School Leadership Study 2012 in Germany, Austria, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland:
School Leadership Practices in Context
(Preferences and Stress in School Leadership Practices – how context matters?)

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This study in the German speaking countries aims to gain empirical insights in the worksetting of school leaders. Its goal is to demonstrate which of their professional activities school leaders like to do (preferences) and which are a strain on them (stress). Moreover, on the basis of their preferences and their stress experiences, types of school leaders will be outlined and correlations between the perception of strain and individual factors (e.g. aspects of one's occupational biography) as well as institutional factors (e.g. conditions of the worksetting) will be determined.

The School Leadership Study is conducted in the following steps:

An exploratory study comprising 20 individual interviews with school leaders of all school types was conducted to identify relevant factors that were to be inquired in the written survey.

A general inquiry using a web-based questionnaire. It focused on e.g. the occupational biography, the school related work setting, and general and specific stressful worklife conditions.

In a third step, the daily professional practices and activities of school leaders were recorded via an end-of-day-log covering three work weeks distributed across the school year (in which the participants entered their activities during the day every evening, indicating what they had done, when, with whom, for how long, and where).

In a fourth step, interviews were conducted with school leaders focusing on the one hand on areas of pressure and tension in school leadership practice, which may lead to strong stress experiences, and on the other hand on the interrelations of stress patterns of highly strained school leaders.

In a further step, job profile analyses were conducted, to investigate into national and regional-specific (ie. federal states or cantons) demands on school leadership.

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The presentation focuses on the findings of the third and fourth steps.

Altogether 5394 school leaders participated in the study (which is a response rate of 49%),.

A sub-sample participated in the end-of-daylog (Nsome eod-logs=900 / N all 21 eod-logs completed=60; altogether 4998 diaries).

For the analysis of quantitative data, structure equation modelling as well as hierarchical linear modelling was used.

The analysis of the specific stress experiences, that is the strain by specific activities, types of activities and areas of practices clearly gives evidence that organizational and administrative activities are perceived as particularly stressful and disliked most.. Activities closely connected with teaching and education (such as *teaching in a class, talking with students, exchange with colleagues, one's own professional development*) proved to be very popular and were perceived as only little stressful.

Tasks that belong to the traditional range of tasks of teachers are more popular among school leaders and are experienced as less stressful than tasks that have been added to school leadership responsibilities only recently through changes in the school system as a consequence of decentralization (new public management).

The analysis of the conditioning factors for *job satisfaction, occupational stress* and *emotional exhaustion* showed the strongest effects for *the individual stress resilience*, and *the social support by colleagues*: The higher *the individual stress resilience* and the higher *the social support by colleagues* are, the lower the individual's *occupational stress* and *emotional exhaustion* are perceived to be and the higher the *job satisfaction* experienced by school leaders is.