Is there a principle of a Principal Social Worker in Austria?

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History of Social Work Profession in Austria

• Professional education in Social Work and Social Paedagogics starts in the 1920s
• Education in Social Work on secondary school level until mid 2000s
• Education in Social Paedagogics on secondary school level until now
• Education in Social paedagogics on university level since 1970s until now

→ In Austria there is a long tradition in educating Frontline Social Workers
The Situation Today

• Social Work at BA level at universities of applied sciences
• Social Paedgogics as MA at universities of applied sciences

• Master Studies at universities of applied sciences for „Social Management“ / „Social Innovation“ / „Social Transformation“ are becoming more common in Austria since around 2010

These MA studies:
→ aim to qualify for leadership in social organisations / NGO’s
→ do not necessary require an Education in Social Work on BA level as a preconditon
→ are seen within the profession of social as a chance to transform social services, contribute to professionalisation and strenghten the position of social work
Formal qualification needs for leading positions in Social Work in Austria

• within public authorities
  → leading positions often require university degrees

• Within the private / NGO sector
  → Less formal requirements
Who acts like a Principal Social Worker in Austria?

• ‘Pioneers’ of Social Work, sometimes without any formal qualification as CEO especially in smaller NGO’s / social organisations

• skilled and experienced social workers in intermediate positions (as head of department or team leader) between workforce and CEO

• persons with MA degree in ‘Social Management’ (with or without BA education in the field of social work) being CEO or head of department

• Persons with a university degree in sociology, psychology, law, psychotherapy, social sciences, who more easily met the criteria for leadership positions within public authorities in the last decades
May those colleagues be called ‘Principal Social Workers’?

Yes, because
- in many ways their job description meets the criteria formalized in the UK
- they do influence and promote social work and he development of the organisation
- they support and speak up for frontline workers as well as for the needs of service users

No, because
- their position is not formally established and therefore not formally recognized
- they lack formal rights to be included in strategic decisions
What are those colleagues called in Austria?

- Fachbereichsleitung
- Fachliche Leitung
- pädagogische Leitung
- Einrichtungsleitung
- Abteilungsleitung
- Teamleitung
- Geschäftsfeldleitung
- Stabstelle

...
A personal opinion - the most important precondition for ‘doing the job’

**Microlevel**
- regarding the needs of the individual frontline social worker
- regarding the needs of the individual service user

**Mesolevel**
- regarding the needs of the team
- regarding the needs of the users of the services

**Macrolevel**
- regarding the needs for the profession of social work
- regarding the needs of the society