

Developing Pedagogical Communication Competence for Students at Dong Thap University: An Educational Perspective in the New Context

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ABSTRACT:

Pedagogical communication skills are a distinctive competency of teachers in using language, gestures, and behaviors to interact effectively with students, parents, and colleagues. Their primary purpose is not only to convey knowledge but also to create a positive educational environment that fosters learners' character development.

This study highlights the importance of pedagogical communication skills for primary teacher education students and examines the extent to which these skills are practiced by students at Dong Thap University. As a core professional competency, pedagogical communication directly influences the effectiveness and quality of teaching performance among pre-service teachers.

Keywords: Pedagogical communication, communication skills, professional competence, educational environment, teacher education.

1. Introduction

Communication plays a vital role in every individual's life. Through communication, human personality is formed and developed. Pedagogical communication refers to the multidimensional interaction between teachers and learners for the purpose of transmitting and acquiring scientific knowledge, life experiences, life skills, professional competencies, and fostering the comprehensive development of learners' personalities. As a specialized form of communication, pedagogical communication not only fulfills the basic functions of communication but also serves as a process that influences and shapes students' personality development.

Therefore, teacher education students must be adequately trained and well-prepared in pedagogical competencies in general and pedagogical communication skills in particular. At the same time, students themselves need to proactively equip themselves with practical experiences in pedagogical communication, which serve as essential assets when entering the teaching profession. In addition to possessing good moral qualities, strong professional ethics, confidence, and enthusiasm for education, future teachers must also demonstrate solid professional knowledge and pedagogical expertise, including effective pedagogical communication skills and broader life communication skills.

In reality, many newly graduated teachers possess strong academic and professional knowledge. During their university studies, they were often outstanding students in terms of subject-matter expertise. However, when they begin teaching, many experience difficulties in classroom communication and are not highly regarded by students regarding their instructional effectiveness and interactions. This situation raises the question of whether their communication skills sufficiently meet the requirements of teaching and educational practice. Particularly in education in general and higher education in particular, communication not only contributes to the formation and development of teachers' personalities but also constitutes an essential component of pedagogical activities and a core element of pedagogical competence. In Vietnam, numerous studies have examined pedagogical communication among university students and proposed various solutions to enhance these skills. However, at Dong Thap University, there has not yet been an in-depth study focusing on students' pedagogical communication skills in the context of rapidly changing educational environments. Therefore, within the scope of this study, the author investigates "Pedagogical communication Skills of Students at Dong Thap University" and proposes effective measures for developing these skills from an educational perspective, based on an understanding of the mechanisms underlying skill formation. This is considered an urgent requirement for the university.

2. Theoretical foundation of the research problem

2.1. Literature review

Pedagogical communication is the most fundamental method and tool for organizing teaching and educational activities. Without communication, it is impossible to direct the activities of teachers and students toward educational objectives. Therefore, teacher education programs must ensure that every student is equipped with and actively develops pedagogical communication competence so that

they can quickly adapt to professional demands and effectively handle pedagogical situations upon entering the teaching profession.

From this perspective, pedagogical communication competence (pedagogical behavior competence) is one of the essential competencies that constitute a teacher's overall pedagogical competence. Regardless of how strong a teacher's academic expertise may be, without skillful pedagogical communication, educational success remains difficult to achieve. Pedagogical communication competence enables teachers to perform educational tasks flexibly, effectively, and persuasively, thereby establishing their influence and professional credibility. This competence should be developed during teacher education so that newly graduated teachers can effectively fulfill their professional responsibilities from the outset. This is why institutions offering teacher education programs, including Dong Nai University, should pay special attention to fostering this competence among students.

2.2. Concepts

2.2.1. Communication

According to the Vietnamese Dictionary, communication is defined as "the act of exchanging and interacting with one another" (Nguyen, N.Y., 1999). Ngo (1995), in *Communication and Pedagogical Behavior*, defines communication as the activity of establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships through direct interaction in order to realize social relationships among individuals (Ngo, C.H., 1995).

In general, numerous definitions of communication exist. Although they are based on different theoretical perspectives, they all agree that communication is fundamentally a process of psychological interaction between individuals.

2.2.2. Pedagogical communication

Pedagogical communication occurs as an integral condition of pedagogical activity. It is the process of interaction and exchange between teachers and learners through verbal and non-verbal

communication means in order to effectively accomplish teaching and educational tasks.

The stages of pedagogical communication include:

Stage1: Planning communication: This stage involves arranging and determining communication methods, organizational forms, timing, and locations based on available resources and in accordance with communication objectives, content, and participants.

Stage 2: Implementing pedagogical communication

- **Opening phase:** This is the orientation stage. During an initial encounter, both the communicator and the recipient actively use their senses to gather information about each other.
- **Development phase:** This stage is manifested through various communicative actions and behavioral responses.

Stage 3: Concluding and evaluating the communication process

- Summarizing the key points of the communication to enhance educational effectiveness.
- Proposing measures and follow-up activities to promote positive aspects and minimize negative aspects of communication participants.

2.2.3. Pedagogical communication skills and the mechanism of their formation

According to Ngo and Hoang (1999), pedagogical communication skills are: "A system of coordinated and appropriate operations, gestures, behaviors, and verbal actions employed by teachers to ensure effective interaction with students in teaching and educational activities while minimizing mental and physical effort under changing conditions." Vu (1997) argued that: "Pedagogical communication skills refer to the ability to quickly recognize students' external expressions and internal psychological changes, as well as one's own psychological states, and to appropriately use verbal and non-verbal means of communication to achieve educational objectives."

Pedagogical communication skills involve the effective application of teachers' knowledge and experience in establishing relationships, exchanging cognition, emotions, and actions, and utilizing communication means with learners in specific situations. In other words, pedagogical communication skills represent the harmonious integration of teachers' knowledge, pedagogical competence, and attitudes as demonstrated in educational activities. They reflect the maturity of teachers' personality traits and professional capacities.

Thus, pedagogical communication skills are expressed through observable actions and behaviors. They are the result of applying knowledge, experience, and positive attitudes to effectively achieve intended educational goals. These skills may be considered a manifestation of pedagogical competence. When examining pedagogical communication skills, attention should be paid to accuracy, flexibility, and adaptability in action. No individual is born with ready-made skills. Teachers are no exception. To develop pedagogical skills in general and pedagogical communication skills in particular, individuals must undergo a process of systematic training. The mechanism of skill formation consists of three stages:

- **Step 1:** Fully understanding the purpose, methods, and conditions of action

Recognizing the objectives, methods, and conditions of action is crucial because objectives represent the anticipated outcomes of behavior. Based on identified goals, individuals formulate plans and seek appropriate conditions and measures to achieve them. However, this stage only provides action orientation and theoretical understanding; it does not yet constitute actual skill performance.

- **Step 2:** Observing models and practicing through imitation

This stage is equally important. Individuals perform actions according to models to develop skills while simultaneously comparing their actions with theoretical knowledge and making adjustments to improve performance and reduce

errors. Depending on individual abilities, the duration and effectiveness of this stage may vary.

- Step 3: Repeated practice under appropriate conditions

Through simulated situations and experiential activities, individuals continue practicing to perfect their skills. During this stage, knowledge is reinforced repeatedly, and action procedures are systematically rehearsed, leading to greater mastery. However, skills may still be unstable. True stability and proficiency are achieved only when individuals can perform effectively under various conditions.

2.3. The Importance of pedagogical communication skills

- From a theoretical perspective, pedagogical communication skills are essential for teachers to effectively perform their professional duties. These are competencies that teacher education students need to develop throughout their university studies and professional careers. The renowned Russian educator K.D. Usinsky emphasized: "Without pedagogical tact and skillful behavior, even the most knowledgeable educators can never become truly good teachers."

- Communication competence in general and pedagogical communication competence in particular remain limited among many students. Practical teaching experiences indicate that numerous students lack confidence when speaking before an audience, have difficulty using appropriate gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and body language in pedagogical settings, and often struggle to handle communication situations tactfully.

-Moreover, rapid social changes continue to raise expectations regarding teachers' communication abilities. Communication approaches that were once appropriate may no longer be effective. With the growing influence of technology and social media, teachers' communication behaviors are receiving increasing public attention, requiring both teachers and teacher education students to develop stronger communication skills and greater self-regulation.

Key dimensions of pedagogical communication skills include:

- + **Communication orientation skills:** The ability to accurately assess personality characteristics and interpersonal relationships based on external indicators such as facial expressions, tone of voice, behavior, gestures, and communication context.

- + **Positioning skills:** The ability to identify one's role in communication, empathize with others by placing oneself in their position, understand their feelings and perspectives, and create conditions that encourage openness and comfort in communication.

- + **Communication management skills:** The ability to attract and maintain attention, identify suitable communication topics, understand the needs and interests of communication partners, regulate one's emotional states, and effectively utilize communication means. This category includes:

- ◆ **Managing communication partners:** Attracting attention, selecting communication topics, regulating the pace of communication, and creating positive emotional experiences;

- ◆ **Self-regulation skills:** Controlling strong emotional reactions and overcoming negative emotional states when necessary;

- ◆ **Use of communication means:** Appropriately employing verbal and non-verbal communication tools. Verbal communication is the distinctive communication medium of human beings. While the content of speech influences cognition, intonation strongly affects emotions. Teachers must therefore select language that is appropriate to communication objectives, content, participants, and specific situations. Non-verbal communication includes behaviors, gestures, facial expressions, smiles, eye contact, and body language. These elements complement verbal communication and provide important communicative cues and orientations.

3. Research methods and data

3.1. Research methods

This study employs theoretical research methods to analyze, synthesize, and systematize

documents, scientific works, and relevant literature concerning pedagogical communication skills among teacher education students. In addition, survey and practical investigation methods were utilized to identify the current situation of teaching and learning at Dong Thap University. The study sample consisted of 200 third-year students enrolled in teacher education programs. Participants were selected using convenience sampling. Data were collected through a questionnaire employing a three-point Likert scale and analyzed using SPSS software. The questionnaire was developed based on the theoretical framework and dimensions of pedagogical communication skills. The collected

data were used to supplement, verify, and refine pedagogical skill-training approaches, thereby helping prospective graduates better prepare for their future teaching careers.

3.2. Research data

- Determination of assessment levels: A 3-point Likert scale questionnaire was administered to 200 students, subjects. The classification of levels was based on mean scores.

- Interval between levels The interval was determined using the formula: Interval = $(3 - 1)/53 = 0,6$

Table 1. Classification of assessment levels

No.	Classification	Score range	Formula	Levels used in the questionnaire
1	Weak	$1.00 \leq \text{Mean} < 1.80$	E x1	Strongly disagree (1)
2	Average	$1.81 \leq \text{Mean} < 2.40$	D x2	Disagree (2)
3	Good	$2.41 \leq \text{Mean} < 3.0$	Cx3	Uncertain (3)
Formula to calculate the Mean = $(Ax3) + (Bx2) + (Cx1)/N$				

4. Research results

4.1. Survey results on the implementation of pedagogical communication skills among third-year students at Dong Thap University

4.1.1. Current status of communication orientation skills among the third-year students

Table 2. Level of implementation of pedagogical communication orientation skills

No	Survey Content	Level of Performance						$(\overline{X})$	Rank	
		Frequency		Sometimes		Never				
		Amo.	Per.	Amo.	Per.	Amo.	Per.			
1	Pedagogical communication orientation skills before contact									
	Ability to quickly grasp the overall classroom situation	158	79,0	23	11,5	19	9,5	2,44	High	
	Ability to accurately collect information about students in the class.	160	80,5	31	15,5	19	9,5	2,57	High	
2	Pedagogical communication orientation skills during interaction									

	Reminding students when they display inappropriate attitudes or behaviors during communication (in class).	167	83,5	21	10,5	11	5,5	2,66	high
	Ability to maintain discipline and order in the classroom.	136	68,0	42	21,0	22	11,0	2,34	medium
	Encouraging, motivating, and praising students when they perform good deeds, demonstrate initiative, or make contributions during lessons	76	38,0	103	51,5	16	8,0	2,27	medium
3	Skills of judging based on facial expressions, gestures, behaviors, and speech								
	Ability to quickly recognize changes in students' attitudes during lessons.	100	50,0	79	39,5	21	10,5	2,33	medium
	Ability to carefully observe students' outward expressions in order to identify their psychological reactions.	78	39,0	101	50,5	21	10,5	2,30	medium
	Ability to recognize students' psychological states through their speech and facial expressions.	112	54,0	55	27,5	37	18,5	2,32	medium
	Ability to identify students' intentions when they participate in classroom discussions.	77	38,5	104	52,0	19	9,5	2,28	medium
	Ability to quickly recognize students' attitudes toward the lesson through their facial expressions.	113	56,5	65	32,5	22	11,0	2,32	medium
	General average ($\bar{X}$)							2,50	

Notes: Amo.: (amount); Per. (percentage)

The results presented in table 2 indicate that students' pedagogical communication orientation skills were generally performed at a moderate level. The item "Reminding students when they display inappropriate attitudes or behaviors during communication (in class)" obtained the highest mean score ($\bar{X} = 2.66$), with 83.5% of respondents reporting that they frequently performed this activity. However, classroom observations revealed that student teachers relied heavily on this skill during their teaching practicum. One possible explanation is that student teachers often have difficulty fully engaging students in their lessons and may lack sufficient experience to use instructional content

itself as a means of maintaining classroom discipline.

Consequently, during observed teaching sessions, classroom disorder was still relatively common, and student teachers frequently had to restore discipline through verbal reminders and comments. According to our observations, on average, a student teacher reminded students approximately two to three times during a single lesson.

Furthermore, direct observation suggested that student teachers' communication orientation skills were not yet well developed. The findings indicate that their ability to orient themselves during interactions with students remained

somewhat limited. Thus, while current teaching practicum activities contribute to the development of communication orientation skills to a certain extent, the duration and intensity of these experiences may not be sufficient to effectively foster this competency.

4.1.2. Current status of pedagogical communication positioning skills among third-year students

Table 3. Level of implementation of pedagogical communication positioning skills

No	Survey Content	Level of Performance						$(\bar{x})$	Rank
		Frequency		Sometimes		Never			
		Amo.	Per	Amo	Per.	Amo	Per.		
1	Ability to create a positive, healthy, and enjoyable classroom atmosphere.	105	52,5	65	32,5	30	15	2,33	medium
2	Ability to foster active learning.	105	52,5	56	28,0	29	14,5	2,33	medium
3	Ability to promote students' creativity.	130	65,0	49	24,5	21	10,5	2,54	high
4	Ability to maintain appropriate teacher student standards of conduct, including respect, encouragement, and emotional support.	111	55,5	59	29,5	30	15,0	2,48	high
5	Ability to apply scientific and specialized knowledge to make lessons engaging and attractive.	35	17,5	115	57,5	50	25,0	1,92	low
6	Willingness to explain and clarify issues that students have not yet fully understood.	158	79,	30	15.0	12	6,0	2,70	high
7	Active participation in school activities such as teaching competitions and educational innovation initiatives.	76	38,0	72	36,0	52	26,0	2,00	medium
8	Ability to assess and evaluate students fairly.	158	79,0	25	12,5	17	8,5	2,70	high
9	Ability to reduce tension in communication.	85	42,5	104	52,0	11	5,5	2,14	medium
10	Ability to demonstrate an appropriate professional demeanor in pedagogical communication.	95	47,5	95	47,5	10	5,0	2,02	medium

11	Ability to gain students' trust, establish rapport, and encourage them to share with teachers.	99	49,5	86	43,0	15	7,5	2,32	medium
General average ($\bar{X}$)								2,49	

The results presented in Table 3 show that the item “Providing fair and objective evaluations of students” was implemented at a high level, achieving a mean score of $\bar{X} = 2.70$. Most students believed that fair and objective assessment helps learners develop trust in their teachers and motivates them to strive for better academic performance.

Classroom observations revealed that some student teachers had begun to master this pedagogical skill. When evaluating students' responses, these student teachers carefully considered individual differences. Students with weaker academic performance or those who rarely volunteered answers were often given more positive evaluations as a means of encouragement and motivation. Conversely, high-achieving students who frequently participated in class discussions were sometimes

assessed more critically in order to encourage them to demonstrate their full potential.

During pedagogical interactions with students, student teachers were generally able to recognize and maintain their professional roles and responsibilities, adhering to appropriate standards of teacher–student relationships, including respect, encouragement, and support.

Overall, the findings indicate that student teachers demonstrated pedagogical communication positioning skills at a moderate level. While they performed effectively in certain aspects, there were still areas in which they struggled to apply communication skills appropriately and effectively in real educational settings.

4.1.3. Current Status of the Implementation of Pedagogical Communication Regulation and Control Skills among Third-Year Students

Table 4. Level of implementation of pedagogical communication regulation and control skills

No	Survey Content	Level of Performance						$(\bar{x})$	Rank
		Frequency		Sometimes		Never			
		Am o.	Per	Am o	Per.	Am o	Per		
1	Emotional and Behavioral Self-Control Skills								
	Ability to control personal emotions when students display inappropriate attitudes during lessons.	143	71,5	44	22,0	13	6,5	2,33	Medium
	Ability to handle situations and respond to students' questions accurately and appropriately.	144	72,0	45	22,5	11	5,5	2,34	Medium
	Ability to conceal personal worries or emotional difficulties while teaching	138	69,0	43	21,5	19	9,5	2,29	Medium
2	Skills in Using Communication Means								

	Ability to ask questions to the whole class as well as to individual students.	153	76,5	36	18,0	11	5,5	2,71	high
	Ability to proactively initiate communication according to one's instructional objectives.	149	74,5	38	19,0	13	6,5	2,68	High
	Ability to control and manage speech during communication.	158	79,0	26	13,0	16	8,0	2,71	High
	Ability to observe students sensitively and attentively during lessons or examinations.	96	48,0	89	44,5	15	7,5	2,20	Medium
	Ability to position oneself appropriately while writing on the board and teaching.	67	33,5	93	46,5	40	20,0	2,13	Medium
	Ability to use teaching aids flexibly and appropriately.	129	64,5	54	27,0	17	8,5	2,26	Medium
	Ability to effectively use diagrams, charts, models, and other visual aids during instruction.	119	59,5	65	32,5	16	8,0	2,23	High
3	Listening Skills								
	Consistently using all senses to listen effectively.	161	80,5	21	10,5	18	9,0	2,75	High
	Asking follow-up questions when students present ideas to ensure understanding of the content.	95	47,5	86	43,0	19	9,5	2,19	Medium
	Ability to accurately restate what students have expressed.	137	68,5	47	23,5	16	8,0	2,30	Medium
	Ability to appropriately correct students' responses.	146	73,0	40	20,0	14	7,0	2,34	Medium
	Never interrupting students while they are speaking.	87	43,5	90	45,0	23	11,5	2,16	Medium
4	Expressive Communication Skills								
	Ability to effectively convey lesson content to students.	146	73,0	35	17,5	19	9,5	2,31	Medium
	Ability to guide students toward achieving communication objectives.	140	70,0	34	17,0	26	13,0	2,28	Medium
	Using simple, understandable language appropriate to students' levels.	152	76,0	30	15,0	18	9,0	2,67	high

	Preparing a clear outline before presenting a topic to students.	149	74,5	29	14,5	22	11,0	2,31	Medium
	Ability to conclude communication appropriately.	150	75,0	29	14,5	21	10,5	2,32	Medium
	General average ($\bar{X}$)							2,69	

From the results presented in Table 4, the items “asking questions to the whole class and to individual students” and “being able to control one's speech during communication” were performed well by primary teacher education students. Most students believed that asking questions to both the whole class and individual students is extremely important because it stimulates students' thinking abilities and active learning, thereby increasing their enthusiasm for acquiring knowledge.

However, during a mathematics lesson observation, we found that student teachers were not able to formulate high-quality questions that differentiated students according to their learning abilities. Most of the questions asked were taken directly from the textbook. Consequently, high-achieving students rarely volunteered to answer, while lower-achieving students appeared anxious about being called upon. The students who most frequently raised their hands were those with average or above-average academic performance, and this pattern persisted throughout the lesson. These findings indicate that although student teachers frequently practiced this skill, its effectiveness remained limited.

4.2. Discussion

The research findings indicate that third-year teacher education students still exhibit several limitations in pedagogical communication skills, particularly in organizing teaching and learning activities. Furthermore, a number of factors influence the methods used to develop these skills. In the current context of higher education, classes often consist of large numbers of students, making it difficult to organize practical training sessions in teacher education courses. Limited opportunities for interaction hinder

lecturers from conducting practical activities designed to develop pedagogical communication skills. As a result, student teachers have insufficient opportunities to engage in authentic practice, which negatively affects the sustainable development of their professional competencies.

Overall, based on students' self-assessments, the pedagogical communication skills of teacher education students at Dong Thap University were at a moderate level. However, discrepancies were found between students' self-evaluations and actual classroom observations. In practice, students demonstrated weak and inflexible communication skills.

5. Proposed measures for developing effective pedagogical communication skills among teacher education students from an educational perspective

5.1. Measure 1: Developing pedagogical communication skills through academic courses

The teacher education curriculum includes foundational courses, specialized courses, elective courses, and pedagogical communication courses. These courses provide students with fundamental and professional knowledge necessary for developing both general and professional competencies required of future teachers. Through the learning process, students gain an understanding of the objectives, methods, and conditions of pedagogical communication. They also have opportunities to observe exemplary communication practices demonstrated by their lecturers.

In addition, educational science courses help students understand the formation and development of personality, willpower, and

values in school students, as well as teaching and learning activities and the characteristics of the teaching profession. This understanding contributes to the gradual development of pedagogical communication principles such as respect, goodwill, and empathy.

Students should recognize the importance of these courses and actively cultivate their pedagogical communication skills by:

- Taking learning activities seriously and actively participating in discussions, presentations, and questioning activities.
- Observing and learning pedagogical communication skills demonstrated by lecturers, such as verbal expression, gestures, posture, and professional demeanor.
- Imitating and practicing communication models demonstrated by lecturers.

5.2. Measure 2: Enhancing students' self-awareness and initiative in developing pedagogical communication skills

The effectiveness of skill development depends on many factors, including practice conditions, the systematic nature of training, and, most importantly, personal effort. Regardless of the solutions implemented, meaningful outcomes cannot be achieved without students' initiative and self-discipline. Therefore, self-awareness and active participation in pedagogical training activities are essential. Students can improve their pedagogical communication skills through the following approaches:

- Independently seeking knowledge related to pedagogical communication skills through books, journals, and online resources.
- Creating a professional pedagogical communication environment within the university. Ensuring that lecturers serve as exemplary role models in pedagogical communication and actively support students in developing communication competencies. This requires lecturers to demonstrate professional standards in language use, behavior, gestures, appearance, and classroom management so that

students can learn from and emulate these practices.

5.3. Measure 3: Developing pedagogical communication skills through teaching practicum

Teaching practicum is considered a crucial stage in the development of pedagogical skills. It provides students with opportunities to engage in real-life teaching experiences and practice pedagogical communication skills. While coursework helps students understand the objectives, methods, and conditions of pedagogical communication and observe exemplary models, practicum experiences allow students to apply these models in authentic educational settings.

Through repeated practice, students learn to perform communication tasks effectively and achieve intended educational goals. Therefore, students should actively participate in observation placements and teaching practicums to strengthen both their pedagogical competencies and communication skills.

5.4. Measure 4: Investing in experiential learning and extracurricular activities

- Organizing meaningful experiential learning activities that provide students with opportunities to acquire and practice pedagogical communication skills.
- Encouraging participation in extracurricular activities such as clubs, competitions, and workshops. Student clubs create opportunities for communication, interaction, and professional exchange. Through club activities, students develop knowledge, attitudes, professional competencies, and pedagogical communication skills. These activities help students improve skills such as: Verbal expression; Public speaking and presentation; Managing and directing communication processes; Flexible interpersonal interaction; Teamwork and collective spirit. Moreover, such activities enable students to maximize personal strengths and develop communication skills through collaborative experiences.

6. Conclusion

Developing and enhancing pedagogical communication skills is a crucial objective of teacher education, contributing significantly to future success in educational practice. This is a long-term and complex process that requires the coordinated efforts of multiple stakeholders and influencing factors. Pedagogical communication refers to multidimensional psychological interactions between teachers and students aimed at transmitting and acquiring scientific knowledge, life experiences, professional skills, and competencies while fostering students' holistic personality development. Pedagogical

communication is unique because it not only fulfills basic communication functions but also directly influences the formation of students' personalities. Therefore, teacher education students must receive comprehensive preparation in pedagogical knowledge and skills, particularly pedagogical communication skills. At the same time, students themselves should actively prepare and enrich their pedagogical communication experiences. Within the scope of this article, only solutions related to the learning process at the university level have been discussed, with the aim of improving pedagogical communication competence among teacher education students.

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