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Similarities and differences in HR consulting in Croatia and in Hungary

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For last decade Human Resources (HR) consulting services have been focused to transform and improve its operational effectiveness, but although significant changes in sense of improvement are done, the real impact of those transformations has limited level of success. The human resource management (HRM/HR) is closely connected to the cultural environment to which an organization or company belongs to and operates in;

HR consulting has undergone significant development in the region. During the past decades the relationship between consultant and client has changed significantly in South and Eastern Europe (SEE) as well. Within traditional consulting the client and the consultant were not equal partners.

Modern companies working today in challenging and rapidly changing environment are faced with significant requirements to change importance and role of HR as company's valuable assets.

Despite these business and HR challenges, talent and skilled people shortages, complex and demanding regulatory framework, and as well, working in highly globalised conditions, companies are asked to demonstrate financial, organizational and business sustainability generating adequate and steadily increased profit ensuring growth and development.

Addressing those business and market challenges effectively will affect organization's ability to sustain overall financial results. HR consulting services are one of most important and uniquely qualified services aimed to help companies to create right answers to those challenges using HR transformation consulting services like HR value & strategy, HR service delivery, HR technology and HR outsourcing.

Concerning the further development in the SEE region, companies will increase its demand for complex and sophisticated HR consulting services as motivation strategies, talent management and management&leadership training including coaching as well.

In Hungary it can be seen that the use of external professional providers for HR consulting services is higher in the total sample than in the Eastern European one. The main constraint in HR consulting encountered in Croatia, are employee rotation, generation gap, and talent management.

Expert- vs. Process Consulting: Changing Paradigms in Management consulting in Germany

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In the last 20 years the consulting market in Germany has developed slightly different compared to other regions. Besides the strong classical expert-oriented consulting, rooted in the tradition of scientific management and a rational approach to all kinds of managerial challenges in the German speaking market, a significant second approach in process consulting has developed.

This internationally unique approach is based on a strong sociological tradition in new systems theory and perceives organizations as self-organizing social systems. The different paradigmatic starting points of the two consulting approaches lead to very different characteristics, strengths and weaknesses in procedures, their consultant's qualifications and even business models.

Starting with the customer's overall requirement for more implementation support from the consultants while the latter refuses to take on more responsibility, the article analyses the possibilities of integrating the different strengths in a combined consulting approach tofulfil the growing customer needs. Three models which try to reconcile the expert-oriented consulting and the process-oriented consulting currently in use or development reveal the difficulties which are partly caused by different organizational theories in use and show the necessity of a different cooperation between consultants, between management and consultant and perhaps even a different form of consulting.

Shifting the Paradigm in the Development of Human Intellectual Capital

A Call for Action

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The Organizational Development community has the opportunity to not only improve, and even advance, the process of adoption through application of OD values, theories, intellectual capital, practices and most of all our capacity for compassion, but also to enhance the quality of future human intellectual capital in doing so. In pursuing that opportunity, we can lead corporate management to satisfy its social responsibility to the general population, to its stakeholders and to future employees alike by taking a pro-active role in improving the presently deplorable condition of the international adoption process in general. The complications, confusion and chaos that too often characterize the present adoption process can be corrected and the problems they create resolved, but these authors contend that it will require relying on the disciplines inherent to organizational development to effectively achieve such a resolution.

As practitioners of OD, we can influence leadership in many industries to tap the rich resource available to future employers by rescuing presently abandoned and otherwise dispossessed children from a life of essentially guaranteed failure and suffering and by giving them a chance to gain the skills and develop the aptitudes that can be the dynamic lifeblood of a new generation of human intellectual capital. Simply by encouraging and supporting their current employees' interest in and willingness to adopt these children and bring them into an environment that will provide them with the education and emotional foundation they need to become contributing members of any society, corporate management can plant its own field, so to speak, of well balanced and effectively educated employees to harvest for future workforce sustenance and industry growth.

Consulting and Training in an International Environment

Reflections, Best Practises and Lessons Learnt

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Increasingly consultants are assigned to working with international organisations. Facilitation of workshops and doing trainings with participants from different cultures causes special challenges for consultants and trainers involved. The key question for them is how they can be prepared professionally for such circumstances.

As little research is found about the consultants' situation, this paper tries to reflect our practical work in international contexts with groups that consist of members of different cultures. We want to focus on the topics of cultural preparation and how helpful it is for consultants to combine the knowledge of objective culture with the development of cultural competences.

Consultants have to handle uncertainty, ambiguity, as well as trust and mistrust in consulting and training processes. We also document some observations with working in a foreign language which we find both, challenging as well as helpful. One of the core competences of consultants is to design processes. We have found some ideas how to work with several design principles in intercultural contexts.

Our findings are summarized in eight propositions, which we want to suggest for further discussions with our colleagues.

Speculation on the Practice and Process of Organization Development in "Hostile" Environments

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Organization Development (OD) as a field, was "born and raised" in the United States, often times in and of itself a "hostile environment". For most of its life in its native land, OD was treated as an "oddity" that few business executives understood, fewer still accepted, and the practice served primarily as a humorous plot line for many television sitcoms. Jaeger's (1986) landmark reworking of Hofstede's (1980) data supplied the explanatory proof for what many of us practitioners had intuitively known – OD's "outcast" status was due to its counterculture foundation. OD's core values (Feminine, Collectivist, Low Power Distance, Low Uncertainty Avoidance) differ from those of the dominant U.S. culture (Masculine, Individualist, Low Power Distance, Low Uncertainty Avoidance) on half the dimensions (Jaeger, 1986).

Interestingly, it is probably the very same cultural differences that make the U.S. a somewhat hostile environment for OD that creates the need for, and effectiveness of, this child from the "fringe elements". Today, OD is generally accepted as an attractive and beneficial tool in corporate board rooms throughout the world (Sorensen, Head, Yaeger & Cooperrider, 2004). Some of the environments, such as Scandinavia (Sorensen, Head, Gironda & Larsen, 1997) possess values that match those of OD perfectly, while some, such as Chile (Fuchs, 1987), are much more different than even the United States, with three or four conflicting values. OD has also been proven an effective tool in the full range of economic development, from its "natural" environment of highly developed (Head, 2004) to the third world undeveloped economies (Golembiewski & Luo, 1994).

While OD has worked globally, it is essential to avoid making the common mistake that it is practiced in the same manner worldwide. To be effective, OD's processes and techniques must be adapted to fit the host country's values. In this spirit, this paper speculates on what the consultant faces when working in cultures with values hostile to OD – those possessing Cooke's Passive/Defensive and Aggressive/Defensive dimensions.

Using English as a foreign language in international and multicultural consulting: an asset or a hindrance?

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The professional world at the beginning of the 21st century seems to be undergoing a paradigm shift which resembles a constant process of change. Growing internationalisation brings about situations which require the individual to "switch" between various different "cultures" on a daily basis: multi-professional teams, interdisciplinary projects, multiple professional identities, various work places, etc. This certainly implies personal and institutional enrichment, but also new challenges, risks and potential for conflict and, therefore, calls for new forms of professional counselling.

When it comes to an encounter of people of mixed national and ethnical backgrounds, one of the challenges mentioned above is undoubtedly the linguistic diversity. Given the widely acknowledged status of English as the world language, English has also become the most widely used language when it comes to professional counselling in intercultural contexts. Due to the growing demand of counselling processes in English, a certain command of the English language has also become indispensible for consultants.

It has to be noted, however, that it's rarely English native speakers who prompt a "multilingual" group to speak English. In most working contexts it's speakers for "none of whom is the mother tongue" (House 1999: 74) who agree to use English as common code of understanding, i.e. English as a lingua franca (ELF). Current research strongly questions the status of native English norms as the only point of reference for 'correct' usage of English (cf. e.g. Seidlhofer et al. 2006).

Based on empirical data, this contribution chooses an interdisciplinary approach at the interface between linguistics and other social sciences to examine some implications of the use of ELF in professional counselling processes, with a strong focus on supervision. It is meant to show that consulting processes among non-native speakers of English can be carried out successfully despite clear linguistic deviations from native speaker norms.

Strategy work in an international setting: entangling top-down and bottom-up approaches via continuous conversations, learning cycles and semi finished instruments

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Most international corporations confine strategic management work to senior managers at headquarters, whereas the practical implementation and change work rests with local line managers. This model fits well when strategy means defining general directions and senior management acts as general strategists. However the “roll-out paradigm” has its limitations especially in the service industries, when specifics of local markets and circumstances have decisive impact on business results and the expertise of local front staff is highly advantageous. In these cases, a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches seems appropriate to connect front line knowledge with the requirements of senior management and headquarters in strategic work.

This paper explores the case of an international real estate leasing company, headquartered in Vienna with subsidiaries in eight European countries (CEE and SEE region); the author consulted in a strategy development project. It reveals an understanding of strategy development where headquarters´ senior management together with local line managers of subsidiaries in different countries co-create operational market strategies in an international setting. The example demonstrates the implications of a combined top-down and bottom-up approach for the consultant’s work in designing the steps of the process as well as in directing interventions within the consulting system. The retrospective analysis conveys three fields of interventions to focus consulting activities towards the desired course: continuous deep conversations with top management to provide the context and strategic frame, learning processes yielding managerial skills as well as new mindsets of the managers involved and the application of semi finished instruments inviting participation when tailoring the details of the strategic analysis. For the consultant, navigating within this framework requires extensive knowledge on both content and process level as well as a mindset and business model allowing for intensive collaboration.

Coaching using a holistic, strengths-based approach:
Dual Perspectives

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Coaching is a rapidly growing form of consulting that is frequently used for leadership and career development, performance management issues and career transition. It often includes the use of a variety of assessment instruments in conjunction with counseling sessions. Coaching philosophies vary; however, those that utilize a holistic, strengths-based approach are typically more effective than other methods.

This experienced based paper is co-authored by the coachee recipient and the external coach who utilized a holistic, strengths-based assessment and coaching process as a career development intervention. It focuses on the concept of talent alignment, looking at the "whole person" and how their talents are used both personally and professionally. Aligning the use of one's gifts to all aspects of life improves performance, increases productivity, retention and employee satisfaction. Data from additional coachees who have completed a holistic, strengths-based assessment process will be compared.

In this paper, the coach describes the appreciative, talent identification model called, the "Inner Circles," and how it impacted the coachee's self-perception and job performance. The coachee shares her viewpoint based on the value received via the coaching engagement in contrast to a 360 degree feedback method that was used previously. It discusses the transformation process for the coachee and the specific results and outcomes of the coaching process. Input from the coachee's human resources vice president is included as another perspective. The paper will address additional assessment tools that were used and the resulting benefits.

Peer Consulting in the Not-for-Profit Sector

A Case Study

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In a time when a fledgling economy and budget cuts make it difficult for not-for-profits to invest in organizational change and effectiveness, there needs to be a model that can be cost effective. This paper will examine the mutual benefits of peer consulting as a method of intervention to facilitate organizational effectiveness and learning in the not-for-profit sector or public sector.

The paper will study this method as applied by the Illinois Association of Community Action Agencies (IACAA), Illinois' largest anti-poverty network. Data analysis on one of the member agencies of IACAA that participated in peer consulting as an intervention will be conducted. The data analysis will cover the results of the peer intervention which was conducted in 2003 to demonstrate the effectiveness of this model.

The paper will also report on the learning benefits for peer consultants and how those benefits have been applied to their respective organizations for continuous improvement. The paper will finally examine why this model of intervention has not been successfully replicated by the Community Action network in other states. The paper will also explore opportunities for this model of consulting to engage in organizational change and development.

Changing the Paradigm of Crisis Management: How to Put OD in the Process

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The present article presents a synthesis of the guiding principles in four areas of crisis management, planning, coordination, leadership and civil behaviour, and outlines interventions in organizational development that may contribute to the achievement of these principles.

This OD incursion stems from the observation that despite advances in the knowledge of crisis management, organizations apply them to a greater or less degree, so that dysfunctional behaviour continues to operate against an efficient resolution of crises. This observation is confirmed by a qualitative meta-analysis based on five major disasters that strike many countries around the world in the last 10 years. Various interventions proposed by OD in terms of human processes, structural design and human resource management, as well as strategy, could possibly be coupled with crisis management guiding principles to increase individuals' and organizations' resilient capacities in times of crises. The conclusion lays out the necessary conditions for cross-fertilization of the two fields.

Building Organizational Change Capacity

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Although many organizations are faced with the challenge of adapting to rapidly changing environments, the underlying conception of the change process remains relatively simplistic in nature. The paper examines the need for a diagnostic orientation to conceptualizing and implementing change and the concomitant challenge of building organizational change capacity. The discussion differentiates the concept of change readiness, the extent to which organizational members recognize the need for a particular change at a specific point in time, from change capacity – the ability of an organization to change not just once, but as a normal course of events in response to and in anticipation of internal and external shifts.

Emphasis is placed on developing an appropriate intervention strategy focused on the: 1) micro- (understanding and acceptance of different approaches to change; enhancing willingness and ability to change); 2) meso- (creating a change facilitative infrastructure, ensuring appropriate resources); and 3) macro- (building a facilitative culture, ongoing strategizing) levels of an organization. Drawing on the authors‘ observations and consulting experience over the past twenty years, the paper examines the challenge of creating true organizational change capacity.

Drawing on three approaches to implementing organizational change – directed change, planned change and guided changing – each with its own advantages and disadvantages, developing change capacity entails the ability to move back and forth among these change management approaches as dictated by the situation. The keys are to develop a common understanding of the dynamics of organizational change, building a change-supportive infrastructure and creating and nurturing a change-facilitative culture. A brief case illustration is provided, focusing on an intervention in a multi-billion dollar global technology leader that was faced with a long-term, complex problem with uncertain dimensions.

Complementary Consulting

The Only Real Option for Managers

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We discuss the very contemporary topic of complementary consulting, which combines the expertise of traditional business consulting and systemic process consulting, thus provoking a qualitative leap. After describing five key issues currently affecting the worlds of management and consulting, we present a set of seven hypotheses that will have lasting influence on our consulting practices:

- Complexity, the increased uncertainty, risk levels and speed of change all raise the demand for a new form of decision-making and consulting.
- Managers find complementary consulting plausible and easy to accept.
- Complementarity on part of the consultants and the focus on good decision-making on part of the organisation serve to and create lasting growth in the behavioural repertoire at all stages of the cooperative process.
- The diagnosis is an ongoing process in which both managers and consultants alike oscillate between the two poles of expertise.
- We need to calculate more quickly, decide more slowly and not confuse the two.
- It helps to link complementary consulting concepts not just with decision-making but also with organisational learning.
- Consulting is increasingly faced with the task of establishing a cooperative process that makes use of every possible integration opportunity to ultimately support the long-term survival of an organisation.

It helps to regard complementary consulting and organizational decision-making as two sides of the same coin. Both go together in bundling forces for the benefit and sustained development of the organisation.

Two brief case studies turn our hypotheses into concrete actions and offer a practical illustration of how we put our ideas to work in real-life situations. We link these ideas with two leitmotifs (compensation and attitude) that could serve to advance current consulting practice.

Last, but not least, we dare an outlook on the necessity to develop managerial decision-making, and offer three keys to the long-term organisational learning process in which the broadening of our horizons will lead to “new solutions for new situations”.

Focusing the business case and making use of teamwork – key issues in consulting networks and collaborations

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The paper presented is based on the research programme "Organization Development in Networks and Collaborations" of the iff – Institute for Organization Development and Group Dynamics of the Alpe-Adria University Klagenfurt and on the author´s consulting practice.

Two aspects of managing networks and collaborations and how consulting can add value to success are presented.

One key issue in managing and consulting networks is focusing the business case. The idea basically comprises that collaborations have to invent something new, which is not in the world yet at least not for those who are joining to form a collaborative venture. This is illustrated by analyzing the consulting process of the initial phase of the "Vienna Network for Workplace Health Promotion". In 2006 the most important regional financer of workplace health promotion, the Health Insurance Vienna Region (Wiener Gebietskrankenkasse, WGKK), decided to involve the health insurance agencies and regional social partners,to set up this network. The consulting process

A second key success factor lies in building teams in networks working on relevant issues of the collaboration. Establishing teamwork is an investment with quite an impact: people involved have to invent the details of their work on the level of content and processes themselves as there is no formal authority telling them what to do. With this they generate continuously the sense of organizing (K. Weick) which is vital to collaborative ventures. The case of a network of companies, research institutes, consultants and service provides in facility and real estate management suggests a model of how to use teamwork to speed up and broaden a process of strategy development.

Forming networks in the tension zone between politics and the economy

Consultation and development of the klima:aktiv network

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This article is about how to build a performing network in the field of climate protection, based on the example of klima:aktiv, a publicly commissioned Austrian climate-protection initiative. The klima:aktiv network is a medium for different cooperation projects aimed at raising public awareness concerning energy efficiency and the careful use of existing energy resources as well as the quality improvement of certain products in existing markets.

Moreover, this network has to operate successfully in the field of tension between political policy making and the economy.

The article describes success factors and stumbling blocks of building such a network in three different phases. Starting from the "initial phase" with a number of unconnected projects, continuing with the "set up phase", which is about building up energy and ownership in the network and establishing adequate forms of governance. The third phase describes how to keep an established network alive and running well in a turbulent environment. Furthermore, this paper points out the challenges of consulting in and to such networks.

This process shows the perspective of a systemic consultant in charge of consulting the development of the network. The reader will also find additional important aspects from the point of view of the network manager responsible for klima:aktiv.

Collaboration in the Political Environment

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Collaboration and networks are the current trend. Western society is ever increasingly developing into a juxtaposition of highly specialized systems and organizations. This differentiation is particularly noticeable in the field of public services. Utilities and other services previously provided directly by government agencies are now made available by a wide range of outsourced and independent organizations.

This paper focuses on the theme of the tense interdependence between political/ governmental organizations, government-related, outsourced organizations and organizations in the non-profit sector in the context of collaboration. The central substantive study focus is on the importance of policy for collaboration. An attempt was made to identify the needs, impact and practical implications of collaboration, where particularly the three aspects of politics, space and the role of consulting were considered.

Using a practical case study based on this interdependence, the importance of politics as well as the spatial aspect and the role of consulting were observed.

This paper summarizes the initial results of these observations.

Practical principles of how to manage a company: Corporate Self Navigation (CSN)

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Have you as a manager ever asked yourself what your image of steering is? Have you as a leader ever paid attention to your basic assumptions of steering a company?

From a systemic perspective, organizations can be viewed as a “biotope” and thereby as a permanent, lively process of communication and decisions. What are the implications for managers and leaders? What are the consequences for them? An understanding of the typical CSN – corporate self navigation - helps to use or transform the modus operandi and thus the underlying composition of decision making and steering of the organization.

The ones who realize that it is impossible to control biotope-like-organizations have got the following options:

- To give up (companies might argue why to keep expensive managers if they cannot influence anything)

- To use this insight and work with it: the clearer and the more consistent the image of the involved parties (such as managers, employees, consultants etc.) is, about how CSN works, the greater the chance to set (from the point of view of a manager) effective impulses in the right direction, at the right point in time and with a minimum of effort.

Thus the following basic question arises: **how can companies be steered within such a competitive and interconnected environment?**

In this session we will present you the basic concept of Corporate Self Navigation:

- Our key hypothesis
- Our answers, approaches and tools
- Real-life case studies that will focus on the impact and results on CSN application

Corporate Self Navigation translates the systemic consulting approach into a practical approach especially to support Managers in their management and steering challenges.

Solution-Preventing Tools versus Solution-Supporting Tools

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The resource-based view of the firm (RBV) indicates that Human Resource Management (HRM) can generate sustainable competitive advantage through recruiting, developing and retaining exceptional human talent. To recognize and to develop exceptional talent, viable assessment instruments are necessary. Traditional performance appraisals, which focus on deficits and problems, came under attack as their outcome often resulted in a decrease rather than an increase in performance, and they often seemed to prevent development of talent instead of supporting it.

From an RBV view the development function of performance appraisals becomes even more important. The RBV highlights the importance of system-level, intangible resources and the importance of the interactions between persons, inviting to a more complex, less reductive view of organizations and their HRM instruments. With this focus on system-level resources, on interactions and on a more complex, less reductive view of organizations, the RBV supports our thesis, that most traditional instruments in HR-management do not support but prevent the achievement of competitive advantages.

This paper suggests the application of Solutions Focus to improve traditional performance assessment tools, and to strengthen their development function. It focuses on the strengths of Solution-focused Assessment (SFA) as a development-supporting tool. The flexibility of SFA allows the modification of existing HR instruments and helps to find ”differences that make a ’difference’” in order to support development and change. As an HRM method it supports the achievement of competitive advantage and can additionally improve the heavily criticized performance appraisal systems. This shows that SFA can provide an accessible bridge between RBV-theory and HR practice.

Reminiscence of a better future

Syntax for complementary INNOVATION Counseling

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Inventions become innovations by being discovered not only by an inventing organization but mainly by the competitors, clients, strategic partners etc. of this organization. As this global co-production of innovation increases the complexity of counseling requirements, neither specialist advising nor organizational development can satisfy them on their own.

Additionally context changes force organizations to transform their market-performance faster than they have had to up until now and not stop at the surface but to go into a continual process of transforming hierarchical structures and dysfunctional communication patterns.

The strength of complementary innovation counseling lies in the combination of business know-how - including sectoral and global economical and technical figures and scenarios of innovation paths - and the expertise of how to set-up communication-designs to support sustainable self-transformation processes of organizations.

Beyond concrete interventions this joint approach needs the commitment of both counseling paradigms to respect organizations as complex social systems that cannot be forced to change in a specific way.

Complementary innovation counseling changes the communication between formal strong distinct counselors paradigm allowing new combinations of interventions and the increasing curiosity of counselors to understand more about the logic of former distinct approaches. By the way it is based on the fact that client systems have experienced the limitations of both approaches requiring new combinations in order to speed up self-transformation processes to survive global changes and crises.

This contribution will show central elements of a counseling syntax combining process- and content oriented innovation counseling.

Studying Error Cultures in Consultancies

What are the Possibilities to Establish Open-Minded Dealings with Errors?

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Literature emphasizes learning potentials of errors for organizations. The possibility to learn from errors is based on a frank communication of employees about errors. However, recent studies revealed that employees frequently do not communicate about their errors due to fear for negative consequences. To overcome this mechanism, literature suggests an amnesty for errors within organizations.

This paper analyses through the perspectives of agency and stewardship theory how this suggested amnesty would affect consultant's behaviour and how up-or-out practices within management consultancies affect consultant's dealing with errors.

Our findings reveal that agents are affected by conflicting mechanisms. On the one hand, in order to improve their relative evaluation in comparison to their colleagues agents increase their engagement into communication about the errors of others. These collective attempts to reveal wrongdoings of colleagues increase the risk of efforts to blur own errors. On the other hand, the necessity to outperform colleagues increases the willingness of agents to engage into whitewashing (e.g. by cowering up errors).

As another result, this paper shows that, if errors and violations are practically difficult to distinguish, implications to improve the management of errors by inhibiting their punishment might conflict with implications of the agency theory to improve the prevention of violations by punishing them. On the contrary a steward is less directly affected since a steward is assumed to prefer to communicate errors openly for the good of the organization. However, in cases, when stewards have to interact with agents within an up-or-out culture, even stewards may reduce their honest communication of knowledge about errors.

Organizational Development in a Suffering Global Economy:

A Consultants Process to Assure Employee Engagement while Enhancing Customer Loyalty

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Organizational Development (OD) is the view of two or more people working together toward shared goals. It is a long-term relationship between a change agent and the systems context toward improving organizational performance. Yet, consultants seldom use OD as a change method targeting the advancement of sales revenue by examining the relationship between the sales representative and his or her customer. I am interested in improving customer and employee engagement within a sales organization by exploiting the positive principles of Organizational Development.

I would like to expand the modest research suggesting that improvements to customer attachment will impact an organizations bottom line. Economic recovery and globalization are two reasons why sales organizations ought to construct an engaging organizational culture. Sales organizations crave relationship longevity with their thriving customers. My paper will attempt to define what constitutes a successful task division during a change process between organizational output and management, sales representatives and external customers.

Theorists suggest that mandates of constant organizational change, which do not demonstrate value, repeatedly fail to produce tangible results. What is the secret to successful and sustainable organizational change within sales organizations? When we think about the actions that can be taken within an organization to improve customer and employee engagement, different kinds of interventions are necessary: transactional, transformational and appreciative inquiry. By altering the culture of the struggling sales organization, this study will identify processes and organizational designs that will increase sales revenues by improving customer engagement.

My study interest pertains to the role that employee engagement plays in customer and business level outcomes. The objective is to do conduct an empirical research study coupled with a quantitative experiment to test the potential differences in the relationship between the customer's intent to remain with the organization and variations in the sales employee engagement. Finally, I will discuss implications of the scientific process for maximum organizational practice and research.

Challenging Some Universal Success Criteria in Management Consulting:

When Practice Meets Prescription

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A number of publications in the field of consulting have attempted to define universal criteria for a consultant's success. Based on a qualitative analysis drawing upon experts' assessments, and highlighting the relational and processual dimensions of consulting, significant nuances are maded on this universal dimension of successful consulting. More specifically, the article attempts to show the importance of considering the organizational context and the specificities of professional bureaucracies, so common in the public health and social services sector, in which the consultant is intervening.

Our analysis is based on two actual case studies of consultant intervention, presenting similar characteristics in terms of the type of consultant, the organizational environment and the larger context in which managers' request for consulting services arose. We conclude with the comments of students planning careers as consultants to illustrate the rich insights that may be drawn from a qualitative analysis and experts' opinions.

Towards a Multidimensional View on Alliance Evolution:

A Case Study of an International Alliance Formation between two SMEs

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Nowadays, strategic alliances are the most popular and widely accepted type of inter-organizational arrangement. Unfortunately, many alliances fail for a variety of reasons.

A frequently mentioned reason is the inability of organizations to integrate the resources necessary to establish an efficient and effective governance structure. In this article, we explain through which dimensions an alliance evolution can be assessed and propose that, during each stage of alliance evolution, firms should consider how their strategic, economic, cultural, and social dimensions influence alliance performance.

We applied this multidimensional approach in a case study of a strategic alliance between firms based in the USA and in the Netherlands, and demonstrate how the different processes that support these dimensions affect the effectiveness of alliances and consequently the prospect of a positive outcome in terms of equity and efficiency.

Consulting by Expertise in Organization Science

A Special Use of OD Know-how for Trans-organizational Collaboration Systems in Public Services

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Public services are complex and interrelated. They cannot be organized by a single organization. Yet a new challenge has emerged: how to deal with interrelated issues exceeding the existing boundaries between organizations, competencies, professions? Collaborative relationships and networks are in line with the trend of the times. Collaborations should be processed as a social system, by a system between systems, run by the participants in order to realize their mutual expectations.

In a case study the paper focuses the ITS Vienna Region project dealing with collaborative traffic control management. Three provinces jointly launch a comprehensive traffic management system within a major city's conurbation. Traffic problems are pressing - mobility demands are expanding, but also do the negative ecological impacts of the growing traffic load. Roads and railroad lines can no longer be extended within the urban area. Improvements only can be accomplished through traffic management system for the entire region which is able to change the behaviour of the people.

The responsibilities are divided between three political entities (provinces and municipalities), each with its own administrative institutions and traditions, as well as between national, regional and local transportation companies with different customers. Traffic management systems require high technology and must integrate the expertise of IT companies and scientific institutions.

The project makes use of consulting in two ways: an external consultant in traffic technology and with a Master in Organization Development (OD) is hired as project manager for the time of the project; in addition two external OD experts from the university work as researchers who give feedback to the management and evaluate the process. This way the consultation model integrates content and process consultation and uses the important resource of externality.

Network Consulting in Regional Clusters

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Consulting networks is on the rise. Providing such a service is becoming an increasingly important business for consultancies, large and small. One reason for this trend is the complex challenge of managing networks, another lacking expertise in network management. In consequence, inter-organizational networks, in addition to the traditional 'objects' of consulting, i.e. isolated organizations, increasingly become clients in consulting processes. At the same time inter-organizational relations and networks are essential components of regional industrial clusters. The resulting particularities need to be taken into account not only in defining and analysing but also when consulting (networks in) clusters.

On the basis of the differences between consulting organizations and consulting networks, it will be argued that network consulting in regional clusters requires at least a two level process approach that focuses on: first, the level of inter-organizational networks in a cluster context and second, the level of the regional cluster itself.

Based on a long-term and intensive involvement in researching and consulting an emergent regional cluster in the field of optics, we gained explorative insights into the particularities of consulting networks in clusters. In the cluster we study a particular network, together with the regional cluster, provide us with the opportunity to apply our multi-level approach to researching and consulting networks in clusters.

By offering first insights into these multi-level processes, the paper contributes to the emergent research on network consulting, that is consulting inter-organizational networks, in general and on consulting such networks in regional clusters in particular.

Conducting a global employee opinion survey within a multinational company: the intersecting roles of internal and external consulting in economic uncertainty

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The challenge facing companies especially in this fast paced environment is to respond to customers' needs and ensure that internal functions deliver accordingly. Communication and cooperation play key roles: understanding the market, listening to customers, and translating this message internally while listening to employee views, which can affect performance.

Employee surveys have long proven effective in identifying obstacles to efficient operations. For this function business leaders have traditionally called upon internal and external consultants.

This paper will explore the impact of increased pace on the evolving role of internal consultants, in carrying out an employee opinion survey: the type of survey selected, the survey's goals, the participants identified, and the difference between the roles of the internal and external consultants. It will describe a new form of employee opinion surveys which focuses on identifying employees' engagement as well as their knowledge of the company's strategic goals. This most recent survey, the Pulse Check, will also be compared with other employee opinion surveys conducted in earlier years.

The Pulse Check is a short, 18-question, closed ended version of an employee opinion survey which was administered to approximately 49,000 employees in 91 countries in 29 languages over a period of 15 business days in November 2008 with a response rate of 64%. The type of survey, urgency and compression of the time frame, level of company involvement, and changing roles of the internal and external consultants reflect the urgency companies feel to produce in a fast paced environment and, in so doing, alter earlier functions of internal and external consultants.

Subtitle Developing maturity grids for assessing organisational capabilities: Practitioner guidance

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The principal idea of the maturity grid is that it describes in a few phrases, the typical behaviour or position exhibited by a firm at a number of levels of 'maturity', for each of several aspects of the area under study. It is a flexible technique that is used by practitioners in industry, consultants and researchers in academia for diagnostic, reflective and improvement purposes.

A large number of maturity grids have been proposed to assess a range of capabilities including quality management, software development, supplier relationships, R&D effectiveness, product development, innovation, product design, collaboration and communication. Each of these assessments focuses on a specific knowledge domain, and, as a result, is normally published in specialised journals relating to the domain addressed. Consequently, this body of work is characterised by a diversity of approaches, prescriptions and practices that can be confusing and sometimes contradictory.

The purpose of this paper is to present a common reference point in the form of practitioner guidance for developing and applying maturity grids to assess organisational capabilities. Acknowledging that some compromise is necessary and appropriate in the interests of producing a useful and usable tool, this paper provides a set of four phases whilst the development process unfolds, namely: planning, development, evaluation and maintenance. A set of specific considerations to pay attention to is added to each phase, most notably the rationale underlying maturity levels to progress form an initial to a more advanced state.

The overall research approach of this paper combines a conceptual analysis of extant maturity grids in the literature complemented with semi-structured interviews of experts who have developed and used maturity grids.

As maturity grid assessments are not just performance measures but also mechanisms for change, in developing and applying maturity grid assessments, the consultants' role shifts from being 'mere' analysts to becoming facilitators and doers.

Lasting results through leadership training?

Develop managers through learning to lead: based on imagination and abundance!

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In our view, effective consulting for leadership entails: training and coaching managers to lead their teams to valuable and concrete organizational results: through instilling high levels of motivation and reducing the amount of spent energy, even in contexts with conflicting interests.

This article describes this vision of leadership consulting/coaching, based on our ideas about effective leadership as well as our reading of the literature. Moreover, we show, in this paper, how managers can improve their leadership approach through a unique, intense management-development programme entitled 'Providing Leadership,' consisting of three parts: plenary sessions; an organizational project with clearly articulated yet also emerging results; and weekly telephone coaching sessions.

In this paper we also report the results of a field study of the perceived programme outcomes: through twelve in-depth, individual interviews with a representative sample of trained managers. We posed the question: What are the 'working ingredients' of the leadership training programme, aiming to entrust managers with the ability to act adequately in future different work situations? Through the interviews we identified four key factors.

And we also identified the relative newness of our leadership vision. This vision is the combination of insight in one's 'way of being', flexible behaviour and seeing this personal development back in the results of a self-chosen and -led organizational project. This leadership training also has the potential of effective organizational development, especially when carried out in-company. The individual projects are then chosen from the strategic agenda. At the same time, the teams constituting these projects while working together adopt, to some extent, a new common vocabulary. This common vocabulary creates a new way of cooperation for the future.

Self-evaluation as an opportunity for learning in organisations

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Self-evaluations provide a valuable opportunity for learning in organisations. But time is scarce and results must be at hand quickly and easily. Simple and inexpensive tools are needed. The current paper compares existing evaluation guides for sustainability research, transdisciplinary projects and success factors for networks (Nölting et al. 2004, Späth 2008, Bergmann et al. 2005, Grossmann et al. 2007).

The project "NENA – network of sustainable lifestyles" serves as a case study to assess success factors for self-evaluation in transdisciplinary settings.

The project investigated how sustainable lifestyles can be successfully implemented. A network was initiated to promote the co-operation of organisations working in the field of sustainable development. The network aims at integrating different views, exchanging experiences and bundling efforts in order to ensure more far-reaching changes towards sustainable life and consumption patterns.

The three evaluation tools have been applied as an ex-post evaluation to the NENA project. The comparison of the three tested evaluation tools gives valuable suggestions on time requirements, fields of application, suitability, helpful suggestions, adaptiveness to specific frameworks, cost-benefit ratio and missing aspects.

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Professionalizing the Use of Management Consulting Services

An investigation into structures and procedures for the use of MC services in Swedish organizations

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While the purchase and use of management consultants has traditionally been carried out at the discretion of individual managers, large organizations have increasingly taken measures to ”professionalize” their use of management consulting services. Measures of professionalization include the establishment of procedures and routines for the use of management consultants, the establishment of preferred suppliers and the implementation of dedicated support units.

The current paper investigates the proliferation of client professionalization among organizations and the antecedents to professionalization based on a survey to the 500 largest organizations in Sweden. Based on a literature review, the paper identifies and investigates six potential antecedents to client professionalization – size, sector, ownership structure, volume of consultant use, reason for consultant use and the organization’s perceived power position in relation to consultants.

The data and analysis show that about 50% of organizations have taken or plan some kind of initiatives towards client professionalization. Of the six antecedents investigated, three were found to be significantly related to professionalization - the size of the organization, the amount of consultants used and the reasons for using consultants in the organization. In relation to the reasons for using consultants, the data show that the use of consultants as resources (rather than experts) is related to higher levels of client professionalization.

Professionalism in Consulting

Theoretical Considerations and Empirical Survey

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This paper is aimed at providing a contribution to the ongoing discussion, if consultancy can be viewed as profession. In literature, diverse opinions about the degree of professionalism of consulting can be found. The debate on professionalism is important for quite simple reasons: consultants should be enabled to do their work in a more productive and a more effective way. Furthermore customers should be enabled to increase the productivity of the use of consultants.

This paper analyzes the theoretical basis of consulting to estimate the status of professionalization within the consulting branch. In order to get a more differentiated view we distinguish several segments within the branch based on the firm size and the staffing of projects.

The empirical part of our paper provides an overview of the status-quo of professionalism in the German speaking consulting branch with a special focus on Austria. Therefore we used results of our quantitative studies as well as data of interviews with representatives of the consulting branch. Results strengthen our conceptual assumption that a sophisticated theoretical basis of professional activities is the most important criterion for professionalism. The different segments of consulting meet this requirement to a quite diverse extent. One other result of our study was the analysis of possible future developments within the different consulting segments concerning professionalism. At a first glance, it seems that the consulting branch is not very flexible in changing its business models.

The results of our study can be used by managers in consulting practice to check the degree of professionalism by using the examples shown in the paper. On the other hand, some necessities can be derived for an individual company to increase its professionalism.

Grown up by now?

An Investigation of 19 Years of Consulting Research

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Since Armenakis's and Burdg's (1988) review of the field of consulting research, an increasing number of researchers started to focus on management consultants who were recognized as important promoters of management fashions and influential actors in the field of management.

Despite this increasing interest from academia, research on management consulting creates the impression of more or less unrelated research isles. Indeed, in the absence of an own consulting journal researchers publish their studies on management consulting in quite a number of journals from very different disciplines like organization studies, management sciences or sociology.

Our paper aims to give an overview of the current state of the art of research on management consulting with regard to topics, researchers, methodology, and theories on a basis of a content analysis of 167 academic articles published between 1990 and 2008.

The findings of our analysis indicate that consulting research was originally dominated by Anglo-American researchers while scientists from continental Europe were increasingly attracted by consulting research since 2000. The most frequently discussed topics are the geographical and historical development of management consulting. Concerning the methods, the interview developed as the most important research method. With regard to theories, no leading paradigm is identifiable. Indeed, research is still lacking a fundamental theoretical basis and those papers applying theory come from different research disciplines and mostly stay unconnected.

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In Search of Management Consulting´s Other:

Introducing Poststructural Organization Theory to Systemic Practices of Consulting

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The management consulting sector exhibits a remarkable homogeneity when it comes to its prevailing paradigm and, related therewith, its preferred subjectivity (i.e. being). In concrete terms, the consulting sector largely depends on a rationalistic model which fosters, among other things, the view that the world can be subdivided into workable data; that those data are to be viewed as objective, stable facts; that those facts can be analyzed in an unbiased manner; and that they can subsequently be used to support the decision making of management.

The aim of the present contribution is two-fold: first, to critically reflect the prevailing management consulting literature against the backdrop of (poststructuralist) organization theory. The second and related objective is to find ways to render the respective insights amenable to practice. The argument will reveal along the following three steps. In the first step, the rationalistic heritage of consulting is brought to light, which holds, for instance, that consulting forms a linear process based on sound planning, implementation and monitoring. Second, in an attempt to transcend the individualist, realist and rationalist grounding of management consulting, reference will be made to poststructural organization theory which is supposed to decouple consulting from its rationalist, progressive presumption.

The third part is devoted to reflect on the practical application of a non-realist approach. Systemic consulting approaches will therefore be summoned and blended with the tenets of poststructural thinking. Potential synergies between the two streams of thought will be discussed on the basis of a consulting project carried out in a large non-profit organization.

Transformation Management

A third option between process-oriented organisational development and content-oriented Change Management

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Whenever organizations seek to bring about significant changes, they will in principle follow one of the two major approaches, i.e. process-oriented organizational development (OD) or content-oriented change management (CM). In the classic form of OD, central elements are functional “process designs” which result in solutions developed from the reflections of those directly involved. In the original tradition of CM, the central elements are “solution designs” which third parties consider as suitable; these are introduced into the system from outside.

Each approach has its benefits and drawbacks. OD produces highly integrated solutions whilst development often takes long and/or is frequently characterized by little fundamental innovation. As a result, optimization is accepted but usually light-weight in nature.

CM quickly delivers fundamental or innovative solutions; however, these are as a rule hardly accepted and often get watered down in the course of implementation. In a nutshell: they are quick fixes with a low degree of integration.

"Transformation Management" (TM) is a third option to initiate, shape and handle processes to design business operations. It is a way to combine the benefits of the classic process-oriented approach of OD and content-oriented CM, so widespread today, in such a way that the drawbacks of the two approaches are hardly felt any longer. TM functions on both the process design and the solution design levels. The core element of the approach is the specific combination of internal and external system logic.

This contribution will show you some of the central elements of the TM approach.

Qualifications of management consultants

What makes management consultants effective in interactions with clients, seen from the eyes of the client?

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In this study we wanted to learn more about factors of success and failure of client-consultant interaction. Interaction is regarded here on the micro-level and deals with patterns of actions and reactions of clients and consultants in their conversation during two specific stages in the consulting process: diagnosis and action planning. The study focuses on what the consultants and clients actually do. Of course, a management consultant is likely to show behaviour that he, or she, feels will lead to success. But does this correspond to the client's perception and the client's expectations?

By better understanding client's perceptions and expectations and by better understanding the mechanics that contribute to successful or unsuccessful interaction, consultants are better equipped for their task.

The study did a thorough case study of 18 client-consultant interactions during a long simulation of a consultancy process in an educational setting of a large Dutch consultancy firm and a postgraduate training program. The consultants were all experienced consultants. The client role was simulated by either real life clients or other consultants. The situations that were created were very close to real life. We documented the strategy beforehand of the consultants, some of heir personality characteristics. We observed the interaction and we interviewed them immediately afterwards and after some weeks. We asked clients for their expectations, we observed them too and interviewed them afterwards. We used several additional questionnaires.

This gave us a pile of data for each of the 18 cases.

In the presentation at the conference we will present the research model, the theoretical framework and the results from this study.

Different Career Paths of the Consultant Candidates of Pécs

Findings of an Empirical Research

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The education of management consultant candidates started in 1997 at the Faculty of Business and Economics at the University of Pécs. The programme has supported the students with a strong theoretical and practical base of the different areas of consulting disciplines. On one hand they learnt general consultancy subjects, but on the other hand they had the chance to deepened their knowledge in project management, human resource management, strategic management, IT systems, change management, international management and organization leadership. Our department was trying to arm the students also with special skills and competencies to be more successful in the labour market. The trainings “managerial skills development” and “working groups” were focusing on improving those attitudes that make a consultant more effective in the real business life. Of course not all of the graduates have chosen to become a consultant, but we do believe that this program provides a strong base for the future careers both in advisory and it other different managerial jobs.

To monitor our results and effectiveness it is necessary to get feedbacks from the labour market and from the former students. Thus an ongoing research has started in Oct. 2008. With a 16-question questionnaire we have asked our former students about their current career. The answers from the different graduation periods also let us draw a typical career path for our students. As usually more than 30% of the graduates became a consultant, we are able to depict the current situation of advisory carriers started in Pécs.

In our paper we present the results of the survey bringing forward the migration willingness of our candidates, the field they are working in, the usefulness of the different academic subjects related to consultancy, the lacks of our education portfolio, the average salary of the graduated people in our specialisation, and a typical career path.

Graduated Field Immersion—A Curricular Model for Consultants

On the Road to Become Global Citizens

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This paper describes a promising new field-tested teaching pedagogy aimed at developing cross-cultural competencies in consultants. It gives them both a skill set and a mindset for becoming "global citizens." Called the Graduated Field Immersion Model (GFIM), the method derives from the social sciences, such as anthropology, sociology, and economics, and builds on the strengths of prior methods for teaching cross-cultural skills.

Graduate level consultants move in and out of increasingly sophisticated and challenging field exercises in a host country. Competencies built in each assignment allow participants to extrapolate their experience from the current culture to different country-based and organization-based cultures. The learning activities culminate in an individualized framework of cultural entry for each participant that has wide transferability to other countries and organizations.

Five years of consultant-participant evaluations support the efficacy of the model's curricular approach as it is used at Pepperdine University's George L. Graziadio School of Business and Management Executive Programs—Masters of Organization Development.

Management Consultant Interaction with Private Equity and Impact on Growth Development Patterns in South Eastern Europe

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The dynamic expansion of entities from developed countries to emerging and fast growing markets increases the challenges faced by foreign investors. Investment in these markets carries threats such as: currency, operational, regulatory, language, and cultural risks. This requires extensive analysis of legal, financial and ownership considerations, facilitated by the management consultant. Currently in times of crisis, the narrow collaboration between the companies' management, seeking capital or strategic foreign partner, and management consultant is highly needed. Factors like lack of liquidity, long term sustainable and development plan, management skills, crisis management are additionally impacting the industry.

Consultants' role is no longer limited to passive analysis of the client's financial performance and position, but active deal facilitation and professional advice of the shareowners. Clients need a deeper expertise and involvement of the management consultants in the business planning process, strategy development, financial planning and analysis.

Management consultants and private equity funds play vital role in bringing value to the companies in South East Europe. The growth of the economy will be driven by (1) execution, backed with (2) management and industry knowledge transfers. This will require closer interaction between management consultants and PE funds though the entire post-closing stage of a transaction.

We experience recent changes in private equity business model of operation in transitional economies and the role of management consultants in the post-closing phase of deals. There is need for growth-development of investee companies within the context of the current global financial crises and change in the role of consulting and advisory support in this process. Another aspect which emerges is the need for business-model re-building in the post-closing stage of a transaction.

Critically Exploring Business Engagement in Academia:

The Case of the UK Consulting Industry

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The dominance of business prerogatives in government has accelerated over the last twenty-five years and has had far-reaching consequences for the priorities of public sector institutions. Central to the transformation of the higher education sector has been a drive to engage University research, especially that in business schools, with the priorities and opportunities presented in various business sectors. In recent years, this has focused especially upon what can loosely be termed 'the knowledge economy' which includes professional service firms, knowledge intensive firms and innovation networks.

This paper critically examines the relationship between the challenges of one industry within this area, management consultancy, and the extent to which these have driven and received the research attention of the academy.

The paper first provides a brief outline of the UK consulting industry and traces its prioritisation by the UK Government as a target for academic engagement. Next, using interviews with senior stakeholders in the UK consulting industry, the challenges and research priorities for this sector are detailed. These priorities are then compared to the actual academic output in this field. It is found that few academics have researched what the consultancy industry perceives its priorities and challenges to be and that, instead a number of other concerns dominate higher education research agendas, especially in leading journals.

The paper then seeks to achieve a number of things. First, it elicits the current challenges and priorities of the UK consulting industry. Second, it examines the extent to which the academy is meeting these concerns. Third, it examines what academics have been prioritising when studying consultancy if not the challenges that the industry itself espouses. Finally, it provides a critical empirical examination of the agenda-setting priorities of the 'new managerialism' in the public sector.

Acting as a long-term consultant

Challenges for the professional practice

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The concept of long-term consultation described in this paper is based on the author's own practice. The paper illustrates the role the consultant takes throughout the consulting process by paying careful attention to the client's business, opening the client to the idea of a general development of the organization and integrating strategic, process and personnel development.

Opening the client to the idea of general development of the organization is best done by simultaneously working on four dimensions: strategy, processes, structure and people. Consulting projects working on only one of these dimensions produce unbalanced results, which in turn risk being rejected or isolated by the system.

Three further aspects of the client-consultant relationship are highlighted: the need for investing in cooperation rather than providing services, bonding with the people in the organization as a role model for change and the integration of strategic and intimate aspects in the relationship and its impact on management learning.

Finally, consequences for the business model of the long-term consultant such as typical patterns in assignments, managing one´s calendar and cooperation with further consultants are presented.

The impact of all these points on the qualification profile is illustrated by describing the expertise needed to provide this type of consulting. Bridging the gaps of strategy, structure, process and people has considerable impact for the qualifications needed (Galbraith 2008). Working on all these dimensions simultaneously requires more action-orientation on the part of the consultant.

The Effect of Consultants

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Consulting is a very important branch for the economy of a region. Within the last view years, the literature which analyzes this growing branch has been increasing. The paper at hand is aimed at delivering a contribution to the micro level theories about consulting. These are theories which describe the interaction between consultant and client as well as interdependencies with other relevant parameters (competitors, legal parameters etc.).

To answer the question how the effect of consultants can be explained, three different models are deduced from three distinct basis theories: the first basis theory roots in the "classical" economic view, the second one uses social-psychological assumptions. Using the systems theory according to Luhmann as the third and most sophisticated basis theory in our study enables us to deduce an effect model that describes the client-consultant relationship in a complex manner. Three dimensions of social occurrences are considered in this effect model: the contentual, the social and the temporal dimension.

Depending on the effect model and the corresponding basis theory used by the consultant in practice, two major types of consulting can be distinguished. The first one is a rather advisory type whereas the second one can be called management consulting. Both types are based on quite diverse assumptions concerning the client-consultant relationship. Two case studies explore the usability of the three effect models and the consulting types in practice in a first step.

"Adding Value" in the Changing World of Consulting

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Today, as the organization world is undergoing transformations and the consulting industry adapts, it's an appropriate time to re-examine what it means to "add value". From our years of experience and teaching, it is also clear that what ends up being "valuable" for clients or their systems is not always obvious or what's expected. The variety of ways consultants can add value is useful in meeting the wide range of "needs" emerging in the client world.

Defining "value added" in the context of consulting has inherent dilemmas including the use of different role perspectives or levels of system, timeframes and distinguishing between 'real' and 'perceived' needs. In addition, there are often the differences involved in *doing for* the client versus *building client capacity* and always intended and unintended outcomes.

Value can be added in many ways. We believe clients and consultants are looking for evidence that the work is *making a difference in something that matters in that system.* This leads to consideration of possible ways to add value organizationally and for an individual or group:

- financial performance
- other forms of performance (triple bottom line)
- intermediate performance indicators (quality, speed, customer satisfaction)
- internal operating processes
- solving of specific problem
- increasing capacity to perform
- new creative ideas or processes developed
- perceived need met
- changed emotional state
- client learning
- client anxiety reduction
- new ways of working

Further work is called for in determining "value added". First we need to be clear about how we define consulting and categorize different types. Then we need to be more intentional about measures that can determine how value is defined by clients. There are numerous research streams that could be undertaken including perspectives on and measurements of value, intermediate and ultimate indicators of performance, importance of individual versus organizational level determinants and effects of changing environments on value added. Finally, if we know more about value added, we might need to change how we prepare and develop consultants.