

Pathways for Disabled Students to Tertiary Education and Employment

Case Studies from Norway

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Strategies and skills in transitions to tertiary education and employment

Case studies of the pathways of young adults with impairments and learning difficulties in Norway

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X. Summary

This report is a part of the Norwegian contribution to the international research project “Pathways for disabled students to employment and tertiary education” headed by the OECD. The aim of this report is to study examples of “successful” transitions from upper secondary education to tertiary education or employment, and identify the strategies and skills the young adults – and their stakeholders – use to succeed in and with the transition. Stakeholders, in this context, means service providers, teachers, professors, employers, family, friends and the like who have had an active stake in the pathways of our cases.

In this report we present the main findings of 9 qualitative case studies. In total, we have conducted 28 interviews with young adults in education or employment, some of their family members, teachers, colleges, advisors, service providers and social workers.

This report documents the crucial role of family involvement, and the mother is most often singled out as the most important resource. Family involvement is a key factor, enabling the young to make the transition from upper secondary education to tertiary education and employment. Strong family involvement throughout childhood and adolescence facilitates sufficient accommodations and support services in school and everyday life – or teaches the young how to master their situation without proper accommodation – which in sum builds a solid foundation for future pathways. Through the efforts and actions of the parents, the young adult has learned how to write applications, make appeals, approach physicians, teachers, scientific staff and accommodators, utilize technical aids, organize assistance, plan ahead, etc. In addition she or he increasingly becomes aware of her or his own needs, and is able to proactively address tertiary educational institutions, employers or support services in adult life.

In this report there is also a focus on what steps are taken by teachers and related staff when they succeed in creating a supportive learning environment and in facilitating successful transitions. Our cases show that knowledge and knowhow in the school system, and willingness to recognize student’s needs, combined with relevant and sufficient accommodations early in the process are important for the benefit of primary and secondary education, as well as in the development of future pathways. In the cases where this has been lacking, the hardships of the informants has been increased, both mentally and practically. Lack of flexibility in the learning environment has been another important factor: Several of our cases reported suffering significantly from absent or insufficient accommodations throughout their school years - almost none reported having received relevant career counseling when they graduated from upper secondary education.

In addition, this report explores what scientific and administrative personnel in higher educational institutions do to foster equal educational opportunities for students with impairments or learning difficulties, and how they facilitate transitions to employment. Our findings vary strongly: Some of the informants suffer from negligence and lack of knowledge and knowhow in the institutions, while others have good experiences – but the good experiences are often guided by the student’s own capability to ask for help and make demands. This, however, is no guarantee for getting adequate help.

This report also looks into how other service providers (e.g., transportation, technical aids, health, employment, economical benefits, etc.) facilitate continual education, transitional opportunities and entry into the labor market for young adults with impairments and learning difficulties. Our informants tell

stories that go in different directions. Some of our informants have experienced the Norwegian Labor and Welfare Service (NAV) as a rigid, time consuming and tiresome service provider, but on the other hand some of our informants were also largely satisfied with the services they had received from NAV, and found the treatment decent and helpful. Some of our informants viewed NAV's labor market programs as important, not only for helping them to get a job, but also in increasing their self-awareness and self-esteem. In addition, several of our cases had their tertiary education financed through vocational rehabilitation, a strategy specifically aimed at improving the employment abilities of persons with impairments at the same time as reducing the cost of taking higher education for those at risk of falling into unemployment after graduating.

We have summed up institutional, strategies as well as some skills in the end of the report (Table 1).

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1. Introduction

1.1 About this report

This report has been written as a contribution to the international research project “Pathways for disabled students to employment and tertiary education” headed by the OECD¹. The Work Research Institute has been commissioned by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labor and Social Inclusion to implement the studies in Norway that have been agreed upon by all the countries participating in the research project. These studies are as follows:

- a) A country background report on policies, data, provisions and practices related to the transition from education to employment for young adults with impairments and learning difficulties.
- b) A longitudinal quantitative study on the pathways of graduates with impairments and learning difficulties after upper secondary and tertiary education.
- c) Qualitative case studies of the strategies and skills of young adults with impairments and learning difficulties – and their stakeholders – in the transition to employment or tertiary education.

In this report, we present the main findings of 9 qualitative case studies. In total, we have conducted 28 interviews with young adults in education or employment and with some of their family members, teachers, colleges, advisors, service providers and social workers.

1.2 Purpose of the case studies

The aim of these case studies, as defined by the countries participating in the project, has been to study examples of “successful” transitions to tertiary education or employment. This means that the cases we have studied are those of young adults with impairments or learning difficulties who have continued their education after graduating from high school or higher education, or who have entered into steady employment (OECD 2009).

Furthermore, the purpose of the studies is to identify those strategies and skills of both the young adults themselves and their stakeholders that have led them to pursue further education or employment. Stakeholders in this context means service providers, teachers, professors, employers, family, friends and the like who have had a positive influence on the pathways of our cases.

More specifically, the purpose of these case studies has been to describe the following:

- What kind of strategies and skills the young adults and their families have used to ensure “successful” transitions into employment or tertiary education.
- What schools, teachers and other staff do to create a supportive learning environment and to facilitate transitions into employment and further education.
- What tertiary educational institutions, scientific and administrative staff do to foster equal educational opportunities for students with impairments or learning difficulties, and how they facilitate transitions to employment.

¹ http://www.oecd.org/document/41/0,3343,en_2649_39263294_38913705_1_1_1_1,00.html

- How other service providers (i.e., in transportation, technical aids, health, employment, economical benefits, etc.) facilitate continual education, transitional opportunities and entry into the labor market for young adults with impairments and learning difficulties.

In the subsequent chapters, we do not distinguish between *institutional strategies* and the *strategies and skills of individuals within these institutions*. One of the reasons for the absence of such a distinction is that most of our cases emphasized institutional strategies as having been more important on their path to tertiary education or employment.

Another reason for the absence of this distinction is that the implementation of institutional strategies is dependent on the assessment and actions of individuals within these institutions. Special and segregated education is one example of an institutional strategy intended to ensure that students who cannot benefit from what the ordinary school system can offer, are entitled to a special education program that sometimes might be implemented in a segregated learning environment (Legard 2009:91-92). Special education is allocated on the basis of an evaluation made by experts (individuals) from the Educational-Psychological Service, and the need for special education has to be discovered by someone – perhaps a teacher or counselor within the educational system, the parents of a student or the student himself/herself. As such, this strategy is highly dependent on the strategies and skills of individuals.

Vocational rehabilitation is another institutional strategy that can be used by the Norwegian Labor and Welfare Service (NAV) to enhance the employability of persons who have a reduced capacity to perform paid labor or who have a limited range of vocational choices due to “illness, injury or defect” (Legard 2009:54). However, the execution of this strategy is based the individual judgments of various individuals within the medical, labor and welfare system. A physician must evaluate the person’s health condition, and a NAV officer will also assess the person’s vocational choices, his/her ability to perform work and if other measures are more appropriate than vocational rehabilitation. We have therefore chosen to include the institutional strategies and strategies and skills of individuals in the same paragraphs and chapters of this report.

1.3 Methodology

As requested by the OECD, our interviewees/cases have been recruited through support services for students or employees with impairments or learning difficulties. Our recruitment criteria were the following:

- The interviewees have to have a physical or mental impairment (CNC A students) or a mental illness or learning difficulty (CNC B students).²
- They must be 19-35 years old and have an upper secondary or tertiary educational degree.
- The cases have to include students in tertiary education or who have a job with a salary that is fully paid by the employer.

² The CNC (cross-national category) A or B categories come from the OECD classification system for students with disabilities. CNC A refers to “students with disabilities or impairments viewed in medical terms as organic disorders attributable to organic pathologies, e.g., in relation to sensory, motor or neurological defects. The educational need is considered to arise primarily from problems attributable to these disabilities.” CNC B refers to “students with behavioral or emotional disorders, or specific difficulties in learning. The educational need is considered to arise primarily from problems in the interaction between the student and the educational context” (Ebersold and Evans 2003).

According to the OECD, these support services were supposed to be “transition programs aiming at improving access of students with disabilities to tertiary education and to employment” (OECD 2009:4). Such transition programs, however, are scarce in Norway (Legard 2009). In upper secondary education, transition services are basically comprised of career guidance for all high school students. This career guidance is not specifically geared towards students with impairments or learning difficulties, nor can career guidance be called a transition *program*, given that career advisors normally do not stay in touch with students after they have graduated. Similar career guidance services also exist for all students in tertiary education, albeit on a smaller scale. We therefore avoided recruiting interviewees through career advisors in upper secondary or tertiary education because it is difficult to identify former students with impairments or learning difficulties and because the distinction between which advisors know about the trajectory of their former students and which do not would be arbitrary. However, we managed to obtain the names of the candidates through an advisor at a school with only students in special education.

The available transitional labor market outside the educational service is even fewer in number than the transition services in upper and secondary education. Recently, however, a few transition projects have been established by NAV. These projects aim to assist students with disabilities, especially those with mental illnesses, helping them to transition into employment after tertiary education. However, these programs report very low success rates in terms of achieving regular paid work for their participants. We requested that two such programs could identify potential cases for us, but this proved futile. One of the projects was already completed when we made contact with them. Despite of this the former project staff managed to get in touch with two potential candidates, but they did not want to disclose any information to our research team. The other program did not have any participants at all who had entered regular employment.

Hence, we had to research other services for students or job-seekers with impairments or learning difficulties to recruit our cases. We eventually found candidates through the following services:

Disability services at tertiary educational institutions: All universities and university colleges in Norway have so-called *contact, counseling, or accommodation* services for students with impairments or learning difficulties. The organization, tasks and quality of these services varies with the size and priorities of each educational institution (Brandt 2005). We contacted universities and university colleges with disability services encompassing a wide range of programs, including counseling, providing technical aids and personal assistance, and accommodating lectures and exams for students with disabilities. In some instances, these services were also involved in a student’s transition from upper secondary to tertiary education and in planning and counseling regarding accommodations associated with academic study, housing, transport, etc. All of our student cases (5 in bachelor’s, master’s and PhD programs) were recruited through disability services at universities and university colleges.

Labor market services: NAV offers a host of labor market services for unemployed persons and persons with disabilities. Some of these services are organized by NAV itself, but most are outsourced to private contractors – so-called labor market enterprises. Such labor market services are normally not transitional. To be included in a labor market program, a person first has to “fail” at finding work on his or her own or “fail” to go through upper secondary education. This means that NAV does not normally get in touch with students with impairments or learning difficulties while they are in upper secondary education to facilitate transitions to further education or work; rather, it becomes involved when the transition to work or higher education do not happen. In one sense, however, it is possible to view these services as transitional because they assist young adults in finding themselves in transitional phases where the outcome of that phase might mean the difference between employment and permanent benefits. Four of our employee

cases were recruited through such labor market services, one of which came from a NAV unit and the rest of which came from municipally owned labor market enterprises.

Career guidance in upper secondary education: Upper secondary schools in Norway are legally required to provide both career guidance and psycho-social counseling for students, and we have discussed the transitional dimension of this service above. One of our employee cases was recruited through an advisor at a school that only enrolls students in special education. The advisor has been doing both career and psycho-social counseling.

Besides having problems finding potential cases through transition programs, we encountered some other problems in the recruitment phase. One was the challenge of finding employees with impairments or learning difficulties. Toward this end, we inquired with schools, centers of competence on learning difficulties and disabilities (*Statped*), NAV offices and labor market programs, but many could not meet the criterion of providing candidates engaged in ordinary wage labor. Many could provide candidates employed in internships or on wage subsidies, but because these are jobs paid by the NAV system and the candidates, thus, are technically still in a labor market program, we did not want to include such cases in our research project. Unfortunately, one of the cases (informants) in this study partly has a job practice that is financed through vocational rehabilitation in the NAV system, and we discovered this only after all the interviews in the case were completed.

The challenge of these instances of finding employees with impairments or learning difficulties might be explained by the fact that their operations are time-bound and limited to certain tasks. The responsibility of upper secondary schools, for example, formally ends when a student graduates or is too old to have the right upper secondary education. Similarly, the task of a labor market program might only be to get a job-seeker into an internship, but in the cases where the end goal of the program is ordinary employment, the labor market enterprise is not able to see whether the job-seeker keeps his job, loses it, becomes ill or applies for different work. Still, it is surprising that out of the six large labor market enterprises that agreed to help us, only two could provide us with some candidates that met our recruitment criteria.

As already mentioned, the aim of these case studies has been to interview both the young adults with impairments and learning difficulties *and* their stakeholders. The method that we used to identify stakeholders was first to interview disabled students and employees and then to ask them to single out 3-4 of the persons who had been most important for them on their path to employment or tertiary education. Most of our interviewees had difficulty singling out more than two such important figures. Normally, these actors were family members or friends and one other stakeholder, such as a teacher, a social worker or a disability service provider.

We conducted semi-structured interviews of about 1.5 hours with the students and employees – almost all of which were face-to-face – and semi-structured telephone-interviews of about 45 minutes with their stakeholders. The interview guides for the interviews with students and employees were centered on the following subjects:

- Positive and negative childhood experiences and experiences with kindergarten, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary school, including transitions in between the various levels of education.
- The content of upper secondary education, accommodations, learning environment and preparation for the transition to tertiary education or employment.

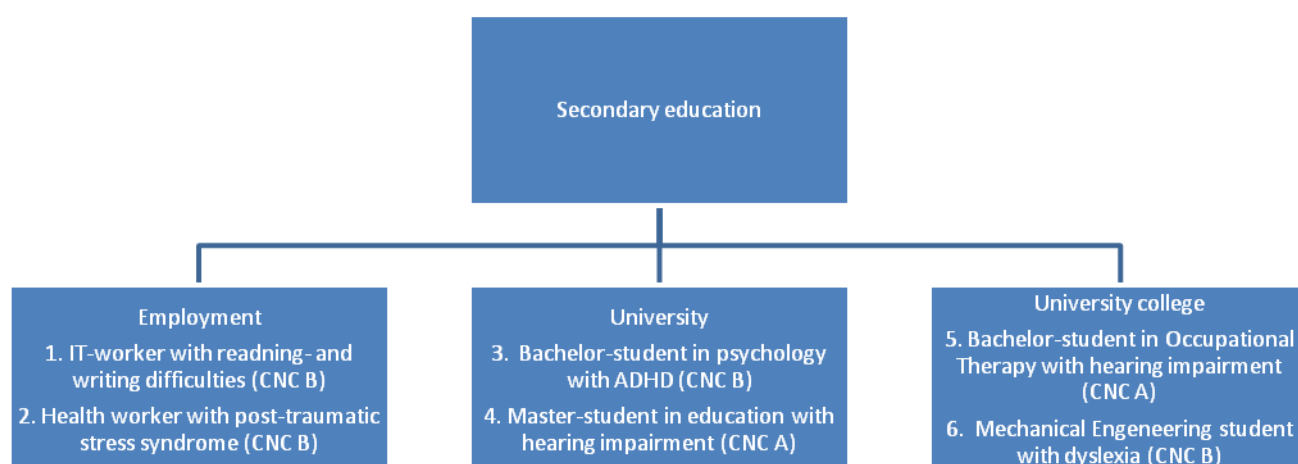
- Important events in the transition to work or tertiary education, problems that had to be solved and support services.
- Previous and present work experience, job-seeking and interviews, tasks and accommodations, relation to employer and colleges and career prospects.
- Positive and negative experiences with tertiary education, accommodations, financing studies, teaching, preparation for the transition to work and relationships with other students.
- Housing, transportation and leisure-time activities.
- Experience with support services, technical aids, economic benefits, medical treatment, assistance etc., especially in transitions.

The interview guides for the interviews with the stakeholders were very different depending on whether the stakeholder was a family member, spouse, friend, employer, service provider, teacher or counselor. In general, they all focused on the skills and strategies used to ensure entry into employment or tertiary education and the quality of provisions and services for disabled students and workers.

2. Presentation of cases

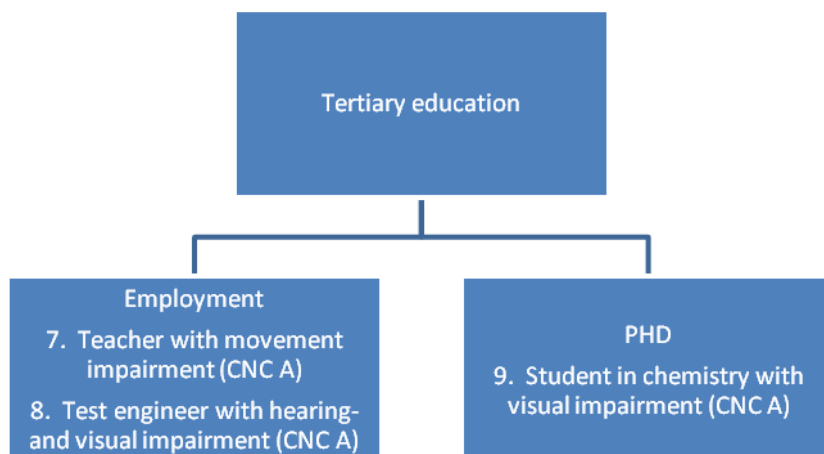
Following the OECD research design, we selected our cases to investigate specific pathways taken after upper secondary and tertiary education. As seen in Figures 1 and 2, we have covered the pathways into employment, university and university college studies after the completion of upper secondary education³ and the pathways into employment or PhD studies once tertiary education has been completed. In the analysis of the cases, we have partly treated the PhD student as an employee. This is because PhD students in Norway normally are hired by an educational institution or a research facility and receive a full salary during their PhD studies.

Figure 1. Cases and pathways after secondary education



³ We were also obliged, based the OECD project design, to investigate pathways into tertiary vocational education (*teknisk fagskole*) (ISCED 4) after upper secondary education, but we were not able to recruit any cases through these educational institutions. However, two of our cases – no. 1 and no 8 – have experience with this educational sector.

Figure 2. Cases and pathways after tertiary education



Case 1, “Arnold” (28): IT-worker with reading- and writing difficulties

“The transition between upper secondary education and employment should be made smoother by using more internship... That kind of practice is necessary to get references which one later can use to get a job. You won’t get a job today without references...”

Arnold comes from a rural part of Norway and has worked in an electronics store, maintaining computers and IT systems, for more than one year. He was diagnosed with reading and writing difficulties in primary school but had very negative experiences with a lack of accommodation in lower and upper secondary education where he studied agriculture.

After completing his military service at the age of 19, he got a job in a factory producing components for the offshore petroleum industry. The nature of the work tasks, along with insufficient training and accommodation, however, discouraged him and made the job very difficult. He had only been employed for a half-year before the employer put him in touch with NAV, where he was put on a waiting list.

After years of waiting, Arnold was enrolled in a support employment labor market program where he learned how to write job applications and CVs and received computer training and access to internships. NAV also financed his participation in a course in IT maintenance at a tertiary vocational school. After several years in the labor market program, he was offered a job in the electronics store following a normal interview process. The employer has received wage subsidies for employing Arnold, and today, Arnold has a permanent position.

Arnold describes the transition from upper secondary education to employment as the feeling of being thrown out of school. In addition to interviewing Arnold, we interviewed a social worker at the labor market enterprise he attended and one of his former NAV officers.

Case 2, “Pauline” (23): Health worker with post traumatic stress disorder*“You can’t hurry if you are mentally ill...”*

Pauline lives on the outskirts of a highly urbanized area in Norway and works part time as an auxiliary nurse in municipal home nursing care services. She has been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of the bullying that she experienced in school from the age of 7 to 15. Despite numerous efforts by her mother to get the school to do something to end the bullying, the school never acted. Pauline was eventually (at upper secondary level) transferred to a special secondary school for students with special education, where she received the necessary accommodations to complete her studies. She was also hospitalized in a psychiatric facility for more than half a year.

Pauline has received assistance from NAV in the transition from school to work. She has been part of a labor market program to clarify her resources and career desires, and she receives vocational rehabilitation benefits to complement her salary from her part-time positions and to help her finish her studies so that she can become certified as an auxiliary nurse. In addition, she is also undergoing self-help treatment at a rehabilitation facility.

Pauline is happy with the support she receives from NAV and sees the auxiliary nurse education program as a step towards working with people with mental illnesses or drug/alcohol abuse. The interview with Pauline was supplemented with interviews with her mother, sister and best friend.

Case 3, “Dorothy” (23): Bachelor student in psychology with AD/HD*“There is a need for more understanding in the educational system about the fact that not everybody is completely A4, and that not everybody with AD/HD is climbing the curtains and is incredible noisy.”*

Dorothy lives in a large Norwegian city and studies psychology. She does not remember primary school as a positive experience. She was not diagnosed with AD/HD until the age of 20, and because of her late diagnosis, no accommodations were made for her in primary or lower secondary school. As a result, she was often absent, and according to her, she was too quiet for the teachers to understand that something was wrong; therefore they just saw her as a “lazy girl”.

However, she was admitted to a special school after lower secondary education, where she had the opportunity to attend smaller classes and also received an individual education plan. From the special school, she continued into ordinary upper secondary education, and although the accommodations were not as extensive as in the special school, she was generally satisfied: she was permitted to work from home when she was tired, and she was permitted to use more time both with regular assignments and for her exams. However, not all of the teachers would accommodate her; some was very helpful, but others were not.

However, the school had a counselor that Dorothy describes as helpful, kind and crucial to Dorothy’s successful path through upper secondary education. The counselor always kept her door open and instructed teachers on how to accommodate Dorothy’s needs.

Dorothy’s transition from upper secondary to university studies was a path made after some consideration and information collection, which she mainly did on her own. She was a little tired of school after graduating, so after finishing her upper secondary education, Dorothy traveled abroad and worked for a

year before starting at the university. Besides Dorothy, we interviewed the advisor from her upper secondary school and a facilitator at the accommodation center at her university.

Case 4, “Olivia” (30): Master’s student with hearing impairment

“Higher education is more important for people with impairments than others.”

Olivia comes from a medium-sized Norwegian city, has a teacher’s education and is a full-time master’s student today. Olivia was born deaf, and in primary and lower secondary school, she attended a special school for the hearing impaired. At the upper secondary level, she attended a school with both hearing and hearing-impaired pupils, although the two groups largely went to different classes.

Her high school had fewer resources for accommodation than the primary school, and instead of having teachers who knew sign language – as in primary and lower secondary education – they sometimes had to use an interpreter. This use of an interpreter resulted in misunderstandings from time to time and poorer learning quality than she experienced with the tailored arrangement that she had enjoyed before.

Olivia describes the expectations of many of the teachers for their hearing-impaired students as quite low. However, for Olivia, who came from a family where higher education was the rule, no exceptions were made. The family, therefore, pushed her to pursue her dream of enrolling in tertiary education.

Olivia has had two journeys through tertiary education, and her experiences during the first were entirely positive. “Those four years were just super,” she told us. The university college that she attended was fully aware of her hearing impairment and knew how to accommodate her according to her needs. Ironically, her career counselors at the junction school did not know of any such programs accommodated for the hearing-impaired, and she and her family had to find all the information by themselves and inform the university college of her attendance.

Olivia worked as a teacher for a couple of years before becoming a student again. Her second journey through tertiary education, however, has been a path filled with more challenges than the first: She finds it hard to find information about accommodation, and she experiences that the accommodation she needs is not always possible to obtain. In addition to speaking with Olivia, we interviewed her mother and one of her teachers from lower secondary school.

Case 5, “Natalie (27): Student in Occupational Therapy with hearing impairment

“I have friends who have ended up with receiving disability benefit because they didn’t have the plan ready, and that is not going to happen to me. A plan means everything!”

Natalie lives in a large Norwegian city and is studying to be an occupational therapist. Despite her family’s efforts, it took several years before she was diagnosed with a hearing impairment, and she did not receive a good working hearing aid before the age of 12.

Although Natalie’s hearing impairment was known when she started primary school, the school did nothing to accommodate, and the teachers had no knowledge about hearing impairments. After a troubled path through primary and the beginning of lower secondary school, Natalie was admitted to a lower secondary school for the hearing-impaired, and she later continued on to a special upper secondary school. The transition from regular to special school was a success both professionally and socially. She learned

sign language, and because all of the necessary accommodations were readily available, she did not become as tired after school as she previously did.

Upon finishing upper secondary education, Natalie was unsure about what to study further, so she started working full-time as a welfare worker. After a couple of years working, her situation took a turn from good to bad and ended in a personal crisis. With help from her doctor, she was granted vocational rehabilitation from NAV that gave her the financial ability to enter tertiary education.

She first spent a year improving some of her grades from upper secondary education, and today, she studies Occupational Therapy at her local university college. However, her experiences with accommodations for both lectures and internships have been negative. In addition to interviewing Natalie herself, we interviewed her mother and her spouse.

Case 6, “Tina”(25): Mechanical engineering student with dyslexia

“I have to dare to use the tempo I need...”

Tina comes from the outskirts of one of Norway’s largest cities. Today, she is enrolled in tertiary education to become a mechanical engineer at the city university college. Tina noticed that she had reading difficulties in primary school, but she hid them from her teachers until lower secondary school when she understood that things were not as they were supposed to be. One of her teachers was central in discovering her dyslexia and getting her relevant accommodations once she was diagnosed. These basically included audio books and adapted exams, and although accommodations were a bit scarcer in upper secondary school, she received what she says that she needed.

In her second year of high school, however, Tina had a difficult time and contemplated quitting school. Her form master took action and persuaded Tina not to quit, and Tina was given the chance to complete her upper secondary education in 4 years – instead of 3 – with an individual educational plan. This worked out for Tina, and looking back, she believes that this arrangement was crucial in allowing her to graduate.

In the search for answers about what to do with her future after upper secondary education, Tina decided to consult a private career advisor due to the lack of public advising services. Before entering her present course of study, Tina spent one year studying interior design and another two studying the Bible at a private institution. She discovered that she wanted to become an engineer and was admitted to her second-choice school for mechanical engineering.

Her present studies are less accommodated than her previous choices. Because of the technical language involved, audiobooks are not available, and much of the curriculum is in English and not available in translated form. The only real accommodation that she enjoys is extra time for exams in a smaller and quiet room. We conducted interviews with Tina and one of her teachers from upper secondary school.

Case 7, “Peter” (30): Teacher with movement impairments

“My experience all the way through is that you don’t receive much follow-up if you don’t make contact yourself and take the initiative to make things happen...”

Peter lives in the countryside near one of Norway’s urban centers, and he holds a bachelor’s degree in economics and marketing from a university college. He has a half-time job (50 %) in a labor market

program for young adults with disabilities where he teaches computer processing. To complement the income from his part-time job, he receives partial disability benefits from NAV.

Peter has mainly had a good experience with accommodations made in school and at the university college, and he and his family have been very proactive in planning the transition from one educational level to another and in using support services and accommodations along the way. Peter uses a wheelchair, lives by himself, has a 24-hour self-managed personal assistance scheme and drives his own specially adapted car. All of these means of assistance are publicly financed or subsidized.

After graduating from the university college, Peter became ill and underwent medical rehabilitation. During his rehabilitation period, he sent out a few job applications without any luck. He also worked for some weeks as a telemarketer, but he felt over-qualified and decided to quit. Due to his unemployment, Peter was offered vocational rehabilitation and received an offer to attend a supported employment labor market program at one of Norway's largest companies; he accepted. Today, he is employed in the same labor market program that he attended.

Peter thinks that positive but realistic thinking, flexible support services such as having his own car and personal assistants, and his own desire to be employed have led him to where he is today. After interviewing Peter, we also talked to his mother and the director of the labor market program.

Case 8, "Oscar" (30): Test engineer with hearing and visual impairment

"Things normally turn out to be okay if you inform people about your impairment..."

Oscar lives in a city in the south of Norway, and he has a fulltime job as a test engineer of cranes for the offshore industry – a job that often takes him abroad. Oscar was diagnosed with both visual and hearing impairments at an early age and with Asperger syndrome as an adult.

Oscar did not have very good or especially negative experiences with school. He managed to complete his upper secondary education and received a vocational certificate as an electrician, even though he refused to use an induction loop in high school as he had done at previous levels of education.

After some years as an employee, however, he developed a drug problem and lost his job. To get him back into work, NAV offered him vocational rehabilitation and an opportunity for further education in a tertiary vocational school. In this program, he specialized in producing a technical component for an engineering company, and he was later employed by the same company.

Oscar did not receive any accommodations at his present workplace and thinks that NAV has offered him more support than necessary. We have interviewed Oscar, his mother and his friend/colleague

Case 9, "Sue" (26): PhD student with visual impairments

"In school you will always be categorized, but there were many who didn't have impairments who struggled more than me..."

Sue lives in a large Norwegian city and works as a PhD student in chemistry at the city university. Her visual impairment was discovered at the age of four, and she attended regular kindergarten and school. During her schooling period, she received technical aids and personal assistance, but she always thought

that the teachers were too fussy (though she knew then that the teachers meant well), so she decided not to use assistance in upper secondary education (except in chemistry class).

Sue's transition to higher education was unproblematic, and she decided to apply to NAV for vocational rehabilitation to finance her studies. In high school, she discovered that chemistry was one of her major interests, and she continued along this path at the university. Sue refused most technical aids during her studies and found her own strategies for coping, such as sitting with friends, typing during lectures, asking for magnified lecture notes, enhancing colors and contrasts in the lab, etc. Two of her major reasons for this approach were to minimize contact with NAV and not to be seen as too different. During her studies, Sue was also very active in various student associations.

Except for a short sick leave at the end of her master's degree, Sue's transition to her PhD position was smooth – at the job interview, she knew almost everyone present. Sue is known to her colleagues as a very good organizer, and she adjusts most of her work tasks herself as necessary given her impairment.

Both Sue and her family believe that capitalizing on support services is a strenuous and difficult task, and her parents have put a strong emphasis on Sue's being capable of handling her own life. In addition to speaking with Sue, we also interviewed her mother, her friend and her supervisor at the university.

3. Main characteristics of transition stories

In the introduction and later in this report, we have put the word “successful” in quotation marks when we write about “successful transitions”. This is because what can be described as a success in a person’s life it is disputable – it is not necessarily employment or tertiary education – but also because very few of our cases can be said to have had unproblematic transitions to tertiary education and/or employment. Except for Sue (case 9, PhD student with visual impairments), who entered directly into a PhD position after finishing her master’s degree, or Olivia (case 4, master’s student with a hearing impairment), who easily got a job after her undergraduate studies, all of our informants have experienced some kind of challenge and have been in need of support on their path towards employment or tertiary education.

This distribution is mainly attributable to our recruitment strategy for finding cases for this study. Since we were supposed to recruit our cases through transition services for students with impairments or learning difficulties, we ended up speaking with individuals who for different reasons have been in touch with such support services for help. In other words, those who made the transition into employment or higher education by themselves and did not face obstacles that made them dependent on external support have to a large extent been selected out of this study.

The transition stories that we heard through the interviews can largely be classified into two types. One is the *against-the-odds* story, and the other is the *working-with-the-system* story; although not all of our cases fit easily into this pattern, most can be found somewhere on a scale in between these two opposites.

3.1 Different types of transitions

Against the odds

The against-the-odds story is often characterized by a lack of accommodations and support in school, bullying and low expectations from teachers and others. The parents, and especially the mother, are singled out as playing a seminal role in helping the individual to overcome the shortcomings of early education, getting the child diagnosed and accessing relevant support services. Often, one individual or institution – a teacher, counselor, special school or psychiatric facility – also has the role of a “savior”: discovering the situation of the youngster, understanding her or his needs, getting the necessary help and putting her or him on the track towards employment.

One example of such an against-the-odds story is that of Pauline (case 2, health worker with post-traumatic stress disorder), who was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder after years of being bullied in school. The schools that she attended never acted to stop the bullying, nor did the psychiatrist whom Pauline was seeing take action to solve the problem with the school. The end result was that Pauline was given a place at an upper secondary school for students with special needs and, later, underwent half a year’s hospitalization in a psychiatric facility.

Pauline was able to switch schools due to the efforts of her mother, and at her new school, she received accommodations according to the severe mental conditions she had developed: private transportation to and from school, the opportunity to come and go to class as she preferred, smaller classes and hence a higher student-teacher ratio and a chance to sleep during school time if she got tired. These accommodations enabled her to complete her upper secondary education.

NAV became involved in her transition process by first offering Pauline a place in a labor market program where she could map her strengths and weakness and find out what she wanted for her future. NAV has also financed her further education, helping her to become an auxiliary nurse, and is paying for self-help therapy and rehabilitation as well as covering some of her living costs with vocational rehabilitation money.

Pauline has received support to complete her upper secondary education and to find employment, but her help came late and first after pressure by her mother and the deterioration of her mental condition – a mental problem that was allowed to develop precisely because of school inaction and a lack of accommodation. As in several of our other cases, the completion of upper secondary education and transition to employment or higher education came about because someone grasped the problem and acted accordingly after it had been allowed to evolve into a crisis.

Natalie (case 5, student in Occupational Therapy with a hearing impairment) is another example of a transition from upper secondary to tertiary education that was successful because of what she and her mother describe as tremendous and countless efforts to never give up from her early childhood to the present. In Natalie's first year of life, Natalie's mother suspected that her daughter was not able to hear all sounds, and in kindergarten, the kindergarden staff also noticed that Natalie did not always react when she was spoken to. Worrying for her daughter, Natalie's mother made several overtures toward the public health center, but they did not act on her information, and today, Natalie's mother wonders if she wasn't taken seriously because she was "a young mother."

For whatever reason, Natalie's mother was not able to access proper help for her daughter. When Natalie was at the age of 4 – at the time Natalie's little brother had his hearing tested at the age of 1 – it became clear that Natalie's mother had not been worrying for no reason. It was confirmed that Natalie's little brother had much better hearing than his sister, but still it took another four years before Natalie was referred to the hospital for evaluation by a specialist. From the time when her mother detected the first signs of her hearing impairment until the time when Natalie got help, eight years had transpired before the public health service responded. At the hospital, they discovered that she had a special form of hearing impairment and that this made it difficult to fit her with a good hearing aid. It took another four years – until Natalie was twelve – for her to acquire a hearing aid that functioned properly.

Natalie's hearing impairment was known when she started primary school, but the school did nothing to accommodate her, and her teachers had no knowledge about accommodating children with hearing impairments. As a result, Natalie was placed in special classes in English and mathematics with pupils below her level – according to the school, for her own benefit. Natalie also experienced that the teachers acted as if they "did not know" about her hearing impairment: they kept giving messages to her orally and spoke in class with their face to the blackboard, thus making it impossible for Natalie to compensate by reading text, writing or reading lips. The school's lack of knowledge and effort to accommodate her resulted in Natalie's having to make an extra effort to keep up with her education, and her mother taught her English and mathematics in her spare time.

Natalie was also bullied by other pupils at school because of her hearing impairment. In combination with the lack of accommodations she received, this made her exhausted, and after one year in lower secondary education, she left school to start working. After one year away from school, the Educational-Psychological service reacted, and it was arranged for Natalie to start at a school for the hearing-impaired. There, she took tests showing that she was a very highly skilled reader and writer, but that her English and mathematic skills were lacking. Natalie continued on to a special upper secondary school. Natalie's

transition from regular to special school can be described as a “success” both professionally and socially. She learned sign language, and because all the accommodations that she needed were available, she was not as tired after school as she used to be.

Upon finishing her upper secondary education, Natalie was unsure of what to study further, so she started working full-time as a welfare worker. After a couple of years working, she found that her workplace environment changed from good to bad. This affected the whole organization, not just Natalie, but for Natalie in particular, it resulted in a personal crisis. Natalie and her physician reached the shared understanding that a change was required for Natalie to regain her health. Her doctor got NAV to respond quickly to Natalie’s situation, and NAV granted her vocational rehabilitation benefits that gave her the financial ability to study. She first spent a year repeating some upper secondary courses in areas where she needed to improve, after which she applied to study Occupational Therapy at the local community college and was admitted on her first try.

Working with the system

In contrast to Pauline and Natalie’s experiences are those of our cases that are working-with-the-system stories. These stories are characterized by relevant accommodation and positive experiences in school, along with high expectations from teachers, support service providers and family members. Parents are crucial in these stories as well, but their relationship to schools and service providers is collaborative rather than antagonistic. Transitions on the path towards higher education and employment have often been carefully planned, and the youngsters themselves have been deeply involved in the process along with their teachers and service providers.

This has especially been the case for Peter (case 7, teacher with movement impairments), whose parents were advised early on by his physiotherapist and physician to look beyond his impairments and think about what he could become with the right type of ambitions. Peter attended a regular kindergarten and ordinary primary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools. For each transition within the education system, Peter and his parents visited his future schools as early as 1.5 years in advance to ensure that the right type of accommodations were in place once he started.

Peter’s transition to university college was planned together with NAV, who put a great deal of emphasis on Peter’s own wishes and financed his studies through vocational rehabilitation. Furthermore, his pathway to independent living was ensured through municipal social services such as personal assistance and public subsidies for both a car and universally designed home – all of which were carefully planned and initiated by Peter and his family in collaboration with support services. Obstacles and disagreements along the way were solved through discussion and negotiation.

After he completed his bachelor’s degree, however, Peter became ill and underwent about a year of rehabilitation. He also applied for some jobs during and right after his rehabilitation but without much success – all he was offered was an unsatisfactory job as a telemarketer – and he was eventually offered a place at a supported employment labor market program at a large private enterprise. He currently works a half-time job as a teacher in the same labor market program. He has found that he has the energy to perform a part-time job and receives partial disability benefits to supplement his salary.

Tina’s case (case 6, mechanical engineering student with dyslexia) also has similar characteristics, although it illustrates that it can take some time before the wheels of the system start rolling. Tina went through primary school hiding her learning difficulties for her teachers and not knowing that she could ask

for help; it was not before she started lower secondary school that she told her teachers about her reading difficulties. Once she did, many efforts were made to accommodate her— for example, audio books and adapted tests.

When Tina started upper secondary education, her reading and writing abilities were tested again, and she received accommodations according to her needs. In her second year, however, Tina experienced difficulties and began thinking of quitting school. She shared this situation with her form master, and the form master took action and persuaded Tina not to quit, helping her to obtain more accommodations so that instead of finishing upper secondary education in 3 years, she was given the chance to finish in 4 years while using an individual education plan. This worked out for Tina, and looking back, she is very pleased with the support and accommodation that she received throughout her secondary education, which qualified her to enter tertiary education.

3.2 The relative absence of transition services

Common to both the against-the-odds and working-with-the-system cases is the relative absence of experiences with transition services to support students with impairments or learning difficulties in employment or tertiary education. Except for Pauline (case 2, health worker with post-traumatic stress disorder), who received support from NAV directly after leaving high school, none of our cases received support from what could be called transition services focused on employment. Additionally, again with the exception of Pauline, none of these individuals received relevant career guidance in upper secondary or tertiary education or felt that their educational institutions were particularly concerned with their pathways into employment. As we were told by one individual,

“It seems as if students are just thrown out of upper secondary education and left alone with their grades.” (Arnold, case 1, IT-worker with reading and writing difficulties)

In the cases where counseling about career opportunities has occurred, the content is viewed as more negative than positive. Olivia, for example, tells the story of how her junction school for both hearing and hearing-impaired students displayed low expectations for its students:

“I was, to a considerable extent, told what I could and could not be. I was told that I could become an assistant or welfare worker. It was not displayed as a broad spectrum of choices, it was a very narrow gauge. But everyone in my family has higher education and think that it is important, and my mother was an urger in regards to my choices.” (Olivia, case 4, master’s student with hearing impairment)

Standing at the crossroads between higher education, employment or a life on social welfare, these individuals have been standing alone. It has been the rule rather than the exception that there has been no contact between the educational institutions and NAV or tertiary institutions on questions such as further accommodations in the workplace, studies or other types of support. Although our cases do not constitute a representative sample of young adults with impairments or learning difficulties, these experiences complement the findings of the country background report on pathways for disabled students. The report shows that there are few transitional services in place for young adults with impairments and learning difficulties who want to enter employment after completing their education (Legard 2009). The report concludes that

- 1) Career guidance is a legal requirement in upper secondary schools, but research shows that this service have been very variable from school to school and is teacher-dependent. In addition, there are no data on how well skilled career advisors in upper secondary education are with regard to transition issues for students with impairments or learning difficulties. Qualitative data from these case studies and others (Anvik 2006; Berge 2007) show that they are not generally skilled in this sense.⁴
- 2) Career guidance in tertiary education is not well developed, with few advisors per student. It also features an emphasis on general guidance and no focus on the special challenges that some – including those with impairments or learning difficulties – might face.
- 3) NAV have no transition programs for high school students with impairments or learning difficulties and has only recently developed a few local projects to assist students with impairments who are seeking employment after tertiary education. In general, programs developed by NAV have mainly focused on youth who drop out of high school and need alternative forms of qualification or job-seekers who first fail in finding work or staying employed and then seek help from the vocational rehabilitation system.

In three of our five employment cases, the latter happened: they either did not find work on their own or lost their jobs due to lack of accommodations or personal issues. Then NAV offered support through labor market programs in the vocational rehabilitation system, which helped them (back) into employment. In four of our educational cases, this also happened; Natalie (case 5, student in Occupational Therapy with hearing impairment) was not able to stay in her job, and NAV provided her with vocational rehabilitation so that she could pursue higher education.

The absence of transition services has also made the transition from secondary to tertiary education more complicated for the students we interviewed:

“It was almost impossible to find out of the availability of accommodation in tertiary education. It involved much e-mailing and telephone calls... There is some information, but this information is mainly aimed at those who are blind, movement impaired, deaf or have dyslexia. It seems like those kinds of impairments are the only one that exist when it comes to accommodation. The answers I got [when e-mailing and phoning] were “we’ll look at your needs when you get here...” and those kinds of answers didn’t make it much easier [to choose the university that would be able to make the best possible accommodations], because it is difficult to know what rights we have and what we can demand. In secondary upper education you have the right to accommodation, while here [in tertiary education] it seemed like accommodation was something you would get if they were kind to you.” (Dorothy, case 3, bachelor student in psychology with AD/HD)

3.3 The importance of family involvement

For both our against-the-odds and working-with-the-system stories, the efforts of the family have been seminal. Nearly all of our cases reported their mothers as either the most important or one of the most important figures on the path to employment or higher education. Even for a case like Peter (case 7,

⁴ A different study on the transitions of students with hearing impairments into employment concluded that whereas special schools for students with hearing impairments often provided relevant career guidance, ordinary schools enrolling all types of students could not meet the career guidance needs of their hearing-impaired students (Berge and Lorentsen 2009).

teacher with movement impairments), who has positive experiences with school and support services, the family/mother played an indispensable role.

In some of our cases, the family seems to have been important in collaborating with support services and schools, ensuring that they are coordinated and employed at the right moment. Sue's family (case 9, PhD student with visual impairments), for example, spent a lot of time sending applications, making appeals and organizing all of the paperwork following contact with the support services. In addition, they were involved in regular meetings with teachers, visual therapists and external experts on visual impairments throughout Sue's primary and lower secondary education.

In other cases, the family has been more important in struggling with schools and support services: struggling to get a diagnosis for a child, to secure the necessary accommodations in school and to procure technical aids, economic support, information on rights and support services, etc. This seems to occur with those who have moderate impairments or more diffuse learning difficulties that have been difficult to diagnose. Oscar's mother (case 8, test engineer with hearing and visual impairment), for example, had to struggle to obtain access to a speech therapist and to keep the service, whereas Pauline's mother (case 2, health worker with post-traumatic stress disorder) primarily had to struggle to find a new school for her daughter to protect her from bullying. Arnold (case 1, IT-worker with reading and writing difficulties) also explains how he and his parents had to struggle to get schools to provide accommodations and to transfer knowledge from one education level to another.

In Olivia's case (case 4, masters student with hearing impairment), the school was unable to provide apprenticeships for some of its hearing-impaired students. As a result, Olivia's mother arranged for apprenticeships not only for her own daughter but also for several of her other hearing-impaired class mates. In Natalie's case (case 5, student in Occupational Therapy with hearing impairment), her mother arranged for her daughter to have a year off after what she describes as fruitless struggles to get the school to provide the accommodations her daughter needed.

Although the collaborative or challenging experiences are different, they have one thing in common: without the efforts of the family/mother, relevant accommodations and support services may not have become available at all or until it was too late. As Peter says about his family's involvement,

“Without my family, things would have been difficult. This was especially the case as when I grew up. At that time, if you did not have anyone who kept going for you, things would go wrong.” (Peter, case 7, teacher with movement impairments)

4. Educational experiences

4.1 Primary-, lower and upper secondary education

The educational experiences depicted in these cases are varying and sometimes contradictory. A few of our interviewees have had very negative experiences throughout their education. Arnold (case 1, IT-worker with reading and writing difficulties) experienced continual problems in lower and upper secondary school getting oral tests, permission to use word processing on computers or access to alternative teaching methods. Today, he euphemistically characterizes his schooling as “little fun” and the school system as “slack”. He believes that he received insufficient accommodations because of a lack of resources – too few teachers to give oral tests or to give private lessons – and the poor organization of his schools: he felt that the school could not tell him whether he could get oral tests or not because they did not know if there were enough teachers at school on those days. In addition, many teachers showed a disregard for his diagnosis and were not willing to accommodate. One of the stories that Arnold told us was of a teacher who produced a grade for one of his written tests based solely on the number of words he had produced and not on the content, which was incomprehensible.

On the opposite side, Sue (case 9, PhD student with visual impairments) received all the technical aids available in her school days and teaching assistants throughout her primary and lower secondary education. In fact, the amount and type of accommodations that she received not only integrated her into the education system but also simultaneously made her feel separate from the other students. She characterizes her desk as a “fortress” because of its construction discouraged other students from contacting her in class, and she experienced teachers and assistants as “fussy” because they gave her too much attention. Unlike Arnold, Sue does not think that she lacked any type of accommodation but rather that there was too much of it. On her own initiative, she therefore decided to forego assistance during her upper secondary education.

In his interview, Peter, said: “I have the impression that most things works out okay as long as you are part of the public school system.” This is a valid description for some of our cases but not for all. Natalie’s story (case 5, student in Occupational Therapy with hearing impairment) displays the damage that negligence on the part of the school can cause: despite her own efforts and her mother’s providing her with home-schooling throughout primary school, they were not able to fill the knowledge gaps that she experienced at school – gaps that she has struggled to fill for the rest of her educational career. Pauline’s story (case 2, health worker with post-traumatic stress disorder) also displays a passive school; when she identified the roots of her problems (being bullied; she even told the school who the bully was), nothing was done. Tina (case 6, mechanical engineering student with dyslexia) spent her 6 first years in school without getting any help with her dyslexia, and there was also no help provided for Dorothy (case 3, bachelor student in psychology with AD/HD) during her first 7 years in school. These four persons have four different impairments with only one thing in common: those impairments are physically invisible. However, when their impairments became known, Dorothy and Tina received help, whereas Pauline and Natalie did not.

4.2 Tertiary education

Most of our employment cases describe their experiences with tertiary education as satisfactory despite shortages of accommodations and support from teachers or other scientific staff. Peter (case 7, teacher with movement impairments) attended a college with old buildings, and sometimes the elevator stopped, so that he could not get into lecture halls or out of the college building after a lecture. Sue and Oscar experienced varying degrees of accommodation and found that the teaching staff was not always prepared to use technical aids or adapt teaching methods to their needs.

When we spoke to the students who are still enrolled in tertiary education, their perspectives varied more from unsatisfied to more or less and satisfied. Natalie's overall experience (case 5, student in Occupational Therapy with hearing impairment) is that there is a lack of knowledge about the implications of her hearing impairment and accommodations at her university college. As a result, she feels that she always has to be on top of things and tell the staff what to do. If they had more knowledge, she is certain her student life would run more smoothly. For example, it took more than two years to get the community college to install an induction loop. Once it was installed, it did not function, and no one knew how to make it work.

Natalie has had two internships during her tertiary studies. Her first internship was a good experience, but her second was a disaster. Almost all the work activity was organized in groups and in large rooms with a great deal of movement and noise, which made it hard for her to follow the trails of the sound. However, the worst part was that she was shown no consideration; they did not want to accommodate her. Natalie tells a story of a supervisor discriminating against her: he meant that her hearing impairment was problematic and was not willing to accommodate her throughout the rest of the internship period. The result of this discrimination was that she dropped out of the internship before the period was over and, as a result, had to enroll in the whole second internship all over again. This time, Natalie asked for an accommodating internship prior to of her deployment. However, she were not met with understanding, and when she made a formal complaint after the second round, she did not encounter any understanding or apologies. Her community college listened to the supervisor and not the student. Natalie thinks that her university college has a long way to go before it is suitable for students with impairments: "Maybe there are too few disabled and that is why they have so know so little," she commented in her interview.

Olivia (case 4, master's student with hearing impairment) has had corresponding experiences, experiencing that the studies she in which she is enrolled are designed for the hearing population and that for as a deaf student, accommodations are sometimes hard to obtain. Information can be bad, and it has been difficult to find out about different accommodation opportunities in advance. The application process was awkward; to get an assistant to take notes for her during lectures, she would have to apply at the beginning of the semester, and the help was not granted until mid-semester. This would have caused her to lose a lot of information if she had not asked her fellow students to assist her. The quality of lecturers also varies: they range from very helpful to unable to adjust their lectures according to her needs. Sometimes she gets the feeling that the administrative or scientific staff members do not understand her situation, and like Natalie, she describes this as tiring. For both Olivia and Natalie, it has infringed the quality of their studies:

"I have given up the system to some extent, and I'm tired of telling them all the time. It's so cumbersome to tell them every time I need anything. I do understand that one has to tell them when something isn't working, but you get so tired of it..." (Olivia, case 4, masters student with hearing impairment)

Of the more satisfied side of the scale, we find Tina (case 6, mechanical engineering student with dyslexia), who told us about the lack of audio books but still finds that she is able to follow the curriculum and get grades that are above average. Dorothy (case 3, bachelor student in psychology with AD/HD) reports that she had problems getting her own study area during her first year at the university due to the prioritization of students with physical impairments but is now generally satisfied with how she has been able to structure her working days with help from a facilitator at the accommodation center at her university.

So, what explains the contentment of some of our interviewees despite the scarcity of accommodations? One reason is that although accommodations have been scarce, they have been sufficient. Several of our cases, for example, reported that the scarcity of accommodations did not affect the benefits of tertiary education. On the contrary, the informants who today are employed are very happy with their education and believe that it has enhanced their employment opportunities. As Oscar (case 8, test engineer with hearing and visual impairment) told us about his tertiary vocational education, “it is the best investment I feel I have made.”

On the other hand, the more mixed experiences of our current students might be explained by the fact that those who are employed today have had some time to digest their struggles. When they look back, they focus more on how they mastered the situation than on what made them tired and sometimes exhausted. Nevertheless, it is not surprising that these feelings of contentment vary; all of our informants have different kind of impairments, and none of them attend or have attended the same school. The many individual differences at play in terms of types of impairments, geography and time can therefore explain why the total sum of experiences is not consistent. This also tells us that the quality of education for students with impairments and learning difficulties varies greatly between educational institutions.

It can also seem that positive experiences with accommodations in primary and secondary school have affected these individuals’ ability to handle a less accommodating learning environment in tertiary education. Their prior experience has made them well aware of their accommodation needs and enabled them to communicate these needs to janitors, facilitators, teachers and other staff. In instances where accommodations have been absent or failed, they have been able to identify their own solutions to prevent serious negative effects on their education.

5. Employment experiences

The experiences that our interviewees have had with wage labor are mixed, both in type and in content. Some have had part-time jobs during their high school and university years, some have worked full-time for longer or shorter periods, and others have almost no work experience whatsoever. Except for Oscar (case 8, test engineer with hearing and visual impairment), who is a certified electrician and has already been hired by several businesses, our employed interviewees are currently employed at their first “real job” that constitutes the major source of their income.

It is often said that the difficulty that students with impairments experience in obtaining part-time or summer jobs during their education is a significant barrier to later employment because they cannot display any previous work experience. For some of our cases, this is true, but it seems to depend on other factors than this generalization regarding what it means to be “disabled”. Sue (case 9, PhD student with visual impairments), for example, has had several part-time jobs during her studies, serving as a life assistant (*støttekontakt*) and host at her student-housing complex. Peter (case 7, teacher with movement impairments), on the other hand, has had problems finding appropriate part-time jobs because these are often physical and difficult to perform with significant movement impairments. Sue and Peter are both “disabled,” but there have been more jobs that Sue can perform with her impairment. Peter also encountered similar problems after graduating from tertiary education. One was that he was not able to find a job that would hire him for less than full-time. Due to his movement impairment, he does not have the physical energy to work a full-time job, and he would be even less capable of working under an employer who demanded that he work more than that:

“It’s not always that easy [to get job experience]. The highest hurdle I have had is that I cannot work 100 percent... Many employers think that either you have to be there 110 percent, or it is not enough.” (Peter, case 7, teacher with movement impairments)

Arnold (case 1, IT-worker with reading and writing difficulties) is one of our interviewees who has had full-time work experience. In his case, this occurred after he finished his military service. His first job was in a factory producing parts for the offshore petroleum industry, where his learning difficulties caused him problems in managing the work tasks that involved remembering standards and measurements. The employer was not willing to give Arnold extra time for training or observe him more closely during the initial period, and neither was NAV willing to finance extra training or other accommodations. The result was a drawn out sickness leave and a serious blow to Arnold’s self-esteem, and it ended with the employer’s putting him in touch with NAV. It took him around 8 years to become employed again.

Oscar’s (case 8, test engineer with hearing and visual impairment) exit from the labor market was dependent on other factors than those at his workplace. After completing his two-year apprentice period at a training company, he continued to work as a regular employee for about two years at the same company. During the same period, he developed a problem with drug/alcohol abuse that was incompatible with his work. Oscar managed to get the abuse under control and returned to work in a manufacturing enterprise. However, he felt that the attitude of his employer was paternalistic and that the company thought he should be grateful to them for helping him back into employment. In the end, he quit the job and was offered further education in a tertiary vocational school through vocational rehabilitation.

During his studies, Oscar specialized in producing a product for a company at which he was later offered a job. About finding work after finishing tertiary vocational education, he says, “I had no problems in getting work, because there was a demand than there were workers.” His relatively easy experience finding a job after he managed his drug problems might be attributed to the high demand for his skills, but Oscar also has quite moderate visual and hearing impairments, and he reports no need for accommodations at his current job.

All of our cases today are generally happy with their present employment: they feel that their work situation accommodates their needs, that their tasks are in accordance with their interests and that the job offers career opportunities – either inside the same enterprise or as a stepping stone towards further education and more challenging work tasks in other enterprises. Later in the chapter, we will look at what kind of strategies and skills both the individuals themselves and the employers have used to maintain the employment relationship. However, because these strategies and skills are applied in an economically and institutionally structured setting, it is worth giving two examples of employment in the IT sector.

Peter (case 7, teacher with movement impairments) is working in a supported employment labor market program for job seekers with impairments. Because his job task is to teach computer skills to the participants in the program, he does not directly use his marketing and economics knowledge from school. However, at meetings with the rest of the team, he contributes using his knowledge within these areas, and he tells us that he will be more involved in tasks concerning the marketing and statistics of the labor market program. One of the most important reasons why Peter has this job is that it allows him to work half-time in combination with 50 percent disability benefits. Peter is also in a job where his movement impairment is a hurdle to performing work tasks, and he has acquired considerable computer skills during his life span, which makes him skilled at the work associated with his position. In other words, the very material preconditions of the IT sector render Peter’s employment possible. This also makes it viable to enact strategies such as offering a 50-percent disability benefit, personal assistance and transportation.

Arnold (case 1, IT-worker with reading and writing difficulties) is also working in the IT sector, providing repairs and maintenance for computers. This job is advantageous for him as it does not require extensive reading or writing skills, and for Arnold, it is also important that there is no boss “looking over his shoulder.” The job is flexible in the sense that he can make up his own working day by organizing his appointments with customers when they are most appropriate for him. Also, like Peter, Arnold reports that computers have been of great interest since he was small. In fact, the only accommodation his employer has made is to assign the writing for longer reports to other employees when such reports are necessary. In Arnold’s case, it is even clearer that his employment is more a result of the material preconditions of the business itself than of strategies and skills involved in his keeping the job.

6. Experiences with support services

As documented in the country background report, children, students and young adults with impairments can receive a range of support services throughout their childhood, student years and employment (Legard 2009). Because these support services vary while these individuals are growing up, their relevant experiences will vary as well. In this research project, a central focus has been to uncover how these services are provided and used in the transition to further education and work. As we have shown earlier in this chapter, transition services for the move from both secondary to tertiary education and education to work are relatively absent, although one of our interviewees was assisted by the vocational rehabilitation system directly after leaving high school.

6.1 Educational services in primary and secondary education

That does not mean that it is unimportant to look at the experiences that our interviewees have with service providers. Quite the contrary, the availability and quality of services in early childhood, in the educational system and in everyday life are important for the pathways of these individuals. Several of the parents we talked to noted that getting a diagnose for their child and support from either centers of national competence/national support systems for special education (see Legard 2009:141-143) or municipal or county habilitation services was crucial for creating a solid foundation for future education and work. An example of this is how Sue's parents (case 9, PhD student with visual impairments) and Oscar's parents (case 8, test engineer with hearing and visual impairment) used instructions by visual and speech therapists, respectively, on how to train with their children at home and prepare them for school.

In many of our cases, accommodations in school have been dependent on assessments by the Educational Psychological service or by a national center of competence. The importance of the involvement of these support services is evident in the cases where such assessments have been absent or come late. As we have already described in the against-the-odds stories, education has been made very difficult for the individuals concerned, and they tend to end up in a crisis somewhere along the path. Natalie (case 5, student in Occupational Therapy with hearing impairment), for example, was so tired after eight years in school without accommodation that her mother arranged for her daughter to leave school and work for one year. First, when she and her mother resorted to drastic measures, the Educational Psychological service was brought in; then, Natalie was consequently offered a tailored school program. Pauline (case 2, health worker with post-traumatic stress disorder) had a similar experience; not before her mother threatened the school with removing her daughter was it arranged for her to start at another school. In both of these cases, special schools became the solution.

6.2 Accommodating services in tertiary education

When one is entering tertiary education, there is no public system like the Educational Psychological services available to ensure that students get the accommodations that they need. In tertiary education, this assignment is handled by the disability services at the universities and colleges in Norway. As we have experienced, they perform their duties with different results. For instance, Olivia (case 4, master's student with hearing impairment) is not pleased with the disability services at her university. For example, she would have been helped by assistance taking notes during lectures, but the closing date for applications for an assistant to take notes is two months after the semester has started – with the result that she must ask her peers to take notes for her at the beginning of each semester. This is frustrating for Olivia and also reduces the quality of learning for her. In addition, Olivia thinks that the disability services work slowly; she must always tell them what to do, and while she understands that she has to, she sometimes wishes that they knew more, so that she wouldn't need to be constantly telling them of her needs.

Natalie (case 5, student in Occupational Therapy with hearing impairment) is also displeased with the accommodations at her community college: it took two years before an induction loop was installed, and when it was, no one had any knowledge about how to use it; in addition, when it was installed, it was out of order. Natalie also finds that the disability services at her community college demonstrate a lack of knowledge about her disability.

Dorothy (case 3, bachelor student in psychology with AD/HD) mainly addresses another problem: the universities and colleges are not very good at making information about accommodation available. In her search for the university or community college best suited for her both professionally and in terms of accommodation, she had a hard time finding out what she needed about accommodation at most places. Her impression is that the information about accommodation is mainly aimed at those with physical disabilities and that information about accommodation for people with other kind of impairments (like AD/HD, as in her case) is almost entirely absent. Dorothy ended up choosing the university that was most informative and is satisfied today mainly because of a very capable facilitator whom she meets at a regular basis and who thereby provides her with the structure that she needs.

On the other hand, we have Tina (case 6, mechanical engineer student with dyslexia) and Sue (case 9, PhD student with visual impairments), who both are satisfied: Tina only receives minimum accommodation, but she thinks that this works well, whereas Sue, throughout her studies, has wanted as little accommodation as possible because she has wished to function as “normally” as possible.

The accommodation services vary from one university/college to another, both when it comes to what accommodations are offered and in terms of how much information they have made available. There are no national standards for how much accommodation students are entitled to, and the disability services obviously have too few recourses to be able to ensure that the right accommodations are made for the students who have comprehensive needs, like, the hearing-impaired we have interviewed. In addition, we have findings that show that the lecturers are often reluctant to do things in a new way (change their routines), and it doesn't seem like they are getting instruction or training in better and more inclusive teaching methods, either.

6.3 NAV – Labor and welfare services

In our interviews with employees it was not these early childhood services but rather their relationship with NAV that was given the most attention. This is explained by three factors. First of all, our interviews were mainly focused on the recent transitions made by our informants, and therefore on possible transition services offered by NAV. Secondly, the informants themselves have more personal experience with the NAV system because it is normally the family members who deal with the applications and other elements of the process while a child is in school. Thirdly, our informants also have very strong opinions about the welfare and labor system, and they describe their relationship to it in either very negative or very positive terms.

It is important to note that a NAV reform was initiated in 2006 and has not been completed yet. The NAV reform is will basically merge the former welfare administration (which administered the National Insurance benefit system) and the labor administration (which handled all labor market services) and some municipal social services. Therefore, when our informants talk about NAV, they might talk about their experiences with the former welfare offices and national insurance schemes, the former labor market office and labor market services or the present-day NAV. The distinctions between these different elements are important, but our interviewees tend to view these services as one overarching welfare and labor “system” that has either helped or hampered them on their path.

Recurring themes in our interviews are the rigid rules, passivity and time-consuming application and appeal processes of NAV. For many of our informants, it has been difficult to get economic and practical support from NAV. In Sue’s opinion (case 9, PhD student with visual impairments) “you almost need a master’s degree in NAV in order to get help there.” She thinks that interacting with NAV “is drudgery”, and she often postpones or drops inquiries to them. As a consequence, she has minimized the necessary contact with NAV. Arnold, who told us that he “disappeared” among the cases at the welfare office for as long as two years, completes the picture by stating that “you have to nag them, otherwise NAV is never able to give you anything.” To access services from NAV, therefore, our main informants and their families have had to involve themselves in the “nagging” and “drudgery.” Peter explains the need for high-level personal and family commitment:

“My experience is that you get very little follow-up if you do not take the initiative yourself. This is the case of both applications and other things. Nothing happens before a deadline is crossed. You have to be cautious. It would have been too late to apply for support from NAV after I ended high school, because all the deadlines would have already passed. It is disturbing that there is no follow-up as long as no deadline for some application is approaching. You can easily be put on standby in the system and end up in a queue somewhere. I have never been pushed by the NAV-system to do anything. You just have to have some resources to make things happen. Suddenly a deadline for an application for a school or something has passed, and you lose half a year or a whole year.” (Peter, case 7, teacher with movement impairments)

On the very opposite side of the scale, we find Oscar (case 8, test engineer with hearing and visual impairment) and Pauline (case 2, health worker with post-traumatic stress disorder), who both are happy with the reception, services and follow-up by NAV. Pauline’s auxiliary nurse training is being paid for by NAV through vocational rehabilitation, has enjoyed access to rehabilitation and self-help courses and has regular conversations with her NAV officer in which they set goals for her future progress. Oscar, too, has had his further education financed by NAV and received relevant information on rights, accommodations and technical aids. It is important to note, though, that Oscar and Pauline, due to the nature of their

impairments, have not required extensive contact with the NAV system. Oscar has relatively moderate impairments, does not need any technical aids in his job and do not seem to think that the extra-strong lighting that the NAV Center for Assistive Technology has installed in his house is very necessary. Pauline has received psychiatric services from municipal, county and national agencies and does not need any technical aids.

In addition, these individuals' relationship to NAV should also be understood in light of the specificity of their pathways. NAV entered the scene with relevant services during a difficult time of their lives: Pauline had just completed her upper secondary education in a segregated school environment and struggled with social anxiety, and Oscar had just become capable of managing his drug problem and was looking for a way back into employment. They were also both able to use NAV strategically in the sense that they could use it on their pathway (back) into employment and consider what they would like to work with in the future. When Oscar contrasts himself with others who are undergoing vocational rehabilitation, he believes that this is one of the reasons he is so happy with the services that he has received:

“I have been offered more support than I felt I needed. If I compare myself to others who receive vocational rehabilitation, they do not know what they want... But if you know what you want and you keep on, I believe that you will be okay.” (Oscar, case 8, test engineer with hearing and visual impairment)

Finally, it should be noted that all of our interviewees report positive experiences with the services that they actually have received from NAV, either in the form of labor market programs or through the financing of education through vocational rehabilitation. Of course, these are all services intended to enhance the future employment opportunities of these individuals.

7. Strategies and skills of individuals and families

Above, we have described the various types of transitions that we have encountered through our case studies and their experiences with education, employment and support services. As the efforts by the individuals themselves and their families has been singled out as the most important, we will begin by looking at the strategies and skills that our young adults and their families have applied to ensure “successful” transitions through the various levels of education and into employment.

Strategies

Several of the strategies that we have identified have been framed by our interviewees themselves as attempts at overcoming shortages of support services and the fragmentation of the service apparatus. One such strategy is to make use of one’s *network*. When Olivia’s school (case 4, master’s student with hearing impairment) was unable to arrange for apprenticeships for Olivia and her classmates, Olivia’s mother pooled her resources and used her network to arrange not only her daughter’s apprenticeship but also those of all of her classmates.

For someone who might be dependent on accommodations for basics like being able to enter a school building, *cautious and meticulous planning* is a central strategy. Every time Peter (case 7, teacher with movement impairments) was supposed to begin a new level of education, he and his family visited the new school as far in advance as a year and a half to prepare teachers and other school staff regarding the necessary accommodations. These preparations were not only practical in the sense that they prepared the school staff for how to provide physical accommodations but also from an economic point of view: physical accommodations such as installing an elevator are not free, and because school budgets are made at the municipal or county level, the school needs time to transmit the information to decision-makers and back again to the school. Peter continued this practice when deciding to continue in tertiary education and visited his future university college more than a year in advance of applying, to talk to advisors and other staff about both his studies and possible accommodations. Hence, the university college had sufficient time to schedule Peter’s lectures in accessible halls and build ramps when they were required. He coupled this strategy with another one that we have seen in our cases: *proactivity*. This essentially means always anticipating and problem-solving in advance around situations that might arise.

Dorothy (case 3, bachelor student in psychology with AD/HD) tells us about the importance of having a *fixed structure*. For Dorothy, structure is of critical importance because if she doesn’t have it, she will not be able to appropriately handle her own situation: for example, she knows from experience that she isn’t able to study at home, so when she moved to a new city to study, she decided to live far away from campus so that she would have to face difficult struggles and negotiations with herself if she became tempted to not follow the study plan. Furthermore, she has also arranged for weekly appointments with representatives from the university accommodation center, where she goes to make a plan for the week and report on how the last week worked out.

Another distinct strategy that we encountered in examining our cases was one of *self-sufficiency*, which entails minimal contact with external service providers or accommodations at school or at the university. This strategy is born out of either necessity or desire – necessity because accommodations or support services have not been made available or a desire to manage by oneself. Sue (case 9, PhD student with visual impairments) is an example of the latter: in upper secondary school, she decided to stop having assistants with her in class, and during her tertiary education, she refused to use some of the technical aids

available and personally asked teachers if there was anything she needed, sat together with friends during lectures and learned to type very quickly in order to “record” what was being taught. She obtained her job without help from transition services, and at her job, she has installed better screens for some of the lab equipment and has taken upon herself the responsibility of ensuring that the lab is tidy and orderly. The only thing she has requested from NAV is magnifying computer software. Arnold, on the other hand, experienced minimal accommodations throughout his lower and upper secondary school years not out of desire but due to a lack of resources and the schools’ failure to recognize his needs.

People with impairments or learning difficulties are not necessarily passive recipients of the services available to them. The third important strategy that we found in the interviews with our young adults was their conscious *utilization of support services to achieve their own ends*. Both Oscar (case 8, test engineer with hearing and visual impairment) and Pauline (case 2, health worker with post-traumatic stress disorder) have enjoyed further education through vocational rehabilitation. Whereas Pauline sees this as a first step in a career where she wants to work with psychiatric patients and drug and alcohol abusers, Oscar has seen his tertiary vocational education as an opportunity to enhance his job opportunities. None of our employment cases has financed tertiary education through national loans and grant provision, or through work, indicating that vocational rehabilitation is something that these individuals use to minimize risks; they pursue higher education in case they are not able to find a job afterwards. A different example of the use of this same strategy is that of Dorothy, who to a large extent instructed her counselor in upper secondary school on how to accommodate for her:

“... [Dorothy] made a handbook for me so that I could follow up girls with AD/HD. This I’m still sending to teachers, and the Educational Psychological service is using it. Dorothy was very intelligent and demanded accommodation from me: She just came to me [with a manner] that demanded me to talk to her.” (Counselor in upper secondary education)

Finally, we would like to emphasize two seemingly contrasting strategies used by our cases, one of which is *openness* about impairments and needs vis-à-vis service providers, teachers, employers, etc. Some say that this strategy has been essential in helping them to obtain information and hints about where and how to apply for assistance and to avoid misunderstandings on what one is capable of doing or what kind of accommodations are necessary. Oscar (case 8, test engineer with hearing and visual impairment), for example, always tells new colleagues about his hearing impairment so that they do not get irritated if he does not catch what they are saying and replies with a “eh?” Arnold (case 1, IT-worker with reading and writing difficulties) thought it was very important that he communicated his reading and writing difficulties in the interview for his present job so that his employer did not get surprised later on and react negatively.

The other strategy is that of *putting on a mask* and pretending that the situation is different from what it is. We saw examples of not acting as if accommodation was necessary, and one of our informants “put on a clown mask” to hide her/his own insecurity in social settings as a form of self-protection. These two strategies are seemingly contradictory, we have found that some of our cases used both strategies in different situations.

We also found evident parental strategies for *enabling independence* on the part of their children, ensuring that they could take care of themselves and live independently at a later stage. Sue’s mother (case 9, PhD student with visual impairments) said that we “let [our kid] be rammed by the door in the face,” signaling a strong emphasis on self-sufficiency and the opportunity to learn through trial and failure. Another parent told us how important it was to involve the child in contact with service providers, health

care personnel and teachers at an early stage so that the child would know how to handle these processes independently when she or he grew older. Also, Olivia's parents had a crystal-clear strategy for enabling their daughter's independence:

“Olivia has siblings without hearing impairments and they [as well as the parents] treated her in an equal way and demanded that she should be a part of the family [on the same basis as if she would have had a sense of hearing]. Young people with hearing impairments have to believe in themselves and they mustn't be pampered. If they are, they will hit the skids upon their first challenge... As long as you have a good foundation, it doesn't matter if the ceiling blows off from time to time!” (Olivia's mother, case 4)

Skills

A central skill for handling education, employment and everyday life in our cases has been *self-awareness*: the awareness of one's own capabilities and disabilities, limits and potentialities, and resources and needs. This skill manifests itself in the awareness of how many hours one is working, what kind of accommodations can be made at the workplace or how teachers can modify their teaching methods to meet particular needs. Of the many good examples of how this skill can be used, one noteworthy one is that of Pauline (case 2, health worker with post-traumatic stress disorder), who got a job in home nursing care where she could work relatively independently and therefore keep a distance to other colleagues as she found would be necessary if she was to function properly at a workplace given her social anxiety. Arnold (case 1, IT-worker with reading and writing difficulties), for his own part, was able to inform his present employer during the interview about his accommodation needs and thus is now not required to write long reports for customers, his colleagues does this for him if it is needed. Dorothy (case 3, bachelor student in psychology with AD/HD) used her self-awareness to make a handbook that she gave to her counselor in upper secondary school, and Tina (case 6, mechanical engineer student with dyslexia) has monitored her own study technique and used her own learning methods as guidance for herself.

Peter (case 7, teacher with movement impairments) used this skill in designing the interior of his own house according to his own desires and needs, and he relates it to what he believes is another important skill: *realism*. This means being conscious about one's own preconditions and planning education and employment opportunities according to these preconditions. Peter himself chose an education that would correspond with professions wherein physical capabilities were of less (or no) importance: economics, statistics and marketing. He also chose to educate himself in a broad range of subjects, making it possible for him to apply on a variety of different kind of jobs, not locking him to a specialized part of the labor market, and thereby enhance his chances of future employment. For Tina (case 6, mechanical engineer student with dyslexia), realism manifested itself when she considered different universities to apply to: She wanted to study in Australia, but reflecting on the struggles that new language might pose made her cognizant of the need for her to study in Norway. An important caveat to make at this point is that several of our cases also felt that what others thought was realistic for them was not necessarily what they wanted or entailed an implicit and very restrictive notion of what they were able to do according to their abilities.

Next to the formal skills acquired through the educational system, *informal vocational skills* have been important for some of our cases. Both Peter (case 7, teacher with movement impairments) and Arnold (case 1, IT-worker with reading and writing difficulties) have been using computers since they were small and have become proficient at various computer skills that today are crucial to their jobs. Peter also told us

that he had special advantages because of his own experiences transitioning from education to work in a labor market program for other young adults with physical impairments.

Several of our interviewees – and especially those with physical impairments – singled out *creativity* as an important skill for them as they sought solutions to issues of physical, organizational and technological accessibility. Sue (case 9, PhD student with visual impairments), for example, is adjusting her laboratory setting herself by enhancing colors and contrast on monitors or structuring the lab in such a way that she knows that everything is in the right place.

Both our main informants and the family members whom we interviewed said that it was important to exercise both *cooperative and combative skills* in relation to school and support services. In general, our interviewees stressed that a collaborative relationship with school staff, physicians, municipal officials and NAV employees is very important. Close dialogue with school staff, for example, makes it possible to solve problems quickly and smoothly as they arise, and close dialogue with physicians is crucial because a physician provides documentation that is necessary for access to many central support services. In the cases where accommodations has not been readily available, combative skills are described as essential: a tough attitude, the ability to be cantankerous, endurance, etc. were some of skills that were mentioned to us in the interviews.

When we mention cooperative and combative skills in tandem, it is because some of our cases have emphasized just this balance between being positive and open towards service providers and being tough and aloof when the same services providers refuse to provide subsidies, technical aids or benefits. In general, however, a *positive and outgoing attitude* was mostly recommended by our interviewees because this makes service providers or school staff more attentive to requests and proposals. In addition, openness about one's own or one's child's impairment or health condition can encourage people to contribute both practically and with hints and tips about rights and duties, support services and benefits.

Organizing skills are described as an advantage in relating to support services or coordinating a multiplicity of services and accommodations. Sue (case 9, PhD student with visual impairments) became an expert at handling logistics in school, during studies and in everyday life. One of her friends told us that “logistics is alpha and omega when you are visually impaired”, and these skills have also made her responsible for properly ordering the laboratory at her present workplace. Peter (case 7, teacher with movement impairments) uses his organizing skills, among other things, to manage a 24-hour assistance service by himself, employing assistants, making their timetables and planning where, how and when to receive practical assistance. These organizing skills are also important for parents who have had to handle many application processes, paperwork and the coordination of support during the upbringing of their children. Tina (case 6, mechanical engineering student with dyslexia) has found that she not is able to benefit from colloquiums and has therefore chosen to study on her own. If she works in groups, it is always in small groups and with students that she knows are able to focus. She knows that her strict means of organizing may affect her social life, but that she has to organize her academic life in this way if she wants be able to follow through.

Keeping in mind all the obstacles that our informants told us that they had to overcome to get where they are today – and the constant planning, quarreling, convincing and fighting that they have described themselves having to engage in – it would appear that *stamina* is an important personal quality that is necessary for the transition to tertiary education and employment. If stamina can be labeled as a skill, it is an important one as such.

8. Strategies and skills of schools, teachers and other staff

Another aspect of our study was engagement with the question of what strategies and skills schools, teachers and other school staff use to create a supportive learning environment for students with impairment or learning difficulties and to facilitate the transition into employment and further education. None of our educational or employment cases, however, have apparently received any such support or facilitation from school staff in their transition to further education and employment (perhaps with the expectation of Tina's form master, whom he was able to list as a reference for potential employers, and Olivia's school counselor who helped her filling out application schemes – but none of this effort was described as part of a structured transition service). Therefore, we have a stronger focus on what they do to support their students in the course of their education and less of a focus on transitional strategies.

Strategies

All strategies and skills that we have examined must be viewed against the backdrop of a general normalization strategy in the Norwegian school system. As far as possible, all schools are supposed to accept and accommodate all types of children and adolescents – and most of our interviewees have attended ordinary primary, lower and upper secondary schools. Following this general strategy, schools provide *technical aids and other accommodations* to overcome shortcomings in terms of physical accessibility and pedagogical diversity. In our cases, we found evidence of schools providing materials like blackboard cameras and reading screens, special desks and personal computers; they also provided forms of accommodation such as oral tests or personal assistance in some cases.

Pauline (case 2, health worker with post-traumatic stress disorder), who attended an upper secondary school for students with special education needs, entered a safer learning environment than what she had experienced before, with smaller classes and hence a smaller student-teacher ratio. She was also allowed to come and go to classes when she wanted and sleep during school hours. These liberties were crucial for her in completing her upper secondary education and would most likely have not been granted her at an ordinary school. Thus, one might say that another strategy we discovered was the provision of *special and segregated education* for students with extensive needs in terms of learning environment accommodations. Also Dorothy (case 3, bachelor student in psychology with AD/HD) was given permission to work at home when she was tired and to work alone when in classes with many noisy students or in those that were conducted in a noisy environment. Natalie and Olivia attended special and segregated education programs for students with hearing impairments, and both attribute great significance to having enjoyed a sheltered learning environment wherein they had the opportunity to develop their own language and communicative skills – something that made them stronger in later encounters with the “hearing world.”

Another accommodation strategy that emerged in our cases was the special *preparation* of students with certain types of impairments before and during the schooling period. Sue, for example, took introductory classes at a national center of competence on visual impairments before she started the first grade. Other individuals reported being prepared individually before certain classes to reduce potential disadvantages due to lack of accessible equipment or pedagogical diversity.

In several of our cases, we found that schools organized *regular meetings* between parents, teachers and other school staff, special therapists and national or county competence units regarding particular impairments or learning difficulties. The aim of these meetings was to coordinate accommodation efforts,

share knowledge and advice and give parents an opportunity to follow up with school staff and support services.

Another strategy that we encountered that seems very useful was a student's having a *direct link* to the school janitor. The use of this strategy greatly reduced the number of persons involved when accommodations needed to be made, which made the process of requesting and granting accommodations more flexible and efficient when necessary.

That the schools have a well *functioning school-based healthcare service* is also important. Dorothy's former counselor (case 3, bachelor student in psychology with AD/HD) stresses that it is important for the pupils to have a school nurse with whom they can consult. According to the counselor, this is especially beneficial for pupils with mental illnesses. In Tina's case (case 6, mechanical engineering student with dyslexia) the flexibility of the school system in offering her *an extra year in school* to complete the curriculum was essential to her ability to graduate.

The final schooling strategy that we discovered was teachers' using their own *spare time* to follow their students' progress more closely. Tina's former teacher, for example, told us about how she used her spare time to meet students outside of school – even for meetings on the other side of town. . However, this teacher says that her modus operandi, devoting much of her spare time to her pupils, cannot be expected from everyone. For example, teachers with small children may not find such attention possible to give. Tina's teacher also told us that she sometimes went to her pupils' homes (the homes of those with Asberger syndrome) to provide *teaching in the home*. This, however, was done in agreement with the Educational-Psychological Service and within her normal working hours. This extensive follow-up for students with "special needs" was accompanied by both *formal and informal contact with other service providers*. An example of the former is teacher participation in the so-called "responsibility groups"⁵ that sometimes support students with impairments or learning difficulties, while an example of the latter was regular lunch breaks with representatives from the Educational Psychological service.

One of the few transitional strategies we encountered was that of teachers' *visiting tertiary educational institutions* with disabled students or *contacting accommodation services at tertiary educational institutions* before even knowing whether their students would be matriculated at those institutions or not. According to one facilitator at an accommodation center at a university, such early contact is crucial to planning for a successful pathway through higher education.

Skills

Of the most important skills of the teachers in our employment cases, *flexibility* and *listening* – both interrelated – were the truly essential ones. Giving one example of flexibility, Arnold related how teachers gave oral tests of their own initiative or organized group activities that allowed other students to give one-to-one lessons to Arnold (case 1, IT-worker with reading and writing difficulties). These were both examples of efforts to overcome a lack of resources and organize oral exams or extra instruction. A precondition for this flexibility is the ability to listen to the student's own description of his or her needs and act accordingly. Many of our interviewees described teachers with such extraordinary skills. One of Pauline's teachers (case 2, health worker with post-traumatic stress disorder) discovered her close and

⁵ "A student with needs for support from several different service providers might have a responsibility group consisting of him- or herself, parents and representatives from the organizations from which he or she receives services" (Legard 2009:145).

productive relationship with her best friend and therefore allowed her to leave school so that they could study together instead her studying with her other fellow students.

Willingness to accommodate seems like a personal quality or teacher skill that could compensate for a lack of training in the field. Dorothy's counselor says this about her colleagues' approach to pupils with impairments:

"The teachers have very little schooling when it comes to accommodation, and we have to teach them on the way. However, we have a really great staff when it comes to the willingness of meeting the pupil, and the teachers are stretching far to accommodate etc. Here we have a very good work environment and it is room for trying out accommodation. The school also makes use of follow up-studies and uses planning days to talk about accommodation." (School counselor)

9. Strategies and skills of tertiary educational institutions, administrative and scientific staff

The third aspect of our study was an effort to consider how strategies and skills among administrative and scientific staff at tertiary educational institutions fostered equal educational opportunity for students with impairments or learning difficulties, as well as to facilitate the transitions to employment. Unlike in the previous section, we have fewer data on the tertiary level of education. This dearth might be because there are only three individuals who have accomplished a tertiary degree in this study but also because students in tertiary education are expected to manage more on their own than children or high school students and because those accommodations are more scarce on this educational level than on others.

Strategies

Nevertheless, we also discovered that new students with impairments or learning difficulties were offered special *preparatory classes* for tertiary education and a range of other *accommodations*. These included photocopies of lecture notes in larger fonts or the use of large letters on power-point presentations. They also included alternative forms of education as necessary to create a more diverse student population.

Tina (case 6, mechanical engineering student with dyslexia) found a *self-help course* at her university that was hosted by the accommodation center. This course was based on the idea that students with dyslexia could exchange and share their experiences. Tina says that the course did not reveal “any shocking news” but that it was a giving experience to take part in it – and that it gave her the inspiration to carry on.

Good dialogue between administrative and scientific staff and students was said to make accommodation efforts effective. In one case, the dialogue concerned making teachers comfortable with using a microphone for an induction loop, and in another case, the issue was having ramps built if a lecture hall proved to be inaccessible. *Personal meetings* between students, accommodation staff and other scientific and administrative staff members were singled out as more effective than phone calls or writing letters to the staff. Scientific staff members in particular seem to be highly skeptical regarding adjustments to their teaching techniques, etc., but a personal meeting with the disabled student often gives the scientist a better understanding of his or her needs and creates a greater willingness to accommodate him or her.

We also found some important transitional strategies in two of our tertiary cases. One of them was from Oscar (case 8, test engineer with hearing and visual impairment), who was able to secure a job in an engineering company because of the *strong emphasis on practical tasks* at his tertiary vocational school. His specialization entailed creating a technological device for the engineering company where he was offered a job after he completed his education. For Sue (case 9, PhD student with visual impairments), it was relatively easy to progress to the PhD because of the *strong emphasis on academic advancement* at her institute at the university. “It lies in the cards,” she told us in the interview, “that you should continue with PhD studies after completing your master’s degree.”

10. Strategies and skills of service providers

In this section, we look at how other service providers have intervened to facilitate a supportive learning environment, equal opportunities in higher education and entry into the labor market for young adults with impairments and learning difficulties. To make the overview easier, we have divided these services into three categories: educational services, NAV and labor market programs.

10.1 Educational services

When inquiring about the involvement of external service providers in relation to education, we found two important strategies: *the preparation of parents and children* for school, and *expert advice* on educational matters. The preparation strategy has been used by national centers of competence (*Statped*) for certain impairments and learning difficulties. A center on visual impairments, for example, prepared Sue (case 9, PhD student with visual impairments) and her family for school by training them in technical aids and giving Sue and other visually impaired children introductory classes before primary school. Such centers also provide expert advice to schools and other support services on how to accommodate students with specific impairments and learning difficulties, and in Sue's case, they also participated in regular meetings with her teachers and her parents. The Educational-Psychological Service has been involved in giving expert advice by documenting reading and writing difficulties. Such (written) material is very important because it is often required to give schools extra economic resources to buy technical aids, train teachers or hire more personnel.

10.2 NAV

Financing education through vocational rehabilitation is an important NAV strategy for encouraging adults with a higher risk of falling into unemployment to pursue a better education. All of our employment cases have included further education – tertiary or not – that has been financed this way. This means that NAV provides economic support for students so that they do not have to get a student loan and can pay for other related costs such as study materials, transportation, etc. As such, the economic support also removes the risk of not being able to pay back a loan after one's education is complete.

Another strategy that we discovered was that of *encouraging claimants of passive benefits to instead apply for active benefits* such as vocational rehabilitation. This strategy is in line with the policy of the state (Legard 2009:79-82). As one of the NAV employees we interviewed told us,

“It has been important in my work to encourage people who have made claims for passive economic support to withdraw their claims and instead apply for vocational rehabilitation. My work has therefore consisted of advising people that they might not be eligible for disability benefits, but instead they might be able to secure their income through vocational rehabilitation, and even more importantly, that further training, education, internships and other vocational rehabilitation efforts will make them able to stay in work despite their health-related challenges. Central in my guidance was the belief that one normally – especially when being young – is better served socially, health-wise and economically by being active.” (NAV officer)

Free technical aids provided through the NAV Center for Assistive Technology constitute another central strategy for enabling people with impairments to lead active lives, including getting an education and a job. The technical aids that we encountered through our cases studies, such as a wheelchairs or magnifying software, are intended at help people with impairments to overcome physical or technological accessibility issues.

Free or subsidized transportation is another strategy that was important in some of our cases. For Peter (case 7, teacher with movement impairments), it was necessary to have a taxi drive him back and forth from the university because it was impossible for him to use mass transportation due to its inaccessibility. NAV also subsidized Peter's drivers license and a specially adapted car because neither was readily available on the market and they are terribly expensive. For Peter, his car was crucial to his getting back and forth from work on a daily basis and attending leisure activities.

Providing *wage subsidies to employers* was another NAV strategy that was used in effect in our case studies. This strategy is intended as an incentive for employers to hire workers associated with the risk of lesser productivity or absence due to illness.

One of the important skills of NAV officers reported in our case studies has been their *ability to involve the users* in the strategy they use and the decisions that they make. Pauline (case 2, health worker with post-traumatic stress disorder), for example, has regular conversations with her NAV officer wherein they jointly evaluate her progress and set new goals for her to reach. Peter noted that his NAV officer encouraged him to pursue the education that he wanted after he finished high school and was prepared to offer vocational rehabilitation if it proved necessary for Peter to achieve his goals:

“My wishes were very important, and the officer I had at that time was very alright. He never doubted that if this was what I wanted, this was to path to take.” (Peter, case 7, teacher with movement impairments)

A final important strategy that we found was the use of active *labor market programs* to secure employment for young adults. These programs were often used in *combination with rehabilitation* and medical treatment.

10.3 Labor market programs

We received descriptions of several labor market programs for young adults in vulnerable situations through our interviews. Peter (case 7, teacher with movement impairments) attended a labor program organized as a joint venture in between NAV and a multinational company, and it provided a *back door into the company* where he is currently working. The program trains participants in both general social skills and technical skills that are useful for the company, and it provides very long internships that make the participants invaluable for the departments where they get their experience. The director of the labor market program calls this a win-win-win program: she says that it benefits the company, which gets state subsidies for trying out and recruiting new employees, it benefits the participants in the program because they normally obtain a job when the program ends, and it benefits society because it means fewer people on disability benefits.

We also encountered *self-awareness programs* or labor market programs of which self-awareness training was a central aspect. After completing upper secondary school, Pauline attended this type of program, where she had an opportunity to investigate her own resources and desires. The labor market program of

which Peter was a part also has an important self-awareness element called “Unique as I am.” According to its director, it is intended to make the participants aware of their own resources, build self-esteem and confidence and learn basic social skills such as calling in sick or keeping appointments. These are skills that, according to the director, many of the participants lack because of a pacifying NAV-system or low expectations or over-protectiveness on the part of the school or the parents.

11. Strategies and skills of employers

We also looked for strategies and skills of employers that are used to create equal job opportunities for persons with learning difficulties, and we found some – although only a few. Peter’s company (case 7, teacher with movement impairments), for example, has indicated a strong commitment to *Health, Security and the Environment (HSE)* and *universal design* at its headquarters. It has an active HSE department that will normally make accommodations itself when necessary. Thus, the company is less dependent on external service providers like the NAV Center for Assistive Technology and is able to make modifications when needs arise. However, physical accessibility is not an important issue at Peter’s office due to its universal design.

Arnold’s employer (case 1, IT-worker with reading and writing difficulties) has used the strategy of *transferring tasks* to other employees (those involving writing reports, etc.) to avoid creating problems for Arnold.

12. Conclusion

In this final chapter, we return to the questions asked in the introduction of this report regarding what individuals, families, teachers, educational institutions, service providers, etc. do to foster the transition into tertiary education or employment for young persons with impairments and learning difficulties.

What kind of strategies and skills do young adults and their families apply to ensure “successful” transitions into employment or tertiary education?

One of the important findings of this report is the crucial role of family involvement – especially that of the mother – in the transition to tertiary education and employment. We have not found that the involvement of the family has been as important in the transitional phase itself – i.e., the process of leaving upper secondary education and entering tertiary education or the job-seeking process after graduation from tertiary or upper secondary education. Rather, it has been central in creating a solid foundation for future pathways through sufficient accommodations and support services at school and in everyday life.

The strategies that families have adopted in their relationship to schools, NAV, health personnel or municipal social service providers have been both collaborative and combative depending on the particular situation of the child and the school context. However, in the cases in which educational progress has occurred most smoothly and where accommodations in everyday life have been able to positively support the student, the relationship between families, schools and service providers has been collaborative. One important forum for such collaboration has been that of regular meetings among schools, parents and relevant educational services.

The importance of family involvement also emerges via the learning effect that it has on individual with impairments or learning difficulties. Through the efforts and actions of the parents, the child (and later the adolescent and young adult) learns how to write applications; make appeals; approach physicians, teachers, scientific staff and accommodators; utilize technical aids; organize assistance; plan ahead; etc. In addition, she or he increasingly becomes aware of her or his own needs and is able to proactively address tertiary educational institutions, employers or support services in adult life, which are individual skills that in our case have been important for coping with the demands of tertiary education, employment or independent life.

Norwegian research on the relationship between social background (family) and the pathways of people with impairments or learning difficulties has normally investigated pathways that “go wrong” – for example, how dependency on public services dependency is “inherited” from parents and passed down to offspring (Kristensen, Bjerkedal, and Brevik 2004; De Vibe and Hansen 2005; Lorentzen and Nielsen 2008) or how the absence of parental nurturing and support is related to the risk of ending up on disability benefits (Olsen, Jentoft, and Jensen 2009). Conversely, there has been less of a focus on those who “succeed.” Considering the effort that parents in our cases have had to put into the education and support for their children, it seems like “successful” transitions are interlinked with family resources: not necessarily the economic resources of the family, but rather the social and cultural “capital” that is required to engage an extensive range of service providers. Recent quantitative surveys indicates that the parents’ educational level is more important for the educational attainment – and consequent employment

outcomes – for young adults with impairments or learning difficulties than for others (Bjerkan and Veenstra 2008).

The most important strategies and skills that we found among families and individuals are summed up in Table 1, on page 51-54.

What do schools, teachers and other staff members do to create a supportive learning environment and to facilitate transitions into employment and further education?

Ironically, we learned a great deal about what the schools, teachers and other school staff do not do in terms of creating a supportive learning environment for their students or to facilitate the transition to employment or further education. Several of our cases reported suffering significantly from absent or insufficient accommodations throughout their school years, and almost no cases reported receiving relevant career counseling when they graduated from upper secondary school. Problems related to insufficient accommodations and accessibility are recurring themes in other research on primary and secondary education for students with impairments or learning difficulties (Anvik 2006; Wendelborg 2006; Berge 2007; Berge and Lorentsen 2009), as is the lack of relevant career counseling in upper secondary education (Anvik 2006; Berge 2007; Berge and Lorentsen 2009).

In looking at what works, on the other hand, we found that relevant and sufficient accommodations early in the education process have been important not only for primary and secondary education but also for future pathways.⁶ In many ways, it seems as if accommodations that work also have a learning effect on the individual with impairment and learning difficulties in contributing to her or his ability to get adequate accommodations at later stages. Symptomatically, those of our interviewees who encountered a crisis somewhere along the path all had experiences with insufficient or absent accommodations in their school years. It is also important to note that these were students with moderate or invisible impairments, like reading or writing difficulties or moderate hearing or visual impairments, indicating that the educational system has difficulty relating to these kinds of impairments.

Another important factor in some of our cases has been flexibility in the school system itself to make it possible for students to graduate. Examples of flexibility might include extending upper secondary education an additional year, teaching students at home or giving them an opportunity to study by themselves. However, when teaching within the ordinary school system has not been adequate, providing segregated special education has been an important strategy for some of the students we interviewed. This was particularly true for students with hearing impairments, who reported that education in a homogenous learning environment was necessary to develop basic communication skills or fill holes in their knowledge that arose from insufficient accommodations in ordinary schools.⁷

Lastly, it is important to emphasize the ability and willingness of individual teachers to accommodate individuals with impairments within the framework of ordinary education, often despite a lack of necessary resources, as crucial to facilitating a supportive learning environment. The strategies and skills that we identified in schools, teachers and other school staff members are summarized in Table 1, at page 52 and 53.

⁶ This is also an important point in Anvik 2006.

⁷ The same finding was also presented in Berge and Lorentsen 2009.

What do scientific and administrative personnel in higher educational institutions do to foster equal educational opportunities for students with impairments or learning difficulties, and how do they facilitate transitions to employment?

The limits of physical and pedagogical accessibility and the scarce resources for accommodations in tertiary education are well documented in the research on the subject (Brandt 2005; Wendelborg 2006; Berge 2007; Nasjonalt dokumentasjonssenter for personer med nedsatt funksjonsevne 2007; Bjerkan and Veenstra 2008; Kessel 2008; Berge and Lorentsen 2009; Magnus 2009). On the other hand, we found that the students we interviewed were able to cope with these barriers by directly asking teachers for adaptations, or they were able to find their own solutions in instances of absent or failing accommodations. The level of information on accommodations and the support that could be provided for students with special needs varied between educational institutions and depending on each student's particular impairment or learning difficulty. However, staff members in accommodation services exercised flexibility in terms of accommodations and found solutions using scarce resources – for example, organizing encounters for students with similar impairments so that they would be able to support each other with information and advice.

A few strategies stood out as central. One was the facilitation of personal meetings between the students to be accommodated and the scientific and administrative staff at the institution at which the students were enrolled. This facilitation was seen as important to overcoming the negative attitudes of scientific staff members in particular to adapting their teaching methods. Another crucial factor was early contact with tertiary institutions, which was dependent on the proactive behavior of the student or related individuals such as teachers, family members, service providers, etc. Getting in touch with accommodation services makes it possible to plan accommodations ahead of time, prepare lecturers, check on the availability of technical aids and send applications to other service providers. These activities might make it possible to avoid waiting periods for assistance or accommodations and unnecessary conflicts with scientific staff members. However, many students with impairments or learning difficulties do not disclose their needs before they begin tertiary education or a new subject or if a problem arises – if they disclose them at all. Other strategies and skills are listed in Table 1, on page 53.

How do other service providers (i.e., in transportation, technical aids, health, employment, economic benefits, etc.) facilitate continual education, transitional opportunities and entry into the labor market for young adults with impairments and learning difficulties?

In the literature on the transition from education to work for young people with impairments and learning difficulties, the negative relationship with labor and welfare services stands out. In most studies, NAV (or what today is called NAV) is described as a barrier to employment due to its rigid and time-consuming procedures, emphasis on the limitations and disabilities of service recipients and authoritarian attitude towards its clients (Grue 2001; Anvik 2006; Berge 2007; Nordrik 2008; Vedeler and Mossige 2009). These elements of NAV are also visible in our study, but some of our informants were also largely satisfied with the services that they had received from NAV and found their treatment fair and helpful.

Some of our interviewees saw labor market programs (financed by NAV) focused on increasing their self-awareness and self-esteem as particularly useful, and one of the labor market programs we encountered was highly successful in providing a back door into a multinational company – thus helping these

individuals to avoid the normal recruitment procedures through which job-seekers with impairments might run a greater risk of being overlooked. In addition, several of our cases had their tertiary education financed through vocational rehabilitation, a strategy specifically aimed at improving the employment abilities of individuals with impairments and reducing the risk of higher education for groups of individuals who are more likely to encounter unemployment after graduating. The literature on labor market measures for young persons with disabilities is unclear regarding the extent to which they are effective in procuring employment for their recipients (Anvik et al. 2007; Rusnes 2010).

We have summed up other (and to a large extent institutional) strategies and some skills in Table 1, on page 51-54. In line with our other findings on the importance of childhood accommodations, it is worth stressing here how early intervention by educational services or national services for special impairments or learning difficulties have been the foundation of a smooth transition through the educational system and, later, employment. The support provided by these types of services, in our cases, consisted of training parents and children for a life with impairments and preparing them for the school experience. In general, however, the realization and coordination of these services was largely dependent on the efforts of individuals with impairments and learning difficulties themselves, a finding that is also on line with those of other research on this subject (Andersson 2005; Nasjonalt dokumentasjonssenter for personer med nedsatt funksjonsevne 2007; Bjerkan and Veenstra 2008; Legard 2009; Lundeby and Tøssebro 2009).

Table 1: Overview of strategies and skills			
<i>Actor</i>	<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Skill</i>	<i>Rationale</i>
<i>Individuals and families</i>	Networking		Using personal or family contacts to secure employment or apprenticeships.
	Cautious and meticulous planning (Being proactive)		Being proactive and farsighted to access support services and accommodations.
	Self-sufficiency		Necessary when support services are not in place or accommodations fail. Desire to be independent and “normal”.
	Strategic utilization of support services		Conscious use of support services to reach one’s goals.
	Openness about disability		Necessary to get information and to avoid misunderstanding and conflicts in education or employment.
	Enabling independence		Avoiding parental overprotection of disabled children and ensuring necessary independence to cope with requirements of tertiary education, employment and life outside the parents’ home.
		Self-awareness of capabilities and disabilities	Teaching others how to accommodate one’s needs, choosing appropriate education and pursuing suitable employment.
		Realism	Avoiding failures by making plans and choices according to one’s own preconditions.
		Informal vocational skills	Formal skills not always sufficient to acquire employment.
		Creativity	Overcoming shortcomings related to physical, organizational and technological accessibility.
		Cooperative and combative skills	Ability to preserve good dialogue with service providers and be able to fight them when services are not provided.
		Positive and outgoing attitude	Makes service providers more attentive to

			proposals and requests.	
		Organizing skills	Necessary to coordinate a range of services and handle application and appeal processes.	
		Stamina	Coping with planning transitions and fighting for support.	
<i>Schools, teachers and other staff</i>	Technical aids and other accommodations		Adapting ordinary schools to the needs of a diverse population of students.	
	Special and segregated education		Important when accommodations are not possible or sufficient in regular schools.	
	Preparation for school		Train parents and children in the requirements of the educational system.	
	Regular dialogue and planning meetings		Coordinating accommodation efforts, sharing knowledge and giving advice.	
	Non-bureaucratic procedures		Direct links between students and staff responsible for accessibility to ensure flexibility and rapidity of accommodations.	
	Health services		Easy access to health personnel to discover need for accommodations or other support services.	
	Extra years in school		Giving students who need extra time a chance to graduate within the same curriculum.	
	Teachers using their spare time		Overcoming a lack of resources in schools to follow up on students with special needs.	
	Teaching in the home		Giving personal lessons to students who have problems dealing with the school environment.	
	Formal and informal contact with other service providers		Getting information on extra-curricular needs of students and coordinating progress with other service providers.	
	Visiting tertiary institutions and contacting their accommodation services		Planning transition to tertiary education and transferring information from one educational level to the other.	
		Flexibility		Being able to accommodate students despite scarce resources or utilizing opportunities in the educational system.
		Listening		Discovering needs of students and finding solutions to learning difficulties.

		Willingness to accommodate	Positive and active attitude overcomes lack of knowledge and training in accommodations.
<i>Tertiary educational institutions , administrative and scientific staff</i>	Preparatory classes		Preparing students with impairments for the requirements of higher education.
	Practical accommodations		Overcoming a lack of physical and pedagogical accessibility and meeting the needs of a diverse student population.
	Self-help courses		Facilitating contact between students with similar impairments and fostering mutual learning.
	Dialogue between scientific and administrative staff		Being able to instruct teachers on how to accommodate and react rapidly to needs that arise.
	Personal meetings		Overcoming the unwillingness of scientific staff to accommodate by arranging personal encounters with students with impairments or learning difficulties.
	Emphasis on practical tasks		Accommodating tertiary education to the needs of employers and skills demanded on the labor market.
	Emphasis on academic advancement		Providing short pathways between masters studies and PhDs.
<i>Educational services</i>	Preparation of parents and children		Training children and parents on how to relate to the outside world and educational system with impairments or learning difficulties.
	Giving advice on needs and accommodations		Required to obtain additional resources in school.
<i>NAV</i>	Financing education		Encouraging adults with a greater risk of falling into unemployment to pursue a tertiary education.
	Encouraging active benefits		Belief that employment is always better personally and economically than passive benefits.
	Providing free technical aids		Overcoming a lack of physical, educational and technological accessibility in education,

			employment and society at large.
	Free or subsidized transportation		Overcoming a lack of accessible public or private transportation.
	Wage subsidies		Incentives for employers to hire workers associated with the risk of lesser productivity or absence due to sickness.
	Labor market programs		Extra support in seeking employment.
	Rehabilitation measures		Combining labor market measures with the improvement of health.
		Involving clients	Ensuring more effective measures and strategies.
<i>Labor market programs</i>	Back doors to employment		Avoiding normal recruitment procedures that have a tendency to exclude or discriminate against job-seekers with impairments.
	Self-awareness programs		Making young disabled adults aware of their own resources, building self-confidence and social skills.
<i>Employees</i>	Commitment to Health, Security and the Environment (HSE)		Avoiding unnecessary contact with external service providers and increasing the flexibility of accommodations.
	Universal design		Avoiding the need for accommodations due to complete accessibility of physical infrastructure.
	Adapting tasks		Giving employees manageable tasks.

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