

# 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 precondition
- 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 the development of the organisation
- they support and speak up for frontline workers as well as for the needs of service users

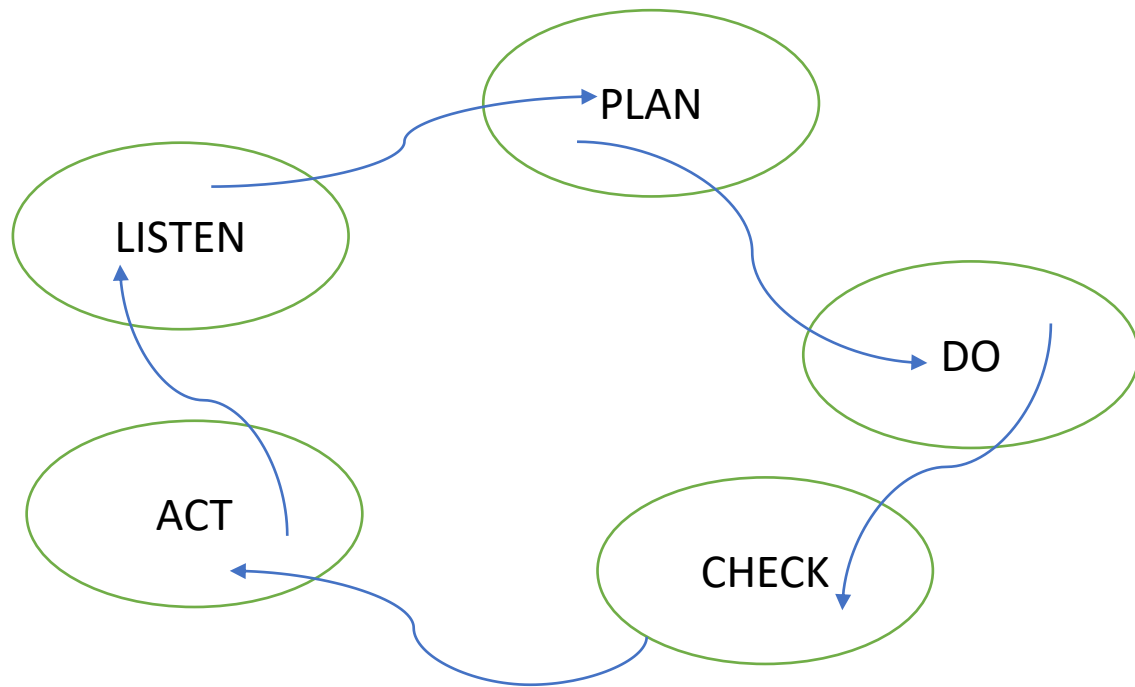
## **No, because**

- 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