

# **NORDIC STUDY PLAN**

## **CONGENITAL DEAFBLINDNESS**



**norden**

Nordic Centre for  
Welfare and Social Issues



## NORDISK LESEPLAN MEDFØDT DØVBLINDHET

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## FOREWORD

In order for professionals in the Nordic countries to be able to communicate with one another in the most accessible possible manner, it is important to have a shared approach as well as to create and maintain a shared Nordic disciplinary language. The Nordic study plan is intended to be a foundation for the different national base education programs, and can be interpreted and adapted to the individual national study plans and local structures. This plan is based on previous Nordic study plans. The point is to create a disciplinary foundation such that encounters with other Nordic arenas will be meaningful and educational, for example those at NVC courses and in the Nordic networks.

The Nordic countries received the task of completing a revision of the Nordic study plan from the Nordic Management Forum 2013. The task was to revise the study plan and update it with regard to current theoretical perspectives. The working group decided that this revision should result in an independent document. This study plan does not go into detail regarding content of the courses, but is intended to be a general tool for the nationally adapted study plans. The study plan was formed as a result of a process within the working group and in dialogue with the professional environments of the Nordic countries.

The group members were: Annica Bostrom (SPSM, Sweden), Monika Estenberger (NKCdb, Sweden), Trine Seljeseth (Nasjonal kompetansetjeneste for døvblinde/National Competence Centre for the Deafblind UNN, Norway) and Helle Buelund Selling (CDH, Denmark).

Johanna Ronka (Kuurosokeat, Finland), Merja Kovanen (Kuurosokeat, Finland) and Estella Björnsson (Midstod, Iceland) have followed the process and provided comments.





## **THE NORDIC STUDY PLAN IN A DIALOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

Communication is created and meaning formed in dialogue. Development of communication is therefore dependent on encounters between people and in the facilitation of dialogue. People with congenital deafblindness must be met on their own terms, with attention to their own perspectives. Communication is challenging when the distal senses do not function optimally. In order to accommodate people with congenital deafblindness, there is a need for competent communication partners who understand the communicative challenges involved. It is important therefore that as many as possible around the individual person with congenital deafblindness are allowed to participate in learning about what is special about congenital deafblindness.

The Nordic study plan has a dialogical perspective on communication and learning. This means that in encounters with the other, there is a particular focus on the understanding of development in a reciprocal relationship. The study plan is intended to be a contribution for ensuring that reflective and competent communicative partners are developed in the Nordic countries. The study plan presumes learning in dialogue between the course holder and the participant in order to ensure that the course content is incorporated into one's own practice. Competence development occurs both in the national base education programs and through courses at the Nordic Welfare Centre. This can also lead to individuals choosing to specialize further in the different Master programs and research projects.

## PLAN STRUCTURE

The study plan is intended to be a dynamic document contributing to equivalence between the Nordic base education programs in the field. It is intended to function as a working document for course leaders and lecturers, and can be used as a model or tool to develop the base education of the individual country. The study plan is dynamic in the sense that it can be developed in accordance with the professional field. It is to be connected to a Nordic working group that will adjust it as required, and it should be used independently of the particular form of education programs offered in the individual country.

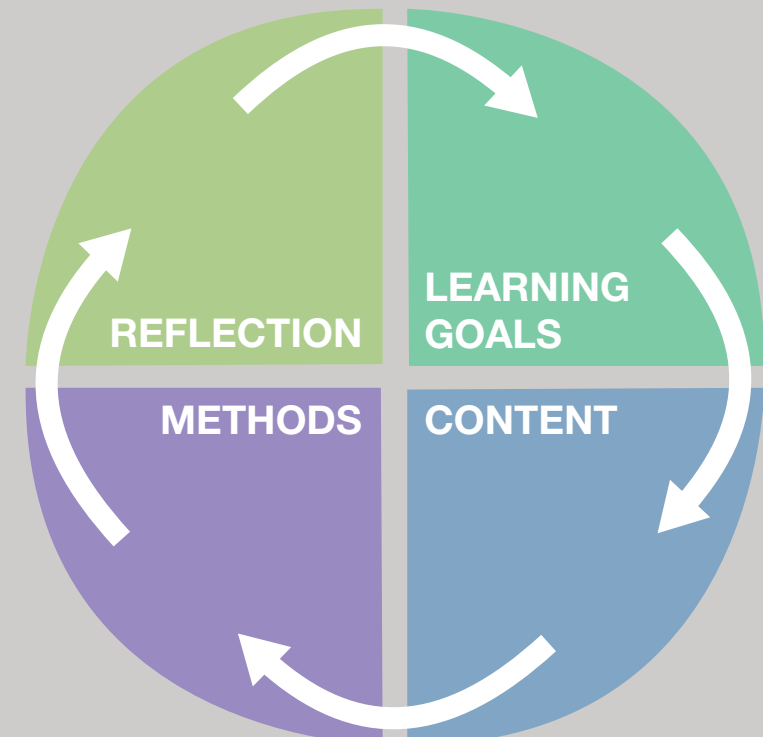
In order to become a competent partner for persons with congenital deafblindness, base education programs should always be built on research and experience-based knowledge. The selection of focus and areas for in-depth study in relation to the content is made on the basis of participants' own contributions, and should be adapted to the persons with whom the course participants work.

The study plan is divided into four parts:

- Learning goals
- Content
- Methods
- Reflection

The levels influence one another through the course leader's thoughts about the question, *Are we doing the right thing, for the right person, in the right order, and at the right time?*

The model can be used by the course leader/lecturer as a working tool for course preparation in order to ensure that there is a connection between the learning goals, content, method and one's own reflections. It can also be used in evaluation of the individual course or base education program, for development and quality assurance.



### Reflection

Good quality is achieved through:

- reflection
- process

### Methods

The course participants should have the opportunity to influence their own learning process

- case-based education

### Learning goals

Disciplinary development is achieved through:

- involvement
- cooperation

### Content

Topics that are important for good partner competence:

- ethics and view of the person
- deafblindness
- interplay of the senses
- communication

## LEARNING GOALS

The course leader describes the intention of the course through the learning goals. The Nordic study plan is based on the goal of educating reflective communication partners. There is also a possibility that the individual courses can have other learning goals.

In order to be able to formulate meaningful learning goals, it can be useful for the course leader to reflect ahead of time over the following points:

- What should one have competence in after the completed course, and why?
- What knowledge does the course participant require?
  - in order to connect the content to practice
  - in order to reflect over one's own position as communication partner
  - in order to construct hypotheses, develop and complete interventions in one's own practice
  - in order to implement the knowledge in everyday work

Clarification of the course participants' expectations and needs is part of ensuring a dialogical learning environment. It is therefore important that this be done together with the course participants at the beginning of the base education program.

## CONTENTS

The contents of the study plan consist of the main themes that together are intended to provide fundamental competence about congenital deafblindness and what is special in this disability. The goal is for participants to develop good partner competence. By this is meant adequate skill and ability in encountering a person with congenital deafblindness in the context of a shared activity under equal conditions based on the interests and competence of both persons. The goal is to encounter the person with congenital deafblindness in such a way that he or she experiences having the ability, trust and will to be a communicative and active person in relation with others.

### **ETHICS AND THE VIEW OF THE PERSON**

**Learning goal:** The course participants are to attain knowledge about relevant views of the person and dominant principles as well as to reflect over their own roles as communication partners and facilitators.

Central concepts are:

- quality of life and wellbeing
- respect
- physical and psychological security
- accessibility and involvement/participation
- inclusion
- integrity
- autonomy and independence
- stimulation, variation and development

### **THE DISABILITY OF CONGENITAL DEAFBLINDNESS**

**Learning goal:** The course participants are to attain fundamental competence about what characterizes deafblindness. They are also to have knowledge of adaptation and facilitation of the social and physical environment on the basis of an activity and participation perspective.

Description of the disability through:

- the history of deafblindness
- the Nordic Definition
- the UN's convention on the rights of the functionally disabled and applicable laws in the different countries regarding participation and accessibility
- identification of the group
  - description of the heterogeneity of people with deafblindness, the population and reasons for this heterogeneity

Special aspects of reduced visual and auditory function/deafblindness that can be relevant:

- a starting point in the bodily-tactile modality is necessary to support any residual vision or hearing in the development of communication
- sequential learning (difficulty grasping contexts, connections and meaning, learning takes more time)
- the risk of social isolation and sensory depression
- if one is not met as a communicating person, the risk can arise of not realizing one's potential

Special adaptations can include:

- the importance of facilitation and organization of the social, psychological and physical environments
- information, communication and orientation
- individual and situation-related adaptations
- functional aids and supports

### **THE INTERPLAY OF THE SENSES**

**Learning goal:** The course participants should attain competence about the different senses, how they interact with and influence one another. They must also have basic competence regarding the function of the senses such that individual adaptation can be made on the basis of the particular situation.

The function of the senses in relation to one another concerns:

- Perception and cognition
- The structure, function and stimulation of the senses
- The tactile-bodily modality as necessary support
- Strategies to use when sensory integration does not function

### **COMMUNICATION**

**Learning goal:** Course participants should attain competence about communication and communication development as viewed from the perspective of deafblindness. They should also have an understanding of the reciprocal influence in encounters with others, and should reflect over and further develop their professional function as good communication partners.

The qualifications for good communication concern building a reciprocal, secure and trusting relation.

- Fundamental qualifications for dialogues (recognize early communicative and emotional structures as well as see the developmental potential)
  - attuning, reciprocity, imitation
  - turn-taking, turn giving and turn shifting
  - shared attention (rhythm, beat, pulse, timing and tempo, the musical elements, are relevant for a good interaction)
- Two-party and multiple party dialogues
- Tactile communication
- Shared experiences in meaningful activities
- The philosophy behind total communication (difference between communication and information)
- Exposure to language, and the importance of being in a linguistic environment





## METHODS

The part contains suggestions for different methods that can be used by the course leader and course participant in order to provide the best opportunity for competence development. The course leader and course participant together find the most appropriate methods for competence raising. The choice of method is made in a dialogical learning environment on the basis of the participant's opportunities, competence and qualifications.

- It is expected that the course/education program will be case-based. The cases should be relevant for the course participants, which can involve either work in direct contact with users, or a supervisor function for a personnel group.
- The methods should ensure that the participants are able to have an active relation to their own learning, implementation and competence enhancement.

Suggestions for tools to facilitate the achievement of the goals of the study plan can be:

- films as pedagogical tool (video analysis, observation and reflection)
- film illustrations (film clips as good examples)
- practical exercises
- logbooks
- close discussion in two's or in small groups
- group work
- projects and homework
- literature and articles

Forms:

- e-learning
- workshops
- supervision
- themed day courses
- lecturing in groups
- study visits
- study groups/networks

## REFLECTION

Good quality is achieved through reflection over one's own practice, learning goals, choice of content and adaptation of the teaching. Reflection is a process throughout the course of base education.

Central questions can be:

- How to ensure that we cover the complete content?
  - Will all the topics be adequately explored?
- How to ensure that the participants can influence their own learning process?
- Are there any special conditions of which the course leader/lecturer should be aware?
- Is there connection and meaning in what is communicated?
- How is the content and theory connected to practice?
- In what way can supervision support the learning process?

For the best possible quality assurance, it is recommended that the course leader and lecturer plan and reflect together, and the lecturer should engage in continuing reflection over their own practice as lecturer.

## LITERATURE AND INFORMATION

National literature lists, relevant films, as well as websites.

Updated lists from the individual Nordic countries can be found on national websites.



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