University of Alberta

Student Teachers' Experiences in Special Schools in China

by

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Abstract

This study investigated Chinese student teachers' experiences as physical education teachers in special schools for individuals with intellectual impairments. The research approach was interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with seven student teachers who completed an internship in a special school in China during the past three years, their weekly journals, and the researcher's reflective notes. Situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) provided the conceptual framework. Three themes emerged from the analysis: I can teach PE in special schools, different but meaningful, and it could be better. Participants initially encountered multitudinous difficulties but eventually felt capable as teachers in special schools. They learned from the teaching practice and interactions with others in the situated context. They perceived physical education in special schools to be different in many aspects but still valued their internship as a meaningful experience.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Personal Background

My interest in adapted physical activity began with my experiences working with individuals with intellectual impairments. While I was an undergraduate student at Beijing Sport University (BSU), I received an opportunity from my undergraduate advisor to complete an internship in a special school for students with intellectual impairments. In China, special schools offer students with impairments an option for compulsory education that is separate from that offered in general schools. Parents of students with impairments in China tend to prefer special schools for their children, due to their location in segregated or self-contained facilities and the presence of the experienced teachers who work there. Special schools offer more educational opportunities than general schools for students with severe developmental impairments, including students with intellectual impairments, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, autism, and other multiple impairments. Also while I was a BSU student, I worked as a volunteer in the Special Olympics tennis program located at the university on the weekends. Special Olympics programs provide students with intellectual impairments opportunities to participate in physical activities and in China they are usually set up in the universities where suitable sport facilities and other resources can be found.

During my internship at the special school, I worked as part of a team that was comprised of four members, including me and three physical education major students from BSU. My own undergraduate degree specialization was in

the area of sports rehabilitation, which is different from physical education. At the special school, I worked more like a member of the support staff while the other members of my group were practicing to be physical education teachers. My role not only provided me with opportunities to work with students with severe impairments, but it also enabled me to observe my peers (the BSU physical education students) during their teaching practice.

I can still remember the first time we stood in front of twenty students at the special school, and how perplexed we were. We felt incapable at the beginning because we could not engage the students; we could not catch their attention and the students just did whatever they wanted during our physical education lessons. A female member from our team tried to communicate with students in a manner similar to the way she would speak to children in kindergarten, even though they were 13 to 18 years old. This succeeded only to arouse dislike from the students. The student teacher cried after that class. Nevertheless, we encouraged each other, asked for advice from the special school teachers, tried our best to get to know the students better, and worked hard to set up better physical education lessons. Gradually the lessons improved. We found that our students could do more activities than we had assumed and performed those activities better than we had expected. We changed our teaching plans to make them more challenging and appealing to students' interests and abilities. It was not just student teachers' teaching skills that changed during the internship, but my perceptions of teaching students with intellectual impairments also changed and I valued the experiences in the special school. My experiences

in the Special Olympics program also contributed to my changed perceptions of individuals with intellectual impairments.

As a result of my experiences in the special school and with the Special Olympics, I wanted to conduct research that could make a contribution to adapted physical education and Special Olympics programs in China. Initially, I planned to focus my thesis research on the experiences of Special Olympics athletes and their partners during Special Olympics programs. However, when I returned to China in July 2012 and met with my former (undergraduate) advisor to begin arrangements to recruit BSU students who were Special Olympics volunteers (as I had been) for my research, I learned that significant changes had occurred in the delivery of the Special Olympics programs in China. The changes were implemented when a new administrator was named to Special Olympics China, which resulted in the cancellation or suspension of Special Olympics programs. As a result, my intended research idea became impossible to pursue as there was no participant pool from which to recruit participants. During the meeting with my former advisor, she recommended that I still focus my research on something I was familiar with. This is what I did; I decided to study the experiences of university physical education students during their internships in special schools. This research idea originated from my own experiences and observations during my internship in a special school. I wanted to learn about others' experiences as well; I wanted to hear the voices of other interns to understand how the internship experience impacted them.

Background and Study Significance

Inclusion of Individuals with Intellectual Impairments in China.

Inclusion is a current practice in the delivery of education and physical education in many countries (Qi & Ha, 2012). "Inclusive education is an ongoing process aimed at offering quality education for all, while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities" (UNESCO, 2008, p. 18). Ideally, inclusion involves teaching all students with and without impairments in age-appropriate classrooms at their local schools, with the support of supplementary aids and services (Block, 2000). Some people have questioned the practice of inclusion, even asking physical educators "did we jump on the wrong bandwagon?" (Block, 1999, p. 36). Although, the practice of inclusion has met many difficulties, the movement to inclusion in education and physical education has continued to grow (Qi & Ha, 2012).

The population of individuals with intellectual impairments (including those with multiple disabilities) in China was about 9.88 million in 2006 (Wu, Wong, Hernandez, & Zhao, 2010). This is a significant number of people whose life quality should receive ongoing attention. In order to keep pace with the global movement toward inclusion, the Chinese government has mandated many policies and laws supporting inclusive education. One of these is *Learning in a Regular Classroom* (Xiao, 2005). Learning in the regular classroom (LRC) means "receiving special education in general education classrooms", and it is

regarded as a practical way to implement inclusion in China (Yu, Su, & Liu, 2011, p. 356).

LRC has developed and propagated extensively in China. At present, it is the main form of implementation to universalize compulsory education among children with impairments. Students with impairments, therefore, can enjoy the same right to receive an education as those without impairments. However, administrators and professionals are not in complete agreement on the definition and implementation of LRC, and there are no relevant laws and statutes for special education established to clarify the standardization of LRC (Deng & Zhu, 2007). LRC is not an idea that germinated in China but rather is a product of the global inclusive movement. Inclusive education in Western countries inspired the development of LRC in China, and at the same time provides a point of reference for LRC. Compared with the implementation of inclusive education in Western countries, LRC is in the primary stage of its development; LRC is underdeveloped relative to inclusive education, which is an educational philosophy with systematic targets and methods (Deng & Zhu, 2007). Inclusive education in the Western developed countries has progressed to a level where great importance is placed on the rights of individuals with impairments to achieve equitable opportunities in education and the choice to attend and participate in their neighborhood schools (Deng & Zhu, 2007). Further, there is recognition of the importance of developing both academic and social skills and abilities in individual with special needs (Deng & Zhu, 2007). In contrast, more attention and efforts are focused on strengthening the book-learning of students

with impairments in China in order to improve their academic performance. The development of social adaptation abilities and life skills in individuals with impairments are overlooked (Deng & Zhu, 2007).

In China it has been recommended that more effort should be put into educating the general public about impairments, into acknowledging the rights of children with impairments, and consequently creating a social cultural atmosphere of equity and harmony (Deng & Zhu, 2007). In this way, individuals with impairments in China may experience more dignity and respect in general schools and in society generally. While this would appear to promote the development of inclusion in China, it should be noted that at present LRC is only provided for those individuals with mild impairments because they are most able to fit into the general school environment. Students with moderate or severe intellectual impairments continue to attend special schools or do not even attend school at all (Deng, Poon-Mcbrayer, & Farnsworth, 2001). While in theory children in China with intellectual impairments (II) may receive education in special education (i.e., segregated) schools, in special classes at general schools, and in general classes at general schools, research findings by Wu et al. (2010) show an alarming pattern. In particular, Wu et al. found that only 5.5% of individuals with II studied at general schools, 1.5% accepted places in special classrooms at general schools, 3.4% chose to study at special schools (which tend to be located in the cities only) and 4.0% accepted other education options (Wu et al., 2010). Therefore, most children with II do not receive any support and education at all, and the situation is even more severe in rural than urban

areas (Wu et al., 2010). It is evident that special education in China is still unable to meet the need for education of children with II.

There is a great distance between the ideal and the reality of inclusion in China. Ideally, individuals with impairments could be fully included into general schools and society could offer extensive support, but in practice this goal is hard to realize (Deng & Guo, 2007). For instance, Deng and Guo (2007) interviewed rural and urban education administrators who unanimously indicated support for the LRC model, but also believed the current practice of placing students with impairments in special schools is preferable right now because special schools are equipped with better resources, professionals, and instructional techniques suited to students with different kinds of impairments. In a subsequent study involving teachers, Deng (2008) reported that both rural and urban teachers held more preferable attitudes toward segregated special education (rather than inclusive) settings, and that urban teachers were more negative toward the notion of inclusion than rural teachers. The urban teachers were more likely to recommend that students with impairments choose segregated special education if conditions permit, even though urban schools were generally better resourced. Deng suggested that the more negative attitudes of urban teachers toward inclusion (compared to rural teachers) is probably due to three reasons: (a) there are more special schools in urban than rural areas; (b) it is difficult or perhaps impossible for rural children with impairments to attend urban special education schools due to financial and transportation barriers, therefore receiving education in nearby general schools is more practical, and (c)

urban school teachers are subject to more pressure related to enhancing students' academic achievements for college entrance rates than teachers at rural school. Not surprisingly, there are many special schools in urban cities like Beijing, and these schools accept a significant number of students with impairments in China.

It is interesting to examine inclusion in China in relation to Polloway, Smith, Patton and Smith's (1996) historical look at the treatment and delivery of services to individuals with *mental retardation* (i.e., intellectual impairments) and developmental disabilities in the twentieth century. Polloway et al. described a progression in service delivery that is characterized by four distinct paradigms. First, a facility-based paradigm was evident in that most programing for persons with II occurred in institutions, residential programs and special schools. In other words, individuals with II were isolated from the rest of society. For physical education in particular, the facility-based paradigm emphasized physical rehabilitation (Reid, 2003). Second, a services-based paradigm emerged that emphasized the provision of special services to individuals with impairments in preparation for integration into society (Polloway et al., 1996). Special physical education demerged during this period (Reid, 2003). Next a supports-based paradigm emerged (Polloway et al., 1996). This shift enabled persons with impairments to receive services in mainstream environments through the provision of supports as needed, and marked the beginning of inclusion in education. Sport for persons with impairments became more prominent and programming was individualized (Reid, 2003). The fourth and final service delivery paradigm described by Polloway et al. (1996) is that of empowerment

and self-determination. Individuals with II became increasingly able to make their own decisions rather than relying on experts; persons with impairments were able to participate in self-determined physical activities (Polloway et al., 1996; Reid, 2003). At present, even though the Chinese government is attempting to support the inclusion of persons with impairments, studies suggest that the conditions individuals with II encounter are more consistent with the facility-based and services-based paradigms (Deng et al., 2001; Wang & Michaels, 2009; Wu et al., 2010).

The success of inclusion is greatly dependent on factors such as the availability of support, personnel, training, and positive attitudes (O'Brien, Kudláček & Hove, 2009). In addition, findings of a recent review by Block & Obrusnikova (2007) indicate that inclusion in physical education can effectively be achieved for the child with impairment without negatively affecting peers without impairments. However, individuals with II do not (and cannot at present) receive appropriate support and adequate service for inclusion in China (Wu et al., 2010).

Negative attitudes from the public, teachers, parents and peers without impairments towards students with II continue to hinder the development of inclusion in China. According to Scior (2011), people usually present greater social distance from individuals with II than individuals with physical impairments. Only persons with severe mental health problems in particular tend to experience more stigmatizing behaviors from the general public. Other research indicates that attitudes toward people with impairments seem to differ

according to culture. Chinese college students' attitudes toward people with impairments are generally negative (Chan, Lee, Yuen, & Chan, 2002). More recently, a cross-cultural study by Scior, Kan, Mcloughlin and Sheridan (2010) revealed that Chinese lay people (i.e., members of the general public) in Hong Kong showed more negative attitudes towards, and higher exclusion of, individuals with II relative to a comparison group from the United Kingdom. The Chinese participants in this study were more in favor of sheltering individuals with II in segregated settings than people in Britain, and they expressed intentions to treat people with II as different from themselves (Scior et al., 2010).

Hampton and Xiao (2009) have indicated that negative perceptions of Chinese people toward individuals with II are probably the result of certain traditional Chinese values, such as Social Traditionalism (traditional beliefs) and Cultural Inwardness (cultural superiority/intolerance). For example, traditional views of persons with II as different and incapable of learning may be passed from parents to children, as well as beliefs that individuals who interact with and become close to people who are different than themselves may bring about changes in themselves such that they become more like the people they have become close to. Chan et al. (2002, p. 326) state that "disability is perceived as a burden and as undesirable" in Asian families, although lack of public education or legislation guaranteeing equal rights for persons with impairments also contributes to negative attitudes in China. If Chinese people were more knowledgeable about individuals with II, other traditional Chinese values such as

Cultivation of Virtues may facilitate more positive perspectives towards people with II. As discussed by Hampton and Xiao (2009), Cultivation of Virtues includes virtues of benevolence, sense of righteousness or justice, honesty and trustworthiness, filial piety, and self-cultivation.

In relation to inclusion in schools, research indicates that Chinese students without impairments and their parents hold negative perspectives about including students with II in the same class (Niu, Liu & Tian, 2005; Siperstein, Parker, Norins & Widaman, 2011). For example, Niu et al. (2005) found less favorable attitudes towards including students with impairments in a general classroom among parents of students without impairments compared to parents of children with impairments. Moreover, attitudes of parents of students without impairments were more negative about including individuals with II in the general classrooms than students with other types of impairments. Students without impairments also possess negative perceptions about their peers with intellectual impairments. For instance, Siperstein et al. (2011) reported that youth in China regarded inclusion as having both positive and negative effects on them personally, but in particular the youth did not want to work with a peer with II on academic tasks. Youth without impairments believed that including students with II in the same class would have a negative influence on their learning, because students with II make noises or engage in other disturbing behaviors that could negatively affect their ability to concentrate. At the same time, the youth without impairments valued inclusion as a way to facilitate the development of a more caring attitude and increased understanding of the

acceptability of differences. It seems, therefore, that many students without impairments in China are willing to interact socially with individuals with II and they support including students with II in non-academic classes (Siperstein et al., 2011). Hence, including students with II in physical education classes could be an opportunity to promote inclusion in China. Unfortunately there are few opportunities to include students with II in general physical education classes since there are few students with II included in general schools (Wu et al., 2010).

Teachers are an important influence on the success of inclusion, but research indicates that their attitudes are not always favorable and they may not feel competent about teaching students with impairments. For example, Block and Obrusnikova (2007) reported that general physical education teachers in the USA have negative perceptions about inclusion. Moreover, teachers' attitudes about teaching students with impairments differ according to the type of impairment a student has. O'Brien et al. (2009) found that physical education teachers have positive attitudes towards teaching students with mild II, but negative attitudes toward teaching students with emotional disturbances and severe disabilities. A literature search revealed that there was no published research about physical education teachers' perspectives towards teaching students with impairments in China. However, generally Chinese teachers believe that special schools are more desirable settings for students with impairments, rather than including them into general schools (Deng, 2008).

There remains a long way for Mainland China to realize inclusive physical education within the current structure of instructional placements; large numbers

of students with special needs who are able to access education are still educated at special schools (Deng et al., 2001; Wu et al., 2010). However, it may be preferable to provide educational services to at least some students with special needs at special schools, if the alternative is providing education in general educational settings without any supports. Mainland China is not well prepared for inclusive physical education as there are many challenges (Li & Sam, 2011). Both the social isolation of people with impairments (Tsai & Fung, 2009) and negative attitudes of teachers (Li & Sam, 2011) are barriers to inclusive physical education in China. Special schools remain indispensable settings for students with severe disabilities, and adapted physical education exists within these settings. However, few studies in the area of adapted physical education in China can be found.

Teachers' experiences and teacher education. Physical education (PE) teachers can play an important role in cultivating a positive and supportive physical activity environment within schools, and in designing suitable content to meet the capabilities and needs of individual students (Sit, McKenzie, Lian, & McManus, 2008). In a review of the research into inclusive PE from 1995 to 2005, Block and Obrusnikova (2007) reported that general physical education teachers tend to possess negative attitudes toward inclusion. Reasons for these negative attitudes include PE teachers' perceptions of inadequate training, and a lack of both experience and knowledge about how to successfully teach students with impairments (see Block & Obrusnikova, 2007). With the accumulation of evidence about teachers' perceptions of incompetence toward teaching students

with impairments, researchers began to focus on the attitudes of pre-service teachers and on teacher preparation (Block & Obrusnikova, 2007). It should also be noted that Block and Obrusnikova specifically mentioned that qualitative studies, which can provide detailed information about attitudes and how to change attitudes, are sorely missing from the literature.

Student teachers are a special group in the education system. They experience an important transition from being education students to becoming professional teachers, and student teaching is a key part of teacher preparation. According to Connolly (1994), the study of teaching and teacher preparation should begin with people and their stories. This suggests to me that if we want to know more about teaching and teacher preparation, we should initially focus on student teachers and their stories. Student teachers and their experiences should be paid more attention, and more qualitative research should be undertaken to hear their stories.

Teaching and teacher preparation cannot focus only on theoretical teaching knowledge or coursework; teaching experiences should also be valued. Teacher education should incorporate sufficient experiential learning (Dewey, 1938). Pre-service fieldwork, such as the internship, can give education students an opportunity to put theoretical knowledge gained in the classroom into practice. Pre-service fieldwork includes practice experiences in which relationships can be built and difference can be experienced in a transforming way (Connolly, 1994). These experiences, coupled with adapted physical education coursework, have

been encouraged and incorporated in physical education teacher education programs in United States (Hodge & Jansma, 1999; Hodge et al., 2003).

The value of student teaching experiences in which pre-service teachers work directly with students who have impairments has been recognized by researchers and teacher preparation personnel, as well as policy makers (Laarhoven, Munk, Lynch, Bosma, & Rouse, 2007). Student teaching can increase student teachers' self-efficacy beliefs, including efficacy for teaching students with impairments (Jobling & Moni, 2004; King-Sears, Carran, Dammann, & Arter, 2012; Recchia & Puig, 2011).

Jobling and Moni (2004) of Australia reported their findings from interviews with pre-service secondary education teachers' about their experiences during a post-school literacy program for young adults with II. The results indicated that the authentic practicum experience in which pre-service teachers had opportunity to interact with adults with II during meaningful activities developed their knowledge, understanding and skills to teach them. Although this study focused on a literacy program for young adults with II, it has implications for the current study because it reveals changes in pre-service teachers that occurred as a result of the experience of their teaching practicum. Prior to the practicum, the pre-service teachers indicated that they felt unprepared due to their lack of experience, knowledge and understanding of teaching students with impairments. However, they acquired relevant knowledge and experience about how to work with students with diverse needs, and developed teaching skills through participation in the authentic teaching and

learning context. The results showed that pre-service teachers gained specific knowledge about the abilities of individuals with II. The challenges they encountered allowed them to improve their practical skills and gain confidence in their ability to teach students with special needs (Jobling & Moni, 2004). Through their interactions with the students with II during teaching and learning activities, pre-service teachers acquired deeper understanding of what their students could learn, rather than focusing on the limitations in their students' capabilities (Jobling & Moni, 2004).

Two qualitative studies by Connolly (1994) and Hodge, Tannehell and Kluge (2003) explored the meaning of inclusive practicum experiences to PE students enrolled in introductory of adapted physical education courses. Student self-reflective journals were used to collect participants' data in both studies as a medium for students' self-reflections; participants used these journals to reflect upon and share their thoughts, feelings, impressions, beliefs, and attitudes about working with students with and without impairments in PE (Hodge et al., 2003). In addition, journaling enabled the students to be reflective about their practice, their experiences, and themselves as practitioners (Connolly, 1994). The results of both studies showed that participants experienced transformation of sorts from their initial feelings of anxiety and unease about the unknown while working with a diversity of youth with and without impairments. Authors of both studies reported positive changes in their participants' attitudes toward teaching students with impairments. Moreover, students in Hodge et al.'s (2003) study reported improvements in their confidence and ability to adapt and modify activities for

students with different needs, interests, and abilities. As well, they learned how to manage and organize a successful physical education lesson to meet unexpected changes. In addition, participants of both studies perceived their practicum experiences as rewarding and meaningful.

More recently, Recchia and Puig (2011) conducted a qualitative study of student teachers' experiences in self-contained or segregated childhood education settings. Analysis of student teachers' weekly teaching journals revealed that practicums in segregated settings can also provide value to future teachers. The authors stated that self-contained settings were different from most inclusive settings. Students in self-contained settings tend to have more severe and complex disabilities, which offered extensive opportunities to work with children with more severe impairments and to learn about and implement appropriate curricular adaptations. In addition, student teachers had easy access to an interdisciplinary team and support staff, which provided them the opportunity to learn from professionals with various skills and expertise in meeting children' learning and developmental needs. Self-contained settings support student teachers' growing understanding of assessment and terminology in the field, and special education cooperating teachers set an example to student teachers in their particular areas of expertise, especially in curricular adaptations and behavioral strategies. These distinctions positively influenced student teachers' learning of new strategies to meet the needs of students with impairments, leading to the conclusion that self-contained or segregated

classrooms "can be a rich training placement for new teachers' learning and development" (Recchia & Puig, 2011, p. 148).

It is evident that research has focused on pre-service teachers' and education students' attitudes towards inclusion (Block & Obrusnikova, 2007), as well as on teaching and teacher preparation (Connolly, 1994; Hodge & Jansma, 1999; King-Sears et al., 2012; Qi & Ha, 2012). The value of practicum experiences for teacher preparation has been recognized (Connolly, 1994; Hodge et al., 2003). Most of the research to date has relied on the use of questionnaires and students' journals to collect data about student teachers' experiences with individuals with impairments. Moreover, because journaling was done in the studies by Connolly (1994), Hodge et al. (2003) and Recchia and Puig (2011) not only for the purpose of self-reflection, but was also for the purposes of sharing with other colleagues and for assessment of practicum training experiences, it is likely that we cannot have access to student teachers' whole stories from these journals. Clandinin & Connelly (1995) presented the idea of a professional knowledge landscape which stands between theory and practice in life, and can be understood narratively in terms of sacred stories, secret stories and cover stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). The professional knowledge landscape contextualizes the relations between teachers' professional knowledge and personal practical knowledge. Teachers' professional knowledge is referred to as the "sacred story" and is comprised of the stories shared by other professionals, such as the views of school administrators, supervisors, and other colleagues; a sacred story that tells us what we should do and should not do

(Goodwin & Rossow-Kinball, 2012). However, knowledge from personal practice is one's lived stories, which sometimes are "secret stories" that teachers keep for themselves when they could be in conflict with sacred stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). In this case, teachers may share with others only their "cover stories"; cover stories are those "in which they portray themselves as experts, certain characters whose teacher stories fit within the acceptable range of the story of school being lived in the school" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996, p. 25). Though journaling is a self-reflective and useful approach, interviews can be another effective way to explore student teachers' experiences in schools. It may be that non-evaluative interviews with the student teachers can be an effective way to know about their "secret stories".

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to learn about student teachers' experiences of physical education in special schools for students with intellectual impairments in China. The study was guided by three research questions:

1. What are the experiences of student teachers who are teaching physical education in special schools?
2. How do the student teachers make sense of their practicum experiences in the special schools?
3. How do the internships in physical education in special schools contribute to student teachers' perceptions of their ability to teach students with impairments?

Investigating the context and the meaning of student teachers' participation in internships is crucial to better understand the training of student teachers, and may reveal strategies or practices around adapted physical education in China.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used to guide this research and interpretation of the data was situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Lave and Wenger emphasize that learning is a process that takes place in social practice. They use the notion of practice to reinterpret thinking and learning. A *community of practice* is a place where shaping and constituting knowledge and knowing occurs (Arnseth, 2008). To learn in the *community of practice*, therefore, is to gradually transition from being a newcomer to becoming a master, through participation. Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 98) proposed that a community is "an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge". In addition, situated learning theory emphasizes that the patterns of participation in community practice have significant influence on a newcomer's ability to build up meaning from practice. Therefore, situated learning theory extends the focus of learning in the workplace, not only to the investigation of interactions in community practice but also to consideration of the nature of participation in practice (Warhurst, 2008). Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory comes from the study and analysis of apprenticeship learning, and their work includes the analysis of how midwives, tailors, quartermasters, butchers and non-drinking alcoholics gradually learn through participation in practice.

An important and prominent aspect of situated learning is *legitimate peripheral participation* (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Legitimate peripheral participation is a term used to describe the progression of learners towards full participation in practices of the community. Legitimate peripheral participation provides newcomers and old-timers a place to talk and interact. Newcomers can learn from legitimate peripheral participation in the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). It requires that the newcomer experience the progress from periphery participation in the community (e.g., assisting the "old-timer" or supervisor teacher) towards full engagement. However, the newcomer must have legitimacy to get closer to the central work of the community and be accepted by the community. Thus, newcomers might sometimes be purposefully assigned to the peripheral participation in certain activities, but safer or less intensive tasks are allocated to the newcomers in accordance with their current capability (Hasrati, 2005). The peripheral position enables and encourages the newcomer to effectively participate in the community of practice, to contribute to the community, and to enhance their understanding and capabilities.

Wenger's (1998) work in situated learning theory emphasized the formation and re-formation of identities in communities of practice. Accordingly, he identifies four interconnected components of learning in situated learning theory: learning as practice, learning as community, learning as meaning and learning as identity. Thus, learning necessarily involves experiencing, belonging, doing and becoming (Warhurst, 2008). With respect learning as practice and community, Wenger (1998) proposed three dimensions of practice

as the property of community: mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire. These three aspects of communities of practice enhance their cohesion among themselves and promote their modification. Membership (or belonging in the community) is necessary when participating and learning in the community (Wenger, 1998). Concerning identity, learning in the community of practice can be regarded as formation and re-formation of identity during practice. Learning and identity formation are connected and inseparable (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Issues of power in relation to communities of practice have been neglected in Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger's (1998) work (Fuller, Hodkinson, Hodkinson & Unwin, 2005). However, Fuller et al. (2005) emphasized that barriers newcomers encountered in the process of learning are created or removed by those who control organizational resources and knowledge production, and this can facilitate or hinder participation in the community.

There are a number of studies that have recently used situated learning theory to elaborate new learners' participation and identity formation in specific work practices (Hodkinson and Hodkinson 2004; Reid et al. 2008; Warhurst 2006, 2008). Warhurst (2006, 2008), for example, used the lens of situated learning theory to discuss the teaching and learning experiences of the new university lecturers. He highlighted new lecturers' involvement in legitimate peripheral participation and the social meaning-making that emerged during the process of identity transformation. Warhurst (2006) indicated that the new

lecturers often learn more through peer collaboration (i.e., in social community of practice with other new lecturers) than through formal academic courses or through self-reflection (i.e., the individual learning community of practice). In the subsequent study he emphasized the interplay between the different learning communities of practice, because new lecturers participated in both social and individual learning toward full participation as seasoned academics (Warhurst, 2008).

According to Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004), secondary school teachers learned through work (practice) and participation within the workplace community. They highlighted teachers' identity changes as they progressed from legitimate peripheral participation to belonging as full participants in the teaching community of practice. Reid, Dahlgren, Petocz and Dahlgren (2008) similarly highlighted that the professional identity was formed and developed during engagement in active professional activities. The researchers in this study indicated that professional identity formation during students' learning experience would influence their manners of practice in their professional working life.

Hodge, Wright, Barraket, Scott, Melville and Richardson (2011) examined multifarious learning experiences to illustrate practice-based learning exchanges such as student placements. This study showed that all types of participants (hosts, students, academics) both teach and learn in these educative scenarios and that these scenarios play an important role in contributing to learning that occur in the "real world". According to Hodge et al. (2011),

practice-based learning exchanges offer a powerful learning experience for students. The students learn in and through situated practices in workplaces where they could also to reflect on their own positionality and identity. The exposure to multiple communities of practice was highly valued in this study, which facilitated reciprocal learning. The students introduced elements of one community of practice into another which enhanced the learning in different communities (Hodge et al., 2011).

In thinking about student teachers experiences in the context of situated learning theory, learning does not simply result from learning about valuable educational theories and knowledge through university courses. Learning is constituted from multiple sources, and is not limited to instructions from teachers or masters (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Lave and Wenger (1991) treat practice as something that is developed and changed through social relationships in the lived world. Learning emerges from our own actions in relation to those of others. We should view student teacher learning as part of the process of participation in social practice, especially social practice in the schools (Korthagen, 2010). The relationships with supervisor teachers, school colleagues, and students with intellectual impairments in special schools have an important influence on student teacher learning.

Similar to internships for senior college students in China, some universities in other countries offer work-integrated learning degrees (WIL) that require students to undertake relevant practical experience such as work placements or internships. There are a number of recent studies focusing on WIL

(Sykes & Dean, 2013; Zegwaard & Coll, 2011). In these degrees, learning occurs, according to Lave and Wenger (1991), during legitimate peripheral participation where the student as the "newcomer" works under the supervision of a practicing expert (the "old timer"). In terms of the benefits from the WIL programs, firstly students learn workplace norms through engagement in the situated context, including the use of workplace language, relevant behaviors and specific methodological techniques in the workplace (Eames & Cates, 2011). Secondly, work placements can greatly improve the career clarification for students (Dressler & Keeling, 2011) and enable students to become acculturated into a community of practice. In the meanwhile, WIL programs can enhance students' awareness of career paths (Zegwaard & Coll, 2011). In the WIL curriculum, reflection on workplace activities is regarded as an important approach to support student learning. Sykes and Dean (2013) highlighted the importance of reflection during practice and emphasized the limitations of using e-logs or reflective journals to capture reflection after the conclusion of activities. They believed that it is more appropriate to support learning by considering reflection as a practice to be completed during activities (Sykes & Dean, 2013).

Situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) was chosen as the conceptual framework for this study because the internships of the participating physical education student teachers can be viewed as a process of learning and thinking that takes place during physical education practice in a special school. The theory emphasizes the value of experience as an important

vehicle for learning (Dewey, 1938). The teaching experience in special schools can be a process of learning to be a real physical education teacher. Situated learning theory focuses on the context or "situated" place of learning as a result of interactions with others within communities of practice. The student teacher learns from practice in the situated setting – special schools–and gradually acquires necessary knowledge and skills to master teaching students with impairments. Through the lens of situated learning, student teachers' learning occurs in social relationships within the context of special schools.

Theory can be used in qualitative research in several different ways, including to frame research questions, develop the philosophical basis, justify the methodological approach, target phenomenon, provide a framework for data analysis and interpretation, and triangulate the findings (Wu & Volker, 2009). I used Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger's (1998) situated learning theory as the framework for designing my research. The theory guided the development of my interview schedule (data collection) and framed my data analysis and interpretation. In the Discussion, I compare my findings to the tenets of situated learning theory. The use of situated learning theory in this study helped me to clarify my thoughts rather than restrict my ideas. I respected and illustrated discrepancies that emerged between the research findings and theory (Wu & Volker, 2009).

Chapter 2: Method

Qualitative research begins with philosophical assumptions made by inquirers, which are constitutive of a stance toward what the nature of reality is (ontology), how the researcher knows what she or he knows (epistemology), the role of values in research (axiology), the language of the research (rhetoric), and what the process of research is (methodology) (Creswell, 2003). In this study, I stood with an ontological view that reality is subjective and multiple; it exists from different individuals' cognitions (Sparkes, 1992). I used quotations from the words of participants to provide evidence of different perspectives in this study (Creswell, 2007). Epistemologically, I tried to lessen distance from participants (Creswell, 2007) and took an initial insider position to understand their stories. At the same time I attempted to make sense of their experiences in an interpretive and outsider position (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005).

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

A qualitative, interpretative, and reflective inquiry was conducted in this study. The approach used was interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith & Osborn, 2008). IPA is designed to investigate how participants make sense of their personal and social world in detail, and particularly the meanings of particular experiences hold for participants (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Therefore, IPA is coincident to the study purpose of the meanings teaching experiences in special schools hold for student teachers.

IPA is a suitable and useful approach when the inquirer attempts to examine how individuals perceive the particular situations they are facing, especially

when engaging in the process or novelty (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Therefore, it appears to be a good fit for a study of the perceptions of student teachers regarding their experiences during an internship in special schools and first time teaching students with II.

The theoretical bases for IPA are phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Smith & Eatough, 2007). The approach is phenomenological in that it is concerned with participants' lived experiences and entails detailed examination of these experiences on their own terms (Smith, 2011). It considers the individuals' life world and their personal cognition rather than present an objective statement (Smith & Osborn, 2008). In addition, IPA emphasizes the active role of the researcher in the dynamic process of understanding the participants' personal lives closely but not entirely (Smith & Osborn, 2008). As the researcher in this study, I previously completed a similar internship as the participants and the research idea came from my personal experiences. This may help me to understand the participants' experiences more deeply.

IPA is also hermeneutical and interpretative in essence. Specifically, IPA involves a two-part hermeneutic; it requires participants to make sense of or interpret their lived experiences, and researchers to make sense of or interpret participants' interpretation of their lived experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2008). It includes both an empathic hermeneutic and a questioning hermeneutic; that is, it involves an attempt to understand the lived experience from the view of the participants but the detailed analysis requires the researcher to step back and ask curious and critical questions about the data from participants (Smith & Osborn,

2008). However, the researcher needs to balance the insider and outsider positions in the process of an IPA study. In the phenomenological insider position, the researcher learns of participants' stories in the data collection and prioritizes their viewpoints; in the interpretative outsider position, the researcher converges on making sense of their experiences and clarifying them to answer the particular research question in the process of data analysis (Reid et al., 2005).

IPA is an idiographic approach in that it usually begins with the detailed analysis of the single case instead of the aggregation of multiple cases (Smith & Osborn, 2008). A good IPA study not only enables learning about important prevailing information from examinations of all cases, but it also allows making statements about the particular participants (Smith & Eatough, 2007). IPA concentrates on analysis of each case in detail and follows with a search for both similarities and differences across the cases (Smith, 2011). The best IPA studies can balance the convergence and divergence within the sample, illustrating both shared themes in the results and pointing out how these themes represent for particular individuals (Smith, 2011).

Context

Internships are required for students in universities and colleges in China, in addition to the major courses completed during college education. Senior undergraduate students attend internships for a period of at least four months after the completion of their coursework. The internship is a process during which students transform their theoretical knowledge into practice under the supervision of advisors both at the universities and internship locations. The

location of the internship varies depending upon the major area of study. Physical education major students at BSU can choose to do their internships at a number of schools in Beijing, which includes a certain number of special schools for students with II, or in other cities The special schools have been included in the internship locations at BSU since 2010, enabling students majoring in physical education and sports rehabilitation the opportunity to work as PE teachers and health teachers in these special schools. There are a number of PE major students in BSU working as PE teachers in these special schools for four months from September to December each year. The internships are directed by a university advisor and assessed by supervisor teachers in the special schools.

Sampling and Recruitment

A purposeful sampling approach was used. This strategy is widely used in qualitative research where participants are selected according to their ability to answer the specific research questions and central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2007). Consistent with IPA, a defined group was found for which the research question was of great importance (Smith & Osborn, 2008); the participants were recruited because of their particular experiences and stories in relation to the investigated phenomenon (Reid et al., 2005). The sampling was opportunistic in that there are numerous senior undergraduate students at BSU doing internships in the special schools from September to December each year. The sampling criteria were that participants had to be current or recent (i.e., within the last two years) physical education students who were training (or had

trained) as physical education teachers in special schools for students with II for four months.

A small sample size of 3 to 6 participants is recommended for student study (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 51). A small sample enables detailed examination and interpretation of the cases to be accomplished; it allows the researcher to be engaged with each individual case in depth (Smith & Osborn, 2008). A large sample size is not recommended, particularly for a novice who may become overwhelmed in the data (Smith & Osborn, 2008) and sacrifice the quality of analysis to quantity. Five or six participants is a reasonable sample size to provide enough information to examine differences and similarities, convergence and divergence among participants (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

The participants were recruited via letters of invitation sent to student teachers who met the sampling criteria. I was in Beijing on December, 2012 and January, 2013, in time to obtain informed consent from the participants. Student teachers' participation in this study was voluntary. Initially, the professor at BSU who directed the internship introduced me to student teachers and provided me with the contact information of student teachers working in special schools in 2011 and 2012. Student teachers who participated in internships in 2011 only had already graduated, so those who were not currently located in Beijing were excluded. I telephoned the potential participants to introduce myself, provide an outline of the research plan and study rationale, and then I sent information packages by email. Each information package contained the information letter and a consent form. The information letter extended an invitation to participate

in the research, as well as a description of the research purpose, procedures, and duration of participation. The research questions and interview process were also explained. My contact information was included in the package so that student teachers who wanted to participate in this study were able to contact me directly. All information packages were written in both Chinese and English.

Participants were selected such that they came from different special schools. According to the literature reviews of inclusion in physical education by Qi and Ha (2012), more positive attitudes towards teaching students with impairments have been found in both in-service and pre-service female PE teachers when compared to male. Thus, participants in this study included both female and male student teachers, to examine gender similarities and differences in Chinese student teachers in physical education. Student teachers who could not provide at least one hour of time for an interview were eliminated from the study.

Ethical application was submitted to the University Research and Ethics Board and approved in Human Ethics Research Online system.

Participants

Seven student teachers participated in the study, including one student teacher who completed a pilot interview. There were three males and four females (see Table 1). The data collected from the student teacher who completed the pilot interview was included in the analysis because she was a rich source of information. Two of the males and two females were senior undergraduate physical education students at BSU who participated in

internships in special schools for students with II in Beijing from September to December, 2012. Two of the participants, one male and one female, were graduate students at BSU and had completed the same internships while they were senior undergraduate students in 2011. The student teacher who was interviewed for the pilot study completed her internship in a special school for four months in 2010, and she was also a graduate student at BSU when the interview was conducted. Generally the participants who completed the internship in 2012 could more easily recall their experiences in the special schools and gave relatively exhaustive descriptions in the interviews. The student teachers in 2010 and 2011 provided valuable information about the changes they underwent as a result of their internship. All participants were physical education major students when they were at BSU but devoted themselves to different specialties of sports, such as aerobics, table tennis, karate and basketball.

Table 1 Description of Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Occupation (2012)	Internship Date
Mary	Female	Masters student	2010
Kate	Female	Undergraduate student	2012
Lucy	Female	Undergraduate student	2012
Jim	Male	Undergraduate student	2012
Dan	Male	Undergraduate student	2012
Sam	Male	Masters student	2011
Amy	Female	Masters student	2011

Internship Context

Seven student teachers in this study were working as physical education teachers in six different special schools in Beijing. Among these six special

schools, five were specifically built for students with intellectual impairments. The other (where Jim was working) is a special school that included students with all types of impairments (however, Jim only taught classes for students with intellectual impairments). All the students with intellectual impairments in special schools were between 5 and 18 years of age.

All internships were four month in duration, and they ranged in frequency from three to five days per week. The internship was part of a 4-year degree in physical education and usually completed in the final year of the students' program. Students who did their internship in 2010 and 2011 (including Mary, Sam and Amy) were able to choose whether they were placed in a special school or regular school for their internship, but students in 2012 (including Kate, Lucy, Jim and Dan) were not given a choice and were assigned to the special schools.

Typically there were approximately ten students with intellectual impairments in each class, and the adult-to-student rate was ranged from approximately 1:10 to 5:10. Each physical education lesson was 35 minutes in length. Kate and Lucy were working in the same special school, but they taught individually with different supervisor teachers. Dan was the only student teacher in the special school he participated. All the other student teachers taught in groups of three or four student teachers, teaching in turn while the others worked as assistants. Most special schools were not able to offer instructional assistants, although some parents hired assistants or acted as assistants themselves (for their own children). The supervisor teachers at the special schools guided and

evaluated the teaching practice of the student teachers. In addition, teaching plans and weekly journals were required by the university to overview student teachers' working in special schools. These documents were evaluated by supervisor teachers in BSU.

Data Collection

Flexible data collection instruments can be used in IPA in order to understand the detailed experiences of participants and figure out how they make sense of their own personal lived world (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Therefore, multiple data sources were used to gather the student teachers' perspectives; the data included interview transcripts, teaching plans and weekly journals provided by the student teachers, and the reflective notes of the researcher. These different sources of data can be helpful to understand participants' experiences more comprehensively.

Interviews. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted by the author and used as the primary data collection source. Semi-structured interviewing allows a flexible dialogue between interviewers and interviewees. It contributes to rapport building and empathy, and tends to lead to richer data (Smith & Osborn, 2008). One-on-one interviews can be easily managed and enable the participants to think deeply, talk freely and be heard carefully, and also facilitate the discussion between the interviewer and interviewee (Reid et al., 2005).

A researcher has to bracket herself or himself out of the interviews, prioritize participants and hear their voices. In the process of interviews, I parked

my pre-existing concerns and anticipations, and focused on participants (Smith et al., 2009). Even in cases where I personally disagreed with what participants reported or when they talked about perspectives different from my own, I parked my thoughts and listened to the participants' voices in an attempt to understand their lived experiences.

In semi-structured interviews, the researcher is guided by, but not confined to, a set of open-ended questions. This allows the interview to progress such that both a depth and breadth of coverage is attained (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The interviews usually begin with the most general questions, with prompts to underline the discussion of interesting or important areas (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Probing interesting and important areas facilitates the discussion of participants' most important experiences (Creswell, 2007). The interview guide was reviewed and discussed by the author and more experienced researchers to refine the interview questions. For this study, the interview guide was structured around the components of situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). The complete guide can be found in the Appendix C, but sample interview questions include: *Could you tell me what you do in special schools? What do you think about your students' learning in your PE lessons? Could you tell me about your interactions with your supervisor teachers and other colleagues in the special school and in the university? How do supervisor teachers assess your work in special schools? Tell me about your interactions with the students in the special school? How do you feel about*

yourself as a PE teacher after your internship in special schools? What do you think about teaching in special schools or general schools in the future?

Initially, a pilot interview was conducted with a student teacher who completed the internship in 2010. The interview questions and procedures were further refined after the pilot study (Creswell, 2007). It also provided a good opportunity for me to practice and improve my interview skills. The pilot interview lasted for 35 minutes. The data were included in the analysis and results, due to its rich content. Following the discussion with the interviewee about the questions and procedures in the interview, the interview guide was refined and then subsequently used in the conduct of the interviews with the remaining study participants.

Before the interviews, a telephone conversation was held with each participant, lasting between approximately 10 and 30 minutes. Basic information about the participants, including personal information and information about the special schools where they were working, was gathered during this telephone conversation. In addition, I asked the participants for access to their teaching plans and weekly journals at this time. The review of their documents in advance contributed to a better understanding of the participants and facilitated the interviews. Participants also selected the locations for interview, the intent of which was to help them to feel more comfortable. Finally, the telephone conversation helped to build rapport with participants and lessened my distance from them.

The interviews with the participants lasted approximately 40 to 80 minutes in length. In addition to responding to gathered information, the participants also explained how their documents (teaching plans and weekly journals) played a role in the internship. Because the participants' first language is Chinese, the interviews took place in Chinese. The content was audiotaped and then transcribed verbatim.

Documents. Student teachers' teaching plans and weekly journals were collected to contribute to understanding the teaching process and their experiences across the four month internship. These documents assisted in understanding the interview data and decreasing bias in the interpretation of the data (Patton, 2002). At the same time, weekly journals may offer potential different stories from what is obtained in the interviews. The documents were collected before the interviews, which in addition to being a data source, helped me understand each participant in depth and contributed to the interview process.

Both transcripts and documents were translated into English by the author following confirmation and first member checks with participants.

Confidentiality. When the documents were copied, the author obscured participants' names and any personal information. The same procedure was used when transcribing the audio-taped interviews. Any mention of personal information about students in the special schools was checked carefully, in order to protect their anonymity. The interview information from participants was not shared with their supervisor teachers, to protect participants from potential impact on the assessment of their performance during the internships.

The author stored the electronic interview transcripts and digital copies of documents in a password protected computer. Participants' information and interview transcripts were only available to the researcher. Interview transcripts were shared only with the author's graduate supervisor and one additional coder.

Reflective notes. During the research process, I recorded reflective notes that included information about the interviews, such as where and when the interview took place, the length of the interview and whether any ideas or questions emerged from the interview. These reflective notes promoted my understanding and interpretation of subtle nuances that were not evident in the interviews, and assisted in the process of data analysis (Patton, 2002). As noted by Bogdan and Biklen (2003), these notes can also bring the researchers back to the interview setting during the process of data analysis.

Data Analysis

A thematic line-by-line analysis of the interview transcripts was completed. Following the idiographic approach in IPA, detailed analysis of one interview transcript was completely finished before moving to the next (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

As per IPA guidelines, the transcripts were first read numerous times to facilitate familiarity with each case in this study, after which interesting and important details were highlighted and commented in the left hand of margins. The initial comments and codes of meaningful details were transformed into themes on the other margins, and the emergent themes were then clustered in the initial lists. Next, the connections between themes were taken into consideration

and the themes were clustered and ordered coherently. Finally, a table of superordinate themes was produced to guide the researcher to summarize the results (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

Considering that the sample size was small, each transcript was analyzed from scratch and then the similarities and differences were compared across cases. The convergence and divergence in the data needed respect. It was inevitable that some themes needed to be reduced. The themes were not chosen simply according to the prevalence within the data. The richness of description of themes highlighted in the interview transcripts and how these descriptions assisted in presenting participants' perceptions of cases also contributed to these decisions (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

The final stage of the analysis was illustrating the convergence and divergence in the themes to the write-up and final statement outlining the meanings inherent in the participants' experiences. A narrative account was needed to explain, illustrate and nuance these themes. Verbatim extracts from the transcripts were used to support the interpretations of final themes in the results (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) guided but did not confine the analysis and interpretation of the data. Difference or divergence was also respected in this study.

Information found in the documents and reflective notes were used to complement and verify the themes, as well as to reveal potential different themes. The potential differences emerging from interviews, documents and reflective notes were analyzed carefully to describe participants' whole

experiences in special schools. No thematic differences were noted. During the analysis of the data, attention was also paid to potential differences in gender. Some essential themes emerged from the data of male participants and the distinctions will be underlined in the Results and Discussion.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness aims to strengthen the credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability of the research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Several approaches were used, such as triangulation, member checking and thick descriptions, to enhance the trustworthiness. Smith (2011) presented that a good IPA paper should have a clear focus, strong data, be rigorous, have sufficient space for the elaboration of each theme, include interpretative and not just descriptive analysis, point to both convergence and divergence, and should be carefully written. A clear and apparent focus on the detail of a particular aspect, instead of a broad examination, is more likely to be of high quality (Smith, 2011). Good qualitative research usually has a relevant, timely, significant and interesting topic (Tracy, 2010).

There is very little published literature related to research in special education and adapted physical education in China. In addition, there is a deficiency in both the conceptual and practical knowledge of student teachers teaching students with impairments. Student teachers' experiences in special schools are worthy of investigation. The purposive sampling provided a transferable foundation to investigate student teachers' experiences of teaching students with intellectual impairments in special schools.

High-quality data is the basis of a successful IPA paper (Smith, 2011). Multiple data sources or data triangulation enhance the credibility and conformability of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To this end, information from interviews, documents and reflective notes were gathered. The quality of the main data source from interviews was improved by several steps. First, the interview questions were discussed and refined with experienced researchers before data collection. In addition, a pilot interview was used to refine the interview schedule and practice interview skills. It is of the great significance that the voice of participants can be heard in the interpretative research (Lincoln, 1995). When presenting the data, it is better to "show" what participants said rather than to "tell" (Tracy, 2010). Thick descriptions supported by a large number of considerable verbatim extractions from interview transcripts helped to achieve this credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The analysis is both descriptive and interpretative owning to the double hermeneutic in IPA (Smith, 2011). Each extract was followed by an interpretative commentary. Critical subjectivity needs to be heightened in the analysis process (Lincoln, 1995) and creates the researcher's personal interpretation of the descriptions from participants.

Member checking also solicits the credibility of the findings and interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checks were completed with the participants, during which they confirmed the accuracy of stories described in the transcripts and documents. Following completion of the thematic analysis, the participants were asked to verify the confidential description and themes

derived from their stories. As well, the credibility of the findings was enhanced through investigator triangulation (Creswell, 2007). Another data coder analyzed 30% of the transcripts. The additional coder possessed a background in qualitative research experience and in adapted physical activity.

As for the rigor of a good IPA paper, selected extracts should give some indication of convergence and divergence, representativeness, and variability to show the breadth and depth of the themes (Smith, 2011). Extracts from at least half of the participants were provided as evidence for each theme in this study. Space is needed for the elaboration of each theme, and subsets of themes were presented in the results (Smith, 2011).

Sincerity was achieved in this study by the self-reflexivity, vulnerability, honesty and transparency of the researcher (Tracy, 2010). I clarified my personal background from the outset and was honest about the biases that may have derived from my similar internship experiences. Transparency was achieved by providing a detailed description of the research purpose and method used. Reflective notes recorded frankly my strengths and shortcomings throughout the interviews and analysis. Furthermore, I considered the relational ethics between the researcher and participants in qualitative inquiry. I respected the sacredness of my relationships with participants in the research process (Lincoln, 1995) and recognized the values of mutual respect, vulnerability, relational spaces and self-reflections in the relational ethics (Bergum & Dossetor, 2005). Qualitative researchers should value the reciprocity with participants and not just appoint others to get a “great story” (Tracy, 2010).

Chapter 3: Results

The findings of this study are presented in the student teachers' own voices. The results include the perspectives of six formal participants and one student teacher who participated in the pilot study. Each of them was given a pseudonym.

Overall, the student teachers showed positive perspectives about their experiences in the special schools. They expressed high satisfaction with their teaching and greatly valued the opportunity to gain exposure to, and interact with, students with intellectual impairments. Participants indicated that they experienced great personal changes during their internship, especially related to their perceptions about physical education in special schools and their perspectives towards individuals with II. Taking their experiences in the internship into consideration, some of the student teachers indicated they had changed their career path to contribute to adapted physical education. Others treated the internship only as an interesting experience without any significant influence on their life plans. Still others reported some less positive perspectives and indicated that they did not plan to seek employment in special schools in the future or had already turned down an employment offer in a special school. They were unanimous, however, in their agreement that the teaching skills they acquired and developed in the special schools would be beneficial for teaching in both special schools and general schools.

Three themes emerged from the thematic analysis of the data: (a) I can teach PE in special schools, (b) different but meaningful, and (c) it could be better. The themes are supported by subthemes as showed in Figure 3.1.

I Can Teach PE in Special Schools

There was transformation evident from the beginning to the end for student teachers during their internship in special schools. All of the participants indicated that their participation in the class was largely peripheral at the beginning of their internship. They spent between one week and one month watching lessons and assisting the supervisor teacher in classes. Finally, their participation transformed into a central teaching position as the PE teacher. They taught PE lessons individually or in a teaching group, depending upon which special school they were located at.

Nothing was easy in special schools. As newcomers to special schools, participants reported various difficulties they encountered when they were teaching PE lessons for students with II. These difficulties were related primarily to interactions between the student teacher and the students with II, and to the student teachers' lack of teaching methods.

Special schools for students with II included students with different types and degrees of impairments. Even though the students were divided into different grades according to their chronological ages, students' diversity made teaching difficult. It was hard for student teachers to teach students with dramatically different personality traits and learning capacities within the same class. As explained by Mary,

> The hard part was that each of them has a different personality and the characteristics were so different. Then a teacher had to face so many students. You had to teach them something, but how much they learned was different. Some students learned fast while some others learned slowly. So how you can make sure that everyone in the class can find something to learn is difficult.

Student teachers were challenged by including all kinds of students together in one PE lesson, especially when the students were young and had a tendency to behave in ways the student teachers were not familiar with or prepared for. They found it difficult to control the class. Compared to student teachers who were teaching in a team, where other teammates could assist with the administration of the class, it was especially hard for those who were teaching alone. Lucy was teaching alone in the special school and she could only turn to her supervisor teacher for help when encountering difficulties. As she said,

> Because you can't teach them in the normal way, where the class runs smoothly… Of course you taught and you had lesson plans, but this one (student) may run away and you had to chase him. Or all of a sudden that one started making loud noises and lied down on the ground; you had to change your teaching. At first I felt uncomfortable and didn't know what to do. Mostly in such special circumstances the (supervisor) teacher would handle them, and I could continue the class.

Students' emotional problems were regarded as the most insurmountable obstacle by student teachers. According to Kate, "The hardest part is the influence from the child's mood and his state, and I can't control him. Then if he got angry, you had completely no idea about what to do with him." She felt helpless about dealing with these problems and shocked by the violent behaviors of a student with autism that accompanied his emotional changes. This was also the reason she passed up an opportunity to work in a special school and attempted to find a job in general schools instead. Kate described,

> When I had just arrived in this school the teacher told me to keep away from this student and she showed me her arm with bruises caused by that kid…. The teacher told him stand still, and he didn't stand well. He may have felt the teacher would do some things to him. You know children with autism. They have their own thoughts. Then he began to fight with the teacher and bite her hand. The principal and all students and teachers were there. They tried to stop this and he just hit them.

Some of the students were emotionally unstable and easily affected by the environment around them. The negative feelings of students sometimes caused noncooperation in class, as Lucy shared,

> Sometimes he may argue with his classmates, or feel unhappy in the classroom; he would bring that emotion in a PE class. He didn't follow you. He would slip over [not listen] from the beginning. He knew what to do but he didn't [do it].

Not all behavioral issues derived from students' negative or unstable emotions however. The discomfort some students experienced during movement, and lack of motivation or "laziness" resulted in inactivity during certain physical activities. As Kate explained,

> At the beginning you didn't know the students well, you may think they are very kind, but sometimes they can be impish. And you just don't know what to do with it. It is likely that some students tried to avoid the uncomfortable feelings in their bodies. They may not want to do some movements, and then they would think of a way to deal with this situation. They would use their own methods to evade it. Some students are especially lazy. There was a kid with Down syndrome. He is really fat and didn't like to run anyway. One time he even pretended to pass out to avoid running.

Student teachers typically were ignored as newcomers by the students during the preliminary stage of their internships, during which they observed the teaching of the supervisor teacher and began teaching with the supervisor teacher's support. Students' noncooperation aggravated difficulties student teachers had while trying to teach. Kate even felt a little bit bullied as she recalled "At the beginning it's not good. The students barely knew you. Maybe there was a little bit of feeling like bullying the weak and fearing the strong. Then he just ignored you when you tried to ask him to do something." She referred to herself as "the weak" at the beginning. Lucy explained the reason why she thought she was ignored by the students.

> Because I didn't have that kind of authority, I was just there, but the students ignored me. You may try to say something to them, but nobody knows you. Like there was a kid with Down syndrome, whatever I said to him, there was no responding. I also tried to be really serious, he just ignored.

Communication was frequently mentioned as an important part of the interactions between students and teachers, and the student teachers initially found it very difficult to communicate with students with II. Jim said, "It was particularly difficult to let them understand what I said and how to do the movements." Student teachers were frustrated when they attempted to explain something to their students but could not be sure if the students understood them. Lucy thought she could not be understood, especially when she tried to explain steps of movements and when she tried to make corrections,

> There were always some obstacles to communicate with them. When I taught the movements, they can't understand very well. They can't master the movements well and I tried to correct their wrong movements, but I was not able to correct them. I don't know how to do that, how to do a good job. It is hard to let them know what I mean.

Student teachers often compared students with II to students without impairments in general schools when they tried to describe how hard it was to communicate with the students with II or how difficult it was to lead them to complete movements as they explained. Amy emphasized the students' lack of awareness about different sides of their bodies,

> It's relatively easy to teach just a little bit of content each lesson, while the hard part is that they may be different from normal children. Like you told them to do the aerobics movements which may use the different sides [of the body], they didn't understand. They aren't like normal children. If I did the mirror demonstration, they understood. You should let them concentrate and tell them which hand or foot you want them to [use to] do the movement. You need to explain every detail.

As a result of students' diversity, as well as various emotional and behavioral characteristics, it was very difficult to follow teaching plans that student teachers scheduled ahead of the lessons. Mary attributed the improper arrangements in the teaching plans to student teachers' insufficient understanding of students,

> Teaching plan… Actually at the beginning, we didn't say it was fixed like this. Because at the beginning we had no contact with these students and we did not teach students like them before, we did not know.

Sam struggled to modify his teaching plans during the teaching in the special school. He stated,

> In the beginning, I wrote teaching plans and wanted to achieve some kind of goals in each lesson. I tried to teach according to these, but I couldn't complete the contents in the teaching plan. And then the teaching plan had always to be changed. It changed a lot, so I don't think it's actually a plan in the end.

In addition to the difficulties that emerged from interactions with students, student teachers felt frustration due to the lack of knowledge specific to teaching students with II. Sam's comments further our understanding of their feelings,

> When we first went there we didn't know the situation. We were eager to understand them at the same time, but we didn't know how. It's depressing. Most of us were voluntary [chose to go to the special schools] and we wanted to do it well, on the contrary we didn't have experience with individuals with impairments and the methods how to teach them, we felt at a loss.

All participants were majoring in physical education and acquired a lot of theoretical knowledge in general physical education. Conversely, there was almost nothing they learned involving teaching students with impairments until they chose or were assigned to do their internship in special schools. As explained by Amy,

> Because in university we just learn general physical education or school physical education, not involving what to do in special schools. So when we went to special schools, I have to say we learned from the beginning. I taught them to dance aerobics. Although the aerobics was very simple, I never learned how to teach students like them. I think it is necessary to develop curriculum in adapted physical education.

There were no textbooks or other resources particularly aiming to clarify how to teach students with impairments in PE lessons in China. Teachers in

special schools used materials developed for use in general schools as reference, but in most circumstances PE class content was completely dependent on PE teachers and their experiences teaching students with impairments. Lucy commented,

> There is a lot of research now about special education about how to make teaching materials and courses more suitable for students with impairments, because they usually use the materials in general schools, maybe make some adjustments in decreasing difficulties, but they don't have their own textbooks. As for the PE class, they didn't have outlines of what you should be teaching. There are no standards like in general physical education. It mainly relies on the teachers; there is nothing to guide them.

Unlike other student teachers in this study, Dan encountered difficulties in his relationship with the supervisor teacher due to his treatment of the students. Essentially the supervisor teacher expressed dissatisfaction with Dan's teaching, believing that Dan showed too much compassion for the students, which negatively affected his ability to instruct and manage the class. As shared by Dan,

> I can't balance the two parts, being strict and being compassionate. I didn't do very well in the two parts. At the beginning, I thought they were poor children and I can't be strict with them. I never spoke to them in a harsh tone. And then the teacher thought I had a problem with my attitude and thought I may not want to teach, in fact I didn't. I just can't

be strict with them, while he thought I should be strict with my students. So there was some misunderstanding at the beginning.

You have to learn how to teach. Student teachers had to learn from scratch in special schools, owing to their lack of experience and knowledge about teaching students with impairments. They struggled to find solutions to the difficulties they ran into and learned from the practice. For example, Mary shared her method of including all kinds of students in PE class according to their differences. She took advantage of the cooperation of the multiple student teachers in the class which enabled them to teach the children in smaller groups,

> We had three people (student teachers). We divided students into groups. They certainly had different paces of learning. Like some students may study quickly, they can slowly follow the music and dance or they can dance in front of their classmates and lead them. Then the students who learned slowly can basically catch up, and the teacher had to lead them through practice again and again. For those who learned even more slowly, you had to teach them slowly by one movement after another.

Student teachers had different expectations for students in special schools relative to students in regular schools. They paid more attention to students and adapted their teaching contents and requirements for different students. Amy furthered the understanding,

> The teaching standard was different. For the young kids, major activities were to move their bodies. You didn't have to teach them aerobics. Neither did the students with severe impairments. There was a class

> including one student with cerebral palsy and two or three with autism. It's hard to teach them. We just took them to jump a hurdle or something else. The other two classes can dance aerobics.

Student teachers learned to teach students with II during their interactions with the students. Along with developing a deeper understanding of their students, they learned that they needed to use simple words and do more demonstrations in class. That was the best way to be understood by their students. Student teachers also realized the importance of encouragement and motivation in practice. Amy indicated that "Some students are very lazy and they don't want to do movements. Then you have to motivate them and try to get them involved in PE classes." Student teachers would encourage students and use different kinds of activities to attract students to take part in PE class. Kate reflected,

> I can only rely on myself to think of more innovative ideas. I cannot always teach the same things in class. If a student was tired of learning, he would not cooperate with you anymore.

In addition, Mary pointed out the significance of gaining recognition or identity as a teacher from students,

> Students like them, a lot of times you needed to encourage them to play happily. Sometimes you needed to get their recognition, especially those students with autism. They were really refusing us at the beginning, but later we could talk together and play together. I think it was very good.

Because there were no teaching materials or textbooks from which student teachers could learn how to teach students with II, the supervisor teachers were the only source from which they could acquire information about students and how to teach them. They learned from their supervisor teachers in all the aspects, including teaching methods and skills, teaching plans, and problem solving in class. They started from following, observing, and imitating the supervisor teachers as described Kate, "I followed the supervisor teacher from the start and observe what she did, and then I can only say imitation." When she experienced difficulty with a student who continually ran away and she had to chase him, the supervisor teacher helped and taught her what to do. "The teacher taught me that when teaching children like this you had to let him be interested in what you teach. And you can't chase him all the day. You had to let him follow you. In another words you pretend to ignore his tricks." Lucy also turned to her supervisor teacher for help when she struggled to be understood by students,

> I asked the teacher what to do you when they can't understand you. She said you can't speak in the professional way, they don't understand. You should understand them and try to think in their way… Language should be simple and they can understand easily.

Student teachers indicated that their supervisor teachers were present in the class when they were teaching so that they could observe what the student teachers did in class and point out what could be improved. Instructions from the supervisor teachers were emphasized by student teachers. As shared by Jim,

> Our supervisor teacher is very responsible. Every time when the class was over, he would be waiting for us and discuss the problems and what we can do to make it better next time. Actually at the beginning, he also told us about every student's situation, such as what the problem was and where defects were, and let us know… He would tell us where the main problem was in this class and what we should do to communicate with the children, and how to change. He told us in detail about students and communicated with us when there was something wrong. I would follow the advice from the teacher and correct accordingly.

Student teachers relied on their supervisor teachers to prepare PE lessons. Sam could not follow his teaching plans in the beginning; he struggled to make it work. "I used his teaching plans as a reference. Teaching was separated step by step and clearly. How we teach was follow this plan, and then we can almost make it." In other circumstances, student teachers learned from teachers' plans but prepared for possible changes. As Kate said,

> When I started preparing teaching plans, I didn't know what to write. More precisely, I did not know how to start. And then I saw teaching plans that the teacher wrote. The teacher also told me that there always were a lot of differences between what you wrote in plans and what you taught in class. If the student changed, you had to change along with it. You cannot teach the students if you just followed what you wrote in plans.

Student teachers who were teaching individually pointed out emphatically that an assistant was required. The teacher cannot pay attention to every student in class at the same time. As explained in the words of Lucy,

> Because the students here are not the same as others, usually the parents would be there. If there is no parent, you have to look after them. I assisted when the (supervisor) teacher was teaching the class. Like warming up, I helped them to do it. Because their arms may be not straight, I helped them to straighten their arms; they may not know how to kick right, and I told them how to do it. Definitely useful it is. Parents sometimes were there, sometimes not. I think those children should be one-to-one. At least when a teacher was leading in front, there must be one person assisting. One person looks after one student. One student may be better, his abilities are better, and then he may not need that (assistance). However, it is particularly less like this in a class.

Participants expressed the sense of achievement in the end that they could teach students with II. They made great efforts to learn about how to teach in special schools from the experienced teachers, the students, and by reflecting on their practice. The most delightful achievement was recognized as important gains in their students. As Mary shared,

> By the end of four months teaching the children can dance aerobics. And some good students can perform. That's so nice. There were lots of stories. For example, there was a child with autism, at first he ignored us, but then I remembered the first time he told us that you come and teach

> me to dance aerobics. At that moment we thought ‘he talked with us’, it is also like recognition for us. Actually in the process of the contact they opened their hearts to us.

In the meanwhile, although participants felt they could finally teach in the special schools, they also expressed that sometimes they had no control as student teachers. Specifically, there was no control over the teaching content, as told by Dan. “He (the supervisor teacher) would tell me to what to teach just before the class, and then I thought about it and quickly prepared the lesson.” Teaching content was usually decided by supervisor teachers and student teachers had no opportunity to be involved in discussion about the content with their supervisor teachers. As supported by the words of Lucy,

> You can't change the outlines. I followed them. I asked the teacher for what I should teach them. After the teacher gave me the teaching content, I knew what to teach and I came back to read books and think how to teach. Like this. It is not to say that they gave me a class and I can teach them whatever I want. I had to follow the school teaching contents and teaching outlines.

Different, But Meaningful

Student teachers experienced physical education differently in special schools, relative to what they learned in their courses at university and what they knew related to physical education in general schools. Even so, participants regarded this internship as a meaningful journey during their life.

PE is different here. Differences in teaching physical education to students with impairments were emphasized by participants in several respects. First of all, student teachers held different expectations for students with II, and they used different evaluations for them in the physical education class. Actually most student teachers held very low performance or learning expectations for these students before they went into the special schools and they just simply wanted their students to enjoy or feel happy during their physical education lessons. As Mary mentioned,

> Expectation for them… In fact there was nothing special about expectations. I felt that if the students can follow me in every class, it is very good. It is good if everybody can play together happily in the end.

Mary also shared about her ideas of standards that she used to evaluate students' performance in her class,

> There were no specific standards. Actually at the beginning in terms of the teachers' view, it was that he can actively cooperate with you. Then from the perspective of aerobics, he can perform himself well and he can follow you. That is doing a good job.

Kate believed that physical education in special schools is student-centered while in general schools it is exam-centered. She commented about the difference in physical education between special schools and general schools,

> Elementary schools don't have much difference from general ones. Elementary schools teach the basics and improve the body fitness. But high schools are exam-oriented. And now the PE grades become more

> and more important in college entrance examination. So it takes a lot of time to prepare the exam. In special schools, they don't have this kind of exam pressure. They can learn and improve for their own. Special schools pay more attention to students.

Parents of students in the special schools were also more concerned about the students (their children) than about points in the exams. As explained by Lucy "Parents paid less attention the points of these students. They mostly cared about if their children felt happy in schools and if there was any progress."

General physical education is well-disciplined and students learn regular sport skills and participate in formal sports and competitions. However, teaching physical education in special schools for students with II requires additional consideration of students' learning abilities and focuses on inclusive participation of all students rather than competitions in sports. Physical education was relatively casual in special schools as Kate explained,

> It is easy to become casual if you didn't get into the habit of being strict. Because they are casual, we became casual too. Because you have to adapt to changing situations, things become very casual. But if we went to general schools, it would be strict with words and discipline. Technical terms would be required and no one can talk casually in class. When you teach students in the special school, you can ask them about the weather. Some students can answer, while some cannot come up with the answer. You can also talk about the common sense in life.

There was no requirement for strict discipline in teaching physical education in special schools, which attributed to a relaxed atmosphere in the special schools. As described by Lucy,

> I think there is less pressure about teaching students in special schools. Because they probably don't require... you must treat it seriously, but in the process you don't need to be so strict. It's more flexible. I don't need to use so much professional term or something like that. They can't understand you then. You should be strict and professional, but sometimes they really don't understand and you have to use simple words to make it clear to them.

Conversely, some student teachers felt it is more difficult to teach in the special schools. Rather than imposing no strict requirements on teachers, Mary believed that teaching students with impairments imposed higher requirements for teachers. She said,

> About the area of adapted physical education it asked for high requirements. It required more particularly in techniques, including the design of the movements. And it paid attention to the subjectivity of students, that is to say you would pay more attention to the students.

In terms of students, those in special schools learn more than sports in Physical Education classes. All the male participants believed that physical education not only benefited students in increasing physical fitness, it also helped students learn *normal* behaviors. As emphasized by Dan,

> Students can not only learn some sport skills, they also learn the regular behaviors. You should follow some rules in PE class, like running in a line in some games. Sometimes it is only a small thing, but if there are no rules, things would lose order. So I think PE can change some faults and of course be good to do exercise.

Jim also saw learning "normal" behaviors during physical education as a significant benefit for students with II, especially for students with autism. As he described,

> The students with autism don't consider about others and only care about their own feelings. In a few years, these students will finally leave school to go into society. It is impossible for them to live on their own, so we should try to change some of their behaviors and make them become normal, and then they can live a normal life in the society.

Dan even believed that learning typical or expected behaviors was beneficial to students, their families and society. As shared by his voice,

> For them (students in special schools) PE is more important. If they can't even learn normal behaviors, it would have a bad impact on them when they live in the real society. So PE in the special school is not only responsible for the students but also for the whole society. Not just exercise, they have to learn the basic rules of society.

I've changed from this experience. Participants had no opportunity to gain experience with individuals with II before they chose or were arranged to teach in special school. Student teachers changed in a number of aspects,

including in perspectives and attitudes towards individual with ID, perceptions of students in special schools, and their skills and competence of teaching physical education.

Student teachers changed their understanding of individuals with II during the interactions with students in special schools. For instance, Jim changed his stereotyped view of individuals with autism after the internship. As he described,

> Some students with autism here can't be seen as autism, because they are very open and bright. The teacher says they are, I can't understand sometime. I thought individuals with autism never talked with others and just found a corner to stay. Some of the students here are different.

Because of their deeper understanding of situation of students with II, student teachers changed from avoiding individuals with II to including them. As shared by Sam,

> It's a special experience. At least when I saw individuals with [II] later I would never exclude them. This is important. I want to know them. Before that I thought people with [II] would be in a mess, now I know it's not and I will never think that way.

Student teachers tended to see the impairments ahead of the whole person. Before they actually knew these individuals with II, they took it for granted that students with II would be rude and were incapable of doing well in both academic and physical work. However, perceptions changed during the

contact with these students in special schools. As supported by the words of Kate,

> After the contact I think there is not too much difference between them and abled students. They just learned things slowly, the reaction may be slow. Maybe some difference in IQ. Then after the adjustment, the body can be good. Because the first time I saw a boy, he greeted to me and asked me if I was the new teacher. It surprised me, you know. I thought these children did not say too many words to others, especially to strangers.

Mary valued this experience and felt it tremendously influenced her life after the internship in the special school. As she said,

> First of all, before this internship in special school I knew nothing about special education and also adapted physical education. I just had paid attention to the Paralympics before. But through this period of internship, I understood this area and I knew there were more things needed to be done. I also had more interest in this area. I think it is very meaningful, but less attention had been paid. Especially in China, less attention had been paid. It is very deficient in this area, and there are a lot of things in this area that need more attention. I want to do something for these types of students and individuals. So I changed to adapted physical activity.

Even though changes in perceptions of individuals with II occurred, Dan still showed negative perspectives towards teaching in special schools. He stated "teachers in the special schools felt quite upset and meaningless. But they are

great because not everyone is willing to do this job. Anyway, if asking me I am not willing to."

On the other hand, educational practice in special schools enhanced student teachers' teaching skills. They believed that what they learned in specials schools would also be beneficial to teaching in general schools. As explained by Mary,

> This internship expanded and improved my teaching skills. Actually I was also teaching ordinary primary school students in a general school at the same time. I found that in fact what I used in the special school can also be used in an ordinary elementary school and it also can have a very good effect. I can even say that in general schools, the layered teaching or dividing into groups in ordinary primary school can produce better results than usual organized activities and unified teaching. The effect seemed better.

It was expected that teaching in special schools made it easier to teach in general schools. After the efforts student teachers made to communicate with students with II, they felt it was likely that they would communicate with students in general schools with ease. Like Jim said "If you can communicate with students here and let them understand, the students in general schools would definitely understand you." Lucy considered teaching Physical Education was simple in general schools compared with teaching in special schools,

> PE is simple, including the preparation section (warming up), basic section (instruction and practice), and end section (cool down). You

> don’t need to know too much and if you have a teaching plan you can teach general PE class. The process is very simple. Explain it and do the demonstrations. But you can’t just do it when you teach students with impairments. You must be more flexible and pay more attention to students, and then change according to students’ circumstances. You can’t just let them do what you teach. It may work in general schools, but not in special schools. After the internship in the special school, it would be easier to teach in other places. And I got a lot of experiences of dealing with emergency situations.

Male participants mentioned about others’ reactions to their teaching in special schools. Friends of Jim showed surprised and curiosity about his internship in special schools. Some friends thought he was suffering in the special school, but he didn’t think so and decided to work in the special school following the conclusion of his internship. “They don’t know because they don’t have contact with them.” Unfortunately, Don experienced others’ sarcasm,

> When my classmates heard that I was going to special schools, I got the feeling of sarcasm and jokes from them. Because they never really had contact with them (individuals with II), they don’t know what the situations are in special school. They thought I was staying with them every day and I may be influenced by them. It’s discrimination.

Participants believed contacts with students in special schools enabled them to understand the real school lives of individuals with II. In contrast, they believed that people who never have contact hold incorrect conceptions and assumptions.

It Could Be Better

Participants reflected on their teaching in special schools and believed they were capable of doing a better job if they had opportunity to do it again. Student teachers highlighted their love, compassion and patience for teaching students with II. Mental preparation was recommended so that students would not be scared and want to leave when they encountered some unanticipated problems in special schools, such as violent behaviors mentioned by Kate.

More contact with students contributed to deeper understanding of the students and facilitated teaching. Amy suggested being familiar with and developing close relationships with students would be helpful for cooperation between teacher and students. Mary regarded feedback from students as an important part of teaching. She used an example to illustrate this,

> They gave feedback. At least you can understand what they like and what they don't. For example, we tried to play a game, and they can be very happy. Then I knew next time they like this kind of stuff, so I can do more similar activities and design more similar games and let them learn through these games. It usually can achieve better effect. But another time, an activity they didn't like, or they didn't have much enthusiasm in this activity, and then the next time I would avoid such types of activities for teaching.

Students' voices should be heard and respected. Kate indicated that if given the opportunity to go back and do it again, she would modify her teaching content and the amount of exercise she assigned according to students' feedback.

More contact sometimes led to close relationship with students. It is worth noting that close relationship with students can promote students' learning. When student teachers were trusted by students, the students were willing to follow the student teachers in class. However, the role of student teachers was not confined to teacher. Student teachers may be treated as a protector. For example, Kate felt close with one of her students and "if something happened, he liked to hide behind me." Student teachers were easily seen as a sister or brother by students. Lucy explained "it's probably that I was not very strict and they felt quite relaxed with me, so they called me sister." It appears that the development of close relationships with students sometimes decreased student teachers' authority as a teacher.

Cooperation with other student teachers in special schools was helpful in the development of both teaching and confidence. Teaching in a group with other student teachers decreased difficulties that resulted from students' diversity. Student teachers could assist each other when problems emerged. Good cooperation among student teachers facilitated a better Physical Education lesson, as Mary said about her experience of cooperation with other student teachers,

> About ten students and we, three student teachers, taught together. And then I felt like the cooperation among us was particularly important. Every time before the lecture we would meet and decide what to do in class and how to divide our teaching. We also summarized after class. It was very clear what we needed to do in class.

Communication among student teachers helped to solve problems and correct faults. Jim benefited from the discussion with other student teachers and reflected on the problems he experienced in class. In addition, communication enriched teaching methods and enhanced teaching skills. As explained by Sam,

> After communication with other student teachers, we would compare which method was better and try it. If it turned out to be an efficient method, we would promote it with others. We tried to include all of the teaching methods and find out which one would be the best for ourselves.

Sam also appreciated the inspiration from other student teachers. This helped him get through the tough beginning in the special school. "I felt frustrated at the beginning and thought about giving up. I planned to leave and go home, but they encouraged me and each other. So I decided to stay. In the end I learned a lot." In contrast, Dan felt lonely as the only student teacher in a special school. He was upset about being alone and believed that "when people get together and discuss what they did, they could help each other and they would never feel so helpless. Taken together, these comments suggest that the internships would be better if student teachers were sent out in teams.

Chapter 4: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to learn about student teachers' experiences in special schools for students with intellectual impairments in China. There were three research questions: (a) what are the experiences of student teachers who are teaching physical education in special schools, (b) how do the student teachers make sense of their practicum experiences in the special schools, and (c) how do the internships in special schools contribute to student teachers' perceptions of their ability to teach students with impairments.

Student teachers regarded the internship of teaching physical education in special schools for students with II as a meaningful journey during their life. They expressed high satisfaction and greatly valued of the opportunity to gain exposure to and interact with individuals with II. There were also some less positive perspectives noted, but all participants spoke highly of the teaching skills and methods they acquired in special schools.

In accordance with Connolly (1994) and Hodge et al. (2003), there was evidence of transformation in the student teachers beginning from the onset of the internship when they felt at loss, incapable, and frustrated about the unknown conditions in special schools and how to teach students with II. By the end of their internships, however, student teachers generally felt capable about teaching PE in special schools. Nothing was easy at the beginning, or even to the end. Student teachers spoke about different kinds of difficulties they encountered in their internships. Generally these difficulties originated from the heterogeneity or diversity of the students' at the special schools, their own lack of knowledge

and skills related to suitable teaching techniques, and the communication/interactions between student teachers and students with II.

Students' diversity, including their emotional and behavioral characteristics, were the perceived to be the most complicated and difficult issues to be resolved. The student teachers were initially lacking in experience and knowledge about teaching students with II, and they spoke about feeling overwhelmed when they initially tried to include students with different types of impairments and different levels of capability in one lesson. They also found it hard to control students' behaviors and maintain classroom discipline. These are similar findings to those reported by Jobling and Moni (2004). Because of their inexperience and lack of understanding, the student teachers reported that they tended to feel uncomfortable, even scared, about certain emotional and behavioral manifestations they observed in the students. Students' emotional changes sometimes hindered their interactions with the student teachers, and could limit their cooperation and participation in class. Clearly it was unrealistic to expect the student teachers to be capable of teaching students with II based on what they had learned in their general physical education coursework at University.

Owing to their lack of experience and preparation in adapted physical education, student teachers had to learn how to teach in special schools from scratch. They acquired knowledge and understanding about how to teach students with diverse needs in special schools and developed teaching skills through participation in the authentic teaching and learning context (Jobling &

Moni, 2004). They gained a deeper understanding of their students, and attempted to solve the problems they encountered. As a result, their expectations for different students changed and they were able to effectively modify their teaching for students at different performance levels. As recommended by Young (2012), the student teachers decreased the number and complexity of movements included in their lessons, they simplified and shortened their explanations for students, and they included demonstrations to increase students' understanding of these movements. In addition, they recognized the importance of encouragement given the level of inactivity shown by a number of students with II.

The student teachers identified the supervisor teachers as their most important resource and support in the special schools. They learned many different things from the experienced teachers, including learning about the students, appropriate teaching methods, and lesson preparation. In addition, teachers provided aid and information when problems occurred in class. In accordance with Recchia and Puig (2011), student teachers in segregated settings (e.g., special schools) learned from observing and interacting with experienced teachers, about specific techniques and the implementation of appropriate adaptations. In this way, the student teachers coincidently improved their practical teaching skills and gained in confidence to teach students with special needs (Jobling & Moni, 2004).

A difference found between the experiences of male and female participants is that male participants mentioned others' reaction to their

internship (teaching) in the special schools. They seemed to receive more attention, expressions of curiosity, and even sarcasm from their friends and classmates; none of the female participants mentioned these experiences. According to a review of inclusion research in physical education (Qi & Ha, 2012), more positive attitudes towards teaching students with impairments were found in both in-service and pre-service female PE teachers when compared to males. Male student teachers/physical education students hold more negative attitudes towards teaching students with impairments and it likely these attitudes influenced their interactions with friends or classmates working in the special schools. In addition, others' misunderstanding and sarcasm may be the result of certain Chinese beliefs (Hampton & Xiao, 2009), as indicated in one participant's statement that "They thought I was staying with them (students with II) every day and I may be influenced by them."

In speaking about the internship, student teachers recognized that physical education was different in the special schools. These differences were typically highlighted and emphasized through comparisons with teaching physical education in general schools. Student teachers had different expectations for students with II than they held for students in general schools. For students with II, they set the relatively low expectations that students could participate in PE lessons and feel happy; there were not expectations of higher performance in sports competitions and on exams. This is in line with expectations set by special schools generally as well as parents of students in special schools'.

Related somewhat to student expectations, the male participants in this study spoke about the belief that physical education for students with II is not only beneficial for the student's physical health, but also facilitated the learning of "normal behaviors". Exercise has been shown to have a positive influence on the behavior of individuals with emotional and behavioral disorders (Medcalf et al., 2006; Tantillo et al., 2002), but the male student teachers expected that students with II could learn common rules and behaviors that would enable them to appear more "normal" and to live a "normal life". Embedded in these comments seems to be assumption that participation in physical education at special schools contributes to the normalization of students with II (Polloway et al, 1996; Wolfensberger, 1972). This perspective was not mentioned by female student teachers.

A number of student teachers expressed the feeling of casualness when teaching in special schools, related to an absence of strict curricular requirements and learning outcomes found in general schools. Stated differently, the student teachers perceived that teachers in special schools were under less pressure than teachers in general schools, due to lower requirements for student performance and increased flexibility in content. However, some student teachers indicated that higher requirements and expectations were needed for teachers of students with impairments.

As reported previously in the literature (Connolly, 1994; Hodge et al., 2003), students changed their stereotypical views of individuals with II during the internship; their views became more inclusive. It appears that frequent,

largely positive, and meaningful contact and experience with students with II changed the student teachers' perspectives (Hodge et al., 2003). Through interactions with students with II in authentic teaching and learning activities, student teachers gained deeper understanding of what their students could learn and accomplish, rather than focusing on deficits in their students' capabilities (Jobling & Moni, 2004). Moreover, student teachers believed that their enhanced teaching skills were not only beneficial for teaching students with II, but also for teaching PE in general schools. As suggested by Recchia and Puig (2011), special schools can be a rich training placement for new teachers' learning and development.

The internship experience also helped to clarify student teachers' career paths. Some students indicated a desire to seek a teaching position in a special school or the adapted physical activity area following their internship, due to their positive experiences which were influenced by their relationships with supervisor teachers and cooperation with other student teachers. However, other student teachers felt they could not accept a teaching position working with individuals with II in the future, despite the fact that their perspectives toward students with II changed a great deal as a result of their experiences. For these individuals, negative perspectives and unwillingness to work with individuals with II still existed.

Reflection on workplace activities is regarded as an important approach to support student learning (Connolly, 1994; Hodge et al., 2003; Sykes & Dean, 2013). During the interviews student teachers mentioned reflections on their

teaching. In particular, they spoke about self-reflections in the context of interactions with their students, their supervisor teachers, and other student teachers. Feedback from the students in special schools facilitated student teachers' reflections on the content of what they taught, what appealed to students' interests, how much the students could do in a lesson, and what the students' abilities were (Connolly, 1994; Hodge et al., 2003). As to interactions with supervisor teachers, student teachers primarily reflected on what they learned from the experienced teachers and how they could integrate the knowledge and teaching techniques into their own teaching. In the meanwhile, communication with peers (other student teachers) promoted student teachers' reflections on others' teaching to reciprocally improve their own teaching skills. It seems that self-reflections of student teachers can be regarded as a way of practice and learning during teaching activities (Sykes & Dean, 2013).

Previous studies have tended to use journals to capture students' self-reflections. Journals are regarded as an effective medium for students' self-reflections, where participants can reflect on and share their thoughts, feelings, impressions, beliefs, and attitudes about working with students with and without impairments in physical education (Connolly, 1994). Moreover, the use of journals allows students to be reflective about their practice, their experiences, and themselves as practitioners (Hodge et al., 2003). However, as mentioned previously, research has found there are limitations of pedagogical structure in the use of e-logs or reflective journals to capture reflection (Sykes & Dean, 2013). Student teachers' weekly journals were used as data in this study and

while they did include clear descriptions and summaries of participants' weekly activities, there were few reflections presented. As Recchia and Puig (2011) noted, when journals are used for the purposes of sharing with other colleagues and for assessment of practicum training experiences, it is likely that we cannot have access to student teachers' whole stories from their journals. Student teachers in the present study specifically indicated their beliefs that the weekly journals were just for assessment, so it is not surprising that self-reflections or "secret stories" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996) were not included. Details of routines in special schools are "safer" to share with supervisor teachers for assessment purposes, to avoid the potential for making a "bad" impression. Nevertheless, self-reflection was still highlighted in the findings/interviews. Instructors at BSU should pay attention to the fact that the student teachers see the purpose of the weekly journals as assessment only, and should find other ways to give student teachers' space to talk and share their stories.

Situated into Theory

In the context of situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), we can see that student teachers learned during the process of their internships as they moved from their initial position on the periphery providing assistance to the supervising teacher, to their final position as a physical education teacher who can teach students with impairments in special schools. As newcomers, the student teachers engaged in legitimate peripheral participation so they could effectively participate in the community of practice and enhance their understanding and capability (Hasrati, 2005). Through their

interactions with supervisor teachers (i.e., old-timers), the old-timers set an example for student teachers to learn from in their particular areas of expertise, especially in adaptations and behavioral strategies (Recchia & Puig, 2011). The supervisor teachers gave instructions, provided assistance during classes, and pointed out deficits so that student teachers could progress from the peripheral participation. At this point in their development student teachers were dependent on supervisor teachers; however, there are no criteria for supervisor teachers about how to work with student teachers. Good supervisor teachers may provide positive learning experiences in special schools. In other circumstances, problematic or less positive relationships between student teachers and supervisor teachers could hinder learning and resulted in negative experiences.

Student teachers also learned from interactions with students, gained a deeper understanding of students with II in practice, and acquired the necessary knowledge to communicate with and teach them in the situated context of special schools. During the legitimate peripheral participation, student teachers gained knowledge and skills and enhanced their capabilities to get closer to the central teaching position of full engagement in the community (special school). In the meantime, student teachers' identities were recognized by students in special schools and accepted by the community. However, participants in this study mentioned the loss of power in decisions around teaching content, which was determined by experienced teachers; student teachers had no opportunity to be involved in discussion about lesson content. The power issue that student teachers encountered here may have had a negative influence on their teaching

practice in special schools since it could decrease the sense of full participation (Fuller et al., 2005).

Learning is a process that identity forms and re-forms in participation in the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Identity was experienced in the process of practice and membership was constructed in the community (Wenger, 1998). On one hand, student teachers were becoming teachers during the practice and their identities were recognized by other members in special schools. On the other hand, there was an identity formation when they participated in the teaching and learning activities (Reid et al, 2008). Work placements improve career clarification for students (Dressler & Keeling, 2011) and enhance their awareness of career paths (Zegwaard & Coll, 2011). The teacher identity was highlighted because student teachers changed in their perceptions and progressed in the teaching practice. They desired to belong as full participants in communities of practice (special schools) as well, so some of them decided to pursue a career in adapted physical education/activity. Practice-based learning contexts can provide students a powerful and meaningful learning experience (Hodge et al., 2011).

According to Lave and Wenger (1991), learning is constituted from multiple sources, and is not limited to instructions from teachers or masters. Learning emerges from our own actions in relation to those of others. The interactions with supervisor teachers, other student teachers, and students with intellectual impairments in special schools all had important influences on student teachers' learning and practice. Student teachers learned from teachers'

instruction, from collaboration with other student teachers, and from the feedback of students during the teaching practice, which was developed and enhanced through social relationships in the lived world (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

Student teachers who had exposure to both special schools and general schools tended to indicate there was the interplay between different learning communities of practice (Warhurst, 2008). What student teachers learned in special schools was perceived to also facilitate teaching in general schools. The student teachers believed they could introduce elements of one community of practice (special school) into the other (general school) to enhance the learning in different communities (Hodge et al., 2011).

Implications and Recommendations

Based on their self-reflections about their experiences in the internships in special schools for students with II, student teachers' made recommendations intended to improve the experience for future interns. These recommendations included a call for sufficient academic and mental preparation prior to the internship, in order to increase student teachers' knowledge and confidence when entering the special schools and encountering unanticipated problems. In fact, the student teachers did not complete a course in adapted physical activity prior to their internship, no such course available. Therefore, there was almost nothing they learned involving teaching students with impairments until they chose or were assigned to do their internship in special schools. Hodge and Jansma (1999) and Hodge et al. (2003) discussed concerns and limitations

associated with preparing educators through University coursework with no practicum or internship. In the present study, the opposite situation existed; student teachers discussed concerns and limitations associated with participating in an internship with no accompanying coursework. The combination of coursework and practicum experiences is recommended (Hodge & Jansma, 1999), therefore curriculum in adapted physical education is required in China.

Related to the recommendation above, participants of this study also highlighted the lack of textbooks particularly aiming to clarify how to teach students with impairments in PE lessons in China. There is a clear need for the development of textbook and other teaching materials.

Student teachers who were able to teach physical education at the special schools as a member of a group appreciated this arrangement, whereas teaching individually often caused student teachers to feel overwhelmed. Teaching as a group enabled practical solutions to address students' diversity such as dividing the students among the group members to teach separately. Moreover, cooperation with other student teachers in special schools was helpful in the development of both teaching and confidence. Student teachers learned from each other to improve their teaching skills and corrected each other's faults during practice. Based on student teachers' experiences in this study, a third recommendation is that student teachers should be assigned to, and teach, in teams at special schools. In this way, they can assist, support, and inspire each other.

Student teachers were dependent on their supervisor teachers in the special schools to the extent that positive interactions between supervisor teachers and student teachers likely contributed to a better environment of learning; learning takes place in social practice and relationships with others (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Therefore, supervisor teachers need to deepen their understanding of the training of student teachers to avoid misunderstandings which could hinder student teachers' participation and result in negative experiences.

Also mentioned by the participants was the need for more contact with students to contribute to a deeper understanding of the students and facilitate teaching. To enable this, training of teachers should include more opportunities to actively interact with students with impairments during internships at the special schools. In addition, my own involvement as a volunteer with Special Olympics programs contributed to changing my perceptions of students with II and increasing my understanding, so similar volunteer positions could be recommended.

Limitations

There were several limitations in this study. The data were collected from seven student teachers who volunteered for this study. This sample is relatively small, and likely does not include all perspectives of student teachers who worked in special schools. In fact, when I telephoned potential participants, some student teachers who expressed negative perspectives about their internship during our telephone conversation refused to be involved in the study.

Perhaps they did not want share their "bad" stories which could lead others to judge them unfavorably; rather, they wanted to be seen as "good" people. As a result, however, the views of individuals with more negative perspectives are likely absent. Future research should include the comprehensive perspectives from all student teachers. Perhaps use of anonymous reports may dispel student teachers' reluctance to share their negative stories.

A second limitation is that the second set of planned member checks were not be implemented with all participants. Specifically, only two participants completed the second member check (by email) and confirmed that the themes described as having emerged from my analysis represented their stories in special schools. The other five student teachers did not respond to my emails. Therefore, the degree to which the themes described are representative of their stories is not known.

Finally, the participants in this study completed their internship in different years. This could potentially result in certain different perspectives towards their experiences in special schools (although differences were not evident in results and discussion).

Conclusions

Overall, the internship experiences at special schools for students with II were useful and indispensable learning opportunities and meaningful events in the life journeys of the student teachers who participated in this study. They experienced personal growth and changed in a number of ways during the internship, including in their perspectives and attitudes towards individual with

II, perceptions of students in special schools, and their skills and competence in teaching physical education. They learned from the teaching practice and from interactions with students, supervisor teachers and peers in special schools, to become capable physical education teachers. Although career choices can be affected by a variety of factors, the internships increased the possibility that student teachers in that some chose to alter their career paths and work in a special school as a result of their experiences. And for student teachers who decide to work in general schools, the positive changes in perspectives and perceptions they experienced could be beneficial for future inclusion in China.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Information Letter

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation

INFORMATION LETTER

Study Title: **Student Teachers' Experiences in Special Schools**

Researcher	**Supervisor**
Kun He Master of Arts Student Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation University of Alberta E-mail : khe1@ualberta.ca	Dr. Janice Causgrove Dunn Associate Professor Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation University of Alberta E-mail : janice.causgrovedunn@ualberta.ca

Dear Participant,

I am a master of arts student in the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation at the University of Alberta. I would like to ask you to participate in an interview for my research study. The purpose of this study is to learn about student teachers' experiences of physical education in special schools for students with intellectual disabilities in China. The use of this study will be used to support my thesis.

If you agree to participate in this study you will complete an interview. The interview will focus on some aspects of your experiences in Special schools. More specifically, I will ask you about your experiences of teaching students with intellectual disabilities in Special schools. The interview will be audio-recorded and will take about 60 minutes. You will also be asked to share your teaching plans and weekly journals with me. I will scan the original documents and return them to you.

I will e-mail you the interview transcript and a summary of the analysis of your interview. You can comment on the accuracy of my analysis, add any additional information, or remove any information if you wish. This will take about 20 minutes. Therefore, the total time commitment is a maximum of **80 minutes.**

Benefits/Risks

First, the information you provide may contribute to a better understanding of

the training of student teachers, and may reveal strategies or practices for the future practice of adapted physical education in China. Second, by participating in this study you will contribute to my professional development as a researcher. There are no known risks associated with this study.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

When the audio files from the interviews are transcribed I will remove your name and any personal information. I will also remove your name and personal information from your teaching plans and weekly journals when I copy them. Any information that you provide remains confidential. We will store all information on a password protected computer. Only members of research will have access to this information. The information will be destroyed five years after publication of the thesis.

Freedom to Withdraw

Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means you do not have to participate in the study. There will be no negative consequences if you do not want to participate. Your information will be removed from the study with no consequences if you decide later that you do not want to participate. If you wish to withdraw, please contact me before April 1st, 2013.

If you have questions about this study, you may contact me (khe1@ualberta.ca) or Dr. Janice Causgrove Dunn (janice.causgrovedunn@alberta.ca). If you have concerns about this study, you may contact the University of Alberta Research Ethics Office at 1-780-492-2615. This office has no direct involvement with this project.

Sincerely,

Kun He

你好，

我是阿尔伯塔大学体育教育与休闲学院的硕士学生。我希望邀请你参与我研究的一个访谈。 这个研究的目的在于了解体育教育专业学生在培智学校实习的经历。这个研究将被用于支持我的硕士论文。

如果你同意参与本研究，你将会完成一段个人访谈。这个访谈有关你在特殊学校的经历。这段访谈大概持续 60 分钟，而且访谈内容将被录音。你同时需要提供你的教案以及周记以复印，复印后将被退还给你。

我会将访谈内容的文字记录以及对我对访谈内容的分析总结电邮给你，你可以自由评论其内容以及添加或删除任何信息。这将需要大约 20 分钟。因此，你总共需要 80 分钟参与本研究。

意义/风险

首先你提供的信息将有助于更好的理解实习学生的培训情况，而且将会为适应性体育在中国的发展提供更多有用的意见。其次你的参与将有助于本人的研究。在本研究中，没有任何相关风险。

匿名参与和保密性

谈话录音被转录时，以及复印教案和周记时，我会删除你的姓名和任何相关的个人信息。你提供的所有信息是被保密的，而且将被保存在有密码保护的电脑上。这些信息将在论文发表五年后删除。

退出自由

你的参与完全出于自愿。你没有被强迫参与本研究，而且你如果不想参与对你没有任何负面影响。如果你决定退出本研究，你所有的信息将被删除。如果你决定退出，请在 2013 年 4 月 1 日前通知我。

如果你有任何有关这个研究的问题，你可以联系我 (khe1@ualberta.ca) 或者 Dr. Janice Causgrove Dunn (janice.causgrovedunn@alberta.ca)。如果你有任何的有关这个研究的疑虑，你可以联系 the University of Alberta Research Ethics Office，电话 1-780-492-2615.

研究者：何坤

Appendix B: Informed Consent Forms

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation

INFORMED CONSENT FORM（知情同意书）

Study Title: **Student Teachers' Experiences in Special Schools**

Investigator	**Supervisor**
Kun He Master of Arts Student Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation University of Alberta E-mail: khe1@ualberta.ca	Dr. Janice Causgrove Dunn Associate Professor Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation University of Alberta E-mail : janice.causgrovedunn@ualberta.ca

Do you understand that you have been asked to be in a research study? Yes No

你是否了解你被邀请参与本研究？

Have you read and received a copy of the attached Information Sheet? Yes No

你是否收到以及阅读了有关本研究的信息说明？

Do you understand that your interviews will be recorded and used in this study? Yes No

你是否了解你的访谈内容将被录音，并且用于本研究？

Do you understand the benefits and risks involved in taking part in this research study? Yes No

你是否了解参与本研究的意义及风险？

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study? Yes No

你是否有机会提问及讨论本研究？

Do you understand that you are free to refuse to participate, or to withdraw from the study at any time, without consequence, and that your information will be withdrawn at your request? Yes No

你是否了解你可以在任何时间没有任何后果地自由退出本研究，而且你的信息可以应你的要求被删除？

Has the issue of confidentiality been explained to you? Do you understand who will have access to your information? Yes No

你是否了解本研究的保密性？以及谁将可以接触到你的信息？

I agree to take part in this study （我同意参与本研究）:

_____ _____

Signature of Research Participant（签名） Date（日期）

Appendix C: Interview Schedule

Research Questions

- What are the experiences of student teachers who are teaching physical education in special schools?
- How do the student teachers make sense of their practicum experiences in the special schools?
- How do the internships in physical education in special schools contribute to student teachers' perceptions of their ability to teach students with impairments?

Conceptual Framework (CF)

- Learning is a process that takes place in social practice.
- To learn in the *community of practice* is to gradually transit from being a newcomer to becoming a master through participation.
- Learning in practice is developed and changed through social relationships in the lived world.

A. Tell me about your experiences as a physical education student teacher at this school.

Prompts:

1. Could you tell me what you did in special schools? (descriptive/knowing). What do you think about it? (thinking)
2. Tell me about the easiest and hardest parts of your work. (contrast/knowing) Why do you think so? (thinking) What did you do when you meet difficulties? (structural/knowing)
3. How do you know if you are doing a good job at the special school? (narrative/knowing) (Do you have a story that describes how you felt about your teaching?)

B. How did you come to your standards and expectations for students in your PE class?

Prompts:

1. What would have assisted your students in meeting the expectations? (structural/knowing)
    - Affect (enjoyed it/not)
    - Social
    - physical
2. Overall, how do you think your students did in PE class? (narrative/knowing)
3. How did you know if your students were doing a good or bad job in PE class? (narrative/knowing) What standards did you use? (structural/narrative) What expectations did you hold? (structural/narrative)
4. How did you mark your students' performance? (narrative) What factors you took into consideration when you gave a mark? (structural/narrative) How did this marking scheme make you feel? (narrative)
5. How did you go about preparing your lesson plans? (narrative) Did they change over time? What influenced the changes? (knowing)
6. What would you do differently next time if you were teaching and assessing a student with disability? (structural/narrative)

C. Tell me about your interactions with your supervisor teachers, school colleagues and other student teachers in the special school and in the university. (CF)

Prompts:

1. What role did the supervising teachers play in your experiences of teaching? How did you feel about their support?
2. How did these interactions influence your teaching? (narrative) What do you think about the interactions with them? (thinking)
3. How did supervisor teachers assess your work in special schools? (narrative) What do you think about the assessment? (thinking/circular) How did it make you feel? (narrative)
4. How about your interactions with other student teachers? (narrative) What do you think about the interactions with them? (thinking)

D. Tell me about your interactions with the students in the special school. (CF)

Prompts:

1. How did the interactions influence your teaching? (narrative)
2. How did you feel teaching students in the special school? (narrative)
3. What did you learn from the students? (knowing)

E. What meaning did your experiences in the special school hold for you as a prospective teacher? (CF)

Prompts:

1. How might the experiences in special school influence you in the future? (narrative/thinking)
2. How do you feel about yourself as a PE teacher after your internship in special schools? (evaluative/thinking)

Figure 3.1 Results of the Thematic Analysis of the Interview Data

Themes	Subthemes
I can teach PE in special schools	Nothing was easy in special schools. You have to learn how to teach.
Different, but meaningful	PE is different here. I've changed from this experience.
It could be better	