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EDITORIAL

The use of information and communication technology (ICT) in social interventions and social policy is becoming an increasingly relevant topic in social science debate and social intervention practices. In 2008, the *Journal of Social Intervention: Theory and Practice* published a special issue on the theme of "digital interventions" and since then, we have occasionally published articles on the use of ICT in social intervention practices (see e.g. Van Haaster, 2008; West & Heath, 2009). This issue brings the theme of ICT in social intervention practices back into focus, as we publish four articles based on conference papers, presented at the international INCLUSO-conference on the e-Inclusion of Youth at Risk. The INCLUSO-project is a joint project involving seven European partners, funded by the European Union in its 7th Framework Programme of research. The INCLUSO project aims to deliver the proof that social software tools can facilitate the social inclusion of marginalized youngsters (www.incluso.org).

In the first article, Engelen, Dekelver and Van Den Bosch discuss how social software can be used within welfare organizations. They start their article by elaborating on the concepts of social software and social inclusion, and continue by describing their experiences in guiding four social welfare organizations in their implementation of social software tools. Their work on this project led to the development of five tools, three of which are discussed in their article for the *Journal of Social Intervention*. The authors conclude that their experiences with the INCLUSO project have confirmed the potential of ICT and social software as useful tools in supporting the interaction between social work organizations and their target group of marginalized youngsters.

In the second article on this theme, Steyaert examines two important trends in social intervention research and practice which are becoming increasingly widespread: ICT and evidence-based practice. He questions whether there is a framework available to label projects as "good practice" or to study the effectiveness of e-inclusion interventions. In his article, Steyaert proposes a number of building blocks for an assessment framework for e-inclusion initiatives and discusses one of the central concepts used in evidence-based practice known as the "effectiveness ladder". In the third article of the INCLUSO conference, Cranmer presents the results of a qualitative study on informal learning practices among young people and the uses of ICTs outside school. Thirteen young people were interviewed, and it became clear that these young people often had fairly easy access to digital technologies – suggesting some closing of the "participation gap" in terms of access – and were integrating these technologies into their lives. However, Cranmer also describes some of the challenges with which these young people were struggling while managing their use of ICTs. The final article in the series of INCLUSO conference papers, by Beelen and Van den Meerschaute, is a practice-based article and describes how ICT is being used in a strategy to combat barriers and increase access for youngsters in the Youth Advice Centres [JACs], Flanders' leading youth welfare centres. A short history of the JACs is given which shows how the JACs had been struggling to reach the target group of young people in Flanders the last decades. It also describes how social media and ICT can enhance the accessibility of the JACs for young people. The authors suggest performing more research to evaluate the benefits of ICT and social media in social work.

These kinds of trends, such as the growing use of ICT in social intervention practices, tend to influence the language and concepts used by social professionals. In the article "The linguistic dance of social work", Vlaeminck describes some linguistic phenomena in social work and shows which words and concepts have been used to capture the nature of the social work being done over the last century. Sometimes words and concepts change, while the phenomena they describe remain the same, while sometimes new terminology actually represents a new dynamic in social work. Three imperatives are formulated to capture the rules that guide the dance of social work language, but Vlaeminck points out that in practice these rules do not necessarily indicate any predictability in the dance. Finally, three linguistic phenomena are described: (1) the ability of social workers to connect with the client through the use of language and communication skills, while they might fail to connect with other professionals such as physicians; (2) the importance of time in communication with colleagues; social workers tend to consider their words very carefully when communicating with other social workers, thereby creating a common language; their communication with other professionals, meanwhile, is actually hampered by this long, slow way

of communicating; (3) the use of metaphors is omnipresent in the language of social workers, but this carries some risks. The author concludes that this linguistic dynamic is inherent to professional practice. However, when phenomena are not clearly named, there is a risk that the profession itself may become indistinct. It is recommended that social workers are conscious and more systematic in their use of language.

A completely different subject is addressed by Kuis, Knoope and Goossensen. According to these authors, the quality of relationship-building is a very important point of interest in contemporary health care research. In their article, they argue that the quality of health care is often measured in terms of "output", such as the number of bedsores and repeat operations. More subtle aspects of the quality of care, such as the patient's view, remain invisible in this output measurement. Furthermore, the quality of health care provision that does not produce a tangible "output", such as mental health care and addiction counselling, is often influenced by less tangible aspects of care such as the attitude of the helper and the support that he or she is able to provide. In other words, the authors emphasize how important the quality of relationship-building is in low-threshold care. They describe the results of a literature search on the quality of relationship-building and disentangle concepts that have value in this context. The authors also searched for questionnaires that measure these concepts. The questionnaire that best covered the quality of relationship-building was selected and this instrument was adapted to the care context. The instrument was used to collect data from 80 visitors to low-threshold institutions in four different cities. The authors conclude that the adjusted questionnaire is useful in measuring the quality of relationship-building because it discriminates between the various helpers of the 80 visitors of the participating institutions. However, since the research also demonstrated some limitations, the authors formulate some recommendations for future research.

The editorial board of the *Journal of Social Intervention: Theory and Practice* wishes to build bridges between scholars, practitioners and students in the field of social intervention, and we find it essential to offer all these target groups the opportunity to publish in our journal. For that reason, the journal will from now on publish occasional articles in the category "Student's work". Student's work includes papers, articles and summaries of theses, written by students during their education. We select these papers according to their relevance to social intervention practices and the quality of their analysis. In this issue, we publish an article by Esther Suurmond, entitled "Good motherhood and the need for a transnational perspective". Suurmond presents the case of an immigrant mother in the Netherlands who was reported to the Council for Child Protection by Youth Care, and uses the concepts of transnationalism and intercultural competence to analyze the situation. "Good motherhood and the need for a transnational perspective" is the prize-winning

article written as part of the Bachelor's degree programme in Social Work (*Maatschappelijk Werk en Dienstverlening*) of the Utrecht University of Applied Sciences.

In the book review section, Ton Notten discusses *Go-getters. An inquiry into the Meaning of a Working-class Origin for the Life Course and Career of University Graduates* (original title: *Doorzetters. Een onderzoek naar de betekenis van de arbeidersafkomst voor de levensloop en loopbaan van universitair afgestudeerden*), and Loïs de Vries discusses *Simply exceptional. The discourse on migrants and refugees in Mental Health Care* (original title: *Gewoon bijzonder. Het vertoog over migranten en vluchtelingen in de GGZ*). In the "News from Higher Education" column, Huub Pijnenburg presents his Model of Integrative Effective Factors for youth care. Pijnenburg presented this model at his inauguration and installation as professor "Effective factors in youth care" at the HAN University of Applied Sciences. The model illustrates that there is more to the notion of effectiveness than the use of effective intervention, and that a complex of factors will impact on effectiveness. It is the ambition of the research group "Effective factors in youth care" to provide more insight into these complex factors.

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