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NOL REVERDA

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EDITORIAL

The current issue of the *Journal of Social Intervention: Theory and Practice* includes a diverse and interesting range of articles on social intervention theory and research (De Zeeuw, Spierings), policy (Hokenstad & Restorick Roberts), and the relevance of theory in social work practices (Oostrik). Van Kemenade and Migchelbrink also present the findings of a case study on the attitude of lecturers in Dutch and Flemish higher education toward certification and quality control.

The *Journal of Social Intervention* wants to offer its readers a critical reflection on which research methods are most suitable for research into social intervention and its effectiveness. In light of this goal, the first article in this issue is highly relevant to the Journal. In this article, De Zeeuw takes a critical look at social intervention research. Traditionally, research has sought to rely on observations. However, many of the approaches used in relation to research social interventions depend on non-observational experience, meaning that such approaches no longer qualify as research. De Zeeuw gives a comprehensive outline of the limitations of both research traditions when applied to the field of social intervention, and provides numerous examples to illustrate his argument. He also draws on a hybrid research model which is better equipped to support social interventions. This model can be called hybrid because it combines recognition and judgement systems. As such, it makes use of the research approaches discussed, while acknowledging their differences.

EDITORIAL

Hokenstad and Restorick Roberts provide an interesting global overview of social intervention programmes and initiatives to create enabling and supportive environments for the elderly. The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), adopted at the United Nations Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid, is the starting point for their analysis. One of MIPAA's three priorities is to ensure enabling and supportive environments for older people. Hokenstad and Restorick Roberts point out that social work and social workers play an important role in implementing this directive. They discuss a number of interesting social intervention programmes and social work roles from different countries, covering themes such as housing and the living environment; care and support for caregivers; neglect, abuse and violence against older persons. This overview shows the relevance of social work in creating supportive environments for older persons. Despite the progress made in achieving the MIPAA directives, the authors also describe a number of challenges and make a number of recommendations.

Spierings presents the case of developing an information system as part of a €1.5 billion urban investment programme in an urban area with 190,000 inhabitants, the "Pact op Zuid" programme in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. The development of information systems can be a difficult task, especially when multiple interests – individual as well as collective – need to be accommodated, as is the case in many urban redevelopment programmes.

Spierings describes how cooperative knowledge production and development of information systems took place within the Pact op Zuid. He starts by elucidating the theoretical framework of the project, as the Pact op Zuid information system benefited from these insights. Next, the author describes and critically reflects on the manufacturing process of the information system. The information system for Pact op Zuid was developed using an innovation configuration. This configuration consisted of a team of six people, who were charged with the task of developing a tailor-made information system. This process involved developing several products that were discussed in smaller teams and presented to the strategic managers, the tactical managers, and the working groups responsible for implementing the Pact op Zuid programme. It is discussed how this process of knowledge production became partly cooperative, as well as partly competitive, and lessons are drawn from the case study.

The use of theory in social work practice is discussed by Hans Oostrik. His article characterizes social work as a narrative practice in which theory plays an important role. According to the author, social workers are "narrators", who use linguistic techniques to encourage clients to tell their stories. Using a social constructivist approach, Oostrik answers the question of how to proceed from these narrative practices to developing action models, which act as a theoretically legitimized

framework for social work activities. A number of elements of theoretical craft in social work are discussed: the theoretical skills of social workers, the theoretical tools that they can use and the theoretical attitude that is required in social work practice.

Van Kemenade and Migchelbrink state that certification plays an important role in quality control. They consider professionals to be crucially important in the certification process, as well as in quality management. However, little research has been carried out on the role of the professional in the certification process. Van Kemenade and Migchelbrink seek to fill that gap by studying the attitude of lecturers in Dutch and Flemish higher education toward certification and quality control. They use survey research to study the attitudes of professionals and performed Delphi research to discover some potential explanations for the findings of the survey. A summary of both, attitudes and explanations, is presented in the article. As a result of the study, Van Kemenade and Migchelbrink suggest two separate quality systems – one aimed at control (ISO or HKZ-certification) and one as a system of improvement. Although the study was performed among lecturers, a comparison is made with the attitudes of professionals in social work toward certification.

Of course, in this issue you will also find the book review section, with reviews by Margaret Angucia, who discusses *Youngest Recruits: Pre-war, war and post-war experiences in Western Cotê d' Ivoire*, Ben Boog, who discusses *Levensloopsociologie* [The Sociology of Life Narratives] and Frits Meijering who reviews *Plezier beleven aan taaie vraagstukken. Werkingsmechanismen van vernieuwing en weerbaarheid* [Enjoying Complex Challenges: The Interface between Tradition and Innovation]. In the "News from Higher Education" column, Corry Ehlen discusses how innovation in higher education can be achieved. She describes some of the challenges of education programmes in the knowledge society, and shows how an innovation programme is being implemented in Zuyd University of Applied Sciences.

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