

Editor's page

We are very happy to present the seventh issue of the Journal of Deafblind Studies on Communication. In these times of the COVID 19 pandemic with big challenges in working at the university where almost everything now takes place online, we succeed to bring out this new issue, while continuing our other activities. I have to thank our new assistant in the Editorial Team Phylischa Hellemons, who did a big job. This issue contains four main articles, two from graduated master students from the Master in Pedagogical Sciences Communication and Deafblindness at the University of Groningen and two papers on Ph.D. studies, one from Finland and one from The Netherlands. Besides the articles several interesting features and commentaries are presented.

The first article is written by Emmi Tuomi, a Ph.D. student in Psychology, and her colleagues from Finland. It reports a qualitative study of cognitive assessments of three teenagers with sensory and multiple disabilities, including moderate to profound developmental disability. The aim was to evaluate the possibilities for adapting standardized tests and the implementation of interactional partnership in assessment. Cognitive assessments were made according to the principles of dynamic assessment with an individually-adapted psychological assessment tool, the Bayley Scales of Infant and Toddler Development. Competent partner strategies such as providing safety, supporting attention, and scaffolding target skills in the zone of proximal development, were crucial and made it possible for the assessor to recognize and support the agency of the persons with complex disabilities.

The second contribution is from a graduated master student Ismael Byaruhanga from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In November 2021 this student received his doctorate in Germany and I would like to congratulate him on this fantastic achievement. This master study was conducted in Uganda and the DRC and it existed of a literature review and a focus group study. In the focus groups participated 14 participants, seven from each country. Participants were living in villages where people with Congenital Deafblindness (CDB) lived. The aim was to investigate to what extent the cultural position and attitude towards people with CDB in East and Central Africa could be described in relation to education. The results showed that the participants of the focus groups attributed the causes of CDB mainly to cultural and religious beliefs. In addition, culture and religion were identified as dominant factors in the social construction of the position of people with CDB in the community, leading to misunderstandings and inappropriate services for them. Recommendations for education and further research were formulated.

The third article is from Kirsten Wolthuis, who defended her PhD thesis on June 3, 2021 at the University of Groningen. The study was aimed at analyzing the relationship between the content of a communication intervention based on the Layered Communication Model and the effectiveness of this intervention. The Layered Communication Model (LCM) describes intersubjective development based on eight different communicative behaviors in three consecutive layers, on which the author published earlier. The intervention was divided in two phases: self-assessment and video-feedback coaching. Intervention content was described based on the behaviors that were targeted for improvement during the phases. Effectiveness was measured by calculating the percentage increase in presence of behaviors between phases and by calculating effect sizes. The results demonstrated that the LCM can be used as a tool to improve communication, especially for targeted behaviors, and that the second intervention phase was most effective.

The fourth article is written by Håkon Lie from Norway, who recently finished his master study, focused on an Improvisation Model and what this means for the analysis of communicative agency in a young woman with CDB. This qualitative study can be considered as really innovative in the deafblind field. The results demonstrated that an improvisation model in combination with conversation analysis was very useful to analyze complex communication patterns in three stages between the deafblind person and her hearing and seeing communication partner. It was possible to define the degree of subjectivity/intersubjectivity in every utterance by each participant as well as how each act was met by the other. With the improvisation model discrimination could be made between the different modalities, as vocal speech and bodily tactile acts. Regarding communicative agency, the model was useful to analyze degrees of self-expression as well as the balance of subjectivity and intersubjectivity between participants. The conversation analysis proved to be useful to identify the complex turn-taking patterns in communication.

In the Features and Commentaries part, you find some very interesting reports on two Nordic conferences aimed at Identification of deafblindness, one book announcement, and a report about the Master Deafblindness at the University of Groningen.

We are delighted that we succeed to publish this seventh issue of the journal. We would like to thank all the authors for their interesting contributions and their patience, and we hope you enjoy reading!

Marleen J. Janssen
Editor in Chief