

Abstract

Title	Shifting horizons. Life changes and learning in relation to visual impairment or blindness
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This study is an investigation of life-worlds of severely visually impaired and blind adults. The aim is to understand changes which people undergo when struck by severe visual impairment or blindness, focusing on how people learn to handle their changed life situation. The following questions are addressed: How does visual impairment change a person's life? How does blindness affect the continuation of life? How do people handle this situation? What characterises learning in relation to blindness? What does it mean to henceforth live with blindness in society?

A qualitative study has been performed with eight adults, four men and four women. The research is grounded in the concept of the life-world, which means the world in which we live our daily lives, a world usually taken for granted. Information have been gathered through interviews, life story interviews and participant observation. The data have been analysed with an interpretative approach.

The study points out that learning processes are related to the participants' respective life-worlds and their lived experiences of being visually impaired or blind. Being blind often means a break in a person's life, dividing life into before and after blindness. This break is interpreted as changed relations to the world in relation to time, the physical surroundings, relations to other people (intersubjectivity), and the performance of activities, all including a changed identity. Learning processes are then interpreted as re-establishing the relations to the world and focus both on re-learning previously well-known activities and learning completely new activities, i.e. the white cane technique. Learning in relation to visual impairment or blindness is further described as a *lived learning* grounded in the life-world and the person's lived experiences, including dimensions of *body-situated learning*, *social learning* and *reflective learning*. Learning processes also comprise the concepts of horizon and the intentional arc. When a person has re-established relations to the different dimensions of the life-world, learning is temporarily seen as finished. However, social learning will continue throughout life.

In discussing the various dimensions of life-changing processes and learning, the following concepts are used: *the body of time*, *physical body*, *the body of activity* and *social body*.

Finally, some pedagogical implications for re-/habilitation work and counseling are discussed.