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Effective school-employment transitions for students with mild intellectual disability

VEERLE GARRELS, DEPARTMENT OF VOCATIONAL TEACHER EDUCATION, OSLO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY, OSLO, NORWAY

HANNE MARIE HØYBRÅTEN SIGSTAD, DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF OSLO, OSLO, NORWAY

A young man in a dark hoodie is silhouetted against a bright sunset over the ocean. He is looking down and to the left, away from the camera. The water is dark blue with white foam from waves breaking in the distance. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and light blue.

Meet Roy:

- Aged 15
- Interested in cars and mechanics
- Mild intellectual disability
- Special education
- Career choice?

What is mild intellectual disability?

- Impairment in intellectual functioning:
 - Logical and abstract thinking
 - Verbal reasoning
 - Working memory
 - Information processing
- IQ 50 – 70
- Impairment in adaptive functioning:
 - Everyday functioning
 - Self-management
- Occurs < age 18

World Health Organization (2019):

“Adults with mild intellectual disability can generally achieve relatively independent living and employment as adults but may require appropriate support”



Is there a career in mechanics for Roy?

When Roy faces
reality...

- In Norway, people with intellectual disability are mostly excluded from the labour market
- Only 2% are in competitive employment
- Most of them are in day service centres or without daytime activity
- Ca. 10 % attend sheltered workshops

- Limited economic independence
- Smaller social networks
- Lower levels of self-determination
- Poorer mental and physical health



United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007), §27:

"States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities"

United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal nr.8:

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Question:

What characterizes the labour market participation for people with intellectual disability in your country?



Some barriers to employment

Disability pension?

81% of young adults with intellectual disability aged 18-19 receive a disability pension

Fast lane to labour market exclusion?



Workplace-related barriers?

- Employers may be reluctant to hire employees with intellectual disability
- They may question their competence and productiveness
- Narrow views of the type of work tasks that employees with intellectual disability may conduct



A self-fulfilling prophecy?

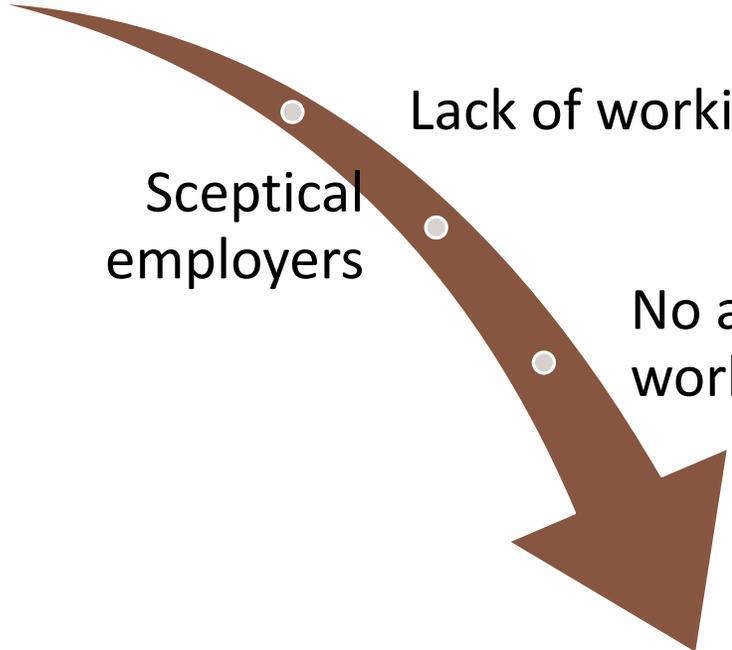
Poor-quality
education

Lack of working skills

Sceptical
employers

No assessment of
working capacity

Unemployment



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graph TD; A[Poor-quality education] --> B[Sceptical employers]; B --> C[Lack of working skills]; C --> D[No assessment of working capacity]; D --> E[Unemployment];
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Questions:

- How are students with intellectual disability being prepared for working life during the school years?
- In your country, which barriers do people with intellectual disability face upon trying to enter the labour market?



Our research project:

- “Effective school-employment transitions for students with mild intellectual disability”
- Investigate how school-work transition may be facilitated for young adults with intellectual disability
- 2020 – 2024
- University of Oslo (UiO), Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet), and Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).
- Advisory Board: Members from Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) and Kansas University (KU).
- Funded by the Research Council of Norway

How we started:

- Familiarizing ourselves with the field
- Pilot study: photovoice study with employees with intellectual disability
- Scoping review of 30 years of Nordic research on the topic



Garrels, Veerle, and Hanne Marie Høybråten Sigstad. (2019). Motivation for Employment in Norwegian Adults with Mild Intellectual Disability: The Role of Competence, Autonomy, and Relatedness. *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, 21(1), pp. 250–261. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16993/sjdr.639>

RESEARCH

Motivation for Employment in Norwegian Adults with Mild Intellectual Disability: The Role of Competence, Autonomy, and Relatedness

Veerle Garrels¹ and Hanne Marie Høybråten Sigstad²

¹ Department of Vocational Teacher Education, Oslo Metropolitan University, NO

² Department of Special Needs Education, University of Oslo, NO

Corresponding author: Veerle Garrels (veerle.garrels@oslomet.no)

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Employment for persons with intellectual disability in the Nordic countries: A scoping review

Veerle Garrels Hanne Marie Høybråten Sigstad

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Three work packages in the project:

1.
Employer
survey

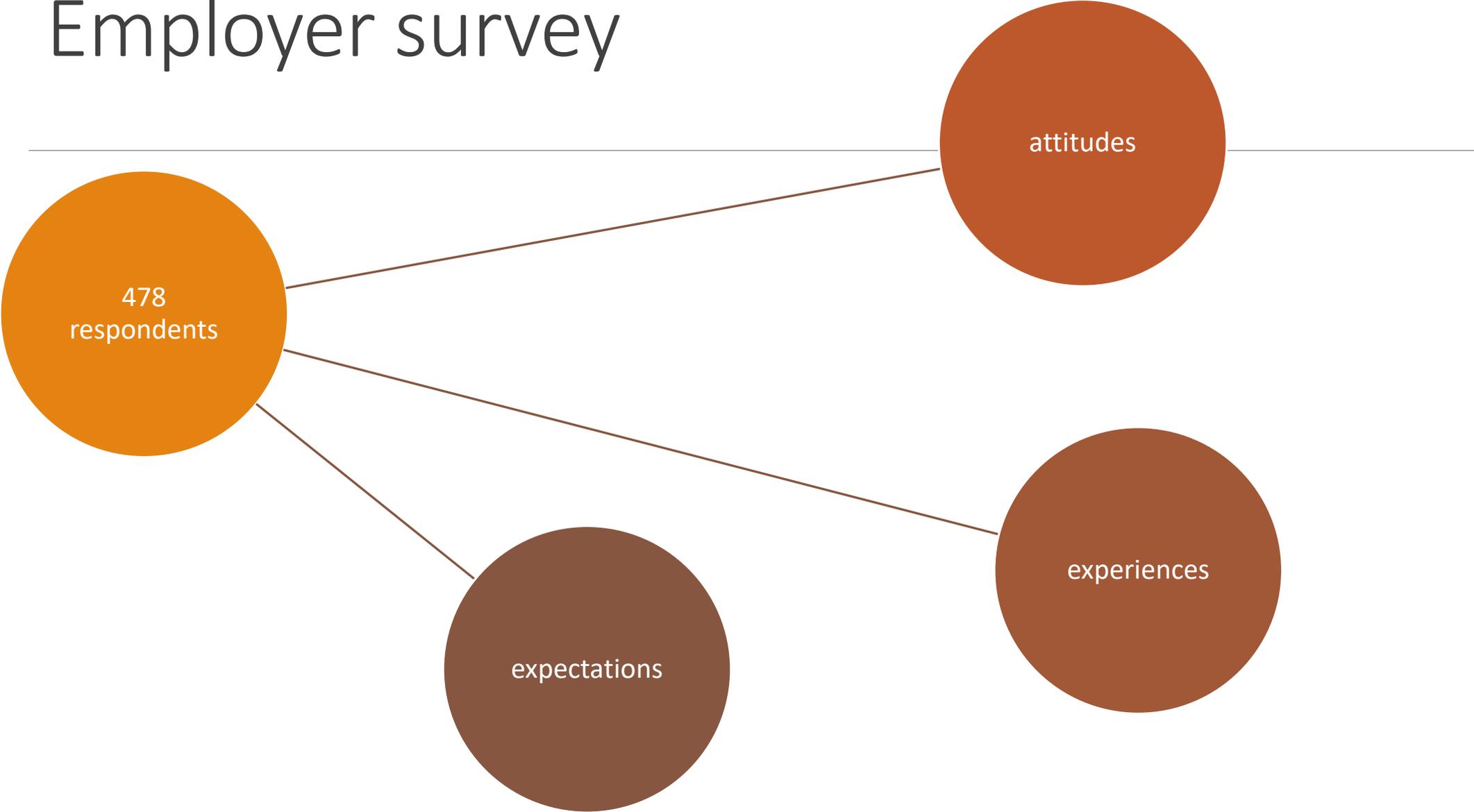


2.
Qualitative
case study

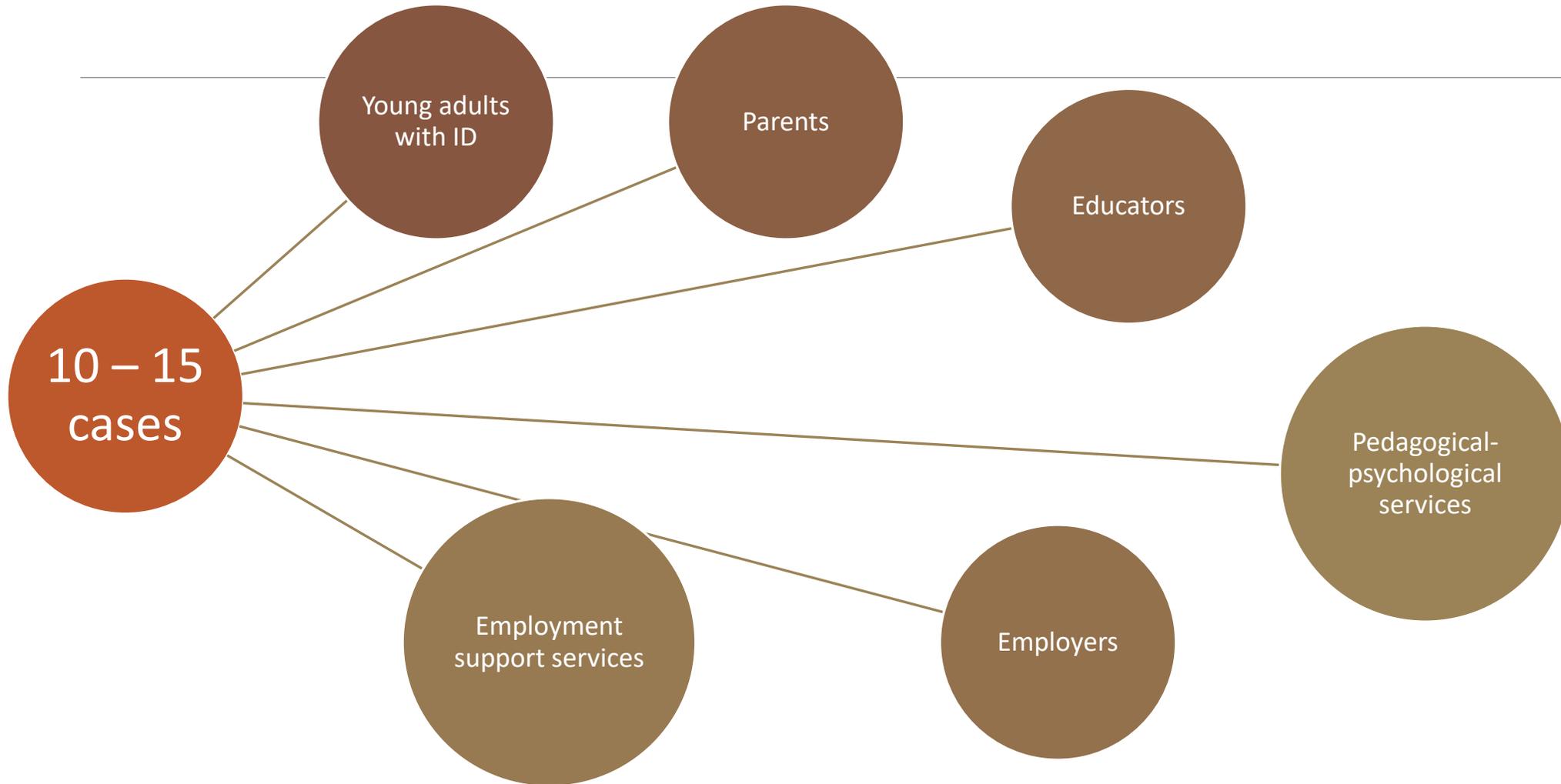


3.
Transition
manual

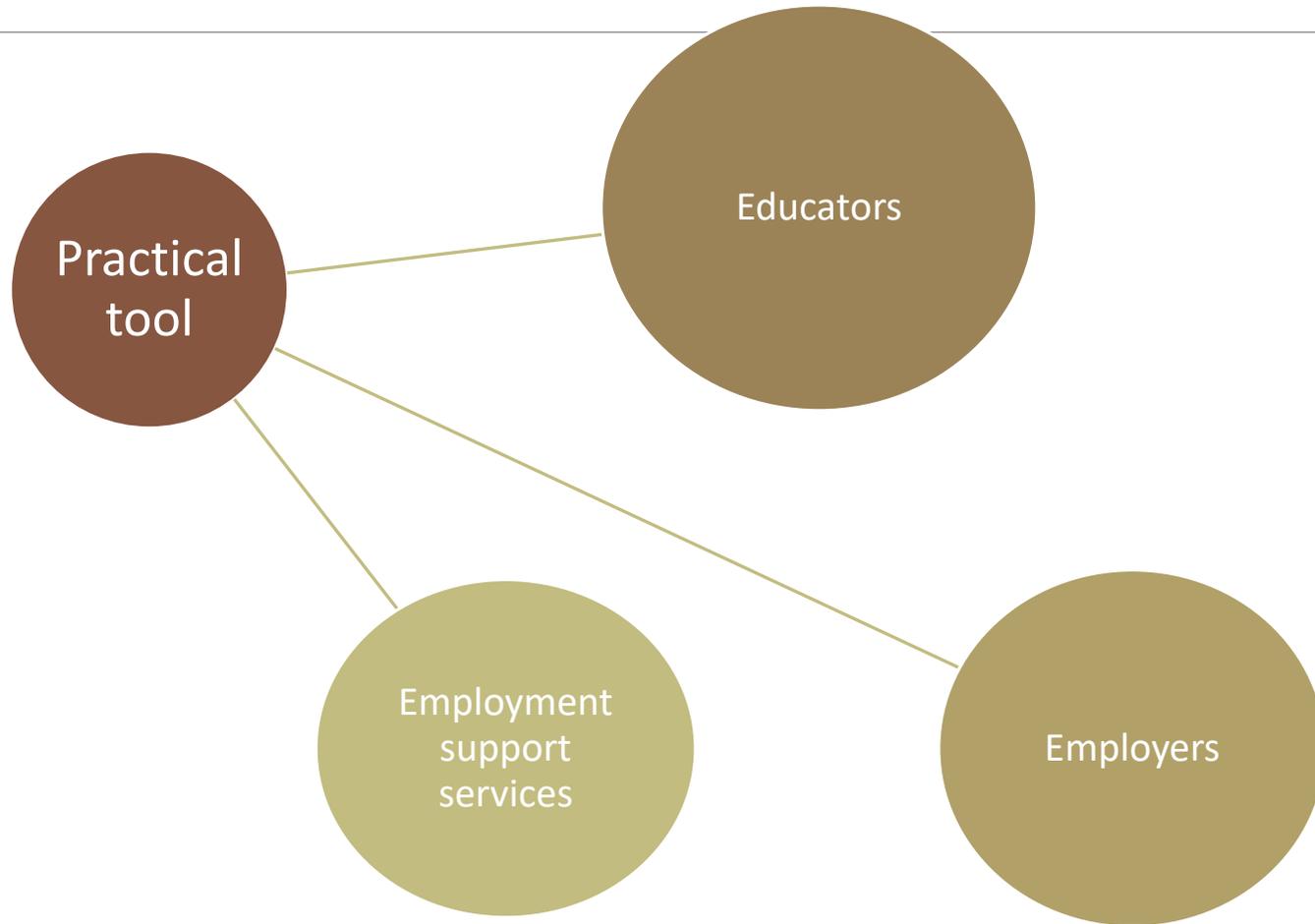
Employer survey



Qualitative best-case study



Transition manual



Expected outcomes of the study:

- Insight in how young adults with intellectual disability may gain access to the labour market
- Information to educators about relevant learning goals
- Information about individualized supports that work
- Information about employers' perspectives
- Development of a transition manual

Questions:

- What are the challenges that vocational teachers face in preparing students with intellectual disability for working life?
- More generally, what are the main challenges concerning students with special educational needs?



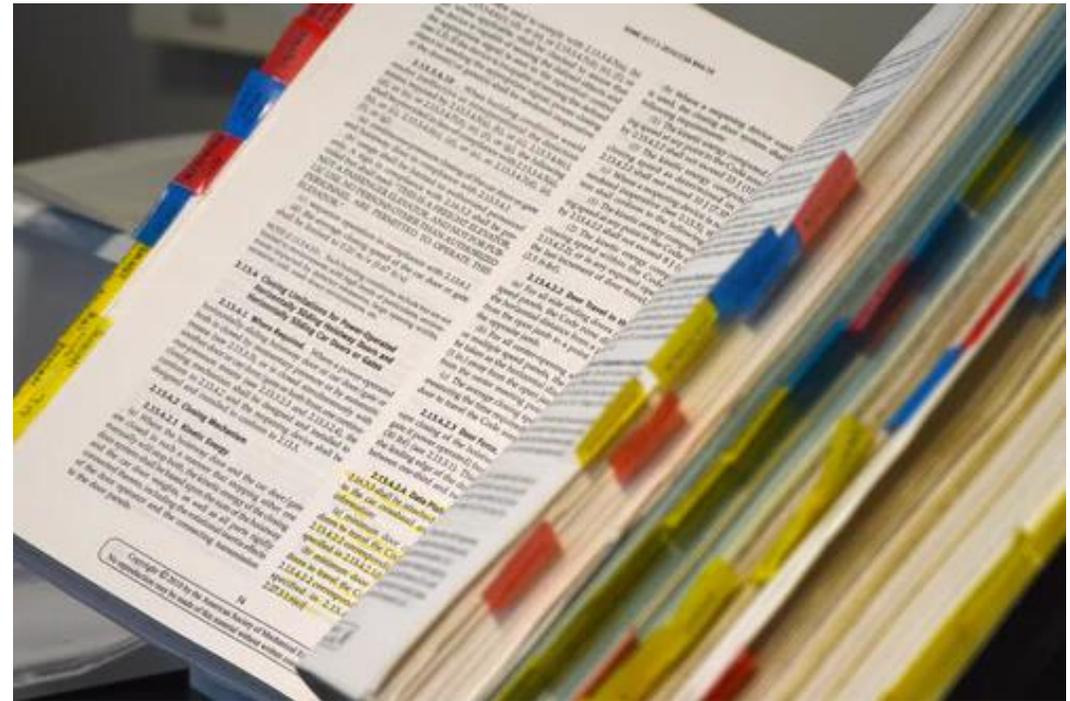
Question:

- What are the possibilities for accommodating vocational education and training for students with intellectual disability?



Question:

- What should a transition manual look like so that it is useful and relevant for VET teachers?



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