

The Effect of Consultants

Author:

DR. RUPERT HASENZAGL
Head of Research Division
Consulting & Training Group
Steinfeldstraße 87
A-3100 St. Poelten
phone: +43 664 39 22 091
<mailto:cotg@aon.at>

Category

1) Research-based papers

The Effect of Consultants

Abstract

Consulting is a very important branch for the economy of a region. In the last view years, the literature which analyzes this growing branch has been increasing. In this paper a contribution to the micro level theories about consulting is delivered. The question how the effect of consultants can be explained, leads to different types of theoretical approaches to describe the client-consultant relationship. Three different models are outlined to estimate the effects of consultants and used to distinguish two types of consultants. Furthermore we show the application of these models with help of two case studies.

1. Introduction and research question

Consulting¹ was in the past one of the most growing branches in the western economies (Buono, 2001b: vii; McKenna, 1995: 51). But not only has the size of the branch constituted its importance. It has also been the influence on the economics of a region (Fincham & Clark, 2002: 3). Contrary to this importance, the theoretical basis of consulting is astonishingly poor. In the past twenty years some theory fragments could be found, but a general theory of consulting which should define the important parameters and help to describe the interaction between these parameters is still missing (Hasenzagl, 2007: 357).

Six years ago we started a research project at the University of Applied Sciences in Wiener Neustadt.² The aim was to deliver contributions to both fields of consulting research:

(1) The *macro* level research in which the structure and the dynamics of the consulting branch, especially in Austria, are analyzed (Egger, Häfke-Schönthaler, Hasenzagl, & Stocker, 2008; Egger, Hasenzagl, Stocker, & Wagner, 2004; Egger, Hasenzagl, Stocker, & Wagner, 2006; Hasenzagl & Kainz, 2008).

¹ When we use the term “consulting” in this paper, we speak about “management consulting (MC)”. This is also a broad field (Watson, Rodgers, & Dudek, 1998: 496). We see the organizations as clients of MC and the functional range of the activities is shown e.g. in the management process (Robbins & Coulter, 2002).

² The author was Professor and head of the department until January 2009 and responsible for the research project.

(2) The *micro* level wherefore conceptual and empirical work is done to explain the (social) interaction within the client-consultant relationship (e.g. Dietrich, Frank, Güttel, & Hasenzagl, 2005; Hasenzagl, 2004, 2007; Hasenzagl, Falkner, & Hatvan, 2006).

The paper at hand is a typical micro level research. It is aimed at answering the question, how the effect of consultants can be explained. Therefore different concepts for effect modelling are shown. The suggested models are quite diverse and result from different theoretical backgrounds (basis theories) which are used to describe consulting. The basic assumptions could be a-theoretical “every day concepts” (naive theories), common basis theories like economics (in the sense of business administration), or systems theory etc.

2. Micro level consulting theories

Analyzing the different types of knowledge which are necessary for professional consulting on micro level, we often find in literature two types of underlying theories: theories *for* consulting and theories *about* consulting³ (Groß & Kieser, 2006: 88; Hasenzagl, 2007). The first one should enable consultants to get a sophisticated perception of an organization which fits well with the complexity of his tasks. These types of theories are not different to the theories which are necessary for managers, but the experience of a consultant in using some of these theories should be larger than the manager’s one. However, the constitutional difference between consulting and management is located in the second type of theories: the theories *about* consulting. In these micro level theories the (social) interaction between consultant and client is described as well as the interdependence with other relevant parameters. These parameters are shown in Figure 1.

³ Cf. Hasenzagl & Mitterer „Professionalism in Consulting” at this conference.

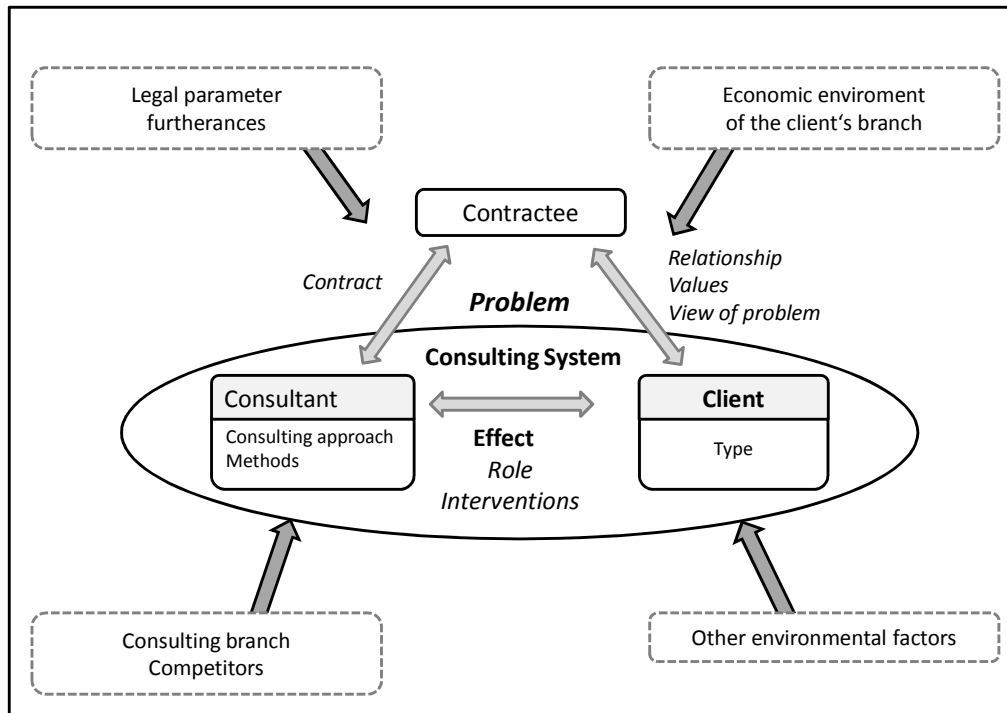


Figure 1: Parameters of a micro theory about consulting (cf. Hasenzagl, 2007)

A very important part in this model is the “consulting system” which is built of the consultant and the client (-systems).⁴ This consulting system is the institutional frame for the interventions of the consultants and therefore for his impact and effect. Usually we have different consulting systems within a project (Dietrich et al., 2005; Hasenzagl, 2007). In the case of organizational change projects, the consulting system normally is generated from the consultant-system and a delegation system of the client which is a small group of the organization’s members (Hasenzagl, 2007: 358).

In 1991, Steyrer stated, that a general theory about consulting, which takes into account the interdependent and circular linkage of the relevant parameters of consulting as shown in Fig. 1 is missing (Steyrer, 1991: 7). This opinion has remained within literature until today. It has often been criticized that contrary to the growth of consulting and its influence on the society (Watson et al., 1998: 495) these theories have been underdeveloped (Hasenzagl, 2007; Lundberg, 2002: 153; Wimmer, 1991: 116). Fincham pointed out, that

⁴ Cf. the “contact system” by Luhmann: “A new system arises out of communication: the contact system of the consulting relationship.” (Luhmann, 2005c: 360).

the knowledge base of consulting is not sufficient: “The critical literature in particular has questioned how a non-codified body of knowledge like ‘consultancy’ could become apparently influential.” (Fincham, 1999: 335). Lundberg summarized “[...] the field remains relatively underconceptualized and some would say even a-theoretical [...]” (Lundberg, 2002: 153). However, in the last years, some research activities could be observed in this field (Mohe, 2008: 41). The publication of books and papers dealing with consultancy from a rather popular point of view (e.g. Leif, 2006) or written for the practitioners' market (Kubr, 2002) has also increased like scientific literature in journals or books (Buono, 2001a, 2002; Clark & Fincham, 2002; Kipping & Engwall, 2002). Especially papers which focus on the client-consultant relationship deal with an essential part of the micro theory about consulting and fit well with the point of view of the model shown in Fig. 1 (Fincham, 1999; Luhmann, 2005c; Werr & Linnarsson, 2002).

Following this line of research, we will analyze how the effects of consultants can be explained or understood. The institutional frame for this analysis is the model shown in Fig. 1. Debating this research question, we build on the recent consulting literature and use previous results of our own research projects to develop different models to explain and understand the effect of consultants. The different models are the result of distinct underlying basis theories. Thus, we show the different levels of theories in more detail in the next part. This is necessary to distinguish different points of view concerning effects of consultants.

3. Levels of theories

In the last chapter we have shown a theory that deals with a special subject, namely consultants. Therefore we call this theory level the subject one (Figure 2).

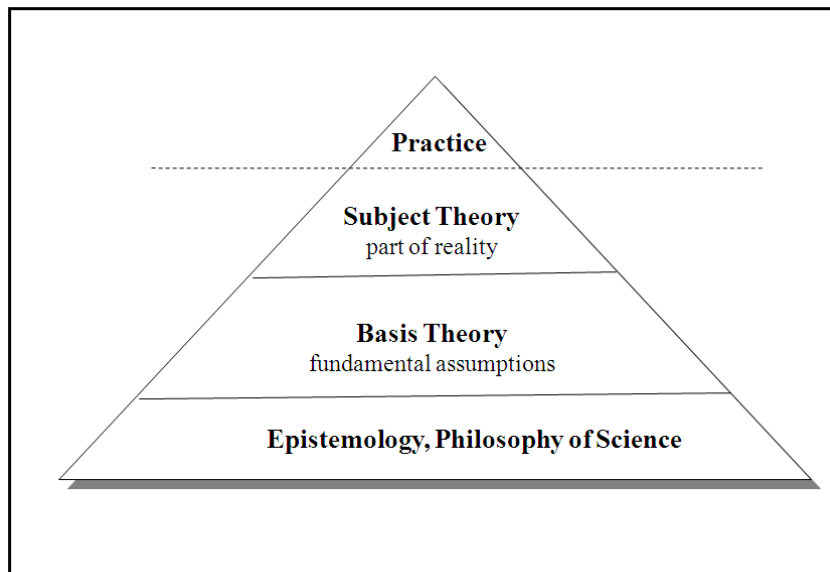


Fig. 2: Levels of Theories

The lowest level is the philosophy of science position. Typical possibilities are objective vs. subjective, descriptive vs. normative positions. A well-known model to describe such positions is the Burrell-Morgan scheme. A specific theory on this level is e.g. the constructivism. On the next level, the level of basis theory we find the basic assumptions (e.g. concerning organizations and individuals). Typical theoretical positions are the economic view or the systems theory of Luhmann. These two theory levels determine the frame for the subject level where a specific part of reality is modeled. Such parts could be leadership, organizational change or consulting. Above the dotted line we find practice with technologies, techniques or tools. If these tools are derived from theories, they normally have a higher quality than tools generated without a theoretical basis just from (non-methodical) observations in practice.

4. Models to explain the effect of consultants

The theory level model shown in Fig. 2 is used to explain different models of the effect of consultants. First, we analyze the effect model in practice, founded on a-theoretical assumptions. Furthermore we use an economics point of view on the level of basis theories to generate an effect model as part of a micro theory about consulting on the subject level.

4.1 A-theoretical and economic model

In a first model a widespread a-theoretical practitioner idea of effective consulting is discussed. This model is characterized by using only contentual aspects to define effects. Some studies (e.g. Kainz, 2008: 26) show that in practice the majority of consultants (about 70%) is convinced to be mainly hired by clients due to the consultant's knowledge. A quantitative survey shows that clients take a similar point of view (Kainz & Torggler, 2008: 275). Comparable results (although with a lower percentage) were presented by Poulfeld & Payne for the Danish consulting market. "To provide expertise, knowledge and new methodologies" (Poulfeld & Payne, 1994: 426) is named by clients as well as by consultants to be one main motive for using consultants.

The question is which type of expertise or knowledge is asked for by the client to such a high amount. Werr & Linnarsson point out as a result of their qualitative study, that the focus of clients is "[...] placed on the quick solving of the identified problems." (Werr & Linnarsson, 2002: 25). However, they assume this to be on the level of "espoused theories"⁵, whereas the "theory in use" reflects a more sophisticated client-consultant learning-oriented relationship. In order to be able to distinguish those two types of theories and to interpret the "theory in use" as mentioned by Werr & Linnarsson we see the necessity of a sophisticated theoretical basis, which cannot be found, neither in consultancy nor in management⁶.

In practice, this rather a-theoretical "expert role" of consultants with a mechanistic understanding of organizations is often combined with the assumption that the effect (E) of consulting is primarily caused by the contentual quality (Q) of the consultant's actions.

$$E = Q \quad (1)$$

This effect-quality equation is assumed to be true, if basis theories are "classical" economics oriented, like within an important stream of business administration. Such economic theories often have the paradigm of "methodological individualism" and the idea

⁵ The terms "espoused theory" and "theory in use" are taken from the well-known learning concept of Argyris & Schön.

⁶ Cf. e.g. the paper on "Professionalism in Consulting" from Hasenzagl & Mitterer at this conference.

of “rational decision making” on the level of philosophy of science⁷. Thus, only one dimension of the social occurrence is taken into account: the content.

We assume that the great influence of economics on management practice is the main reason for the domination of the mechanistic rational organization metaphor in practice (Wimmer, 2004: 163) as mentioned above⁸. As far as the effect of consultants is concerned, the explanatory power of economics-based approaches does not seem to be significantly higher than the one of the practitioner model.

4.2 A social-psychological model

A first enhancement of the simple assumptions shown in eq. (1) can be reached by taking an “irrational” behaviour of clients into account. Thereby additional social psychological aspects are considered; this type of effect model is often used in literature (e.g. Grossmann & Scala, 2002: 57). The contentual aspects (quality) as well as the social aspects of the client-consultant relationship (acceptance) are reflected to explore effects of consultants. The basis theory of such a perspective on effect is normally a kind of social-psychological one. Using these assumptions, effect can be calculated as the product of quality and acceptance:

$$E = Q \times A \quad (2)$$

Within this concept, the “social competence” of the consultant plays an important role. It is often assumed, that a high degree of “social competence” can increase the probability to receive acceptance for a consulting intervention. In eq. (2) two dimensions of social occurrence are considered: the content and the social dimension.

⁷ In the literature there is a discussion within the business administration school concerning other positions on the philosophy of science level (see the discussion of equation 2). But especially within consulting and in German speaking Europe, we often find the above mentioned “rational” oriented position which in many cases underestimates the complexity of organizations (Wimmer, 2004: 167).

⁸ This mechanistic point of view in management practice is especially reflected in the widespread use of the deterministic contingency approach. One important example for the unreflected use of this approach is Business Process Reengineering (BPR) (Hasenzagl, 2006: 309).

Social psychology is also the basis of the “classical” mainstream of the “Organizational Development (OD)” consulting approach. This approach is sharply separated from the economics or engineering approach of consulting. The latter was almost the only way of doing consulting until the 1960s and is still playing a major role (cf. the above mentioned economic rational model). The radical new OD view requires a new understanding of consulting. Thus, OD was the starting point of a (theoretical) reflection of consulting in the sense of a micro theory of consulting concerning e.g. the different roles and interventions (Schein, 1987, 1988).

According to our empirical research, consultants name social competences as the most important ability; and their importance is assumed to further increase (Kainz, 2008: 28). That result points to the increasing importance of “acceptance” in practice. The “de-institutionalization” of consulting as a taken for granted requirement of modern management (Birke, 2007) can be a reasonable explanation for the increasing importance of acceptance. The above mentioned domination of the mechanistic organization metaphor (with an overestimation of the contentual quality) leads to the conclusion, that the main part of the practitioners uses “social techniques” to increase their acceptance. They still follow the assumptions underlying eq. (1) and not social-psychological assumptions comparable to those of OD.

The enhanced (theoretical) reflection and understanding of consulting within the OD approach leads to an improved effect model⁹ as shown in eq. (2). However, internal limits of the social psychological basis theory (e.g. limits in the degree of complexity) and the application in OD as a subject theory (e.g. the normative image of humanity) limit its practical usability. Effective consulting in projects with high complexity (e.g. deep organizational change projects) requires a basis theory with a higher degree of internal complexity. Especially within the German speaking region, the social systems theory according to Luhmann has gained significant importance in consulting as a sophisticated basis theory. Thus, we use this basis theory for our next effect model. Therefore we will

⁹ Porras and Berg have shown a study concerning the impact of OD projects (Porras & Berg, 1978). But in this paper, the focus of the impact analysis is on the whole project and not on the effect of an intervention and/ or a concept like in our paper.

give a short overview of essential basic assumptions of the systems theory which seem necessary to understand the effect model.

4.3 Systems theory as basis theory of consulting

The systems theory has not been very popular in the USA for the last three decades (Hessling & Pahl, 2006: 215). Recent publications indicate to a change of this situation.

4.3.1. Systems theory according to Luhmann

Systems theory has often been seen as a functional theory in the tradition of Talcott Parsons. But Luhmann's theoretical point of view differs significantly from Parson's approach. One major difference lies on the level of philosophy of science (analytical realism vs. constructivism). Luhmann's theory was developed in different waves (Miebach, 2006: 246); even the first step, the functional-structural theory (till 1979) included some enhancements, the final spin-off from Parsons approach came with the introduction of the "concept of autopoiesis" and the theory of self-referential observation (Luhmann, 2005a, 2005b). The position of Luhmann's theory within the sociological theories is seen very distinct. Opinions range from a descriptive "classical" theory to a theory with a lot of connections to "state of the art" sociological theories, even postmodernism (Hasse, 2005; Koch, 2005). However, it is recognized as a very powerful theory due to its great internal complexity. Although the discussion has been fruitful in the last years, it has shifted from the theoretical point of view to the practical application of the theory. Since the mid 1980s, a number of papers and books have been published with applications of the systems theory especially in management consulting as well as in management (e.g. Exner, Königswieser, & Titscher, 1987; Hasenzagl, 2007; Luhmann, 2005c; Seidl & Mohe, 2007; Vos, 2005). Since the early 2000s our research in the Austrian consulting market has shown that about the half of the consultants see at least an influence of the systems theory (especially by using "systemic" tools and techniques) in their work (Hasenzagl & Kainz, 2008: 297).

This short introduction is intended to show the potential power of this basis theory, whereby both types of theories – for and about consulting – are affected. At one hand within the theories *for* consulting the systems theory is a powerful basis for management

theories (Steinmann & Schreyögg, 2005). On the other hand we see a considerable advantage of the systems theory when describing the interaction and interdependence of the parameters in Figure 1. Thereby systems theory functions as a basis theory for theories *about* consulting (on subject level cf. Fig. 2).

Some key assumptions of the systems theory seem to be important to understand the effects of consultants. In systems theory, the elements of a social system are communications (Luhmann, 1995: 137-175). In that rather strange definition communication is seen as an emergent unit of three selections: information, utterance and understanding (Luhmann, 2005a: 66). In contrast to structuralism, Luhmann's theory regards communication as an event that produces the subsequent event (the following communication). This operation of recreating communication that refers to the previous one, needs self-reference of the system (Luhmann, 2005a: 67). The elements under consideration which are "coordinated" (in the sense of complexity reduction) by structures of a social system are not behaviors of individuals; the elements of social systems are communications and not individuals and their behavior. Members of an organization are in this sense environment for the organization.

Aside from the question "how" a communication is created (in our case as reaction to a further one), it is important "which" communication is produced. This is "[...] a question about the *structures* of social systems. Luhmann conceptualizes social structures as *expectations* [...]" (Luhmann, 1995: 293; Seidl, 2005: 31). Structures make the following communication expectable and reduce complexity: not every communication is possible in the sense, that only a small range is meaningful for the system. Structures are not deterministic in a causal input/output understanding, they just "[...] make certain communications more likely than others [...]" (Seidl, 2005: 31).

The changing of the structures can only be performed by the system itself. Thus, the organization (as a special type of social system) is autonomous, although not autarkical. Therefore organizations need irritations of their environments, especially by individuals (psychic systems (Luhmann, 1995: 59)). These irritations (as the meaning extracted from the utterance by the organization, therefore the understood information is constructed by

the organization itself) are necessary that communications emerge and the organization might learn by changing structures. The “structural coupling” of individuals conceptualized as psychic systems and a social system with an “interpenetration” of both systems is one of the important assumptions of Luhmann (Luhmann, 1995: 59; Seidl, 2005: 32). Similar ideas can be found in other concepts as well (e.g. structuration theory by Giddens).

From a systems theory point of view a consultant can only irritate an organization and try to support the “self-learning effects”. In this sense, consultants can only have an effect, if the organization is able to understand a signal from the environment (in this case: the consultant) as information. “Understanding” is the third selection necessary for a communication to emerge. If the system does not understand information no communication occurs; information of the psychic system “consultant” cannot emerge to a communication and thus no further communication can follow. Since the information of the consultant has no “connectivity” within the organization, no further communication can “connect” to this information (because there is no prior communication). As noted before, the structures of the system “determine” which communication can follow or is expectable.

Following these assumptions learning of a system can be modeled in a two step process: in a first step signals occur from the environment (e.g. a consultant) which are understood by the system as information. In the second step, the system processes the observed information within the system-inherent logic depending on the structures of the system. The result of this internal processing may be learning by the system in terms of changing its structures.¹⁰

4.3.2. Effect model based on the systems theory

We pointed out that two steps are necessary within an organization to attribute an effect to a consultant within the systems theory:

- Information by the consultant is observed by the organization. Therefore a communication emerges which is “connectable” for further communications
- A functional reaction of the organization.

¹⁰ Similar assumptions can be found in literature about organizational learning from a systemic point of view (e.g. Klimecki, Laßleben, & Thomae, 2000).

A functional reaction means that the organization changes its communication progress (by changing the underlying structures) and is thus more likely to reach its goals. A consultant has to estimate, which information is connective (C_a) and what the expected reaction of the organization is. The quality (Q_c) of the information is high, if the organization changes in the intended direction (functional in the above mentioned sense).

$$E(t) = C_a(t) \times Q_c(t) \quad (3)$$

Three dimensions of social occurrences are considered in the systems theory and therefore in eq. (3): the contentual, the social and the temporal dimension. Again we see a rather social aspect ($C_a(t)$) and a more contentual aspect ($Q_c(t)$)¹¹. But the separation between these two dimensions is more analytical than in eq. (2). The third dimension - the time - is represented in eq. (3) by the term (t). Time is very important for the connectability as well as for the reaction of the organization ($Q_c(t)$).

This effect model requires of a consultant (a) to know the goals of the organization, and (b) to take these goals into account as well as (c) the connectivity and (d) the estimated reaction of the organization. A deep understanding of an organization in the sense of hypothesizing its structures is inevitable to meet these requirements. A lot of systemic techniques and tools are applied in consultancy in German speaking Europe. However, we assume that the use of these tools is not always based on a deep understanding of Luhmann's theory¹² (Hasenzagl & Kainz, 2008: 297, 309). In our opinion the sole use of tools without a connection to the complex underlying theory does not enable to build hypotheses concerning the reaction of the organization (for $C_a(t)$ as well as for $Q_c(t)$ in eq. (3)). Effect can be attributed to the consultants, if the organization moves towards its goals.

¹¹ For a comparable approach see e.g. Simsa and with respect to consulting Titscher (Simsa, 2001; Titscher, 2001).

¹² Luhmann calls this position „Strictly technical”, that “[...] means, in this context, 'without knowledge of the theoretical connections'.” (Luhmann, 2005c: 352).

The consultant in a first step normally intervenes within the consulting system (cf. Fig. 1, also called 'contact system'). Thus, the reaction of the organization to the interventions¹³ of the consulting system into the organization have to be considered as well (Hasenzagl, 2007: 358). This highly complex situation cannot be analyzed without a theory which is able to model such complex social occurrences.

Despite its high complexity, the model remains usable in practice, as shown in the following chapter.

5. Application of the effect models

First we show the definition of different types of consulting; in a next step we use these types to draft the results of two case studies.

5.1 Different types of consultants

Depending on the effect model and the basis theory referred to by the consultant (mostly implicit especially as practitioner and economics-based consultant), diverse types of consulting can be distinguished. Two major groups of consulting approaches (see also: Schein, 2002: 24; Seidl & Mohe, 2007: 22; Werr & Linnarsson, 2002: 25) are identified which are characterized in Table 1 in more detail.

	Type 1: Economic and technical advisor	Type 2: Management consultant
Basic assumption	An organization is a rational and trivial machine	An organization is a complex (non trivial) social unit
Contentual Dimension	Main dimension, consultant is a contentual expert	Problem definition and solving conducted by the client, consultant enables

¹³ Seidl & Mohe see the main intervention of the contact system in a second-order observation (Seidl & Mohe, 2007: 20). Therefore the contact system observes the observations of the organization and "[...] has and can use (or not use) the possibility to see that which the observed observer *cannot* see." (Luhmann, 2005c: 357). We see a broader range of possible interventions of the consulting system (Dietrich et al., 2005: 281/82; Hasenzagl, 2007: 358).

	The problem definition and the concept is conducted by the consultant	new views
Social dimension	Technical approach (social technology) Asymmetric relationship	Social aspects (structures) are in the focus Symmetric relationship
Temporal dimension	Rather long projects High degree of standardization of methods	Long projects but preferably short consultant employment Situational interventions
Consultant knowledge	Economics oriented (IT, Logistic)	Theories about consulting as basis for knowledge Sophisticated management theories based on powerful basis theories (theories for consulting)
Applicability	Rare problems with lack of knowledge within the organization First order change (change of artifacts)	Unspecific problems with need for radical new solutions Second order change (“cultural change”)
Assumption about effect	$E = Q$ Eq. (1) $E = Q \times A$ Eq. (2)	$E(t) = Ca(t) \times Qc(t)$ Eq. (3)

Table 1: Two types of consultants (cf. Hasenzagl, 2007)

Members of the first group operate with a rather simplified model concerning the consultant’s effects. This group prefers an “advice oriented” approach. They want the clients to implement the consultant’s concepts and see the source of the consultant’s power in the contentual expertise. For the second group (we call them management consultant) one main aspect of the consultant’s role is to “enable” the clients to find their

own solutions. The presumed effect model in this group is more sophisticated and of higher complexity.

Furthermore the two type approach of consulting based on the effect models serves as the conceptual basis to analyze some empirical results of our previous work. On the one hand these practical cases enhance the understanding of the theoretical effect concept; on the other hand they show the usability of a sophisticated theoretical concept in practice. We give a short overview concerning the results, for a deeper insight see Hasenzagl (2007: 356).

5.2 Case studies

In the first case study, the assumptions concerning the consulting system shown above can be strengthened. Furthermore in this empirical study the advantages of the second type of consultant (Tab. 1) for change of the second order become apparent.

- a.) The case study was conducted by a research team, using a hermeneutic method to interpret the change process second order within a regional development advisor (Dietrich et al., 2005). The interpretation showed clearly that the consulting system (cf. Fig. 1) which was differentiated as an interaction system with members of the consulting firm and a small group of the client organization had a very strong influence on changing the client organization on a cultural level. First of all, the clients group of the consulting system underwent a 2nd order (cultural) change. Thereafter this “strange” group induced a changing process within the organization.
- b.) In a second case study conducted in a research project leaded by the author, especially the two different types of consultants where used to analyze a consulting project with a hermeneutic approach as well (Grumböck, Horvath, & Schuster, 2002). A large global enterprise had hired expert consultants to integrate the acquisition of a smaller firm. The consultants were typical type 1 consultants and members of the global “consulting industry”. The consultants elaborated an integration concept which was declined (in the sense of not implemented) by the client. An interview with a manager of the consulting firm revealed that he considered the project to be a failure. Interviews with the client showed a quite different picture. They saw some learning effects with respect to their own

integration concepts and thus the project did not really fail from their point of view. As mentioned above, we are speaking of a type 1 consultant. However, the client implicitly expected results of a type 2 consultant; they wanted impacts (irritations) to improve their own ideas concerning the integration. Thus, the consultant's concept was not implemented, but it delivered some useful irritations for the client to learn.

Two aspects of this project are especially worth a short discussion: *First* we see, that the failure rate of consulting projects, which is mentioned to be between 50% and 80% (for an literature overview see: Seidl & Mohe, 2007: 3) has to be scrutinized. Which consulting type respectively which effect model is used to see a project as failed? As shown above, a project can lead to a learning of the client, despite the refusal of the consultant's problem solving concept. The refusal is a failure with respect to eq. (1) or (2), but could be successful with respect to eq. (3). *Second* different assumptions concerning clients learning are also mentioned by Werr & Linnarson. As shown above, they pointed out, that learning effects were not recognized by clients because these effects are on a processual (not contentual) and latent (tacit) level. In our empirical study we found the interesting case that the client saw the learning effects whereas the consultant did not!

6. Reflection and research implications

Results of this paper enable to understand the different assumptions about effects in the practice of consultancy and to reflect the success of consulting projects in a more sophisticated way. Therefore our results contribute to the client-consultant relationship literature (e.g. Werr & Linnarsson, 2002) .

Additionally, the results can be seen as a contribution to a general micro theory of consulting. In this field some further research demand can be identified. To increase the professionalism of the consulting branch, a general theory of consulting is desirable, at least theoretical models are indispensable (Lundberg, 2002: 171). Normally, the client-consultant interaction (which is the scope of such consulting theories) is very complex, especially on a social and temporal level. Therefore an appropriate complexity of the consulting theories and therefore of the underlying basis theories seems necessary and the implementation of these theories in practice calls for an academic education. The

results of the paper at hand were used in the past in academic education as well as in the training of consulting practitioners and met the requirements of these applications adequately.

References

- Birke, M. (2007). Nach den Beratererzählungen - Ein Rück- und Ausblick auf den Wandel der Unternehmensberatung als gesellschaftliche Institution. *Arbeit*, 16(3), 231-245.
- Buono, A. F. (2001a). *Current Trends in Management Consulting* (Vol. 1). Greenwich, Connecticut: Information Age Publishing.
- Buono, A. F. (2001b). Introduction. In A. F. Buono (Ed.), *Current Trends in Management Consulting* (pp. vii-xiv). Greenwich, Connecticut: Information Age Publishing.
- Buono, A. F. (2002). *Developing Knowledge and Value in Management Consulting* (Vol. 2). Greenwich, Connecticut: Information Age Publishing.
- Clark, T., & Fincham, R. (2002). *Critical Consulting*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Dietrich, A., Frank, H., Güttel, W. H., & Hasenzagl, R. (2005). Das Feuer kleiner Gruppen: Analyse der Entwicklungslogik und -dynamik eines Beratungsprozesses. *Gruppendynamik und Organisationsberatung*, 36(3), 271-284.
- Egger, W., Häfke-Schönthaler, J., Hasenzagl, R., & Stocker, F. (2008). *Wirtschaftsberatung in Österreich . Markt und Branche, Struktur und Entwicklungen 2007/2008*. Wien: Facultas.
- Egger, W., Hasenzagl, R., Stocker, F., & Wagner, C. (2004). *Wirtschaftsberatung in Österreich: Struktur und Entwicklungen*. Wien, Graz: Verlag NwV.
- Egger, W., Hasenzagl, R., Stocker, F., & Wagner, C. (2006). *Wirtschaftsberatung in Österreich 2005/2006. Markt und Branche, Struktur und Entwicklungen*. Wiener Neustadt: Fachhochschule Wiener Neustadt.
- Exner, A., Königswieser, R., & Titscher, S. (1987). Unternehmensberatung – systemisch. Theoretische Annahmen und Interventionen im Vergleich zu anderen Ansätzen. *Die Betriebswirtschaft (DBW)*, 47(3), 265-284.
- Fincham, R. (1999). The Consultant-Client Relationship: Critical Perspectives on the Management of Organizational Change. *Journal of Management Studies*, 36(3), 335-351.
- Fincham, R., & Clark, T. (2002). Introduction: The Emergence of Critical Perspectives on Consulting. In T. Clark & R. Fincham (Eds.), *Critical Consulting* (pp. 1-18). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Groß, C., & Kieser, A. (2006). Are Consultants Moving towards Professionalization? In R. Greenwood & R. Suddaby (Eds.), *Professional Service Firms* (Vol. 24, pp. 69-100). Amsterdam et al.: Elsevier.
- Grossmann, R., & Scala, K. (2002). Landkarten von Organisationen. In K. Scala & R. Grossmann (Eds.), *Supervision in Organisationen* (2. ed., pp. 35-64). Weinheim, München: Juventa.
- Grumböck, C., Horvath, E., & Schuster, D. (2002). Fallanalyse Fachberatung, Fachbereichsbericht 3/2002. University of Applied Sciences Wiener Neustadt.
- Hasenzagl, R. (2004). Rollenkonforme Interventionen: Beitrag zu einer Theorie über Beratung. In W. Egger, R. Hasenzagl, F. Stocker & C. Wagner (Eds.), *Wirtschaftsberatung in Österreich: Struktur und Entwicklungen* (pp. 421-444). Wien, Graz: Verlag NwV.
- Hasenzagl, R. (2006). Corporate Entrepreneurship und Veränderungsmethoden. In H. Frank (Ed.), *Corporate Entrepreneurship* (pp. 289-319). Wien: Facultas.
- Hasenzagl, R. (2007). Die Wirkung von Beratern. *Gruppendynamik und Organisationsberatung*, 38(4), 351-370.

- Hasenzagl, R., Falkner, G., & Hatvan, B. (2006). Rollen-Interventions-Model - Eine empirische Untersuchung zur Wirkung von Beratung. *Schmalenbachs Zeitschrift für betriebswirtschaftliche Forschung*, 58(12), 1033-1050.
- Hasenzagl, R., & Kainz, G. (2008). Entwicklungstendenzen in der Unternehmensberatung. In W. Egger, J. Häfke-Schönthaler, R. Hasenzagl & F. Stocker (Eds.), *Wirtschaftsberatung in Österreich* (pp. 285-336). Wien: Facultas
- Hasse, R. (2005). Luhmann's Systems Theory and the New Institutionalism. In D. Seidl & K. H. Becker (Eds.), *Niklas Luhmann and Organization Studies* (pp. 248-261). Malmö: Liber & Copenhagen Business School Press.
- Hessling, A., & Pahl, H. (2006). The Global System of Finance. Scanning Talcott Parsons and Niklas Luhmann for Theoretical Keystones. *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 65(1), 189-218.
- Kainz, G. (2008). Unternehmensberatung in Österreich. In W. Egger, J. Häfke-Schönthaler, R. Hasenzagl & F. Stocker (Eds.), *Wirtschaftsberatung in Österreich. Markt und Branche, Struktur und Entwicklungen 2007/2008* (pp. 11-43). Wien: Facultas.
- Kainz, G., & Torggler, M. (2008). Zusammenfassende Darstellung der Angebots- und Nachfragestruktur am österreichischen Markt für Beratung 2008. In W. Egger, J. Häfke-Schönthaler, R. Hasenzagl & F. Stocker (Eds.), *Wirtschaftsberatung in Österreich. Markt und Branche, Struktur und Entwicklungen 2007/2008* (pp. 255-284). Wien: Facultas.
- Kipping, M., & Engwall, L. (2002). *Management Consulting: Emergence and Dynamics of a Knowledge Industry*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Klimecki, R., Laßleben, H., & Thomae, M. (2000). Organisationales Lernen: Zur Integration von Theorie, Empirie und Gestaltung. In G. Schreyögg & P. Conrad (Eds.), *Organisatorischer Wandel und Transformation* (pp. 63-98). Wiesbaden: Gabler.
- Koch, J. (2005). Luhmann's System Theory and Postmodernism. In D. Seidl & K. H. Becker (Eds.), *Niklas Luhmann and Organization Studies* (pp. 262-281). Malmö: Liber & Copenhagen Business School Press.
- Kubr, M. (2002). *Management Consulting: A Guide to the Profession* (4 ed.). Geneva: International Labour Organization.
- Leif, T. (2006). *beraten & verkauft. McKinsey & Co. - der große Bluff der Unternehmensberater*. München: Bertelsmann.
- Luhmann, N. (1995). *Social Systems*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Luhmann, N. (2005a). The Autopoiesis of Social Systems. In D. Seidl & K. H. Becker (Eds.), *Niklas Luhmann and Organization Studies* (pp. 64-82). Malmö: Liber & Copenhagen Business School Press.
- Luhmann, N. (2005b). The Concept of Autopoiesis. In D. Seidl & K. H. Becker (Eds.), *Niklas Luhmann and Organization Studies* (pp. 54-63). Malmö: Liber & Copenhagen Business School Press.
- Luhmann, N. (2005c). Communication Barriers in Management Consulting. In D. Seidl & K. H. Becker (Eds.), *Niklas Luhmann and Organization Studies* (pp. 351-364). Malmö: Liber & Copenhagen Business School Press.
- Lundberg, C. C. (2002). Toward a General Theory. In A. F. Buono (Ed.), *Developing Knowledge and Value in Management Consulting* (pp. 153-168). Greenwich, Connecticut: Information Age Publishing.
- McKenna, C. D. (1995). The Origins of Modern Management Consulting. *Business and Economic History*, 24(1), 51-58.
- Miebach, B. (2006). *Soziologische Handlungstheorien* (2 ed.). Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Mohe, M. (2008). Bridging the Cultural Gap in Management Consulting Research. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, 8(1), 41-57.
- Porras, J. I., & Berg, P. O. (1978). The Impact of Organization Development. *Academy of Management Review*, 3(2), 249-266.

- Poulfelt, F., & Payne, A. (1994). Management Consultants: Client and Consultant Perspectives. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 10(4), 421-436.
- Robbins, S. P., & Coulter, M. K. (2002). *Management* (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall International.
- Schein, E. H. (1987). *Process Consultation, Vol. 2. Lessons for Managers and Consultants*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.
- Schein, E. H. (1988). *Process Consultation, Vol. 1. Its Role in Organization Development*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.
- Schein, E. H. (2002). Consulting: What should it mean? In T. Clark & R. Fincham (Eds.), *Critical Consulting* (pp. 22-27). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Seidl, D. (2005). The Basic Concepts of Luhmann's Theory of Social Systems. In D. Seidl & K. H. Becker (Eds.), *Niklas Luhmann and Organization Studies* (pp. 21-53). Malmö: Liber.
- Seidl, D., & Mohe, M. (2007). *The Consultant-Client Relationship: A System-Theoretical Perspective* (Vol. Discussions Paper 2007-06). Munich: University Munich.
- Simsa, R. (2001). Einflussstrategien von Nonprofit Organisationen: Ausprägungen und Konsequenzen für das Personalmanagement. *Zeitschrift für Personalforschung*, 3(15), 53-76.
- Steinmann, H., & Schreyögg, G. (2005). *Management. Grundlagen der Unternehmensführung* (6 ed.). Wiesbaden: Gabler.
- Steyrer, J. (1991). Unternehmensberatung. Stand der deutschsprachigen Theoriebildung und empirischen Forschung. In M. Hofmann (Ed.), *Theorie und Praxis der Unternehmensberatung* (pp. 1-44). Heidelberg: Physica.
- Titscher, S. (2001). *Professionelle Beratung: Was beide Seiten vorher wissen sollten* (2 ed.). Frankfurt, Wien: Ueberreuter.
- Vos, J.-P. (2005). Strategic Management from a Systems-Theoretical Perspective. In D. Seidl & K. H. Becker (Eds.), *Niklas Luhmann and Organization Studies* (pp. 365-385). Malmö: Liber.
- Watson, A., Rodgers, T., & Dudek, D. (1998). The Human Nature of Management Consulting: Judgment and Expertise. *Managerial and Decision Economics*, 19(7-8), 495-503.
- Werr, A., & Linnarsson, H. (2002). Management Consulting for Client Learning? In A. F. Buono (Ed.), *Developing Knowledge and Value in Management Consulting* (Vol. 2, pp. 3-31). Greenwich, Connecticut: Information Age Publishing.
- Wimmer, R. (1991). Organisationsberatung - eine Wachstumsbranche ohne professionelles Selbstverständnis. Überlegungen zur Weiterführung des OE-Ansatzes in Richtung systemischer Organisationsberatung. In M. Hofmann (Ed.), *Theorie und Praxis der Unternehmensberatung. Bestandsaufnahme und Entwicklungsperspektiven* (pp. 45-136). Heidelberg: Physica.
- Wimmer, R. (2004). *Organisation und Beratung. Systemtheoretische Perspektiven für die Praxis*. Heidelberg: Carl-Auer-Systeme Verlag.