activities in teacher training institutions primarily consists of scientific seminars and master's theses. Most studies on managing pedagogical skills training activities for students are conducted at specific institutions. The seminar "Enhancing Pedagogical Skills for Faculty Members in Teacher Training Institutions" held in December 2014 in Phuc Yen, Vinh Phuc, focused on the following issues: the necessity and urgency of enhancing pedagogical skills for faculty members; an analysis and evaluation of the current state of pedagogical competencies among faculty members in teacher training institutions, particularly teaching methods that foster students' creativity and self-learning skills; and the sharing of practical experiences by faculty members and teacher training institutions regarding efforts to improve the pedagogical competencies of their faculty members (Hanoi National University of Education 2, 2014). The national scientific seminar "Innovating Pedagogical Training Activities for Students Towards Competency Development" held in Hanoi in November 2014 identified several inadequacies and limitations: Training Program Content: While the program focuses on professional training for students, the content and curriculum are often unreasonable, overly academic, theoretical, and lack practical application. Sometimes, the training at pedagogical universities does not keep pace with changes in secondary education practices. Methods and Implementation of Pedagogical Training: There are significant shortcomings in the methods and implementation of pedagogical training. Some institutions lack a rigorous, coherent model for pedagogical training. The coordination between pedagogical universities, practice schools, and secondary education institutions is weak and inefficient; Students' Pedagogical Skills: Students exhibit many limitations in both teaching methods and student management skills. Most institutions prioritize subject knowledge over pedagogical training, resulting in graduates who are often unprepared and bewildered in their profession. Evaluation of Pedagogical Training Activities: There is no established set of evaluation criteria that ensures scientific, consistent, and systematic assessment. The gap between the training results (as reflected by grades) and the practical requirements is still too wide (Ha Tay Teacher Training College, 2014).

Therefore, studies on pedagogical training, despite having certain practical applications, remain individual studies focusing on specific subjects without representing a comprehensive view across teacher training institutions. Proposed solutions lack coherence and systematic evaluation and have not been thoroughly validated. Issues such as effective training organization, the relationship between teacher training institutions and educational facilities in providing professional training for pedagogical students, and necessary conditions for effective student practice and internship post-graduation to meet the demands of general education are still under discussion. Particularly pressing is the integration of pedagogical training into the current credit-based education system using competency-based approaches, which remains a topical issue yet to be extensively researched. In the field of education, managing pedagogical training with an emphasis on enhancing training quality, skill development, and meeting the needs of teacher education through a competency-based approach remains a new area requiring further research. Proposing scientifically sound, suitable, and feasible management solutions for pedagogical training is crucial and necessary to educate teachers who are capable of personal development and are well-suited to changes in education. This contributes to improving the quality of teacher education, meeting fundamental renewal requirements, and comprehensively advancing the national education system.

3. Methodology

3.1. Survey Objectives

The study aims to survey the current status of training and management of pedagogical skills for students at universities in the Southeastern region, focusing on the Training Department, the Faculty of Education, especially the Department of Psychology - Education, supervising instructors, pedagogical training, and subject teaching methods. The analysis aims to evaluate the influencing factors of the management of pedagogical training to provide practical grounds for proposing management solutions to enhance the quality of pedagogical training for students at multidisciplinary universities in the Southwest region, meeting the practical requirements of current teacher education in secondary education.

3.2. Content and Methodology of the Survey

3.2.1. Survey Content. The survey focuses on the following aspects:

The current context of pedagogical training based on competency-based approaches at universities that offer teacher education programs at the undergraduate level in the Southwest region of Vietnam. The current status of pedagogical training management is based on competency-based approaches at universities that offer teacher education programs at the undergraduate level in the Southwest region of Vietnam. The current context of factors influencing the management of pedagogical training at universities that offer teacher education programs at the undergraduate level in the Southwest region of Vietnam.

3.2.2. Survey Methodology

Written Survey Method: The thesis utilizes the following basic methods to investigate the current status of pedagogical training and training management based on competency-based approaches for undergraduate students in the Southwest region of Vietnam universities offering teacher education programs.

Purpose: This method is employed to gather information from participants regarding specific topics needing investigation. This written survey method aims to collect comprehensive data on the practices and management of pedagogical training for future educators in the specified geographical area and academic context.

Survey Content: Use of 04 Survey Templates

Template 1: Survey on the Management of Pedagogical Training

Objective: Investigate the current status of pedagogical training management by administrative personnel and factors influencing the training and management of pedagogical training.

Template 2: Survey on Pedagogical Training by Pedagogical Faculty

Objective: Assess the current status of pedagogical training conducted by faculty teaching pedagogical skills and professional development in the field of pedagogical training programs. Evaluate the competency system in pedagogical skills that meets professional standards and educational practices in secondary schools.

Template 3: Survey on Pedagogical Training by Secondary School Teachers and Alumni

Objective: Examine the current state of pedagogical training among secondary school teachers and alumni regarding pedagogical training programs and the competency system in pedagogical skills. Evaluate how well these programs prepare students to meet the requirements of secondary school teaching.

Template 4: Survey on Pedagogical Training of Final-Year Students

Objective: Assess the current status of pedagogical training among final-year students regarding pedagogical training programs and the competency system in pedagogical skills.

Procedure:

Designing the Questionnaire:

The questionnaire was designed basing on theoretical studies and gather opinions from experts in the field of pedagogical training. The questionnaire covered relevant aspects identified in the literature and expert consultations.

Pilot Survey and Data Handling:

The authors conducted a pilot survey to test the questionnaire and refine it based on feedback received. This step helps ensure clarity and comprehensiveness of the questions. The process and analyzing the collected data were related to the survey. This includes organizing the data and preparing it for analysis.

3.3. Data Analysis

The survey data was analyzed according to the requirements of the research project. This involves:

The researchers use statistical methods such as calculating mean values and conducting Spearman's rank correlation coefficient to assess the research outcomes quantitatively. Compare the data to identify trends, correlations, and relationships between different variables related to pedagogical training. By following this structured approach, the research can systematically gather and analyze data to evaluate the current status and effectiveness of pedagogical training programs in meeting the professional needs of educators in secondary education.

Criteria and Scoring Scale for Evaluation

In evaluating the current status of pedagogical training and management according to the competency approach, we require survey respondents to select from 4 levels of assessment: Excellent: 4 points; Good: 3 points; Partially satisfactory: 2 points; Not satisfactory: 1 point.

To determine the scoring scale, we calculate it as follows:

The scoring scale for evaluating the pedagogical training and management according to the competency approach is defined as follows:

Here are the 4 levels of the scale: Low Level: From 1 to less than 1.75; Average Level: From 1.75 to less than 2.50. Good Level: From 2.50 to less than 3.25 High Level: 3.25 and above

3.4. Survey Scope

3.4.1. Survey Participants

Based on the scale and organizational structure of multidisciplinary universities providing training for undergraduate teachers in the Southwest region, we conducted surveys on the following participants: 28 managers of the Training Department responsible for training teaching professional vocations; 25 heads of departments of education on professional vocations and teaching methods; 65 lecturers teaching professional vocations and subject teaching methods; 165 final-year students; 50 experienced managers and teachers guiding students in teaching internships and graduate students.

3.4.2. Survey Area

University in the Sound of Vietnam.

4. Results

The research findings were analyzed from 314 survey responses collected out of a total of 333 surveys distributed to participants from 3 multidisciplinary universities providing teachers training in the Southwest region of Vietnam.

4.1. Current Situation of Pedagogical Skills Training Using Competency-Based Approach at Universities Offering Teacher Education Programs in the Southwest Region of Vietnam.

4.1.1. Perception of the Role of Pedagogical Skills Training Using Competency-Based Approach for University Students in the Southwest Region of Vietnam.

The perception of the importance of pedagogical skills training using a competency-based approach for university students in the Southwest region of Vietnam significantly influences the outcomes of such training. Competencies are developed through integrating knowledge, skills, and attitudes, with perception being the first step and a necessary condition for competency formation. Statistical analysis of the survey results on the perception of the importance of pedagogical skills training involving administrators, lecturers teaching pedagogical skills, subject pedagogy lecturers, and final-year students is presented in Table 1:

Table 1. Awareness of the important role of pedagical professional training for students

No.	Object Survey	Level						
		Important		Normal		Not important		Total
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number
1	Managers	41	80.39	10	19.61	0	0	51
2	Lecturer teaches pedagogical skills	46	76.67	14	23.33	0	0	60
3	Final year students	116	72.5	32	20	12	7.5	160
Total		203	74.91	56	20.66	12	4.43	271

4.1.2. Current State of Competency-Based Pedagogical Training

Current State of Competency-Based Pedagogical Training Objectives

The learning outcomes published by multidisciplinary universities that train teachers in the Southwestern region of Vietnam, while varying in some aspects, are relatively consistent in their demand for future teachers to possess pedagogical competencies and professional teaching skills across different domains. In addition to requiring a firm grasp of specialized knowledge and teaching methods, future teachers are also expected to have appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitudes in areas such as pedagogical communication, counseling and consulting students, organizing activities, integration capabilities, and lifelong learning. The content of these requirements for graduates forms the basis for developing training programs, testing, and evaluating graduates. Additionally, there are emphasized requirements related to qualities, ethics, politics, and lifestyles particularly for teachers and graduates. However, a deeper analysis reveals that the approach is still predominantly content-based and does not fully reflect the requirements of professional teacher standards, nor the new demands of general education. A study conducted a survey to investigate the current training objectives of universities that train teachers in the Southwestern region of Vietnam regarding their alignment with the expected system of pedagogical professional competencies. The results are as follows (Table 2):

Table 2. Level of Representation of Training Objectives in Teacher Training Programs

No.	Content	Managers		Lecturer teaches pedagogical skills		Students		Overall average	
		average		Average		Average		average	
		$\bar{X}$		$\bar{X}$		$\bar{X}$		$\bar{X}$	
1	Training goals are built based on output standards	2.46	2	2.58	2	1.97	2	2.28	2
2	Training objectives clearly define the system of pedagogical competencies and pedagogical professional competencies to meet professional requirements	2.42	3	2.41	3	1.82	3	2.21	3
3	Training goals clearly define professional values	2.75	1	2.73	1	2.57	1	2.68	1

Current State of Pedagogical Training Content

According to the current training framework in multidisciplinary universities that train general education teachers in the Southwestern region of Vietnam, the basic content of pedagogical training includes the following modules: Psychology, Developmental and Educational Psychology, Education Science, Subject Teaching Methods, Regular Teaching Practicum, and Intensive Teaching Practicum. Some universities also offer additional modules such as Pedagogical Training 1, Pedagogical Training 2, and Pedagogical Training 3. Furthermore, there are elective courses like Pedagogical Communication, Methods and Techniques of Active Teaching. The results of the current state of competency-based pedagogical training content are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Evaluation of Competency-Based Pedagogical Training Content

No.	Content	Managers		Lecturer teaches pedagogical skills		Students		Overall average	
		average		average		average		Average	
		$\bar{X}$		$\bar{X}$		$\bar{X}$		$\bar{X}$	
1	About student development orientation	2.50	2	2.58	1	2.52	2	2.53	2
2	About teaching – education	2.71	1	2.52	2	2.61	1	2.61	1
3	Regarding assessment of teaching results- education	2.17	4	2.50	3	2.33	3	2.33	3
4	About training and developing pedagogical capacity	2.21	3	2.12	4	1.96	4	2.10	4
5	About practical knowledge of high schools	2.04	5	2.10	5	1.84	5	2.00	5

Organizational form and method of pedagogical training

Pedagogical training for students aims at developing professional knowledge, skills, attitudes, personal qualities, and vocational commitment. Numerous educational science studies indicate that future teachers demonstrate better integration of theoretical knowledge into practical contexts and greater confidence in teaching and educating students when they have solid practical experiences. Research also underscores the importance of practical training in enhancing academic outcomes, job retention rates, and teacher readiness. Therefore, the organizational forms and methods of competency-based pedagogical training should focus on developing students' critical thinking skills, teaching methods, and self-learning strategies under the guidance of educators. Training should involve organizing experiential learning activities relevant to everyday teaching practices. Survey results on the organizational forms and methods of pedagogical training are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Evaluation of Organizational Forms and Methods of Pedagogical Training

No.	Content	Managers		Lecturer teaches pedagogical skills		Students		Overall average	
		average		Average		average		Average	
		$\bar{X}$		$\bar{X}$		$\bar{X}$		$\bar{X}$	
1	Students practice regularly at high school	2.41	5	2.08	7	1.84	7	2.11	7
2	Invite good teachers from high schools to teach students about pedagogical skills	2.11	7	2.23	5	2.42	4	2.25	5
3	University lecturers participated teaching	2.16	6	2.17	6	2.39	5	2.24	6
	or professional, professional and educational activities education at high school								
4	Increase the use of pedagogical situations collected from general practice for classroom teaching	2.55	3	2.54	4	1.96	6	2.35	4
5	Strengthen guidance for students in thinking methods, self-study methods, and self-research in educational science	2.50	4	2.63	3	2.06	3	2.39	3
6	Teaching in groups	2.75	1	2.91	1	2.93	2	2.86	1
7	Organize discussions and seminars	2.60	2	2.72	2	2.88	1	2.73	2

The current state of assessment and evaluation in Professional Pedagogy Training based on competency approach

Assessment and evaluation of training outcomes are crucial stages in the training process. They contribute significantly to adjusting the entire training process, motivating learners to progress continuously. Moreover, assessment and evaluation provide valuable feedback for instructors and administrators, helping them fine-tune teaching methods and management to achieve increasingly higher educational goals. Assessment based on learners' competencies is fundamentally understood as evaluating learners' abilities in performing tasks against specific criteria to determine their level of attainment. The survey on the implementation of competency-based assessment and evaluation in Professional Pedagogy Training at universities training future educators is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Implementation of competency-based assessment and evaluation in Professional Pedagogy Training

No.	Content	Managers		Lecturer teaches pedagogical skills		Students		Overall average	
		average		Average		average		Average	
		$\bar{X}$		$\bar{X}$		$\bar{X}$		$\bar{X}$	
1	Develop a system of criteria and indicators to evaluate pedagogical professional capacity in each course or each module	2.38	1	2.42	1	2.31	2	2.37	1
2	Determine the level of pedagogical competency that students need to achieve at the end of the course term	2.04	3	2.14	3	1.95	3	2.04	3
3	Assess the extent to which learners apply learned knowledge to perform specific learning tasks	2.25	2	2.33	2	2.44	1	2.34	2

The current state of facilities and training methods in Professional Pedagogy based on the competency approach

Infrastructure and training facilities in Professional Pedagogy based on a competency approach are essential conditions for enhancing the quality of training in this field. Table 6 presents statistical results from the survey assessing stakeholders' opinions and evaluations regarding the current status of facilities and training methods in Professional Pedagogy based on a competency approach at universities in the Southwest region.

Table 6. Evaluation of facilities and training methods in Professional Pedagogy based on competency approach

No.	Content	Managers		Lecturer teaches pedagogical skills		Students		Overall average	
		average		average		average		Average	
		$\bar{X}$		$\bar{X}$		$\bar{X}$		$\bar{X}$	
1	Integrated teaching and learning room	2.27	3	2.15	4	2.11	3	2.18	4
2	Theoretical and professional classrooms	2.46	1	2.41	1	2.45	1	2.44	1
3	Pedagogical professional room to practice pedagogical skills frequent	2.38	2	2.11	3	2.09	4	2.19	3
4	Curriculum materials	1.96	5	2.02	5	1.87	5	1.95	5
5	Other equipment, facilities, and service items	2.23	4	2.25	2	2.13	2	2.20	2

5. Discussion

5.1. Perception of the Role of Pedagogical Skills Training Using Competency-Based Approach for University Students in the Southwest Region of Vietnam

The survey results indicate that the perception of the role of competency-based pedagogical training for university students in the Southwestern region of Vietnam among administrators, pedagogical training lecturers, subject teaching method lecturers, and final-year students is quite consistent. The findings affirm that all surveyed groups highly value the importance of competency-based pedagogical training for university students in this region. When comparing the different groups, we also noticed some differences, albeit minor. Specifically, administrators rated the importance of competency-based pedagogical training the highest, at 80.39%. Neither administrators nor lecturers of pedagogical training and subject teaching methods expressed any opinion on the unimportance of competency-based pedagogical training. However, 7.5% of final-year students expressed this opinion. Thus, it can be seen that the training department administrators, pedagogical training lecturers, subject teaching method lecturers, and final-year students all recognize and highly value competency-based pedagogical training. This presents a favorable condition for proposing solutions to enhance the quality of competency-based pedagogical training.

5.2. Current State of Competency-Based Pedagogical Training

5.2.1. Current State of Competency-Based Pedagogical Training Objectives

Table 2 revealed that high consensus among the three surveyed groups on Competency-Based Pedagogical Training Objectives. The survey results indicate a high level of agreement among the three groups (administrators, pedagogical training lecturers, and final-year students) regarding the content fulfillment of competency-based pedagogical training objectives. The survey results show that the training objective rated highest for its level of fulfillment is "Training objectives clearly identify professional values" with an average score of 2.68. This is followed by "Training objectives meet learning outcomes" with an average score of 2.28. The lowest rated is "Training objectives clearly identify pedagogical competencies to meet professional requirements" with an average score of 2.21. However, there is a statistically significant difference between the evaluations of final-year students and those of administrators and pedagogical training lecturers. Specifically, final-year students rated the objectives from "not fulfilled" to "fulfilled," whereas pedagogical training lecturers rated them from "fulfilled" to "well fulfilled." This difference may be due to lecturers, in their teaching role, evaluating based on the overall situation, while students, as learners, assess based on their expectations and personal needs.

5.2.2. Current State of Pedagogical Training Content

Observing Table 3, the content with the highest level of fulfillment is "Teaching and Education," with an average score of 2.61, followed by "Student Development Orientation," with an average score of 2.53. Combined with interview feedback, the evaluation of the fulfillment of necessary knowledge for students to perform their roles and duties as future teachers—such as knowledge and skills in understanding learners and the educational environment, educational planning, class management, and homeroom teacher responsibilities—still fails to engage students. This is because universities have not provided students with ample opportunities for real-life teaching and educational scenarios in general education schools. Additionally, the pedagogical training program remains heavily academic, not focusing enough on skill training, and is not closely aligned with the practical realities of general education. The content area of "Practical Understanding of General Schools" received the lowest average score of 2.00. This result aligns with feedback from survey participants, indicating that the pedagogical training courses remain heavily theoretical and academic, lacking sufficient connection to and alignment with the evolving realities of general education. Although the subject

teaching methods courses aim to equip students with a thorough understanding of teaching methodologies and update them on innovations in teaching methods, there is still a significant gap between theory and practice, and between university training and the actual teaching environment in general schools. Consequently, students often feel bewildered and confused when faced with the practical demands of their mentor teachers in general schools, such as lesson planning, designing lesson plans, presenting lectures, using visual aids, and organizing experiential and career-oriented activities. Among the five criteria for evaluating the content of pedagogical training, the criterion "Training and Developing Pedagogical Competencies" received the second lowest average score of 2.10. This evaluation includes feedback from both final-year students and pedagogical training lecturers. Following this is the criterion "Assessment of Teaching and Educational Outcomes" with an average score of 2.33.

5.2.3. Organizational form and method of pedagogical training

Based on the observation method during teaching sessions at both university and secondary school levels during teaching practice and pedagogical internship phases, and referring to the data from Table 4, the specific findings are as follows:

The majority of the surveyed aspects regarding the current state of organizational forms and methods of pedagogical training achieve average ratings. Specifically, two aspects rated moderately high across all surveyed groups are "Teaching in groups" and "Organizing discussions and seminars," with average scores of 2.86 and 2.73, respectively. Survey results also align with interview discussions, indicating that these teaching methods are commonly used by teachers to guide students' cognitive and learning activities in class through group work and discussion. Based on a study combining interviews with pedagogical instructors, lecturers in pedagogy and subject-specific didactics from universities in the Southwest region of Vietnam, it is affirmed that the content of specialized scientific knowledge and professional pedagogical knowledge is not yet harmonized and appropriately aligned with secondary school teaching programs. The vocational modules are predominantly theoretical, disconnected from reality and pedagogical practice. Vocational orientation is perceived as insufficient and ineffective due to program arrangement methods that still heavily favor lecturing.

Most courses in these knowledge blocks are theoretical, and practical teaching encounters difficulties due to inadequate infrastructure, funding, and insufficient emphasis on practical teaching by instructors. Consequently, many students struggle to apply their learned knowledge effectively to master basic teaching skills and often lack confidence in fulfilling the responsibilities and duties of a teacher during their pedagogical internship phase. The survey data from opinion polls also indicate that the teaching methods and approaches for vocational education modules in pedagogy predominantly focus on theoretical instruction, which lacks practical application. Among the evaluated training methods, the items "Students engage in regular practical exercises in secondary schools," "Enhancing guidance on student's critical thinking, self-study, and research methods in educational sciences," and "Inviting proficient teachers from secondary schools to teach pedagogical skills to students" received average scores in the order of $X=2.11$, $X=2.24$, and $X=2.25$ across all three groups surveyed: administrative staff, pedagogical instructors, subject-specific didactics instructors, and final-year students.

These findings reflect a partial disconnect from practical application and alignment with recruitment needs in teacher training programs, especially in pedagogical vocational training. During interviews, many opinions pointed to the pivotal role of pedagogical instructors in determining the overall quality of teacher education and, specifically vocational pedagogy training. Many instructors in vocational pedagogy lack practical experience and understanding of secondary education realities, leading to a focus on theoretical teaching methods that are often detached from practical application.

The survey results reveal a significant difference in perceptions among different groups regarding two specific aspects: "Enhancing the use of pedagogical situations collected from secondary school practice for classroom teaching" and "Strengthening guidance on students' critical thinking, self-study, and research methods in educational sciences." While administrative staff and pedagogical instructors, as well as subject-specific didactics instructors, rated these aspects relatively high, final-year students rated them at an average level.

5.2.4. The current state of assessment and evaluation in Professional Pedagogy Training based on the competency approach

The results from Table 5 indicate that all surveyed groups rated the assessment and evaluation of Professional Pedagogy Training as average across all aspects. The item "Determining the level of competency in Professional Pedagogy that students need to achieve by the end of the course" scored the lowest at $X=2.04$. Combined with interviews and observations, all surveyed groups agreed that this activity has not been clearly implemented in the detailed curriculum of the courses, both in the general objectives and specific objectives. Consequently, students find it challenging to orient themselves, adjust, and develop their own competency in Professional Pedagogy. The statistical results from the survey indicate that the item "Developing a system of criteria and indicators to assess the competency in Professional Pedagogy within each subject or module" achieved the highest average score of $X=2.37$. However, in practice, the system of criteria and indicators for assessing the competency in Professional Pedagogy within each course or module of the detailed curriculum is not clearly defined. Consequently, the assessment of the competency levels in Professional Pedagogy for students at universities in the Southwest region is not satisfactory. This is primarily because the criteria are not specific and detailed enough, making it difficult to accurately and effectively assess the competency in Professional Pedagogy. Through research and observations combined with survey results, the evaluation of how students apply the knowledge they have learned to perform specific learning tasks, as evidenced by specific learning products within the detailed course curriculum, shows that the assessment criteria are still quite general and vague. They have not yet become effective tools for students' self-assessment, evaluation, and self-learning.

5.2.5. The current status of facilities and training methods in Professional Pedagogy based on competency approach

In general, the physical facilities and conditions to support competency-based training in Professional Pedagogy received a moderately consistent average rating from all three surveyed groups. The "Theory and Specialized Classrooms" aspect was evaluated as the most adequately met, with the highest average score of $X=2.44$. The conditions in these theoretical classrooms generally include sufficient lighting and modern equipment to support teaching activities. However, according to student evaluations, these classrooms still do not fully meet their expectations. Students mentioned that the equipment and machinery supporting teaching activities are not always in optimal working condition and ready to serve instructional needs. The lowest rated aspect in the survey regarding the level of "Curriculum Resources" achieved an average score of $X=1.95$. When asked about the reasons for this situation, all surveyed groups expressed the view that because these universities originally were teacher training colleges, after becoming multidisciplinary universities, their academic resources for developing textbooks are still limited. Therefore, there is a need for the curriculum to be more systematically developed, with clear timelines and increased financial investment in this area. The average scores for the aspects "Integrated Teaching-Learning Rooms," "Practice Rooms for Teaching Profession Regular Practice," and "Other Equipment, Facilities, and Tools" are $X=2.18$, $X=2.19$, and $X=2.20$, respectively. Across all these aspects, there is a noticeable difference between the perceptions of administrative staff, vocational teacher educators, and final-year students. This difference may be attributed to the fact that while administrative staff show some

level of concern regarding facilities, there lacks a systematic process for inspection, supervision, and maintenance of equipment. Consequently, educators and students who directly utilize these facilities for teaching and training in the vocational teaching profession find that they only partially meet the needs of their activities.

6. Conclusion

Training in pedagogy for teacher education students, based on a competency-based approach, must be designed and implemented following an educational program that clearly and comprehensively defines the system of pedagogical competencies. These competencies should be explicitly detailed in terms of the levels of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and responsibilities that learners need to achieve upon completing the pedagogical training program. Through studying the current state of pedagogical training for students at universities in the Southwest region, universities can use this as a basis to develop and enhance competency-based pedagogical training programs that clearly outline the learner's performance objectives at each stage of the learning process. Teacher training institutions are responsible for mobilizing and utilizing available facilities and resources to effectively support high-quality pedagogical training, practice, and internships. This should be done in accordance with the content and training programs issued by the Ministry of Education and Training and as per the plans agreed upon between the teacher training institutions.

To overcome existing limitations and improve the effectiveness of competency-based teacher education, the following key solutions should be implemented in a synchronized manner: (1) strengthening the alignment between competency frameworks and training programs through clear definition of learning outcomes and appropriate assessment methods; (2) enhancing the capacity of teacher educators through continuous professional development, updating teaching methods, and integrating new technologies; (3) developing practice-oriented teaching modules linked with real-world school settings and increasing the duration and quality of internships; (4) applying digital technology and blended learning models to support the tracking and assessment of students' competency development; (5) establishing an effective monitoring and feedback system involving students, instructors, and employers to improve the training programs; and (6) promoting collaborative governance models among teacher training institutions, educational authorities, and schools to share resources, jointly develop curricula, and ensure training quality. The effective implementation of these solutions will contribute to improving the quality of teacher education, meeting the demands of general education reform, and aligning with international integration requirements in the current context.

Declarations

Author Contributions. All authors contributed equally to the study's conception and design. All authors have read and approved the published version of the manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest. The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Funding. None

Ethical Approval. The information in this research is based on respect for privacy and approval by the ethics committee

Data Availability Statement. The authors confirm that the data supporting this study's findings are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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