



## Brief

# Is all counselling equally worthwhile? Systemic counselling as relationship building

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The purpose of this study is to generate knowledge about educational leaders' counselling practice in using a systemic counselling model. The main research question is: *How can systemic counselling contribute to social sustainable interaction in the kindergarten?* Social sustainability puts human needs at the center, facilitating participation and cooperation. The kindergarten should be a community of practice where staff are tuning in on each other by coordinating activities and where they interact in the contextual work with the children. Systemic counselling can be a tool for developing such skills. We concretize social sustainability as coordinated interaction in teams, where belonging, inclusion, trust, and participation can ensure that the kindergarten staff have equal opportunities to participate in the work processes with the children. Social sustainability and interaction are analysed in this context.

In order to answer the question, we have accomplished qualitative research interviews with four pedagogical leaders / kindergarten teachers. All informants have completed 30 credits education in counselling, where systemic counselling was an integrated part of the study.

Our theoretical framework for the analysis of the interviews is based on Bateson's (2000) communication theory, Jensen and Ulleberg's (2019) systemic counselling model, and team leadership in kindergarten (Aasen, 2015, 2019).

Throughout the analysis of the interviews, we identified three main themes:

*Theme 1: Experiences with interaction in the team community—nearness and vulnerability.* Relationships and communication can be challenging in a close-knit team. During

counselling, nearness and vulnerability emerged, which can make interaction between staff and the counsellor's role challenging.

*Theme 2: Systemic counselling and experiences using circular questions.* The informants valued the model as a good pedagogical tool for developing interaction skills in the team. Despite formal competence in counselling, the results show that the informants use their competence to a small extent. There is a lack of understanding of the concept of intonation and skills for using circular questions.

*Theme 3: Culture for counselling during a busy kindergarten day.* Kindergarten everyday life is busy and complex, and it is a challenge to make time and space to implement planned counselling on a regular basis.

We found that systemic counselling is highly valued, but requires good professional knowledge of the counselling model, the ability to use circular questions, as well as structured time for counselling. Despite formal systemic counselling competence in practice, systemic counselling is carried out to a small extent. Such a practice can be an obstacle to sustainable interaction.

**Keywords:** *counselling culture; social sustainability; systemic counselling; team-interaction*