

Evaluation of Field Training for Students of Special Education from the Perspective of Trainees and Supervisors: A Field Study at Princess Noura University

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This research project was funded by the Deanship of Scientific Research, Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University, through the Research Funding Program, grant No (37 / S /160)

Abstract--- *The study aimed at evaluating the status of field training at the department of special education, faculty of education, princess Noura University from the perspective of trainees and supervisors. To achieve the objectives of the study, the researchers designed two questionnaires: the first for trainees and the second for supervisors. The first one was applied to (141) students majoring in autism, learning difficulties, talent, and intellectual excellence. The second was applied to (20) supervisors specialized in autism and learning difficulties. After the data were statistically processed, the results relevant to the trainees revealed that they possess the suitable skills to apply what they learned in theory and also have the ability to benefit from technological devices in their classes. In addition, field training developed in them a positive attitude toward the teaching profession and provided them with self-confidence to teach individually or collectively. As for the most important challenges, they were: transportation from – to training places, absence of propitious educational aids in places of training, in addition extra work they were requested to do by school management and training centers. As for results pertaining supervisors, they revealed that training was needed for their self-development in the field of specialization. In addition, training made them teach theoretical courses in a more effective manner. The most challenging problems were found in: difficulty of performance in effecting duties in the theoretical courses set for them to teach and in the inadequate number of schools and training centers, besides absence of propitious educational aids in such schools and centers. The results also showed that specialization in learning difficulty was mostly affected by previously stated challenges if compared to those of autism and talent.*

Keywords--- *Field Training, Field Study, Trainee Students, Supervisors of Special Education.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Pre-service training is one of the programs given to students of colleges of education with the aim of training and qualifying them while still studying in universities and institutions. Field training at colleges of education aims at providing students with the necessary teaching and experience skills after covering most of the theoretical specialization and vocational courses in the college of education. (Al-Ajarmeh, 2015).

Thus, field training programs occupy a distinguished position in teachers' preparation programs. The training process and actual practice are not an easy job because they require multi-diversified needs, such as preparing a study program that meets the needs of both student and teacher at the same time. It should be emphasized that student's competence is not only determined by the amount of knowledge he gained from course work offered by educational institutions, but also by the professional and artistic training, future teachers need, in order to interrelate theory with application (Alqumsh & Al-Kharabsheh, 2009). Due to the importance of preparing and qualifying future teachers in order to meet the ambition of the teaching process; and because field training represents the practical side of this qualification, the idea of the present study emerged. Thus, the study will assess the actual status of field training from the perspective of students and supervisors to determine the positive aspects to consolidate and to determine the challenges and obstacles to avoid them.

1.1 Problem of the Study

The University of princess Noura bint Abdulrahman moves in steady steps to secure high-quality academic programs to endow its graduates' academic degrees accredited locally and internationally. Within this framework, the university gave priority to accreditation of college programs. Therefore, it took great steps in reviewing such programs and in supporting and developing researches. Among those programs are those relevant to teacher's special education which graduated its first batch, second semester of the academic year 1433-1434 A.H, due to the importance of field training in training female teachers of special education, the two courses of field training (observations and training) were given greater interest in the B.A programs of special education at Princess University. (18) Hours that rate 13% of the study plan hours were assigned for these two courses.

In an attempt, by the researchers, to improve education outcomes and to determine the challenges and obstacles that trainees encounter, from their perspective and the perspective of supervisors, they designed this study.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The study aims at evaluating field training for female students of special education from their perspective and the perspective of supervisors via a field study of the students at princess Noura University; the objectives include:

1. Evaluation methods used in teaching study courses of special education to find out whether such courses are effective from the perspective of the trainee student.
2. Evaluating the efficiency of theoretical cognitive skills the student learned from the courses preceding field training and whether or not such theoretical skills are easy to apply, from the perspective of the trainee.
3. Evaluating the foremost field challenges to which trainees are exposed during field training, from the

perspective of trainee and supervisors.

4. Evaluating differences among specializations (learning difficulties, talent, intellectual excellence, and autism) during the stage of field training of special education at Noura University.

1.3 Questions of the Study

The study attempts to answer the major following questions

- A. What are the results of evaluating field training for female students of special education from their perspective and supervisors’?
- B. The question is subdivided into the following questions:
- C. What is the level of students applying teaching methods used in study courses of special education programs in training field situations?
- D. How much did students benefit from the theoretical information and knowledge taught in the study plan through the training process?
- E. What are the foremost field challenges the trainees encounter through field training from the perspective of students and supervisors?
- F. Are there differences with statistical significance among specializations (learning difficulties, talent, mental excellence, and autism) during the period of training of special education programs at Princess Noura University?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The importance of the study stems from being the first of its kind in special education program which aims to evaluate field training at Princess Noura University. The study also aims to give an actual evaluation of the field training program after the elapse of seven years of establishment. It also aims to determine the problems that concern the trainee during the period of practical training in addition to the supervisor. This, in turn, will provide those in charge of the program with the positives and challenges pertaining educational, organizational, and managerial sides the field supervisor and the student encounter in the field. This also provides a chance to develop the program in the light of positives and challenges in order to upgrade the level of education outcomes of the department with its various specializations.

1.5 Procedural Definitions

- Evaluation: it is a process of collecting data through various measurement methods by which educational efficiency is measured. It is based on efficiency criteria of whose judgment certain important decisions relevant to students’ methods, or styles are taken into consideration (Al-kilani & Al-Rusan, 2014). Procedure wise, it is defined as the process of judging various sides of field training within the program of special education teachers offered by the faculty of education in princess Noura University, from the perspective of students and their supervisors.

- Field training: it is defined as that part of preparing teacher's program which deals with practical side of

teachers' training that provides them with a chance to teach through practically applying what they learned with regard to concepts, principles, and education theories (Mahmood, 2000).

In this study, it means the knowledge, theoretical frameworks, and set of practices that lead to student's acquisition of professional and practical skills needed to perform educational tasks in the classroom, Last semester (eighth level) according to the B.A study plan of special education department at princess Noura University.

- Training field students: they are the female students joining special education programs at Princess Noura University registered in the study program of the academic year 1436 – 1437 AH (eighth level).

- Supervisors: they are teaching staff members, lectures, or teaching assistants who supervise students' performance throughout all stages of study.

- University of princess Noura bint Abdulrahman: it is a government University for girls situated in Riyadh.

1.6 Limitation of the Study

The study is limited to:

- A sample of female students from the department of special education of princess Noura University together with a sample of training field supervisors who were randomly selected from those majoring in (learning difficulties, talent, intellectual excellence, and autism), academic year 1436 – 1437 A.H. Thus, generalization of results apply only to samples of this study.
- Study instrument:
The researchers designed it so as to suit the population of the study. The psychometric characteristics were verified.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

From the onset of 2003 programs for qualifying teachers of special education were requested to use these standards for the sake of evaluating their programs. (CEC, 2002). The significance of field training is reflected in the following points:

- It is a unique experience for the teacher of the future as it allows him to interact with students and school employees in real teaching situations.
- It qualified the student teacher to learn some basic teaching skills such as: (determining objectives, preparation and planning, designing teaching aids, using various teaching strategies, class and student management, and evaluation strategies).
- It prepares the student/teacher to confront an essential challenge via acquiring a deeper understanding of the teaching process and the real problems of teaching.

Training is regarded as an attempt used to change individuals' behavior as they start to use different methods in performing their works. It doesn't provide information anymore, but associated with practicing new methods to develop knowledge, skills, and capabilities. Some see that training, as a sub-system of the basic one in sustained education, includes all individuals' activities in school that contribute to incessant professional development. In the

field of special education training is more important for the sustainability of the job in light of analyzing the training system as follows:

1. Inputs include mentality training, objectives, material on human resources, planning and the targeted for training.
2. Operations: these include: specifying educational needs, implementation, and follow up
3. Outcomes: they include: training evaluation, determining the level of performance to be measured, achieving the set goals and those of the society (Oudi, 2009).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

After reading a lot of studies which discussed the issue of field training, the researcher would hereby list down the most important of them:

The study of (Qatanani, 2012) aimed to evaluate the role field training and academic supervision play in special education teaching at Al-Balqa university from the perspective of female students. The results showed that the evaluation of trainees for the benefit they gained from training was medium in general; while the highest rating was for the issue of communication with teachers and other specialists in school. Tasks of management origin ranked high medium which implies that the supervisor always performs his duties.

The study of (Al-Bassam, 2012) aimed to identify the most prominent academic, managerial, and organizational obstacles from the perspective of female students and supervisors. It also aimed to unveil the differences in the students' attitudes regarding those issues relevant to the type of kindergarten in accordance with study level. The sample of the study comprised (26) supervisors and (268) female students of the training field from the department of education and kindergarten at King Saud University in the City of Riyadh.

The results showed that both supervisors and students agree that students encounter difficulty in combining field training and course study throughout the semester. The results also showed: that some kindergartens didn't take into consideration the financial situation of students, absence of teaching aids in these kindergartens, and a striking discrepancy between the evaluation of supervisors for the trainees.

The study of (Al-Qamsh and Al-Kharabsheh, 2009), which aimed at evaluating field training for diploma students of special education at Jordanian community colleges from the perspective of trainees and teachers, indicated that it highly influenced social interaction and increased the ability of trainees to solve out their problems. The results also showed that cooperative teachers discovered that field training contributed to the development of study programs of special education diplomas.

The study of (Waleign & Fantabun, 2006) investigated the problems training class teachers encounter in field applications implemented in their senior year. It also suggested some recommendation which might help to improve the application in Ethiopia. The study sample consisted of (285) students from different specializations in addition to (7) supervisors of academic staff in charge of training at Jimma University. The data were collected from students' responses in the questionnaire and from the direct interview. The results showed that the program was suitably

implemented, but the shortage of the necessary facilities and services were the most serious problems that students encountered throughout the period of practice. Hayes (2002) conducted a survey field study to evaluate a program for preparing teachers to know whether participants (university instructors, students, trainees, cooperative teachers, and school principals) achieve the set goals. Survey results showed that all participating groups agreed that the program achieved the declared objectives as they were all put into effect and proved beneficial in developing students as teachers.

2.1 Commentary on Previous Studies

Some past studies like that of Hindi (2006) tackled problems field training faces from the perspective of the students themselves. Others tackled problems students of field training encounter from the perspective of students and supervisors such as those of Albassam (2012); Al-Qumsh and Al-Kharabshed (2009); Walelign & Fantabun (2006). The present study is distinguished for focusing on female students as a sample in addition to being the first in the new department besides discussing detailed issues related to field training. In its evaluation, it tackled syllabus of special training programs from the perspective of students and supervisors. It also tackled the dimensions of field challenges embodied in administration and organization that trainees encounter in the field.

III. METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

The current study aimed to identify field challenges that students encounter from the perspective of students and their supervisors through this descriptive-analytical study. What follows is study methodology, study population, study instrument for collecting data, procedures of application, in addition to statistical methods used.

3.1 Study Methodology

The researchers used the descriptive-analytical method based on study phenomenon in a real situation, describing it qualitatively and quantitatively.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population comprises (350) female students (eighth level) majoring in special education together with (36) supervisors in-field training at princess Noura university 1436 – 1437 A.H.

3.3 Sample of the Study

The sample of this study comprises (141) students majoring in learning difficulties and autism in the department of special education at Noura University. The sample was randomly selected. Table (1) illustrates the distribution of sample members.

Table 1: Illustrates the Study Sample Distribution (Female Students, Supervisors)

No.	Sample	Specialization	Number	Percentage
1	Female Students	Learning difficulties	52	%36.9
		Autism	72	%51.1
		Talent and mental excellence	17	%12.1
		Total	141	%100
2	Field training supervisors	Learning difficulties	8	%40
		Autism	12	%60
		Total	20	100

3.4 Instrument of the Study

The researchers prepared a questionnaire for collecting data from reviewing the relevant literature. The questionnaire, in its final shape, comprised the following:

First part: Comprises preliminary data on the study sample.

Second part: comprises items of the questionnaire.

Item gradation of the second part of the questionnaire was graded according to the five-scale system as follows:

- No. (5) indicates “strongly agree” illustrated through arithmetic means (4.20 – 5)
- No. (4) indicates “agree” illustrated through arithmetic means (3.39 – 4.19)
- No. (3) indicates “neutral” illustrated through arithmetic means (2.58 – 3.38)
- No. (2) indicates “disagree” illustrated through arithmetic means (1.77 – 2.57)
- No. (1) indicates “strongly disagree” illustrated through arithmetic means (1 – 1.76)

The following are the procedures the researchers adopted to verify the validity and reliability of items of the questionnaire which were statistically prepared.

3.4.1 Procedures of Verifying Reliability

The researchers presented the questionnaire in its preliminary form to a panel of judges and specialists in Saudi Universities in addition to those of concern so as to take their opinion on items of the questionnaire regarding clarity and language corrections. Any modifications they deem necessary will be taken into consideration.

The researchers collected the suggestions of judges with regard to rewording of some items, deletion of irrelevant ones, modifying some, and deleting others. Afterward, the questionnaire was applied to a pioneering sample comprising (20) members of the study population to statistically verify the validity and reliability of the instrument of the study.

3.4.2 Verifying Reliability of Questionnaire Items

To verify internal uniformity, the researchers calculated Pearson’s correlation coefficient between item grade and total. It was found that the values of correlation coefficients of questionnaire items ranged between (0.75 – 0.96). All values of correlation coefficients were statistically significant at the function level ($\alpha = 0.05$), which indicates acceptable reliability of questionnaire items.

3.4.3 Validity Verification Procedures

The researchers calculated the study validity coefficient using Cronbach alpha. The value of validity of Cronbach alpha for the whole instrument was (0.96). Thus, the study instrument enjoys a high level of validity which makes it reliable for the dimensions it includes to obtain accurate results.

3.4.4 Data Collection

After finalizing the questionnaire and after statistically verifying procedures of reliability and validity, the

researchers applied it to a sample of female students comprising (141) students and (20) supervisors.

The data were exported to computer memory, and SPSS was used for necessary statistical analysis for answers of the study.

3.5 Statistical Processing

The researcher exported the data to SPSS program in preparation for statistical analysis using the following statistical processors:

- Pearson correlation coefficient to calculate the reliability of the internal uniformity of the study tool.
- Validity coefficient of Cronbach alpha to calculate the validity coefficient of the study.
- Using repetitions and arithmetic means to calculate answers of sample members to questionnaire items of repetitions and means.
- One way ANOVA was used regarding the following variables: students' specializations (learning difficulties, autism, talent, and intellectual excellence)

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In answering the first question: to what extent did female students apply teaching methods used in special education programs to field training situations?

Here the computational methods and standard deviations for each element are calculated as follows

The results also showed that field training presented an opportunity for students to apply education principles they studied in theoretical courses. In addition, the role of the supervisors was positive. These results agree with that of Qatanani (2012), regarding the role of the supervisor. The result of item I have appropriate methods to evaluate students' performance very well. and was also high as item repetition of previous items rated "high" while the mean of item In preparing my plan of education program, I resort to a teacher's directory for special education ranked high (3.6); item Teaching methods I need avail in the center (school) lower than medium in which the mean ranked (2.7) neutral. This is the lowest among dimensions. The result agrees with that of Walelign & Fantabun, (2006).

Results of supervisors' answers indicated that presents the supervisors' answers to these questions. After calculating means, the researchers found out that the most frequently repeated items were linked to the methods item: "Supervision helps me create new teaching methods in presenting theoretical programs", which students couldn't perfect. The mean scored (4.45) "strongly agree" followed by item: "Field training makes me feel the need for self-development in my specialization", which scored (4.3); item " I present teaching demonstration to students to benefit from the application" ranked almost the same (4.3). Items linked to motivation and students' checking academic resources ranked medium (4.2); items related to creating new methods, and caring for students rated high with a mean (4.1). As for item no. "Field training helps me determine methods and equipment which the student needs for her specialization" it rated "high" at (3.4). As for item "Availability of teaching aids in number and quality at schools help students in the job assigned for them" related to shortage of teaching methods rated (2.8) "neutral" which indicates that students were neutral in answering this question.

-In answering the second question, "To what extent did the students benefit from the theoretical knowledge that they learned through training?" The computational methods and standard deviations for each element are calculated as follows.

Regarding students' responses regarding the dimension of benefiting from theoretical knowledge studied through training, from their perspective

The results indicated that the item that was most frequently repeated from the perspective of students was item: "I have the ability to benefit from technological means to implement classes", Whose means rated "high" (4.3); item: "Field training supervisors follow up or plan preparation, implementation, and constant evaluation" Also rated "high" (4.2); All items relevant to this dimension ranked "medium" as the means rated (3.6 – 3.9) which is considered "high." These items in their order revealed the gap between the theoretical and practical status, item: "There is a gap between theory and practice, rated (3.9). Item: "I have the suitable teaching skills to deal with difficult, unexpected situations in teaching" rated "medium" (3.8), This result agrees with that of Hayes (2002).

With regard to the students' answers to the question regarding the extent to which they benefited from the theoretical knowledge that they obtained during field training, the results indicated that the most frequent repetition was related to helping students throughout field training period and supervisors' attempt to help students convey knowledge well. The mean of the two items was (4.3). The item of inadequacy of hours of training rated third with a mean of (4.2).

The mean of items pertaining supervisors' contentment with assigning training to them ranked (4.0). the supervisors' opinion related to points of weakness in-field training with regard to courses rated "high" with a mean of (4.0); the item related to the number of knowledge students have in their specialization the supervisors' answers rated "medium" with a mean of (3.9), item of education facilities rated "medium" with a mean (3.8); item on developing supervisors skill also rated "medium" with a mean (3.7); item pertaining students' having suitable strategies was the lowest as the mean was (3.4).

-Regarding answers to the third question:

"What are the major field challenges trainees encounter through training, from the perspective of students and supervisors?"

Arithmetic means and standard deviations were calculated for each item

After calculating arithmetic means of the items related to field challenges, the results were as follows:

Items: "There are clear objective principles for the final evaluation" high with a mean of (4.4); item: "Experiences I practice during field training are new and good" rated "very good" with a mean of (4.1); the answer to final evaluation was "very high" with a mean of (4.0); answers to item: "Field training supervisors are equipped with an adequate experience that facilitates many issues for us" This result agrees with the result of Al-Bassam (2012).

-With regard to distance the dimension of administration and structure challenges which trainees encounter through a training period, from their perspective, shows that the most serious challenge facing students was transportation which rated "Low" with a mean of (1.6); then follows the item of meetings which rated "medium"

with a mean (2.5); then the item of extra load which rated medium and mean (2-7); extra load given to students by administration item which rated “medium” and a mean (2.9). The fifth challenge for students was discrepancy in evaluations, item (9), which rated “high” with a mean (3, 2). As for the item of distribution , it rated “high” with a mean (3.6).

The item of cooperation between students and supervisors (6) rated “very high” with a mean (4.0); other items that rated “high” are with a mean (4,1); the positive relation item (2) rated “high” with a mean (4.2), then the item of periodic meetings item which rated “very high” with a mean (4.2). As for support for students item , it rated very high with a mean of (4.2). Finally, the nature of relation between students and supervisors, rated high with a mean (4.5).

-With regard to distance the reveals field challenges trainees face through training, from the perspective of supervisors.

shows the foremost among field academic challenges that supervisors encounter and affect the teaching process (exams, preparation, and correction). was (4.4). Such a result dictates that supervisors shouldn't be given many courses to teach so as to save more time for supervision. As for item conflict between trainer's instructions and those of cooperative teachers, the mean was (4.2). This might result from absence of periodic meetings.

Item regarding educational methods, the mean was (2.4), “medium.” Item regarding behavioral skills, the means was (2.6) which implies that it is missing. The mean of supervisors' evaluation of item about counting courses for trainees was (2.8)., regarding preparing students academically, rated “high” with a mean (3.5) reflecting suitability of theoretical courses for field training, regarding supervisor's criteria of evaluation, rated “high” with a mean (3.7).

Supervisors response to item (3) regarding having sufficient time to visit trainees; the results were “high” with a mean (3.8). Regarding , on supervisor's schedule, rated “high” with a mean of (4.4). Regarding , pertaining feedback, rated “very high” with a mean (4.4) reflecting the role of supervisors.

-Regarding the dimension presents the dimension of academic and administration structural challenges that trainees encounter, from their perspective, After calculating means relevant to the dimension of academic, administrative and organizational challenges, the researchers found out that the foremost among the challenges was the sufficient number of centers, item regarding, to number of students. Whose mean was (2.3) which indicates that students suffer from this.

This item correlates with , regarding search for centers, whose mean was (4.6). As for regarding transportation, it ranked “very high” with a mean of (4.3). regarding , introducing students positively to administration, the mean was (2.9) due to inattention showed by supervisor. regarding, motivations, ranked “very high” with a mean of (4.4). The last is related to, regarding meetings at the end of every semester, ranked “very high” with a mean (4.1).

-In answering question four: are there differences with statistical significance between branches of specialization (learning difficulties, talent, intellectual excellence, and autism) at the stage of training with special education programs at Princess Noura University?

One-way ANOVA was used for analysis, as seen in table (2).

Table 2: Results of ANOVA Analysis Regarding Study Dimensions

Fields	Variance source	Square total	Degree of freedom	Square mean	(F) value	Statistical significance
Active teaching dimension	Between groups	,141	2	,070	,323	,725
	In-groups	25,694	118	,218		
	Total	25,834	120			
Developing cognitive skills correlating them to educational application	Between groups	,047	2	,023	,103	,902
	In-groups	26,944	118	8,228		
	Total	26,991	120			
Academic field problems	Between groups	1,284	2	,641	4,225	,017*
	In-groups	17,911	118	,152		
	Total	19,193	120			
Administrative and organizational problems	Between groups	,160	2	,080	,385	,681
	In-groups	24,601	118	,208		
	Total	24,762	120			

Table (2) reveals that there are differences with statistical significance

($\alpha = 0.05$) in the dimension of field academic problems.

Results in table (2) show that:

- There were no differences with statistical significance at the function level ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the dimension of active teaching attributed to fields of specialization (learning difficulties, intellectual talent and excellence, and autism) in the field of training of special education programs at Princess Noura University. (F) value was (0.323) at the level (0.725) which is functionally insignificant ($\alpha = 0.05$)
- There were no differences with statistical significance at the function level ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the dimension of developing cognitive skills correlated to educational applications attributed to fields of specialization (learning difficulties...etc.) at the field training stage of the special education program at princess Noura University. (F) Value was (0.323) at the function level (0.725) which is statistically insignificant ($\alpha = 0.05$).
- There were differences with statistical significance at the function level ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the dimension of field academic training attributed to fields of specialization (learning difficulties ...etc.) at the stage of field training at princess Noura University. (F) Value was (0.323) at the function level (0.725) which is

functionally insignificant ($\alpha = 0.05$). Such results agree with the results of Qatanani, (2012); Al-Bassan (2012), and Hindi (2006).

- There were no differences with statistical significance at the function level ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the dimension of administration and organizational problems attributed to fields of specialization (learning difficulties...etc.) at the field training stage at Princess Noura University. (T) value was (0.385) at the function level (0.681)

Table 3: Dimensional Comparisons Relevant to Field Academic Problems

Student specialization	Mean	Exist	Learning difficulties	Talent and creativity
Autism	3.54	-	***	
Learning difficulties	3.70		-	***
Talent and Creativity	3.41			-

- which is functionally insignificant ($\alpha = 0.05$).

***: Means statistically significant at the function level ($\alpha=0.05$)

Results in the previous table show that:

- There is a difference between autism specialization and learning difficulties in favor of learning for the arithmetic mean was higher.
- There is a difference between specialization of learning difficulties and that of talent and creativity in favor of learning difficulties for the mean was higher

The researchers believe that specialization of learning difficulties is among the most attracting to students in the department. Such specialization is available in state universities in Riyadh, specifically in (King Saud and Imam Universities) which makes finding cooperative schools ready to send trainees difficult as such schools are far from students' homes as stated in this study.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of what the study reached, the researchers recommend the following:

- Supervisors in charge of training shouldn't be given any courses to teach during the semester of field training.
- Cooperating with some state schools and private centers to train students as such cooperation will financially and morally be of help for school centers that be provided with propitious teaching aids and workshops which will encourage them to better interact with trainees.
- Assign means of transportation for students and field training supervisors.

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