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Effective school-employment transitions for students with mild intellectual disability

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A person is silhouetted against a bright sunset over the ocean. The person is looking down and slightly to the left. The ocean is dark blue with white-capped waves. The sky is a mix of orange and yellow. The bottom of the image has a solid orange bar.

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?

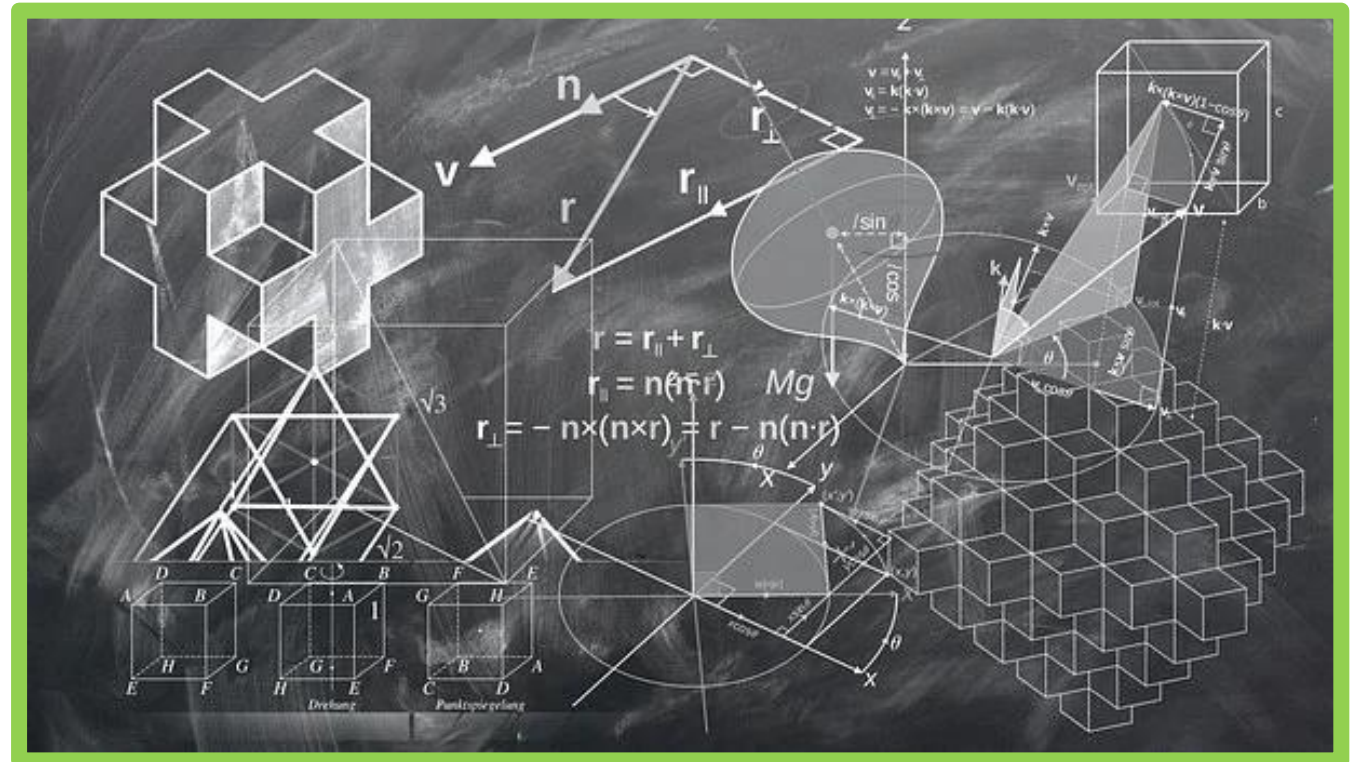
81% of young adults with intellectual disability aged 18-19 receive a disability pension

Fast lane to labour market exclusion?



School-related barriers?

- Educators may find it difficult to prepare their students for an uncertain labor market
- Low expectations
- Ca. 30% of Norwegian students with intellectual disability are in a study preparation track rather than in vocational education



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

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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

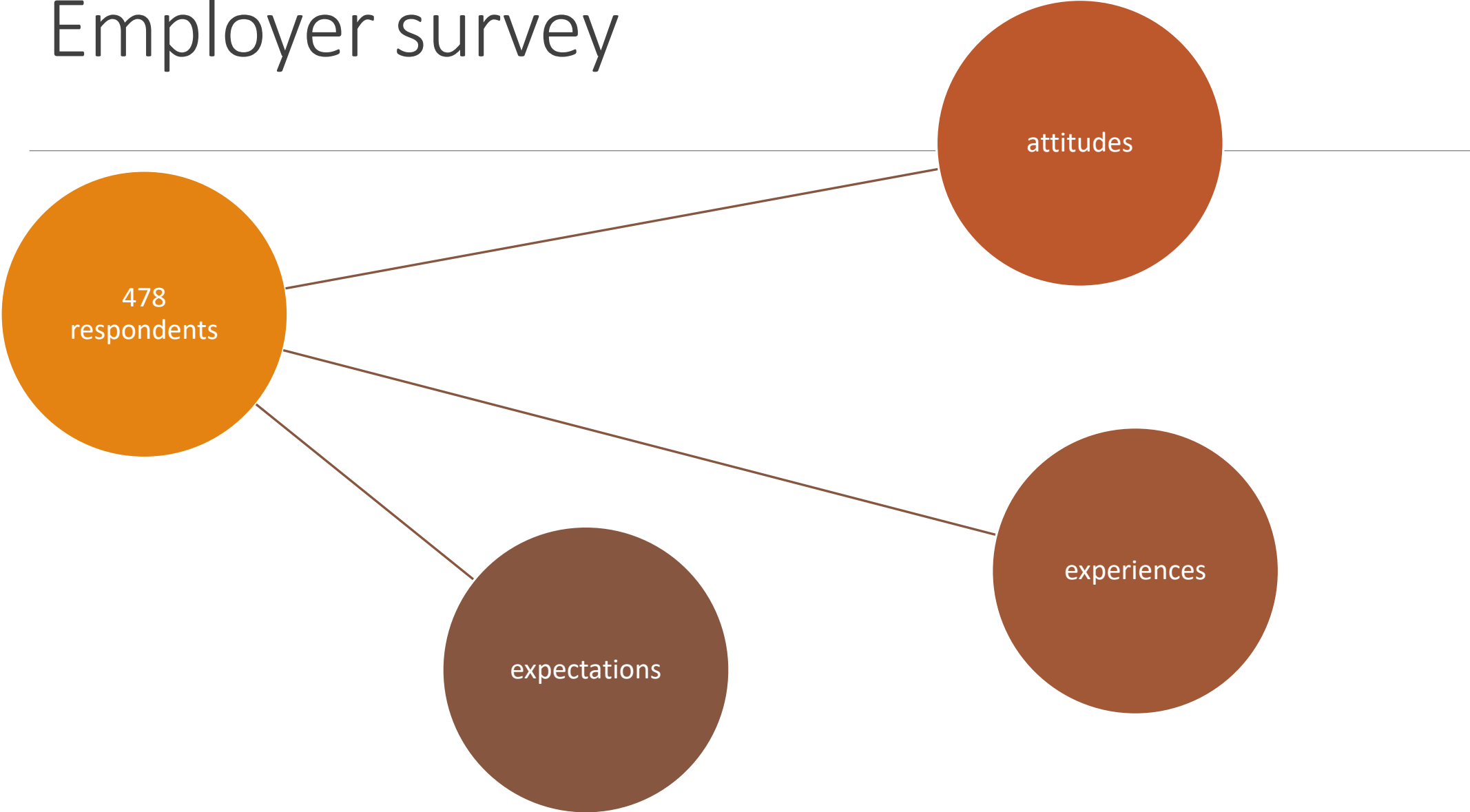


2.
Qualitative
case study

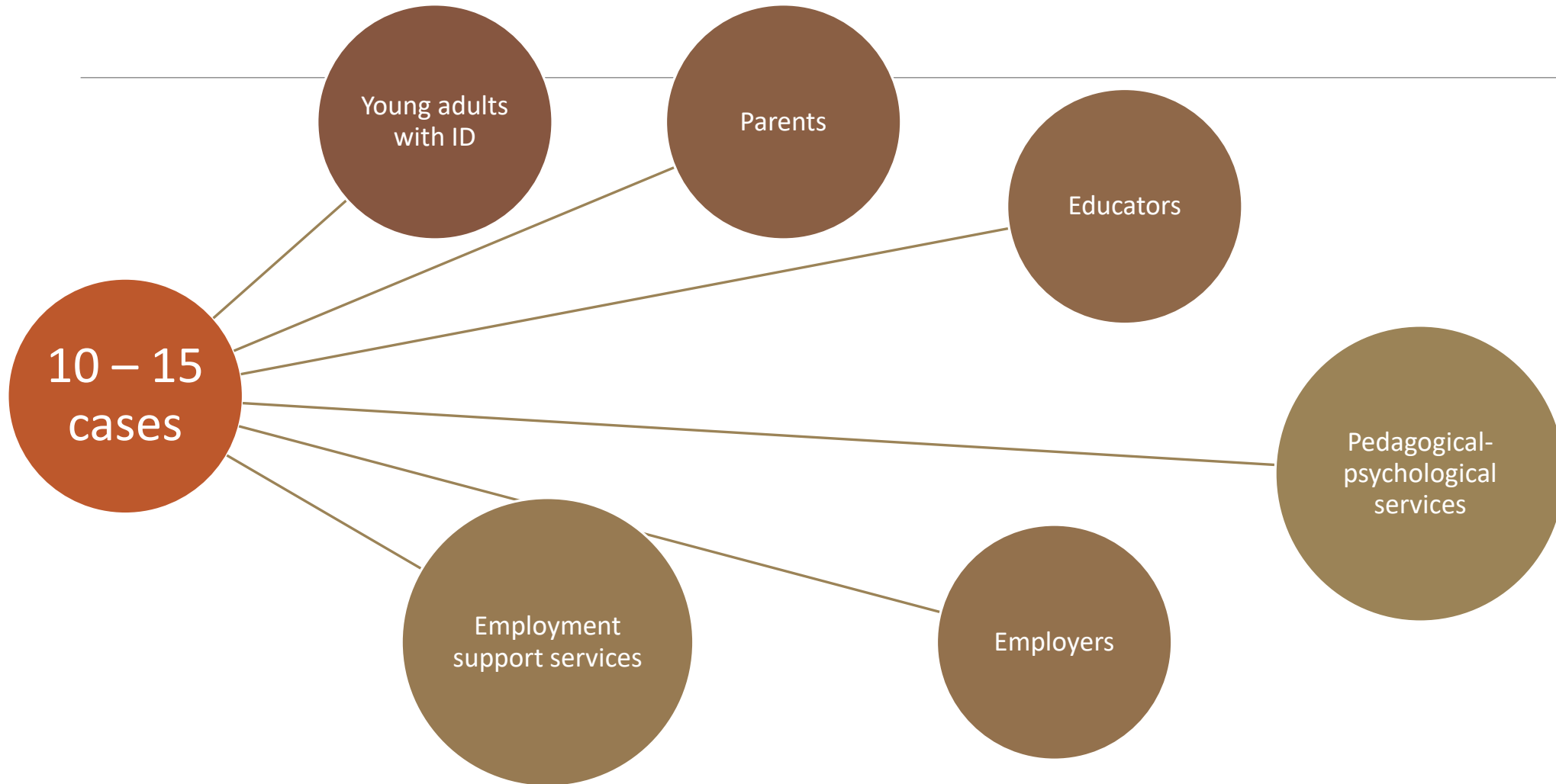


3.
Transition
manual

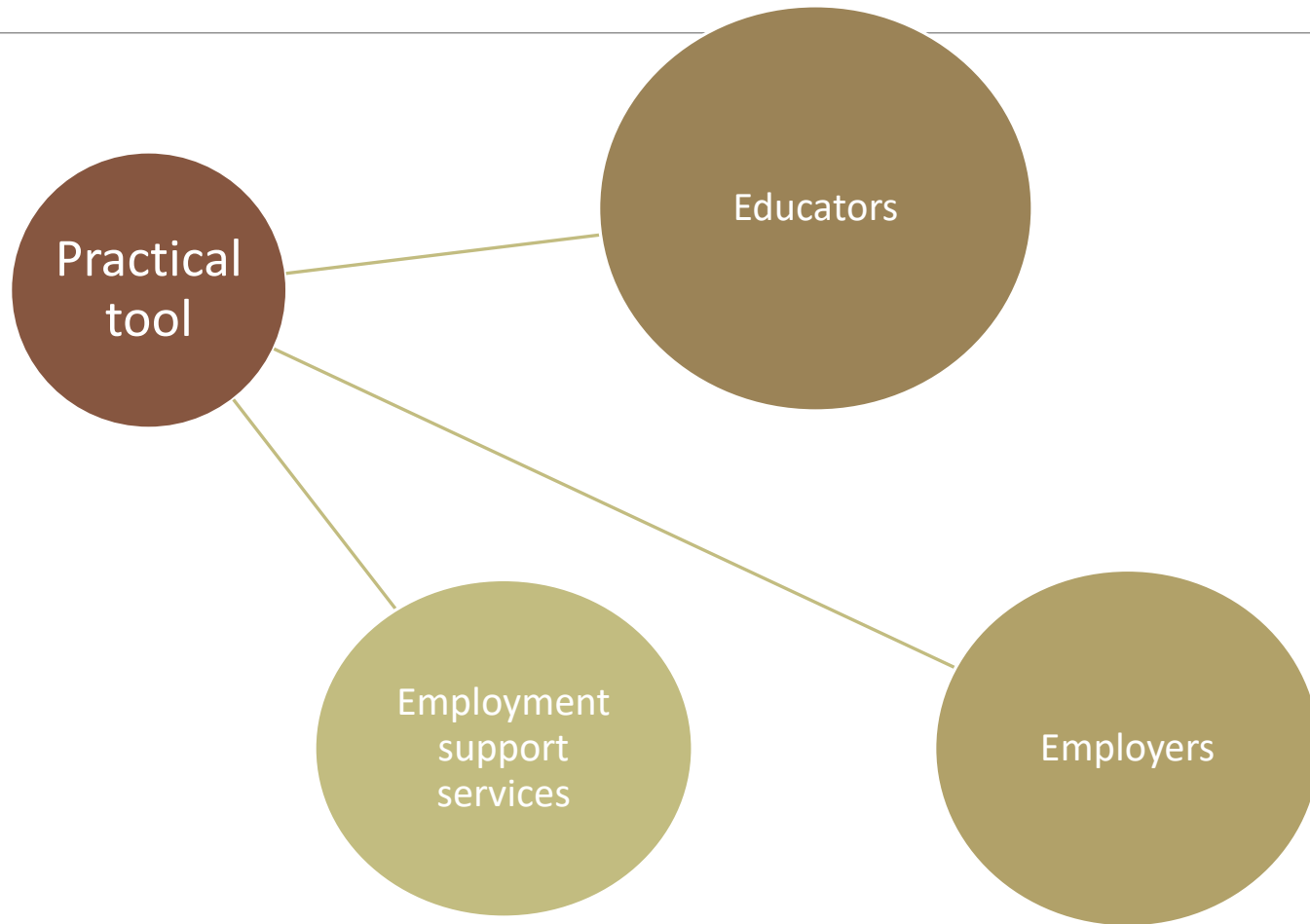
Employer survey



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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