A multifaceted perspective on the role of management consultants
- A qualitative case study of management consultant’s role in a Swedish MNC

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Abstract

There are many and varied views on the role of the management consultant. Roles range from the functional perspective to variations of the critical perspective. Despite these many perspectives, there is low consensus and a poor understanding of what the consultant actually does. Adding to the mix is that there is even poorer understanding of how the implementation of a new concept affects the consultant’s role. Consequently, the authors will look at what role a management consultant take when working with new knowledge, and how this role is viewed from the perspective of the consultant, managers and employee in the client organization: a Swedish MNC.

The research issue was examined through the authors’ own model, which was tested through in-depth interviews with management consultant, managers and employee within the case company. Interview material was complemented through participant observations. Data was then analyzed as authors tried to understand the informants through an emic research perspective.

The study shows that the role of the management consultant varies depending on who is asked. The perspective ranges from the functional perspective on management consulting to the critical perspective, even if no informant can be said to argue that the management consultant belong to only one of the two perspectives. What is more, the study indicates that the closeness (relationship) of the client and the management consultant as well as the knowledge used by the consultant determines the consultant’s role.

The authors suggest that further research should focus on how knowledge determines the role of the consultant, the effect of closeness between client and consultant and finally how implementation of new knowledge affects the view of the management consultant’s role.

**KEYWORDS:** management consultants, management consultants’ role, functional perspective, critical perspective, tacit knowledge, explicit knowledge, knowledge management, client-consultant relationship & reforms.
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1. Introduction

1.1 THE GROWTH OF MANAGEMENT CONSULTING

“There has never been a time in recorded history when the rich and powerful have not needed expert advisers of some description. The biblical kings had prophets, Persian sultans had viziers, and Greek city states had the oracle at Delphi. Even the Mafia had their consigliere.” (O’Mahoney, 2010, p. 16)

As illustrated by the quote above, the concept of delivering expert advice from consultants goes back a long way, even if what is referred to as management consulting only dates back to the 1920s (Kipping, 1999; O’Mahoney, 2010, p. 16). However, it wasn’t until after the two world wars in Europe, when American companies expanded more intensely in Western Europe, that management consulting gained momentum on this side of the continent (Kipping, 1999). Since then, management consulting has been attracting increasing scholarly attention (Mohe & Seidl, 2011; O’Mahoney, 2010, p. 17) and management innovations during the last fifty years bear, if not wholly constructed by, a strong influence from consultants (O’Mahoney, 2010, p. 263). Kipping (1999) explain that scientific management methods, which aimed at increasing labor productivity, reduce production costs and increase output for companies, began to establish in Western Europe in the aftermath of the great depression. European firms were in need of an organizational change and new strategies and the expansion of management consulting can be explained by a demand for know-how and managerial expertise. Consequently, this led to the perspective on management consultants as expert advisors, distributing know-how as outsiders (Sturdy, Clark, Fincham, & Handley, 2009; O’Mahoney, 2010, pp. 94-98), forming the basis for the functional perspective on management consulting. From this perspective, researchers are concerned with improving or securing the effectiveness of management consulting (Sturdy et al., 2009) taking a highly practical standpoint (Mohe & Seidl. 2011). In this perspective, the client is seen as “in charge” (Werr & Styhre, 2003).

Werr & Styhre (2003) divides the literature on management consulting into two approaches: the functionalist perspective (as discussed above) and the critical perspective. The critical perspective, which came about during the 1990s as management consulting increased in popularity (Mohe & Seidl, 2011), criticizes the functional approach to management consulting. Here, the consultant is perceived as the dominating party in the relationship (Werr & Styhre, 2003). However, in reality, the distinctions between the roles of management consultants are blurred as the industry changes and management consultants adapt to satisfy medium-term needs (O’Mahoney, p. 50). Except exist-
ing in various formats, there are various reasons for the prevalence of management consultants, and we will refer to this as the management consultants' role\(^1\).

Sturdy et al., (2009) suggests that the relationship between the client and management consultant is such that to try and specify it into the twofold classification of “innovator” (functional perspective) or “legitimizing” (critical perspective) is an oversimplification of the complex and dynamic relationship between these two actors. Also, there is a flawed understanding of the interaction process between client and management consultant, despite the many variances among the perspectives on the management consultant. As a result, there is no clear understanding of the interaction process between management consultants and their clients. What is more, Sturdy et al., (2009) explains that there is no good understanding on what management consultants and clients do\(^2\). This interaction process is poorly understood and it stands clear that boundary and knowledge flows are far more complex and dynamic that what is suggested by persisting images of management consulting. Consequently, it becomes interesting to examine how consultants manage knowledge, the common denominator in all perspectives, mediating the consultants practice (Sturdy & Wright 2011). Despite the ambiguity, management consulting continued to grow (Hicks, Padmakumar & Wilderom, 2009) and although most consultancies where hit badly by the 2008 recession, human resource management consultancies\(^3\) fared better (O’Mahoney, 2010, p. 71).

The plentiful and diverging takes on the role of management consultants, the lack of understanding of the complex relationship between client-consultants and their use of knowledge makes it interesting to explore the management consultant’s role. Furthermore, it becomes interesting to see if it varies from the different viewpoints of managers, employee and management consultant.

1.2 RESEARCH PURPOSE & RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study is to explore the management consultants’ role from three distinct perspectives: management consultant, managers and employee. Consequently, the thesis will examine a Swedish MNC that is experiencing a “learning transformation” (implementing a, for the organization, new concept\(^4\)) with the help of management consultants. The focus is not in the concept being implemented, but the role the consultant undertakes. This results in the following research question:

| What role does a management consultant take when working with implementing a new concept, and how is this role viewed from the perspective of the consultant, managers and employee in the client organization? |

From here on, the authors will refer to “management consultants” as simply “consultants”.

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1 Explanation of what is meant by "role" is found in O’Mahoney (2010) Ch.3.
3 To which the organizations learning transformation belongs. For more information, see appendix III.
4 For more information on the concept, see appendix III.
1.3 DISPOSITION

In order to understand management consulting, it is imperative to understand the different roles that the management consultants undertake. The perspective on the consultant’s role range from the functional perspective to variations of the critical perspectives developed after 1990, when consulting became a hot topic among scholars. This also becomes the theoretical starting point of the thesis. The theoretical content is not evenly balanced, as it is a result of the complexity of the theory explained. Consequently, some theories are brief, and others extended.

Authors continue by explaining why knowledge has become such an important topic (this also, to a degree, explains why there has been an exponential growth of management consultants) within organizations today, before moving on to why organizations need knowledge. Thereafter, authors explain how consultants manage knowledge, the central asset of the management consultants business, and as such, a mediator (Sturdy & Wright, 2011). How consultants use knowledge is especially interesting since the concept (or knowledge) that the consultant is trying to implement is highly ambiguous and unclear among scholars.

A moderating factor central to the consultant work is the client-consultant relationship. Authors will examine the client-consultant relationship, as it will affect the answers given to the other questions regarding the role of the management consultant.

Assuming that management consultants work with knowledge, some critique can be leveraged towards their practice/function in general (as opposed to a specific theory). Consultants bring

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*Mediates the relationship (Sturdy & Wright, 2011)
**Moderates the relationship (Kellogg, 1984)

Figure 1: Thesis logic and construct

For more information on the concept being implemented, see appendix III.
about new knowledge, which changes how organizations work. Change and especially greater changes⁶ are essentially reforms⁷. Thus, critique about organizational reforms is discussed as it criticizes the fundamental function and role of management consultants.

The theoretical discussion is concluded with a model (see figure 3, p. 15), summarizing the consultant’s role as a result of what kind of knowledge he or she brings. The model also accounts for in the clients’ role, assuming that the client takes either an active or passive role towards the consultant.

The theoretical chapter is followed by the methodology and a presentation of the question matrix (appendix I, p. 44) that shows the logic of the questions and to what theory the specific question belongs. The question matrix is follow by the empirical data, which is presented in the answers matrix (appendix II, p. 47) that shows the responses from each group of informants. The answers from the informants are then analyzed through the theoretical framework developed by the authors. The thesis is then concluded and recommendations for further research and recommendations for practitioners are given, together with two research hypotheses.

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⁶ The research object is experiencing a “greater change” (Global Head of Learning Management, 2012).
⁷ Following the definition of “reforms” by Swedish national encyclopaedia; Nationalencyklopedin (2011).
2. Theory

2.1 PERSPECTIVES ON MANAGEMENT CONSULTING

2.1.1 The functional perspective

The reasons that consultants exist from a functional perspective (Werr & Styhre, 2003) are that they do things clients can’t (providing expertise), they fill in for managers (management substitute), have an objective perspective (outsiders) (Sturdy et al., 2009; O’Mahoney, 2010, pp. 94-98), provide access to methodologies (codification into best practice) (Baiij, Van den Bosch & Volberda, 2005; O’Mahoney, 2010, p. 30), provide original thinking (leadership in research), validate internal decisions (legitimizing) or provide necessary skills and expertise absent within the firm (O’Mahoney, 2010, pp. 28-30). Frostensson (2011) argues that consultants who are perceived as elite consultancies – advocate that management consultants deal with strategy and high value added activities. They point towards the consultant as a *doctor* who (a) identifies the problem (b) research and recommend a solution and (c) implement the solution. This stance might be justified in a functional and historical perspective; however, there has been a change in the societal context and what was before cannot wholly be applied today. However, the role of the traditional management consultants is converging with many other business areas due to their growing importance as a competitive factor for host companies (Kipping, 1999). A functional perspective that is derived from transaction cost economics and advocated by consultants themselves (Hicks et al., 2009), is that consultants help commodify knowledge and distribute it to their clients. In this perspective the consultant is dependent on a comparison on what the production of the service would cost in comparison to buying the resource from external distributors (consultants). Moreover, this knowledge is up-to-date due to the fact that consultants work within different client organizations (economies of scale).

2.1.2 The critical perspective

The critical perspective on management consulting developed a posteriori its growth among scholars and various business schools, looked at what role the consultant undertakes in social, political and cultural setting and how they affect the public agenda (O’Mahoney, 2010, p. 260; Mohe & Seidl, 2011). When talking about the sociological function of the management consultant, there are according to Sturdy et al., (2009) two (opposite) dominant perspectives: consultants as innovators (bringing new knowledge) or consultants as legitimizers (legitimizing existing knowledge). The innovator perspective bears strong affinity to the functionalist perspective (Sturdy et al., 2009).

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8 O’Mahoney (2010 p. 35) also talk about management consultants as “doctors”.
9 An example could be that, within transaction cost economics (TCE), a manager would estimate what it would cost to produce a hammer in house versus buying one from a distributor. The decision would include variables such as: frequency of project/task, assets required, commodification of the project, and client specificity of task/project (O’Mahoney, 2010, pp. 30-31).
O’Mahoney (2010, p. 35) explains that the perspective on consultants as legitimizers is in stark contrast to the (functional) transaction cost economical perspective, since it does not involve direct economic benefit. Instead it involves justifying manager’s changes and the consultant provides outsider information and validation for the manager’s ideas rather than providing expertise or working as “doctors”. Sturdy et al., (2009) suggests that the critical perspective offers a broader view than the functional perspective. Armbrüster & Glücker, (2007) shows a similar standpoint arguing that consulting projects are not exclusively founded upon economic reasoning, but are most of the times tied to organizational politics.

Some proponents of the critical perspective on the management consultant see the consultant as the controlling party, fooling the naïve clients through rhetoric’s and impression management (Werr & Styhre, 2003; Sturdy & Wright, 2011). Whittle (2008) exemplifies how managers work as trendsetters, legitimizing managers work with new management innovations through discourse. She analyzed the discourse of consultants when the work-life-balance\textsuperscript{10} was in fashion among consultants in the UK, and questioned their trend-setting role. According to Whittle (2008) consultants not only work as fashion-setters. Instead, to what extent a consultant can be seen as a fashion-setter depends on to what extent the consultant engages in the discourse. In this manner, consultants can choose to leave or re-contextualize issues and cannot be seen as fashion victims having a dethatched relationship to popular discourse.

Other authors adopting the critical perspective towards the role of the management consultant question the consultant’s knowledge and expertise. They argue that consultants convince clients of their value, despite their lack of formal knowledge base. One such critical view on the role of consultants in the host organization is that of the “fraudster”. In this perspective O’Mahoney (2010, p. 16) explains, consultants are seen as tricksters or charlatans giving advice to clients that often does not yield results. In economic downturns, this behavior has shown to increase and includes: bribes, conflicts of interest and maximizing of the consultant’s own benefit\textsuperscript{11}. Consultants can also be seen as skilled advocates of new management trends which, when implemented decreases jobs and consequently deteriorate firms performance (Sturdy et al., 2009). Others regard consultants’ knowledge as a rhetorical constructs made available through the exercise of consultants power (Hicks et al., 2009). Heusinkveld, Sturdy & Werr, (2011) argue that apparent mass production of commodified management knowledge has led an oversimplification and standardization of the complex environment of organizations. Moreover, new management ideas (spread through consultants) lead to a more stressful environment and a tendency towards factorization (Heusinkveld et al., 2011).

\textsuperscript{10} Whittle defines work-life-balance as “the idea that work should be ‘balanced’ with non-work activities (Whittle, 2008, p. 514).

\textsuperscript{11} Especially interesting since there is an economic downturn as this thesis is written.
Sturdy et al., (2009) suggests that the division into these two distinct areas (legitimacy or innovation) is far too simple as knowledge flows are far more complex and dynamic than these two perspectives suggest. Management consultants do not simply work as an innovators or legitimizers, but rather as a mix of the two. The two perspectives on the consultants’ role can be summaries as below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functional perspective</th>
<th>Critical perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Have experience from previous projects</td>
<td>• Legitimizers – legitimizes existing knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fill in for managers</td>
<td>• Fashion-setters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Give objective advise as doctors</td>
<td>• Knowledge brokers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Have access to best practice methodologies</td>
<td>• Fraudsters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify, research &amp; recommend and implements solutions</td>
<td>• Using rhetoric to fool clients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Access to expertise absent at the host company</td>
<td>• Used as a tool in corporate politicking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Commodify knowledge</td>
<td>• Lack knowledge and a formal knowledge base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Create a more stressful environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whichever perspective adopted, the consultant works with knowledge management and can be seen as knowledge brokers: between and within their client organizations (Werr & Stjernberg, 2003) dealing with the flow, translation (Sturdy et al., 2009) and commodification of knowledge, (O’Mahoney, 2010, p. 30-31) and as knowledge entrepreneurs (Heusinkveld, et al., 2011). Therefore, an understanding of how consultants work with knowledge becomes necessary in order to understand the consultant’s role.

2.2 THE COMMON DENOMINATOR: KNOWLEDGE

There is substantial research supporting the need to manage knowledge in organizations today (Cook & Brown, 1999) and knowledge is believed to be deeply rooted within organizations (Sturdy et al., 2009; Prokesch, 1995). In fact organizations can be seen as a learning organism that constantly evolves through small activities and other efforts to capture information externally and internally, developing it into useful knowledge within the company (Prokesch, 1995). Nonaka (1994) and Prokesch, (1995) shows that modern businesses, large and small, must find, develop and utilize the internal knowledge within companies to make it available to everyone in the company. This knowledge, which can be tacit or explicit in nature (Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka, Toyama, Kono, 2000; Cook & Yanow, 1993; Örtenblad, 2005; Engelhardt & Simmons, 2002), is widely believed to result in a competitive advantage and benefit those that are able to handle learning better than others (Senge & Sterman, 1992; Dodgson, 1993; Stewart, 2001; Nonaka et al., 2000). Organizations today are trying to cope with vast and increasing amount of information (Engelhardt& Simmons, 2002) and there is a problem in trying to turn information into useful knowledge that can be leveraged by the organization (Jaenson, 1997). It should then come as no surprise that management consultants have grown in importance being perceived as in the forefront in bringing new knowledge into organizations; as change agents or promoters of management.
fashions (Sturdy et al., 2009) and as the archetype of knowledge intensive firms (Werr & Stjernberg, 2003). Therefore, knowledge cannot be detached from consultants as it mediates the consultants practice (Sturdy & Wright, 2011).

Since, as explained previously, the central asset in a consultancy is knowledge (O’Mahoney, 2010, pp. 30-31, 238; Werr & Stjernberg, 2003; Hicks, et al., 2009) it is essential for consultants to manage knowledge efficiently. Knowledge can be divided into explicit and tacit knowledge, but it is pedagogically appealing to talk about knowledge as theory or knowledge as practice. On one side of the continuum, knowledge is seen as theory, which assumes that knowledge is articulate or possible to articulate. This implies that the knowledge can be transferred (i.e. is without contingencies) and can be separated from its user. Individuals need to learn the right skills and organizations need to identify relevant knowledge and distribute it within the organization. Consequently, organizations need to identify the optimal knowledge and codify it in order for it to be transformed to all of the organizations members. Too high reliance on this type of knowledge can be related to the consultant’s fashion-setting, fooling¹² and legitimizing role, using standardized information to a idiosyncratic task.

On the other side of the continuum, knowledge is seen as practice, where abstract and articulate knowledge has to be applied in a specific situation, thus requiring a knowing subject that can translate abstract theory into practice. Here knowledge cannot be separated from its user, and knowledge is generated, maintained and accumulated through action in a certain context (Werr & Stjernberg, 2003; Sturdy et al., 2009). This can be seen as a result of the doctor, innovator or expert role of consultants, as they customize the knowledge depending on organization and issue at hand.

According to Werr & Stjernberg (2003) the interaction between tacit (knowledge as practice) and explicit knowledge (knowledge as theory) is central for the knowledge creation process, and these two factors can be seen as symbiotic. For this reason, good knowledge management means managing both the explicit and tacit knowledge i.e. knowledge that is both written down and stored and information that is created among interacting individuals functioning in symbiosis. Werr & Stjernberg (2003) elaborates on a case study of major US management consultancies and concludes that consultancies manage knowledge through three methods: tools, cases and experience. These three factors constituted what can be labeled organizational competence: tools and methods constitute a common language that allowed for documentation and exchange of experience. Cases showed how these models and tools were applied in reality and experience represented the ability of experienced consultants to translate tools methods and cases to the situation at hand.

¹² Fooling is seen as a result of fraudulent behaviour (consultants’ role as fraudsters).
Örtenblad (2001) takes a somewhat different approach to knowledge management and argues that consultants can use knowledge as a sort of hybrid between knowledge as theory and knowledge practice. In this case, what perspective should be used could be seen as contingent on the environment. In this perspective knowledge as theory would be better apt for fairly standardized and repetitive tasks, whereas knowledge as practice would be more suited for idiosyncratic and creative tasks where focus is less on using knowledge and is instead aimed at creating new knowledge. This contingency approach is however more complementary to the knowledge as a theory/practice perspective (Werr & Stjernberg, 2003) and would not work if knowledge sharing is automatic and non-deliberate by nature (Örtenblad, 2001).

Consultant’s knowledge is central to the consultants’ business, and it has to be captured and stored in some way (O’Mahoney, 2010, pp. 239-240). O’Mahoney (2010, pp. 239-240) talks about two knowledge management strategies that consultants pursue in order to capture the tacit and explicit knowledge: codification and personalization. Codification is related to the explicit knowledge explained by Werr & Stjernberg (2003) and involves the knowledge as theory concept. This is also related to best practice systems. The other perspective is personalization where knowledge is created through personal interaction and is similar to what Werr & Stjernberg (2003) talks about when they refer to knowledge as practice. However, consultants have to be wary of relying too much on databases and codified knowledge, since there is evidence that it is not what the consultant knows but how the consultant uses what he or she knows that is important (O’Mahoney, 2010, pp. 238-240). This would make tacit knowledge more important than explicit. In line with this, Hicks et al. (2009) emphasize knowledge as practice and focus on looking at the consultant’s knowledge as knowing. They define knowing as “socially situated activity whereby knowledge is both applied, and thereby, created during practice” (Hicks et al. 2009, p. 292). As a result, the biggest problem with sharing knowledge within consultancies is not a technical one but due to the reluctance of partners to give away information to other partners (O’Mahoney, 2010, p. 240), effectively impeding good knowledge management.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of knowledge</th>
<th>Knowledge strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bring new knowledge</td>
<td>Use tacit knowledge or knowledge as practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leverage clients existing knowledge</td>
<td>Use explicit knowledge or knowledge as theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote management fashions</td>
<td>Works with tools, methods, and cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with organizational competence</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Besides being knowledge intensive, management consulting is a strongly client driven business (O’Mahoney, 2010, pp. 94-95), and outcomes are strongly contingent upon a healthy client-consultant relationship (O’Mahoney, 2010, pp. 94-95; Werr & Pemer, 2007; Mohe & Seidl, 2011) and the client-consultant relationship is central to the nature of management consultancy (Werr

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13 Hicks et al. (2009) regard knowing as synonymous with practice and doing.
& Styhre, 2003). It has been shown that the success of consulting projects is impacted the most by the commitment and effective communication to why consultants are contracted (O’Mahoney, 2010, p. 116). Therefore, even if consultants apply a good knowledge management strategy, the client-consultant relationship will effectively moderate the benefit of hiring consultants.

2.3 CLIENT-CONSULTANT RELATIONSHIP
The clients and consultants relationship moderates the consultants practice and researchers have suggested that successful projects are associated with successful relationships and unsuccessful projects, unsurprisingly, with unsuccessful relationships (Kellogg, 1984). Relations are especially important from consultant’s perspective since consultants are mostly selected on referrals, previous experience and word of mouth making good relationships and trust not only a prerequisite for good performance but also a necessity in attracting clients (O’Mahoney, 2010, p. 108). Furthermore, the relationship between the consultant and the client is regarded the most important factor for clients that plan to hire consultants (Kipping, 1999) making consultants keen on maintaining good relations towards clients.

The two separate tracks of management consulting (functional and critical) also stretch to the client-consultant relationship. Sturdy & Wright (2011) reviews the literature on the client-consultant relationship and find that it has shifted from buyer – victim – partner. Initially, clients where seen as procurer of consulting expertise (Sturdy & Wright, 2011), putting stronger emphasis on the client organization as opposed to other perspectives, which puts emphasis on the consultants’ role or bilateral communication (Mohe & Seidl, 2011). Werr & Styhre (2003) similarly puts emphasis on the client’s role; any progress in the client organization is a result of the client’s own product, meaning that the client has the information, thus making consultants legitimizers by nature. They argue that putting the client at the center stage also has revived support from scholars examining the client-consultant discourse and how the clients construct their relationship.

The critical perspective on the client-consultant relationship draws from the theory on the consultant’s role, portraying the client as passive victim to the consultant’s rhetoric (Sturdy & Wright, 2011) in the same way as Whittle (2008) showed that consultants used rhetoric to engage in beneficial practices using narrative discourse, similar to the perspective on the consultant as a legitimizer or fraudster.

There is yet another view where clients and consultants work in harmony (Sturdy & Wright, 2011; Kellogg, 1984). This receives support from Werr & Pemer (2007) who states that consultants will have to establish bilateral trust and cope with environmental variables in order to form a good client-consultant relationship. From their view, the relationship is a bilateral where both partners have an interest in cooperating (seen in scenario C & D in the model below) (Sturdy &
Wright, 2011). Sturdy & Wright (2011) simplifies the views on the client-consultant relationship in Figure 2: “Images of the passive and active consultancy client” seen below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control over consultants</th>
<th>Passive clients</th>
<th>Active clients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Victims of the sales pitch</td>
<td>Purchaser and partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control over ideas</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Followers of fashion</td>
<td>Co-producers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Images of the passive and active consultancy client (Sturdy & Wright, 2011, p. 488)

Sturdy & Wright (2011) describe these four scenarios by categorizing the client role as active or passive.

Passive scenarios: scenario A (victim) is common in the critical literature. Here, the client is highly dependent upon the knowledge and experience of the consultants. The relationship is characterized by little evaluation of consultant’s practice, where clients are vulnerable to consultant’s sales techniques and political maneuvering, similar consultant’s role as a legitimizer or fraudster. In scenario B (follower of fashion), there is emphasis on the uncertain adoption and management ideas by the client who falls for consultants advocating new management trends, well in line with the fashion-setting role of consultants.

Active scenarios: C (partner) involves an active use of client consultants and client as purchasers and partners, acting on the organizational boundary. The buyer uses resource power and project management skills to remain in control, using a systematic, sometimes even skeptical selection and evaluation of management consultants. This means that the consultant is selected due to his or her expertise, suiting the perspective on the consultant as an expert. The last scenario, D (co-producers), involves co-production of knowledge, and it is difficult to distinguish from the partnership. However, whereas the partnership scenario focus on the nature of the relationship, the co-production image focus more on the management ideas involved. This implies that the consultant’s role is that of the innovator or doctor.

It is interesting to note that the different levels of “activity” in Sturdy & Wright’s (2011) model imply that client activity will allow or impede the consultant’s possibility to exploit or help the client, thereby affecting the role the consultant undertakes.

Consultants can also face resistance from the host organization. Sturdy et al., (2009) argue that consultant’s face resistance from the target organization and may find it difficult to cooperate with clients due feelings such as envy and a no-cooperation environment (O’Mahoney, 2010, p. 119; Werr & Styhre, 2003). Similarly, Sturdy & Wright (2011) found that consultants could face resistance from internal consultants who tries to undermine their external counterparts’ legitima-
cy. This would also impede the consultant’s ability to provide customized solutions, making them a victim to the managers politicking and scheming efforts.

There are, except different clients and relationships, some general principles that should be present in a healthy client-consultant relationship. To counter the feelings of envy, low cooperation and fear from managers, it is extremely important to communicate why consultants are contracted to perform a specific task (O’Mahoney, 2010, pp. 115-116; Kellogg, 1984). Kellogg (1984) examined consultants working with organizational development and found that besides good communication, there had to be a good fit between client and consultant. Fit was described as “Both the consultant and the client like and respect each other and have positive expectations about working together” (Kellogg, 1984, p. 170). Moreover, she found that a good contracting process with goal clarity and a clear definition of role and tasks were imperative. Besides these factors there is no other solution to creating a good client-consultant relationship other than being open, honest, and equitable in the treatment of consultants (O’Mahoney, 2010, p. 119).

Even if the basis of a good relationship between client and consultant exists, there is, according to Schein (1997), not always easy to identify the clients within a consultant’s project. He proposes that clients be simplified and categorized into six typologies (Schein, 1997, p. 202).

| Contact clients | Individuals that contact the consultant with a request or an issue. |
| Intermediate clients | Individuals or groups who get involved within interviews, meetings and other activities. |
| Primary clients | Individuals who “own” the problem or issue, and normally the ones paying the consultants’ bills or the ones whose budget covers the consultant’s project. |
| Unwitting clients | Individuals, who will be affected by the consultant’s intervention, but are not aware that they will be impacted. |
| Indirect clients | Individuals who will be affected by the consultant’s intervention, but where the consultant is not aware that they will be impacted. |
| Ultimate clients | The total organization or the whole group of which the consultant has to consider in any intervention. |

**Table 3:** Simplifying model 1: basic types of clients (Schein, 1997, p. 202-203)

Consequently, any examination of the perspectives on the consultant should show what relationship the individual have towards the consultant, since it may vary depending the type of client.

Summarizing the hygiene factors and general principles that favor or impede the client-consultant relationship creates the following (next page).

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14 Belonging to HR-consulting (to which the case organization is subject, see appendix III for further information).
Table 4: Summary of the factors determining the Client-Consultant relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors determining the client-consultant relationship</th>
<th>Barriers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to manage the double control problem</td>
<td>• Consultants may face resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Trust</td>
<td>• Good communication is paramount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mutual interest in cooperation</td>
<td>• The relation has to be characterized by openness, honest and equitable treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Good contracting process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clear goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clear definition of task</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Good fit between consultant and client</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relation to consultant (Schein’s classification)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.4 CRITIQUE
The authors will focus on why management consultants practice can be problematic. This is the root cause of the more specific issues with management consultants’ practices. The reason for hiring management consultants is easily related to organizations need for knowledge (dealing with knowledge: legitimizing, innovating, fashion-setters or experts). Management consultants enter an organization with the aim of using knowledge to improve the business. New knowledge means bringing about change, and administrative reforms are common in modern organizations as a way for managers to change the way that their company is organized. Reforms can deal with administrative solutions, changing formal structures or even processes\(^\text{15}\) (Brunsson, 2006a). Consultants deal with change and are considered one of the fourfold classification of change agents, acting as an advisor, educator, counselor or analyst (Caldwell, 2003).

The need for reforms is driven by three factors: problems, solutions and organizational forgetfulness (Brunsson 2006a & 2006b). Brunsson (2006b) explains that the greater the supply of these factors, the greater the probability that a reform will occur. A successful reform should solve the problem in such a way that a new reform should not be necessary. However, reforms have shown to have a tendency to fail since there are constantly new reforms. Brunsson (2006a) continues stating that reforms are often presented as diverging from existing practices. However, it could be argued that reforms are part of a standardized and repetitive activity and there are three common attributes of administrative reforms. First, reforms are seen as better (simple) than existing solutions. Second, reforms are attempts to bring a chaotic reality to some sort of order (normative). Third, reforms try to align a one-view perspective on the organization (subjective\(^\text{16}\)). In addition to these three variables, reforms do not produce immediate results, instead change occurs over time.

According to Brunsson (2006a) reforms contain ideas about problems and solutions and these together with organizational forgetfulness allow these problems and solutions to be used many times over. Problems are plentiful in modern organizations and many problems stem from the tension between what an ideal organization should look like and what the organization actually looks like. Some may say that a situation is problematic; other may say that the very same situa-

\(^\text{15}\) Organizational learning is seen as a process.

\(^\text{16}\) Brunsson (2006a) refers to reforms as “one-sided”.
tion is free of problems. Problems may also be unsolvable. In fact, there are several problems in organizations that cannot be solved (e.g. conflicting demands). Reforms may also trigger further reforms targeted at new problems created by new solution or even by the very same problem. This occurs when previous reforms when the original reform is found to be inadequate for dealing with the situation at hand. This may be moderated by the fact that most reforms tend to be “oversold”: promising things they can never actually fulfill.17

Problems without an adequate supply of solution cannot trigger reforms. Brunsson (2006a) explains that ideas of solutions, which deal with organizational structure, processes and ideologies, are needed. However, a solution in itself is not enough to motivate change. Rather, It has to be better and more appealing than the current solution. The fact that there are many solutions to one problem also benefits reforms: if there were only one solution there would be no need for change. Furthermore, solutions are also (to a certain degree) a matter of fashion (which would explain why many consultants are seen as fashion-setters) and there is often a solution and a problem that is considered right18. Management consultants many times spread the perception of what is right and in fashion. The consultants are aided by the modern view of organizations where progress (and change) is desirable and conservatism is frowned upon. According to Brunsson (2006b), the search for better solutions is empowered by a culture of hope. A hoping for a better future is part of the western culture, and people tend to think that even if ideals are not realized now, they will be in the future. Therefore the organizations keep reforming in such a way that they can even be considered reformistic.

As mentioned, Brunsson (2006a) organizations tend to forget previous (and failed) reforms and thus initiate similar reforms over and over in an oscillation process. Consultants can capitalize on this forgetfulness to initiate further reforms through upselling (O’Mahoney, 2010, p. 34). The reform may be opposite to the last reform, but is a repetition of a reform that happened earlier in time. Forgetfulness is moderated by rotation of the workforce19, replacement of top management and the use of consultants. This is also true for consultancies being that they have a high rotation of their workforce (Harvard Business Review, 2010). Brunsson (2006a) describes that different consultants (and consultancies) will look at a problem with a new set of eyes and may repeat old mistakes. Finally, organizational forgetfulness makes reforms very different when initiated and when finalizing. Usually these reforms look simple and elegant in the beginning, but the more the reform is implemented, the more complex it becomes, and the less appealing it looks. Thus a new reform may be seen as the solution.

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17 This is strongly related to the consultants’ practice: they work with improving organizations through change.
18 As in: "right in time", i.e. popular in current (at the time) management literature.
19 Especially interesting since workers spend shorter time in companies than before (Harvard Business Review, 2010).
Table 5: Summary of the theory on reformers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reformers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Work with hope, forgetfulness and the hoping for a better future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The solution has to be more appealing than the existing solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• New reforms bring new problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reforms are perceived differently at different stages of the change process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reforms come and go in an oscillation process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.5 THE DUAL FOURFOLD CATEGORIZATION OF THE MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS’ ROLE

Summarizing the theory on knowledge management and the roles of consultants – especially in relation to knowledge management – authors observe that how the consultant manages knowledge is connected to the role the consultant undertakes. The consultant’s role will be put into four categories: **expert, doctor/innovator, legitimizer/fraudster & fashion-setter**. However, the moderating client-consultant relations have to be taken into account. By integrating the clients relationship towards the consultant into the model the authors can analyze differences in answers from informants. This can be achieved through the use of figure 5: “images of passive and active consultancy clients” by Sturdy & Wright (2011). Active clients should be seen as situated more towards functional perspective of management consulting where the clients are in control. On the other hand, the clients that contract consultants from the critical perspective would be victims and thus take a more passive in the relationship. These four scenarios can be illustrated as a fourfold classification (illustrated below):

![Figure 3: The dual fourfold categorization of the management consultants’ role (authors own model)](image)

A, Expert: the expert brings new knowledge to the company, although it is mostly standardized. This standardized information could come from some kind of best practice framework, but one should be aware of excessive standardization of knowledge. Client activity in this scenario is high, since the expert will have to be chosen upon the grounds of who has the *best* knowledge. The client here is more active as a purchasing partner and the client remains in control, as in scenario
“C” in Sturdy & Wright’s (2011) model (figure 2, p. 11), using rigorous and sometimes critical evaluation of consultants.

**B, Doctor/innovator:** in this role, the consultants use mostly customized information. This is due to the consultants working with idiosyncratic tasks with customized solutions. Client activity is also high; there should also be more co-operations between client and consultant than in scenario A. Here, there is higher focus is on the management ideas and less focus on the relationship, as scenario “D” in Sturdy & Wright’s (2011) model (figure 2, p. 11).

**C, Legitimizer/fraudster:** in this scenario, the consultant is contracted in order to legitimize manager’s opinions. Here consultants are using existing knowledge to supporting organizational politicking. The consultant could also leverage existing information using discourse and rhetoric to fool naïve clients; scenario C could easily be turned into the perspective on the consultant’s role as that of the fraudster. Clients who choose consultants in order to legitimize themselves would not care much for consultants work, therefore acting passively. The same would be true if the consultant is fooling its clients, since a high involvement would hinder such actions. The client activity corresponds to scenario “A” in Sturdy & Wright’s (2011) model (figure 2, p. 11), except that managers could be the one using consultants, not subjugating them to the consultant’s sales pitch.

**D, Fashion-setter:** the consultant as a fashion-setter, using popular discourse to sell new management ideas. Here consultants use more personalized information through re-packaging clients existing solutions, re-branding them and using them as a new solution. Client’s activity corresponds to scenario “B” in Sturdy & Wright’s (2011) model (figure 2, p. 11) since clients fall victim to the consultant’s ability to re-package existing information and offer solutions that is right.

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3. Methodology

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

Management consultancy has shown to be difficult to examine, being an interaction between two actors: client and consultant\(^\text{21}\). The health of this relationship is imperative to the success of the consultants’ practice. Moreover, when studying the role of the consultant using such an abstract concept as organizational learning makes it difficult to establish acceptable “laws” as favored by positivists (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, p. 115-116; Greener, 2008, p. 17). According to Saunders et al., (2009) deductive research approach represents the most common perception of the relationship between theory and empiricism in the social sciences. By examining if theories on consultants correspond to reality through observations and interviews, the authors hope to bring new insight to the subject. Some author even goes as far as suggesting that social context should be examined from a qualitative perspective due to the many complexities of the subject (Dodgson, 1993). The authors are referring to the subjects of interview in this thesis as informants, following recommendation of Bryman& Bell (2005).

The authors explain and interpret the informants’ view as opposed to seeing the consultants’ role through the eyes of the informants. This is in line with the emic research perspective, describing people’s beliefs from within a culture. The emic perspective has also shown to be favorable when investigating complex situations where people interact (Greener, 2008, p. 17-18; Morey & Luthans, 1984). According to Morey & Luthans (1984), the emic research perspective gives the authors the benefit of understanding the informants’ view of the reality. This emic perspective highlights the importance of using qualitative methods such as observations and interviews with particular informants using their unique insider viewpoints to collect data. Furthermore, the emic perspective is also favorable when for example examining a comparison of manager and subordinate ideas on different issues, which is in line what this thesis is aiming for. The drawbacks when using the emic perspective is that it should be applied to a total organization study to better understand its complexity and strengthen then validity of the study. This was not possible due to the various limitations of this cross-sectional study (see delimitations, p. 21).

3.1.1 Data gathering and in-depth interviews

Working with a qualitative approach, one can describe and characterize the phenomenon of study (Larsson 1986, pp. 28). One such method, and the one used in this thesis, is in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews will allow us to discover more about the interviewee through an examination of what he or she says and how he or she responds a specific question (Greener, 2008, p. 89; Morey & Luthans, 1984). Authors have examined the interview material exploratory, as

\(^{21}\) See theory on consultants practice
authors were unsure of the precise nature of the problem (Saunders et al., 2009, pp. 139-140), thus being able to gain new insight in the role of consultant and the role of client. The real essence of our analysis is the practical comparison of responses from informants, which will be derived from our interviews and observations (Larsson, 1986, pp. 31). The qualitative method is especially useful when examining the perceptional matters such as implementation of intangible variables22 (Holloway & Jefferson, 2003, Ch. 3), which is precisely what the authors were trying to do.

In line what is suggested by Buchanan and Bryman (2007) the authors constructed the questions to allow the informants to take the front stage, and at the same time minimize their own intervention. Questions where divided into “Tier 1” and “Tier 2”. Tier 1 questions where more open, but if the information obtained by these more general questions were deemed insufficient, the interviewer could resort to more detailed Tier 2 questions (both seen in appendix I). Both of the authors read and analyzed the transcripts, comparing thought in order to discover biased understandings (Strauss, 1987, Ch. 2). However, this was not the only way of gathering data, since one of the authors acted as a participant observer, which is elaborated upon further down (p. 20).

3.2 OBJECT OF STUDY
This thesis is based upon a single case study where the case company (Swedish MNC in the finance industry) is implementing the “next generation of learning”. This transformation involved the inclusion of (for the organization) new concepts and best practices. Due to the increased pressure from new supranational legislations and the economic downturn from 2008, the organization has been forced to decrease both employees working with learning and capital allocated to this function. Consequently, these factors have forced the leading managers of this function to employ consultants to improve and streamline the process of learning to better align it with future needs and at the same time rationalize the process. Included in this is also an outsourcing initiative to the Baltics where the cost of labor is a relation of 4:1. These initiatives are done across all of the organizational divisions, starting in Sweden and then expanding globally (Global Head of Learning Management, 2012). The authors included a question regarding the informants perspective to why consultants where used in this particular project, this can be seen in the beginning of the analysis (p. 25) giving an inside-out perspective on the matter.

This single case study was chosen due to that one of the authors work there part-time and had access to informants and saw a possibility to examine the company. The company is also acting within a knowledge intensive industry (Alvesson, 2004, p 18), with employees ranging from 15 000-20 000 with presence in 20+ countries. Since the winter of 2011 the company is restructuring its learning unit and has employed consultants’ working with learning management in

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22 Such as e.g. knowledge or relationships.
order facilitates this change. Furthermore, according to Global Head of Learning Management (2012) the case company has a history using consultants when implementing reforms. The selection of information that contributed to this study was influenced by Schein’s (1997) six types of clients (seen on p. 12) and by their relation to the project:

- Interviews with a senior consultant working with implementing the next generation of learning: working with facilitating, spreading and implementing change of the company’s learning units. The consultant has more than 10 years of experience in regards to learning management and was previously CEO of a company (50-200 employees) selling learning management solutions.

- Interviews with the “Global Head of learning Management”, with overall global responsibility for the education and training of all the company’s employees. This manager has a 25-year experience from various parts of the company, ranging from finance to HR functions. The responsibility includes delivering education and training to the organizations 15 000-20 000 employees situated all across the globe.

- Interviews with the “Head of Learning Excellence”: responsible for the efficiency and outsourcing initiative of the course administration of training activities. Has more than 25 years worth of experience from IT, ventures, HR and project management from within the company.

- Interviews with a manager responsible for education and training within one division who has previously worked as a branch head in one of the company’s local offices (responsibility for 20-50 employees). More than 20 years of experience from the company.

- Interview with an employee (project manager) with a 7-year experience from the company, ranging from customer support to learning management and course administration.

The consultant was one of two consultants used for the transformation (the other being one of the researchers) and the managers where the three driving managers for this transformation. The employee was the only one that was directly involved in the project without being in a management position, thus the only available employee with insight in the project. The selection of informants was made because they were the people who had the most experience and knowledge about the range studied. The selection of the informants was made by one of the authors as his understanding (as an insider) of this was applied as a selection function. The informants, duration of interview and dates can be seen in table 6 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informant</th>
<th>Length of Interview</th>
<th>Date of Interview (Year/month/day)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior Management Consultant</td>
<td>1h 50min</td>
<td>2012-04-02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Head of Learning Management</td>
<td>2h 5min</td>
<td>2012-03-20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2.1 Informants, interview question and language

The questions that were asked the informants were open and general, based on the theory on management consulting, knowledge management and client-consultant relationship (see appendix I for questionnaire). Follow-up questions were also used, complementing and contributing to a deeper understanding on these issues. Following the recommendations by Bryman & Bell (2005, p. 363) the order of the question in the interviews was followed as much as possible. However, there was some divergence between the informants and the emphasis was put on how the informant understood and answered the questions. These forms of questions were created to capture the informants view and create a context to our research topic. The interview questions were asked in Swedish, since the informants had Swedish as native language. Authors chose to use the native language of the informants since this means that they would have an easier time explaining and answering the questions increasing the validity.

After the interviews were conducted, the interview material was transcribed and translated into English, as presented in the empirical part of this thesis (for further details see appendix I & II). This of course means that the author’s capability of translating Swedish into English can affect the end result. However, the authors could translate the words in the exact same way throughout all of the transcription and create a coherent and structured translation of the text since the informants were allowed to answer in their native language. This created an increased comparability, minimizing errors of omission to the author’s language-skill.

After the interviews were done the transcriptions from the interviews was carefully analyzed and authors stayed as objective towards the answers as possible, thus creating a fair idea the subject of interpretation. The analysis was operationalized through the interview matrix and the answers matrix connected to the theories on consultants, answers given by the informants and the participant observations (for further details see appendix I & II).

3.2.2 Participant observation

One the authors were working part-time as a management consultant implementing the “next generation of learning” within the host organization. This allowed for us to capture informal narratives (Ryen, 2004, Ch. 2), procedures and other additional input that would not be available during a formal interview. It also enabled an insider perspective, or what Saunders et al., (2009, pp. 297-298) refer to as ecological validity; studying phenomena in its natural context. While this allowed for observing and capturing of more and contextually rich data, it was important for us

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23 The managers themselves refer to the re-structuring of the learning process in this way. Managers also talk about “next generation of education and training” which is used interchangeably.
to avoid observer biases, which are common when doing participant observer research (Saunders et al., 2009, pp. 297-298) and therefore decreasing the validity of the data. For this reason, the other researcher, who was not working as a consultant within the company, tried to nullify biases as much as possible through questioning the analysis of the inside observer, as suggested by Saunders et al., (2009, p. 298). However, it is important to notice that even if a participant observer may be biased, the input from someone that have worked for an extended period of time within the case organization together with the informants, providing “more gain than pain”.

The one authors working as a consultant acted as a participant observer; meaning that both the participants and the researcher were aware of that research was conducted (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 294), and there was informed consent (Greener, 2008, p. 44). The relationships with the interviewees was already formed, minimizing the stress put on both interviewer and interviewee, normally one of the drawbacks of this method (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 295-296; Greener, 2008, p. 87).

Saunders et al., (2009, pp. 308-309) explains that there are some drawbacks of us using the participant observation method. First, time errors can occur when the measured period is untypical to normal circumstances. However, since the organization was changing its learning process, change was not a problem, but the center of attention for the study. Secondly, there is the observer effect, where employees change their behaviors due to the fact that they are being observed24. However, the authors minimized this through the fact of habituation: the consultant is familiar with the interviewees and has been working with them for some time. The other way of minimizing the observer effect would have been to minimize observer interaction, however this was not a viable option since one of the researchers was working at the firm.

Practically, the observations were done both on a day-to-day basis and during the actual interview process. This resulted, not only in the habituation effect, but in some observations that could confirm and enforce or weaken what informants said. This can be seen in “appendix II” in the “observations” column where keywords are put down (pp. 48-57) connecting them to both theory and interviews to create supporting or rejecting evidence. During the interview process the author made notes about the respondents’ behavior. Observations from day-to-day exposure to the respondents were sometimes noted, and sometimes simply recorded through memory.

3.3 DELIMITATIONS, VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY
The case study was only conducted among Swedish managers and consultants working in various divisions of the Swedish branch of the company. This is due to the fact that the company was transforming its learning divisions in Sweden, making it an ideal candidate to be able to fulfill the thesis purpose. However, only looking at one company weakens the validity of the analysis, but

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24 Similar to the “Hawthorne effect”. For further insight, read Adair (1984)
gives a fair insight to how the consultant’s role is perceived in this particular company. The validity of this single case study is also strengthened by that the informant were the main stakeholders in this project. Another limitation of the study which may affect the results, is that it may be hard for the informants to discriminate their experience from this particular project and previous (or simultaneous projects) where consultants were used. Connected to the validity is the reliability of this single case study, which is difficult to prove due to the subjective perceptions of the informants and the qualitative nature of this study. This means that results will vary depending on an infinite amount of variables resulting in that each and every study becomes unique, making it hard to generalize the results. Nevertheless the study will give new insight into the perception of a consultant’s role within a case company when working with ambiguous knowledge from three different perspectives.

When there was a repetition of the informant’s answers, that is, when informant’s answers became repetitions of previous answers, authors concluded that there was a saturation of information. Furthermore, the consultant had very limited time, and it was only possible to make the interview in one go.
4. Empirical evidence

Below (Table 7) is a description of the abbreviation that will be used when referring to informants, who will be abbreviated as I (informant) + the informants’ number (1-5). This is used to explain what an informants said or literally in the form of quotes. The other abbreviation is that of the “interview protocol” which is displayed as IP (interview protocol) + the protocol number (1-5). This is used when referring to the transcript and the large picture – an interpretation of what the informants said.

On the next page (p. 24) there will be a short summary of the informants’ answers connected to the theory to which the questions belong. If you are interested in more information than what will be presented in the “interview protocol summary” (p. 24), there is a more detailed coding of the informants answers to the authors questions and observations in appendix II (p. 47). In the analysis, authors will refer to the scenarios in figure 3 (p. 15) “The dual fourfold categorization of the management consultants’ role” simply as the capital letters: A (Expert), B (Doctor/innovator), C (Legitimizer/fraudster) & D (Fashion-setter).

Table 7: Coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview protocol abbreviation (transcript)</th>
<th>Informant abbreviation (Individual)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IP1: Interview protocol 1</td>
<td>I1: Senior Management Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IP2: Interview protocol 2</td>
<td>I2: Global Head of Learning Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IP3: Interview protocol 3</td>
<td>I3: Head of Learning Excellence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IP4: Interview protocol 4</td>
<td>I4: Head of Learning at one division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IP5: Interview protocol 5</td>
<td>I5: Employee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the following page (p. 24), an “Interview protocol summary matrix” is presented. The matrix is a summary of questions and their corresponding answers from consultant, managers and employee. The matrix is structured according to the following logic: first, the overarching subject area is presented, which is labeled as “Question” since these are the areas that correspond to the “tier 1” questions (see methodology, p. 18). Second is the more specific theory to which the questions belonged, which is labeled as “Theory”. Third are processed keywords, summarizing the different informants’ answers to the interview questions, labeled for each of the three categories of informants: “Consultant”, “Managers” and “Employee” in accordance to the informant’s roles and in order to increase comparability.

More detailed information on what specific questions were asked and a synthesis of informants’ answers can be found in appendix I & II (p. 44 & 47).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Consultant keywords</th>
<th>Managers keywords</th>
<th>Employee keywords</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Background to the project and why consultants were contracted.</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Transformation, becoming a learning organization, change, increase efficiency, cost efficient, profita-</td>
<td>Changing mindset, behavior, competence, competitive advantage, create shortcuts, outside expertise, effective solution, centralized and decentralized, communication, anchoring, short-</td>
<td>Complex issues, organizational learning, framework, knowledge transformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ble, previous experience from this company, experience from other companies, ambiguous goals</td>
<td>cut, joint effort, unity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The consultant’s work, practical job tasks and work-process.</td>
<td>Functional</td>
<td>Best practice, scientific knowledge, business, intelligence, experience, fast results, holistic pers-</td>
<td>Documented knowledge, previous experience, coming from the outside, outsider, theories, tangible results, efficient, feedback mechanism, entrepreneurs, adding value, best practice, recommendations, strategic advisor, common understanding, facilitator, doctor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>perspective</td>
<td>pective, large and small projects, learning organization, tools, creating value, understanding the client and their needs, advisor, working with words, outsider</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The consultant’s role, difficulty with consultants.</td>
<td>Critical</td>
<td>Re-packaging information, working practically, resistance, flight of knowledge, difficult to measure and evaluate</td>
<td>Trust, legitimizer, narratives, culture, norms, values, learning form mistakes, cooperation, vacuum of knowledge, engine of the change proves, detached from organizational setting, evaluation</td>
<td>Divided focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge, how the consultant work with knowledge.</td>
<td>Tacit and</td>
<td>Knowledge is networking, knowledge is collected, refined and distributed, knowledge sharing, word-of-mouth, databases, selling, knowledge is experience</td>
<td>Knowledge, skills, behaviors, mindset, coaching holistic perspective, best practice, expertise, models of knowledge transfer, too much structuring, shared value, buying value, working strategically, practice, theory, facts, synergies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>explicit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification, implementing and distributing knowledge.</td>
<td>Innovator or</td>
<td>Facilitator, tools, packaging knowledge, workshops, discussions, interpretation</td>
<td>Trust, knowledge within the organization, culture, new knowledge, existing knowledge, latest and greatest from research, politicking, framework, re-packaging, leadership</td>
<td>New knowledge, experience, contextual information, neutral partner, leveraging existing information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>legitimizer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New and/or existing knowledge.</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Trust, communication, information, fit, contracting process, Informal mandate,</td>
<td>Brave, ask questions, cope with different people, communicate, partnership, minimize resistance, cooperate, good relationship, success, interest- ed in the organization, shared goal, conflict of interest, good contracting process, mutual speaking partner</td>
<td>Collegial relationship, trust, respect, trust, communication, goal clarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client-consultant relationship: communication, trust, fit, contracting and other factors.</td>
<td>Reformer</td>
<td>Shortcut, right, best-in-business,</td>
<td>Pressure from board, pressure from environment, resistance to change, deal with unpleasant work, keep us at our toes, increase performance, keep and attract employees.</td>
<td>Efficiency, development, rationalization, change, company culture, neutral and objective observer, project changes over time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critique towards reforms and consultants as fraudsters.</td>
<td>Fraudsters</td>
<td>Hope, doing things you don’t believe in, temporary solution, outsider, perform</td>
<td>Would not do things she does not believe in, politicking, internal problems, overcharge, create change that is not wholly supported</td>
<td>Passive, activity determines role and outcome</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Analysis

5.1 BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

When talking about the background to the project, I1 (Senior Management Consultant) mostly referred to results such as efficiency and profitability, although there was an ambiguity surrounding what the actual goals were. Furthermore, I1 talked about the end result as a transformation, which was said to be an efficient organization with the next generation of education and training. The managers had a somewhat different perspective. I2 (Global Head of Learning Management) mostly talked a lot about a learning transformation, introducing a “corporate learning model” to change employees’ mindsets and behaviors, and that the consultant was used as a shortcut. The transformation was necessary to create a competitive advantage in terms of learning. I3 (Head of Learning Excellence) on the other hand talked about that the leaning transformation was done in order to create faster processes and a more efficient organization, and the consultant was contracted in order to provide business intelligence and best practice. Both I2 and I3 saw the consultant as a cost effective solution given the circumstances: it was faster and allows for lower overhead costs. I4 (Head of Learning in one division) saw the project as a learning transformation and a joint effort to create a stronger unity within the organization, capitalizing on synergies. I4 also diverged from I2 and I3 in saying that the consultant was contracted to unify the organization efforts and make it work towards a mutual goal. I2, I3 and I4 all saw the project as a way to deliver education and training to the organizations employees in a faster, better and more accessible way. I5 (Employee) saw the background of the project as an effort to map the larger and complex issues surrounding organizational learning and in this process; the consultant could provide a good framework.

The novelty of the project and the level of involvement can explain the slightly diverging opinions from the different informants. Furthermore, drawing from Schein’s six-fold typology on clients (table 3, p. 12), these all have a different relation towards the consultant. However, there has been extensive communication about the project. This means that slight personal influence has been applied when trying to explain the reason for the project.

Table 8: Summary of the background to the project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In contrast to each other this can be said about the background of the project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• I1 saw the project as a transformation towards a leaner, better and more profitable organization. The end result was seen as creating an efficient next generation of education and training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I2, I3 &amp; I4 saw the project as a way to create a competitive advantage and deliver education and training to the employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I5 saw the project as mapping process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The informants differed in their perspective on the project depending on their position within the organization. This might be explained by communication and to what degree the individual is partaking in the project.
5.2 THE ROLE OF THE CONSULTANT

When it comes to the role of the consultant, I1 see herself as a typical expert using best practice and scientific knowledge form the latest research in combination with previous experience from external project. This receives support from I2, I3, and I4 & I5 and is supported by the functional perspective on management consulting. I4 explains:

“I don’t have the time to look for best practice; this is a typical situation for which consultants are used.” (IP4, p. 3)

As the quote above suggest, consultants are contracted when the organization need explicit knowledge such as best practice, and when this knowledge is not part of the organizations normal capabilities. This is further highlighted by I5 who explains that:

“We can’t know everything. Consultants have competences and can perform tasks that we can’t due to the fact that the consultant’s competence is not something we need permanently within our organization. For this reason it is better to buy this kind of competence.” (IP5, p. 1)

As seen, there are some similarities among the informants; however there are also some important differences. I2 and I3 agrees that with this statement adding that consultants have practical benefits, such as eliminating overhead costs and can function as a feedback mechanism, and I3 adds that the consultant also should function as a neutral speaking-partner. This shows that in some cases, consultants could be used for practical reasons that does not stem from the fact that the consultants are outsiders, experts or legitimizers. I1 agrees with this and illustrates by saying that:

“I don’t only work with know-how, but also with more practical tasks. It’s hard to just work as an advisor, you also have to prove that you can deliver and provide tangible results to the customer.” (IP1, p. 4)

This is similar to I2’s (contractors) opinion, where the consultant is proven to be a strategic advisor, but also work with operative tasks. All the above indicates that besides working as a strategic advisor and providing best practice as an outsider, the consultant also works as a sort of “management substitute” doing operative and practical work tasks. This means that the consultant is also used as an extra pair of hands, in similar to the functionalist perspective.

As mentioned before, I1 perceives herself as an outside advisor, providing fast result and short-cuts to her clients. I1 is very much the provider of solutions and less concerned with identifying problems. This is similar to the classical functional perspective on the role of the management consultants, although by focusing more on the solution than the problem (only a part of the value chain). I1 shows that the consultant is less concerned with finding problems thus acting less
like the doctor metaphor:

“I would say that I am very much an advisor. It’s all about providing good examples; this is a role that I have possessed in previous projects.” (…) “You have to give advice that the customer understands, adapting your language to the situation at hand.” (IP1, pp. 3-4)

I2 and I5 shows similar affinity to I1’s perspective, stating that the problem is known and the consultant is contracted to solve the issue at hand. However, I3 sees the consultant more in line with the consultant as a doctor metaphor. This means that there are different perspectives on the consultant even if all fall within the functionalist perspective. Only I3 sees the consultant as someone who works with the whole value-chain, whereas the others, including the consultant herself, perceives the consultants role as working only with one particular part of the process.

Only implementing the solution and not identifying the problem nor researching and recommending a solution would, according to the authors, create something like the pharmacist metaphor where the patient (client) already knows what illness (problem) he or she has and the pharmacist hands out the most suitable prescription (solution).

There is a perceived value of coming from the outside. This could be explained as a way to provide best practice and experience not present within the organization, but it can also be seen as a form of legitimacy. Coming from outside of the organizations boundaries not being affected by organizational politics provides added value:

“With external knowledge and experience comes a form of legitimacy.” (IP3, p. 1)

I4 explains that bringing the right knowledge gives legitimacy, but adds some additional insight: consultants provide an important start-up effect. This means that in addition to providing the legitimacy by coming as an outside expert, consultants can facilitate change. I5 elaborates further arguing that those who seek legitimacy in a transformation could use consultants due to their neutrality. The fact that I1, I2 and I5 use the word “neutral” could be a result of variations of the consultant as an “outsider”. However, other informants talk about the consultant as being objective, not neutral. This is important since there is a difference between objectivity and neutrality, as you can be objective and take someone’s party but not neutral and take someone’s party, which some of the informants does not distinguish between. For example, I5 says that she hopes that the consultant is neutral:

“I believe and hope that the consultant takes a neutral role and that she stands for the neutral and practical. We as employees are often to emotionally engaged and biased from previous experience from within the organization. This makes it difficult for us to see problems without being influenced by emotions and previous opinions.” (IP5, p. 2)
I1 talks about that all clients are not the same. Consultants have to use the right terminology depending on individual clients within the organization. It is to some extent about working with words. Taken together with the fact that some informants see the consultant as someone neutral, while others see the consultant as someone objective indicates that the clients makes the consultant meet two different kinds of expectations. More importantly, I1 (the consultant) and I2 (the contractor) are those who use the word neutral, hinting that they want to communicate that the consultant is neutral to others within the organization. This could be due to the fact that a neutral party is more trustworthy, thus bringing more legitimacy to the project than someone who is merely objective. This could result in that the informants perceive the role of the consultant differently. However, the contractor (I2) sees the consultant more closely to how the consultant (I1) perceives herself. This means that the communication between contractor and consultant may be different than that between the consultant and other parties within the organization. This may be strengthened by the fact that I2 is paying the consultants bills, indicating that the consultant is in fact not neutral, but shapes rhetoric, action and legitimation in accordance to the will of I2:

“I see the consultant as a partner to make me succeed. In order to succeed there is a need for close dialogue, mutual respect and a strong relationship.” (IP2, p. 10)

This is similar to the consultants’ role as legitimizer and part of corporate politicking using rhetoric to steer members of the organization down a certain path. Moreover, this shows that the relationship between consultant and different types of clients diverge, which will be discussed more in depth later.

One reason that the view on the consultant’s varies could be a result of the novelty of the knowledge that the consultant tries to implement. Is unclear in theory (see appendix III), as a result, informants may have become increasingly subjective when trying to explain the role of the consultant, leading to a fragmented picture of the consultant’s role, diverging between the informants.

**Table 9: Summary of the consultant’s role**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In contrast to each other this can be said about consultant’s role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• I1 and I2 saw the consultant’s role as providing expert advice as an outsider. This advice included providing business intelligence, best practice and previous experience from similar projects outside of the organization. This is in accordance with the perspective of I3, I4 and I5 who also adds that the consultant’s knowledge is a source of legitimacy. I5 diverges from the other informants by pressing on the value of the consultant role as an outsider more than the role of the consultant as an expert.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I1, I2 and I5 talk about consultants as neutral rather than objective, something that is not covered in theory and indicates that the consultant may be taking a legitimizing role.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I1 and I2 enjoy a different relation than I1 and the other informants (closer). This may indicate that I2 affects the role of I1 more than the other informants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The consultant’s role differs between informants ranging from variation of the functional perspective (expert, A) to variations of the critical perspective (legitimizer/fraudster, C).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The effect of the novelty of the concept may have affected the answers of the informants.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All informants regarded the consultant as someone who works with know-how, but also with more
operative tasks which is similar to the functional perspective. One interesting observation is that the further away the informant was from the consultant, the more the consultant was seen as someone doing practical work. The relationship between the consultant, manager and employee differed. But what is interesting is that the contracting client (I2) and the consultant (I1) has a more similar perspective on the consultant’s role that the other informants. Furthermore, the multifaceted perspective on the consultant’s role indicates that there is no easy way to label the consultants work. This indicates that dividing the consultant role into expert, legitimizer/fraudster, doctor/innovator or fashion-setter (as seen in the authors’ model, p. 15) is too simplistic.

5.3 KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT
I2 illustrates the importance of knowledge in the organizations industry:

“Competence is our most important means of competing in this knowledge intensive industry.” (IP2, p. 1)

This project deals with knowledge in two ways. It is about implementing the consultant’s knowledge within the organization, but it is also about the knowledge on how to transfer knowledge to others (organizational learning, learning organization). I1 explains how her work is complex:

“It’s not easy to measure (I1’s work). I would have liked it to be more measurable.” (IP1, p. 10)

I1 says that she works with knowledge in multiple ways: collecting, refining and distributing, mainly through networks with other consultants. I1 also differentiates between knowledge that can be transferred and knowledge that cannot be transferred. I4 agree with the consultant’s perspective of knowledge and highlight the value of the consultant’s previous experience from other organizations, which is in line with the theoretical argument that experience is far more important than explicit knowledge. I3 diverges strongly from the perspective of I1 and I4, stating that theory is not knowledge before it is implemented in a context:

“Theory is not knowledge. A theory is something I carry with me, but it is not knowledge before I use it in a context.”(...)” I don’t believe that a consultant can bring something that is not already there, you have to build upon existing knowledge. The consultant provides a framework, which is then filled with existing information. Sometimes the consultant can tell us what we already know, but the confirmation can be necessary for things to happen.” (IP3, p. 4)

This is further highlighted by I4 who explains that knowledge is modern theories and ways of working. I3 agrees and say the consultant works more with best practice, while managers works more with experience. I3’s quote also shows how the consultant can say things that the organization already knows, which is a form of legitimacy. The informants perceive knowledge is and how the consultant works with knowledge in many different ways. This could be seen as a result of the novelty of the concept: knowledge. I5 adds yet another dimension, stating that:
“You can look at the consultant’s models as equations, we fill the equation with information so that it can be solved, and the consultant only brings the equation.” (IP5, p. 3)

This would be natural, since, according to Nonaka, explicit knowledge can easily be transferred as opposed to tacit knowledge, which is harder to transfer, however:

“Consultant’s bring both a form of best practice and expertise, but also the knowledge on how to implement this knowledge within the organization.” (IP2, p. 6)

As seen, the consultant uses both explicit and tacit knowledge as a sort of hybrid. This is similar the perspective that knowledge as theory and knowledge as practice function complementary to each other. However, the tacit knowledge (experience) is used to be able to transfer the explicit knowledge (models, best practice) in order for it to be understood by clients. The managers in their turn receive this explicit knowledge and try to implement it in practice, thus turning it into knowledge that can be used. This means that while the consultant uses both knowledge as theory and knowledge as practice, what the client gets, is the knowledge as theory, which they then have to use themselves with the help of the consultant. This would make the end product knowledge, even if the consultant provides best practice. Finally, the consultant uses her experience to help the client to use existing knowledge within the new theory. In similarity to theory that talks about consultants as someone who uses methods, tools and cases this means that the consultant uses different methods to translate the theories to the client. Put otherwise, the consultants brings explicit knowledge such as best practice and then translates these methods and tools by using their tacit knowledge (previous experience). This is well illustrated by I5:

“Think about it in this way: I want a cake, but I also want to learn how to make one myself. Then I have to contract a consultant so I can learn how to bake a cake. However, if I just want a cake, then, I can tell the consultant what kind of cake I want, and she can make one for me, and hopefully it meets my expectations.” (IP5, p. 8)

The quote above illustrates that depending on what knowledge the client wants – here explained as a cake, or the knowledge of how to make one – determines what knowledge the consultant needs to provide. This could be translated to: do the client need the tool or the experience of how to use it. This can also be related to the role of the consultant: does the client need explicit or tacit knowledge, or legitimacy.

The consultants work with bringing new knowledge, but also leveraging existing knowledge within the organization. I4 explains:

“It is a combination of both (existing and new knowledge), this is an expectation that I have on the consultant; that she brings new knowledge but also can se lingering resources within the organization.” (IP4, p. 4)
When it comes to providing new knowledge or leveraging existing knowledge, I1 explains that it is important to respect the knowledge within the organization but that there always is some knowledge that is absent. She continues to explain that when having for example a workshop, knowledge is put in a framework that the consultant have provided, but the actual knowledge comes as input from the employees. I2, I3, I4 and I5 say that the actual information already exists within the organization and that the consultant’s main role is to leverage this information:

“You have to trust the consultant as an expert, because the answers can be found in the organization.” (IP2, p. 6)

All of the informants within the organization could give examples of when the consultant brought new knowledge and when the consultant helped to leverage existing knowledge. This is in contrast to what is said previously: that the consultant mainly leverages existing knowledge. The authors believe that this is a result of that the consultant mostly only provides new knowledge such as methods and best practice to leverage existing information, making the leveraging of existing information a much greater part of her job. Since I2, I3, I4 and I5 works more closely with providing input into the models than with the models themselves, this becomes more persistent in their minds, explaining why this is seen as a much greater part of the consultant’s job, This is also in line with modern theories on the clients’ role, where any progress is seen as a result of the clients’ efforts. This can be illustrated by a quote from I5:

“Consultants bring new knowledge which is then blended with the existing knowledge, which together creates new knowledge. The consultant’s task is to preserve that each and every individual provides and make sure that it is channeled to the collective end.” (IP5, p. 5)

I3 adds that many models that the consultants use are similar to models that have been used before, though she believes that the consultant is good at repackaging information, making it more available to others.

The authors note that the argument made by the informants would imply that existing knowledge is in need of new knowledge (models, theory) to be able to leverage existing knowledge. In the same way as new knowledge (models, theories) is depending on existing knowledge to “fill the equation” and make the new knowledge applicable to the organization. In summary this indicates that organization have the knowledge, but cannot use it without consultants:

“The consultant works with re-packaging. The re-packaging in itself can be a form of new knowledge. Since we have not packaged it in this way, it becomes something new.” (IP3, p. 5)

The authors argue that this indicates that new knowledge e.g. models can highlight the same in-
formation in different ways. Different models provide different insight depending on what new knowledge is used to leverage the existing knowledge. This creates new knowledge or at least the illusion of new knowledge. This could be a form of personalization of knowledge since the re-packaging can be an effort to adapt to the organization, it could also be an effort to fraud the organization, even if there is no evidence of this in the authors case study.

Table 10: Summary of knowledge management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In contrast to each other this can be said about knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• There is consensus that consultant brings explicit knowledge through methods and tools and tacit knowledge such as experience. However, to what degree the consultant does this diverge between informants. Most informants argue that the consultant mainly leverages existing knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I2 presses on the fact that the consultant provides new knowledge; while I5 presses on that the consultant mostly leverages existing knowledge. The authors can observe that the closer the informant works towards the consultant, the more likely the informant is to say that the consultant use new knowledge and vice versa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In summary, consultants bring new knowledge (the equation) but also provide tacit knowledge (how to solve the equation). The consultant then uses new knowledge (methods and tools) to leverage knowledge that exists within the organization in order to fill the equation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was difference between how informants thought about how the consultant works with knowledge. Most informants argued that the consultant brings explicit knowledge and that the consultant leverages knowledge within the organization. This combination would mean that the consultant uses theories and best practice to leverage existing information within the organization in new ways. Since different informants argued differently about what particular knowledge were used, the consultant can be seen as pending between using explicit and/or tacit knowledge, as seen on the left side on the authors' own model on p. 15.

5.4 CLIENT-CONSULTANT RELATIONSHIP

All informants argue that they have a good relationship to the consultant, even if how they would label the relationship differs. I2 for example says that they (I1 & I2) have a partnership where the consultant functions as a speaking partner and a friend. This corresponds to the newer perspective on the client-consultant relationship, which is branded by partnerships. I2 says:

“Our relation is simple, we understand each other and I think that we make good decisions together. I also appreciate that we can have fun while working together.” (IP2, p. 12)

I3 and I4 say that they have a partnership towards the consultant, even if they are not really friends. I5 says that there is a collegial relationship between her and I1, which does not differ from her relation to others (employees). This shows that the relationships vary between informants of varying hierarchical positions. Furthermore, it indicates that the either the consultant shapes her stance towards the informants depending on what position they occupy, or that the informants say that the consultant is partner or colleague to put her on a similar level as themselves and thus minimize the feeling of envy and competition towards the consultant. It is probably a combination of both. For example, if I5 were to label the relationship of I1 as towards someone of higher rank, this would make her inferior. Furthermore, I1 admits that she has a spe-
cial relationship towards I2:

“It’s the relation to the contractors that matter the most, but you want to have a good relation towards everyone since you don’t know who holds the informal power.” (IP1, p. 11)

The quote illustrates that the consultant would be willing to adapt to different people within the organization in order to avoid the risk of treating someone with informal power in a suboptimal way. However, in this case, the consultant has been within the organization before, and knows most power relations, who could make her less keen on acting this way and more keen on maintaining a good relation towards I2. That the relationship between I1 and the other informants varies can be related to theories stating that different clients having different relationships towards the consultant.

Trust and respect are agreed upon cornerstones in a healthy client-consultant relationship from all parties: consultant, manager and employee. However, I5 highlight something unique: the consultant does not simply need to be respected by the members of the organization, the reverse is also true.

“I think it is important that the consultant respect the employees and the obstacles that we will face in a change process. In the same way the employees need to respect the consultant’s work, no matter how they feel about it.” (IP5, p. 7)

This adaption to the members of the organization could be seen in different ways. For one it could be seen simply as respecting one another, but it could also be seen as a subconscious defense mechanism stemming from the fear of not knowing how the consultant’s work will affect the employees’ future within the organization. This fear may be especially true within the organization in this study since a lot of people have lost their jobs due to increasing efforts to rationalize costs as a result of the 2008 recession. The uncertainty and anxiety among employees can be felt in the air, and many are uncertain of their position. The trust issue is related to communication. All the informants stress the need for communicating what the consultant does and how this will affect the employees within the organization.

All of the informants believe that they are active in their work towards the consultant, even the consultant (I1) herself. The consultant explains that the client activity influences what she does:

“An active client make clear demands, there is continuous evaluation and dialogue. Passive clients give me ambiguous demands, and it becomes more difficult to handle. In those cases I have to determine myself how to work.” (IP, pp. 11-12)

Since the client takes an active part in the process, it indicates that there would be clear goals and a clear method of evaluation. Interestingly, this is not the case. I1 says that her job tasks are not that clearly defined, even if they work towards a common goal. This can be explained as a result
of the close relationship between I1 and I2 where their close dialogue could work as a substitute to a clear contract. It could also be a result of the high ambiguity of what needs to be done, meaning that it is hard to formulate specific job tasks and goals:

“I am active as much as I can.”(…) “I can allow the consultant to act on her own in areas where I know she can perform.” (IP2, p. 12)

Even if I1 and I2 say they enjoy a partnership, I2 allows I1 to do things on her own. I1, I2 and I3 meet every Wednesday to outline what needs to be done until next week. I2 maintains strong control over I1 even if she allows for her to work in her own way. This would indicate that I2 controls I1 even if she does not micro-manage everything she does. I2 is more interested in the results than in the method of getting them. Summarizing this, the consultant would fall neatly into scenario C in Figure 2: “Images of the passive and active clients” (p. 13) seeing that I1 is selected on her expertise. That the client is active is also seen as a benefit from the perspective of I1:

“The happiest clients in the end are those who are active.” (IP1, p. 12)

Not being active could be directly harmful to the organization. For example, I4 says:

“There are risks associated with allowing a consultant to act completely on his/her own.” (…)”If you're passive (as a client), you lose your opportunity to communicate and inform, which constitutes a good chance of anchoring within the organization.” (…)“The obvious risk is that the project could go totally wrong.” (IP4, p. 6)

This fear receives support from I3:

“If you’re passive as a client, the consultant can do whatever he or she wants. It can also result in that the consultant becomes passive.” (IP3, p. 8)

These statements imply that if a client were to be passive, the consultant could turn into the role as a fraudster or simply become passive. Whichever the case, it would have a negative impact on the organizations’ performance.

Table 11: Summary of the client-consultant relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In contrast to each other this can be said about client-consultant relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All informants experience a good relationship to the consultant, especially I2 who regard the consultant as a friend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The consultant shapes her behavior towards different clients, and different members of the organization may be labeling their relationship towards I1 differently in order to avoid feeling threatened.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust, communication and respect were regarded as cornerstones for a functional relationship between client and consultant. I5 diverged slightly saying that it is also important that the consultant respects the employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The informants said that the client took an active role towards the consultant, and the authors labeled the relationship as that of a purchaser and partner in Sturdy &amp; Wright’s model.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The relationship means two things. First, a good relationship must build upon trust, communication
and mutual respect. The informants expressed that there was a good relationship, which implies that the consultant, manager and employees were willing to cooperate but not needing to control everything the consultant does. The client was seen as highly active; however, since there was a high amount of trust (due to the good relationship) the consultant could work independently to a certain degree. There were also some expressed risks with having a passive role towards consultants. This awareness could make the members of the organization especially keen on only contracting consultants’ to whom they have good relationships with. The informants said that they were active towards the consultant, placing them in the “active clients” column in the bottom of the authors’ own model of p. 15.

5.4 CRITIQUE TOWARDS CONSULTANTS
Both managers and the employee said that they experience that there are a lot of reforms in their organization. The reason for why reforms are initiated varies between informants. I5 says that reforms are done in order to maximize the effect of the business, since she does not believe that it operates at full capacity. This means I5 is hoping or believing that there is a better solution and thus a need for reforms. I2 relates to this on a higher level, explaining that external variables put pressure on the business to maximize profits. This is also a hoping that there are better ways of squeezing profits out of the same business through reforms. I1 says that she implements reforms in order to create better and faster results than the competition, which is similar to what is said by I2 and I5. The common thread in these arguments is that they want to become the best through reforms. I1 says:

“...The organizations use consultants to initiate reforms since they want to reach fast results, increase market shares and beat the competition.” (IP1, p. 12)

The authors believe that the other organization also uses consultants, making consultant’s part of the status quo rather than something that provides a competitive advantage. Organizations need to continue to hire consultants in order to legitimize and prove that they progress or rather, create the illusion of progress. These reforms should be aided by forgetfulness, which is evident in many ways. For one, and as stated earlier by I3, the managers say that the knowledge that the consultant brings is not something that they need to keep as part of their normal skillset, seeing as it is only temporary, making it unnecessary to keep. Furthermore, one of the biggest issues with changes within the organization is how to keep the knowledge that the consultant brings, since failing to do so would further increase the effect of forgetfulness. What is more, the consultant’s re-packaging of knowledge would increase the effect of forgetfulness even further. I3 explains:

“You need to create a structured way to administrate and store knowledge, otherwise you risk losing it, which is a frequent occurrence in companies today. You need a structure and someone responsible for keeping the knowledge.” (IP3, p. 5)

For any reform to exist there has to be a supply of problems and solutions. Since the managers and employees within the organization states that they already know the problem, they provide
the problems themselves. The consultant is then contracted to provide the solution to the organizations internal problems. This means that while the problems stem from the inside of the organization, solutions stem from the outside. Consequently, these organizations together with the consultants create a need for reforms.

The novelty of the knowledge should create an increased risk of a feeling of failure, making these kinds of reforms more frequent. In addition, the knowledge that is needed to induce reforms (coming from the consultant) is comprised of both tacit and explicit knowledge. It is hard to implement these kinds of ambiguous concepts since there are many different perspectives on what knowledge is, what knowledge is needed and how the consultant should work with this knowledge. Moreover, these reforms affect managers and employees in different, which may create even stronger feelings that the organization is not working the way it should. This is evident among informants where 15 shows higher aversion to reforms than 12.

Table 12: Summary of critique against consultants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In contrast to each other this can be said about the critique against consultants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Reforms build upon organizations hope for a better future; this was evident among all of the informants. The hope and resistance against reforms can be explained by the fact that reforms are very different when initiated and when finalizing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There were traces of forgetfulness as informants expressed that the consultant’s knowledge had no permanent place within the organization. There was difficulty in creating a framework for storing the information and that there was a certain degree of re-packaging of information further increasing the effect of forgetfulness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The informants working within the case organization stated that they knew the problem, and that the consultant only provided the solution. This is in line with the argument that there has to be a supply of both problems and solutions within organizations for reforms to exist. In this case, the organization is providing the problems and the consultant is providing the solutions.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

According to the informants the organization experiences a lot of reforms. These reforms can be explained by a hoping for becoming the best through change, and forgetfulness in the form of absence of good ways of storing the information, the re-packaging and the feeling that the consultant’s knowledge is something that is needed temporarily. The authors argue that the informants were aware of organizational forgetfulness but that the consultant in this particular case was working in accordance with the functional perspective seen in the top of the authors own model seen on p.15.
6. Conclusion
The purpose of this study was to explore the management consultants’ role from three distinct perspectives: management consultant, managers and employee when implementing new knowledge into an organization.

The study shows that the informants view on the consultant’s role varied depending on which informant was asked. The consultant is described as an outside expert providing best practice and theories. However, the authors saw that there was a legitimizing factor involved in the consultant work and the consultant was involved in both strategic and practical work. According to the authors’ interpretation, I1 and I2 had a closer picture of the consultant’s role than the rest of the informants. This means that it was the closeness to the consultant rather than the position of the informant that determined how the consultant’s role was perceived. The authors conclude that to divide the consultant role into a simple category such as expert, legitimizer or innovator is far too simplistic, not being able to account for the multifaceted role of the consultant that varies depending which informant were asked.

Most informants agreed that the consultant provided explicit knowledge, but used tacit knowledge to transfer and implement this knowledge. Furthermore most of the clients argued that the consultant mainly helped to leverage existing knowledge, as opposed to the consultant who argued that she brought mostly new knowledge. This, according to the authors, means that the consultant see herself as an expert while some clients see her as a legitimizer, additionally, the clients’ opinions vary and are not unanimous. The study shows that the further away you are both in power and relation to the consultant, the more likely it is that you will say that the consultant leverage exciting knowledge. The authors interpret this as: if you bring new knowledge you will belong to the functional perspective, as opposed to if you only leverage existing information, which will make you a legitimizer and part of the critical perspective. This would mean that what knowledge the consultant brings to the organization determines what role the consultant undertakes.

The authors interpret the relationship between clients and the consultant as good. However, the authors note that the further away the informant was from the consultant, the poorer the relationship. Additionally, all informants said that they were active toward the consultant. This active relationship was characterized by control over the consultant but not over the consultant’s ideas. This made the authors believe that while there was a healthy relationship, and while clients where active, the consultant had certain leeway. Moreover, the further away the client was from the consultant, the less involved they were.

What affected the view of the role of the consultant was not the hierarchical position within the
organization, but rather, the closeness of the relationship to the consultant. This could be interpreted as a result of the moderating factor (client-consultant relationship) or simply due to the fact that the closer you are, the more influence you possess over the consultant according to the authors.

An understanding of what the consultant does is of course not a simple matter of knowledge, place in the organizational hierarchy, or a result of the client-consultant relationship, but a combination of all factors. According to the authors, one reason that the consultant’s role varied in this study could be explained due to that the knowledge that the consultant implements is unclear in theory and can be seen as new. As a result, informants may have become increasingly subjective when trying to explain the role of the consultant, leading to a fragmented picture of the consultant’s role, diverging between the informants.

Our study suggests two things, summarized in the hypotheses below:

- **Hypothesis 1**: The kind of knowledge that is needed determines the role of the consultant.
- **Hypothesis 2**: The closeness of the relationship towards the consultant determines the clients’ perspective on the consultants’ role.

### 6.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

If the novelty of the concept implemented spreads to the perspective of the consultants’ role, the need for clear communication before and during the consultants work becomes imperative. Different expectations on the consultants’ role may be natural, but if this should become excessive it may increase the stressfulness for the consultant as well as jeopardize the project as consultants try to satisfy multiple actors. According to the authors, this would probably be moderated by the client-consultant relationship, especially evident in organizations with multiple power sources. Therefore, communication is needed to make clear the role of the consultant, why he or she is contracted and what is included in the contract in order to create a holistic picture on the consultants’ role and function, enabling optimal performance within the client’s organization. Since our study indicates that the managers have a closer relationship and understanding of the consultant’s role, they bear the greater part of the responsibility for the communication.

Seeing that it is important to store the knowledge that the consultant brings, organizations should structure a way to store and manage this knowledge early on in the process to avoid nurturing forgetfulness and unnecessary reforms.
**Table 13: Summary of recommendations to practitioners**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations to practitioners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- When dealing with new concepts, communication is of great importance, especially since there is increased anxiety and decreased job-security within the organization. The contractor needs to address why the consultant is used and how this will impact the job of employees. This is the manager’s responsibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Always create a way to manage and store the consultant’s knowledge. Appoint someone to be responsible for this from the beginning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. **Suggestions for further research**

The authors suggest that further research should focus on how knowledge determines the role of the consultant and the effect of the closeness between client and consultant. Finally the authors think it would be interesting to further explore how new knowledge affects the view of the consultant’s role.
REFERENCES


Global Head of Learning Management (2012) Notes from meetings gathered between 2012-01-01 to 2012-05-25 by the participant observer.


Mohe, M, & Seidl, D. (2011) Theorizing the Client-Consultant Relationship from the


Strauss, A. (1987) *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom.


Werr, A., & Stjernberg, T. (2003) Exploring Management Consulting Firms as Know-


READING GUIDE

Appendix I: questions appendices (pp. 44-46)*
First is the general theoretical background, which is labeled as “Theory”. Second is the sub-area, which is a more specific theory or a part of general theory. After this, the more open questions, labeled “Tier 1 questions” are presented. To the right of the “Tier 1” questions there are more specific questions, which are labeled “Tier 2 questions”.

Appendix II: answers appendices (pp. 47-56)*
The answers matrix start of by detailing the question area: the overarching area to which the question belongs. Second keywords are displayed as a result of what words where used by each respondent, in order to provide a quick glimpse of what was said. After the keywords, there is a synthesized summary with the informants’ answers. After the summary, observations are presented, complementing what the informants said. Lastly there is a column which displays where the answers can be found in the transcripts.

Appendix III: theory on organizational learning and the learning organization (p. 57-58)
This appendix represents a complementary background for anyone who would like to know more about what is implemented by the consultants in the particular transformation in which the study was conducted. This is presented as a very brief literature review.

*Described from left to right.
### APPENDIX I: questions appendices

#### QUESTIONS TO CONSULTANTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Sub-area</th>
<th>Tier 1 questions</th>
<th>Tier 2 questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Background/Introduction** | None | • Berätta om det projekt som du/ni utför på i klientorganisationen?  
• Varför tror du kunden har valt att anlita dig som konsult till detta uppdrag? | • Vad upplever du är det svåra med detta projekt?  
• Vad upplever du är det enkla med detta projekt?  
• Vad anser du att du som konsult bidrar med i detta uppdrag?  
• Hur skulle du beskriva arbetet du utför för?  
• Hur går du till väga när du får ett uppdrag som detta?  
• Vad tycker du är viktigt att tänka på när man arbetar som konsult? |
| **The role of consultants** | Functional perspective | • Vilken är din roll?  
• Vilka är dina praktiska arbetsuppgifter?  
• När du får ett uppdrag, hur går du till väga? | • Kan du beskriva ditt arbete som konsult?  
• Vad anser du är det svåra med att arbeta som konsult?  
• Vad tycker du att du tillhör som extern konsult?  
• Kan du beskriva din roll som konsult hos företaget?  
• Vad är det viktigaste du måste tänka på när kommer till en ny arbetsplats och ska utföra ett jobb? |
| | Critical perspective | • Vad utöver det praktiska jobbar du med?  
• Följer du med i vad som är populärt just nu?  
• År det viktigt att använda språket på ett korrekt sätt? | |
| **Knowledge management** | Tacit and explicit knowledge | • Hur jobbar du med kunskap?  
• Vad är dina främsta verktyg?  
• Hur identifierar du problem hos ett företag?  
• Vem ger dig den informationen? | • Vilka metoder/modeller använder du för att underlätta arbetet?  
• Hur arbetar du med att implementera kunskap?  
• Vad anser du att kunskap är?  
• Vilka typer av kunskaper tycker du är viktiga för ett företag?  
• Vad anser du är "good knowledge management"?  
• Kan du som konsult dra nytta av dina erfarenheter från tidigare uppdrag? I så fall hur? |
| | Innovator or legitimizer | • Upplever du att det är du som kommer med ny kunskap, eller finns kunskapen inom organisationen och du faciliterer i hittandet och utnyttjandet av den? | • Ge exempel på hur du kommer med ny kunskap?  
• Ge exempel på när du hjälpt organisationen att ta fram existerande kunskap? |
| | Good knowledge management | • Vad tycker du är bra "knowledge management"?  
• Hur jobbar du med kunskap/information? | • Vilka är utmaningarna med att arbeta med implementering av nya modeller och kunskaper? |
| **Client-consultant relationship** | General | • Vad har du för roll i relationen till din uppdragsgivare? | • Hur ser du på relationen mellan konsult och uppdragsgivare?  
• Vad är viktigt? Vad skapar problem? Vad skapar värde? Vad är absolut nödvändigt för att relationen ska fungera?  
• Varför tror du att företag genomför reformer?  
• Vad är avgörande för att en reform lyckas eller misslyckas? |
| | General | • Hur skulle du karaktärisera din relation till din uppdragsgivare? | |
| | Communication | • Vad spelar kommunikation för roll i din relation till klienten? Till anställda? Till managers? | |
| | Trust | • Vad spelar förtröende för roll i relationen mellan manager och konsult?  
• Konsult och anställda? | |
| | Different clients, resistance | • Har du olika klienter, om isfall, hur skiljer sig din relation till andra?  
• Är din klient aktiv eller passiv? Hur visar det sig? | • Vilka olika typer av klienter kan du identifiera |
| | Fit | • Hur trivs du med din nuvarande uppdragsgivare? | • Vad är bra/dåligt?  
• Har du tydliga mål? |
| | Contracting&goals | • Hur var kontraktsprocessen? | |
| **Critical perspective** | Reformers | • Vilken roll spelar du som konsult i förändringsarbeten?  
• Hur arbetar du med dem? | • Hur anser du att ditt arbete påverkar organisationen du arbetar för?  
• Varför tror du att din klient behöver hjälp från konsulter?  
• Gör man som konsult saker man inte tror på till 100 % för att få fram någon form av förändring? |
| | Fraudsters | • Finns det en negativ sida av konsultens roll? | |
### QUESTIONS TO MANAGERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Sub-area</th>
<th>Tier 1 questions</th>
<th>Tier 2 questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Background/Introduction</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Berätta om det projekt som du/ni utför på företaget?</td>
<td>Vad upplever du att det svåra med detta projekt?</td>
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<td>Varn för tror du din organisation har valt att anlita en konsult till detta uppdrag?</td>
<td>Vad tycker du att konsulter är en kostnadseffektiv lösning för?</td>
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<td>Varn för tror du att ett konsult ska ha för kunskaper?</td>
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<tr>
<td>The role of consultants</td>
<td>Functional perspective</td>
<td>Vad är dina praktiska arbetsuppgifter i denna process?</td>
<td>Vilken roll tycker du konsulter tar?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Vilken konsult tycker du passar för detta projekt?</td>
<td>Hur påverkar konsulterns roll utvecklingen av projektet?</td>
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<td>Vilken roll tycker du konsulter tar?</td>
<td>Vad är bra med konsulter?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tacit and explicit knowledge</td>
<td>Hur jobbar ni med kunskap, hur jobbar konsulter med kunskap och hur skiljer det sig?</td>
<td>Ge exempel på hur konsulter kommer med ny kunskap?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vilka är konsulterns främsta verktyg?</td>
<td>Ge exempel på när konsulter hjälpt organisationen att ta fram existerande kunskap?</td>
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<td>Knowledge management</td>
<td>Innovator or legitimizer</td>
<td>Upplever du att det är konsulter som kommer med ny kunskap, eller finns kunskapen inom organisationen och konsulterna har funnit utnyttjandet av den?</td>
<td>Varför tror du att organisationen behöver hjälp från konsulter?</td>
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<td>Good knowledge management</td>
<td>Vad tycker du är bra &quot;knowledge management&quot;?</td>
<td>Hur ser du på relatiönerna mellan konsulter och anställda?</td>
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<td>Hur jobbar du med kunskap/information?</td>
<td>Hur är användbar och effektivt konsulterns arbete?</td>
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<td>Varför tror du konsulter hjälper företag med kunskapsutvecklingen?</td>
<td>Vilka olika typer av konsulter kan man identifiera?</td>
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<td>Hur skapa man en kunskapsstimulerande arbetsmiljö?</td>
<td>Hur var konsulterns arbete påverkar organisationen? Vad är viktigt?</td>
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<td>Client-consultant relationship</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Vad har du för roll i relationen till konsulter?</td>
<td>Varn för tror du att företag genomför reformer och förändringsarbete?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Different clients, resistance</td>
<td>Vad spelar förtroende för roll i relationen mellan manager och konsulter?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Fit</td>
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<td>Hur är konsulterns arbete påverkar organisationen? Vad är viktigt?</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Varn för tror du att ett konsult arbete påverkar organisationen? Vad är bra/dåligt?</td>
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<td>Critical perspective</td>
<td>Reformers</td>
<td>Vilken roll spelat du som manager i förändringsarbeten?</td>
<td>Hur är det på samarbete med konsulter? Varn för tror du att företag genomför reformer och förändringsarbete?</td>
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<td>Fraudsters</td>
<td>Tycker du det sker mycket förändringar på din arbetsplats?</td>
<td>Hur är det på samarbete med konsulter? Varn för tror du att företag genomför reformer och förändringsarbete?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Finns det en negativ sida av konsulterns roll?</td>
<td>Hur är det på samarbete med konsulter? Varn för tror du att företag genomför reformer och förändringsarbete?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>Sub-area</td>
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<td>Tier 2 questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------</td>
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<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Background/Introduction** | None | • Berätta om det projekt som konsulter utför på din arbetsplats?  
• Vårfor tror du din chef har valt att anlita en konsult till detta uppdrag?  
• Tycker du konsulter är ett bra komplement till er organisation? | • Vad upplever du är det svåra med detta projekt?  
• Vad upplever du är det enkla med detta projekt?  
• Vad anser du att du som anställd bidrar med i detta uppdrag?  
• Hur tycker du att man ska gå till väga når man genomförr ett uppdrag som detta?  
• Vad tycker du är viktigt att tänka på når man arbetar med konsulter? |
| **The role of consultants** | Functional perspective | • Vad är dina praktiska arbetsuppgifter i denna process?  
| | Critical perspective | • Vad tror du konsulter tillför i ett förändringsarbete? | • På vilket sätt arbetar konsulter med dina problem?  
• Tycker du att konsulterns metoder är lättförståeliga och fungerande?  
• Ser du resultatet av konsulterns arbete?  
• Vilka är utmaningarna med att arbeta med implementering av nya modeller och kunskaper som konsulter presenterar?  
• Vad anser du att kunskap är?  
• Vilka typer av konsulter tycker du är viktiga för ett företag? |
| Knowledge management | Tacit and explicit knowledge | • Hur jobbar ni med kunskap, hur jobbar konsulter med kunskap och hur skiljer det sig?  
• Vilka är konsulterns främsta verktyg?  
• Har konsulterna verktyg som du tycker är bra/dålig? Hur kan de se ut?  
• Hur tycker konsulterns roller identifierar ett problem hos ett företag?  
• Vem ger dig den informationen till konsulterna? | • På vilket sätt arbetar konsulter med dina problem?  
• Tycker du att konsulterns metoder är lättförståeliga och fungerande?  
• Ser du resultatet av konsulterns arbete?  
• Vilka är utmaningarna med att arbeta med implementering av nya modeller och kunskaper som konsulter presenterar?  
• Vad anser du att kunskap är?  
• Vilka typer av konsulter tycker du är viktiga för ett företag? |
| | Good knowledge management | • Upplever du att det är konsulter som kommer med ny kunskap, eller visas kunskapen inom organisationen och konsulterna främjar och utnyttjar den?  
| | Innovator or legitimizer | • Hur jobbar du med kunskap/information?  
• Varför tror du konsulter hjälper företag med kunskapsutveckling?  
| | Communication | • Upplever du att det är konsulter som kommer med ny kunskap, eller visas kunskapen inom organisationen och konsulterna främjar och utnyttjar den?  
| | Trust | • Vem ger dig den informationen till konsulterna? | • Ge exempel på hur konsulter kommer med ny kunskap?  
• Ge exempel på när konsulter hjälper organisationen att ta fram existerande kunskap? |
| | General | • Vad har du för relationen till konsulterna?  
| | Different clients, resistance | • Hur skulle du karakterisera din relation till konsulterna?  
| | Fit | • Har ni andra konsulter, om i så fall, hur skiljer sig din relation till dem?  
• Är konsulter aktiv eller passiv? Hur visar det sig?  
| | Reformers | • Tycker du det sker mycket förändringar på din arbetsplats?  
• Har ni andra konsulter, om i så fall, hur skiljer sig din relation till dem?  
• Är konsulter aktiv eller passiv? Hur visar det sig?  
| | Fraudsters | • Finns det en negativ sida av konsulternas roll?  
• Varför tror du att företag genomför reformer? | • Vad tycker du är viktiga för ett företag?  
• Ser du resultatet av konsulterns arbete?  
• Vilka är utmaningarna med att arbeta med implementering av nya modeller och kunskaper som konsulter presenterar?  
• Vad anser du att kunskap är?  
• Vilka typer av konsulter tycker du är viktiga för ett företag? |

**Client-consultant relationship**

**Critical perspective**
**CONSULTANTS ANSWERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Keywords</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Transcript</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background to the project, and why the consultant was contracted</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>IP1, pp. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I1: Transformation, becoming a learning organization, change, increase efficiency, cost efficient, profitable, previous experience from this company, experience from other companies, ambiguous goals</td>
<td>I1: The consultant was contracted by the &quot;Global Head of Learning Management&quot; to introduce and implement the concept of learning organization and next generation of education and training within the host firm. I1: Experience and best practice was mentioned as the reasons for contracting the consultant. I1: The consultant had previous knowledge towards both the company and the managers, however on a divisional level, transforming one of the organizations divisions into. I1: Not really a clear goal</td>
<td>I1: The consultant expressed strongly that previous experience within the organization was imperative to success.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The consultant's work, practical job tasks and work-process</strong></td>
<td>I1: Functional perspective, Best practice, scientific knowledge, business intelligence, experience, fast results, holistic perspective, large and small projects, learning organization, tools, creating value, understanding the client and their needs, advisor, working with words, outsider</td>
<td>I1: The consultant expressed that her work as providing scientific knowledge and best practice finding ways to speed up the process through experience leading to fast results. The consultant also works with business intelligence. I1: The consultant said that the practical work was dealing with smaller project and presentations while at the same time maintaining the long-term perspective in mind. I1: The informant said that the important thing to think about when working as a consultant is personal contacts, being a good listener, interpreting facts, getting input and connecting their input to the organization, creating value. I1: The consultant expressed that she did not only work with expert advice, but also with practical job-tasks, since in the end of the day, the consultant will have had to deliver something. I1: It’s hard to deliver the big picture if you are placed within a small context. I1: The consultant previewed herself as an expert in the area and an advisor. Outside the organization.</td>
<td>I1: The consultant referred to the process of speeding up the organizational development process as a &quot;shortcut&quot; to &quot;fast results&quot;. I1: The consultant emphasized the importance of being one step ahead of the client. I1: The consultant stressed the importance of understanding your client. I1: The consultant expressed the importance of following up and making sure that something really happens.</td>
<td>IP1, pp. 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The consultants role, difficulty with consultants</strong></td>
<td>I1: Critical perspective, Re-packaging information, working practically, resistance, flight of knowledge, difficult to measure and evaluate</td>
<td>I1: The consultant talked about how she receives existing input from the organization re-packaging it and re-selling it to the organization as a new concept. I1: Working practically increases the client’s perception of the consultant as someone who gets things done. I1: Sometimes you don’t get all the information, and sometimes there are employees and/or managers who do not appreciate having consultants within the organization. I1: The consultant expressed that it is important to understand who has mandate and who pays the bill in the end. I1: Consultants use narratives and words. I1: The consultant expresses that when an expert leaves, knowledge might sometimes leave with the expert, given that there are no good methods for capturing and storing knowledge within the organization. I1: The consultant admits that it is difficult in measure her work and the results of her work, even if she believes this responsibility lies on the managers desk. I1: Sometimes consultants can be used to tackle difficult questions so that managers don’t have to deal with them. Consultants can be seen as threatening towards the client. Even if you cannot take their job, you can change their way of working, which they are used to. They don’t want that.</td>
<td></td>
<td>IP1, pp. 3, 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Tacit and explicit knowledge

**I1: Knowledge is networking. Knowledge is collected, refined and distributed, knowledge sharing, word-of-mouth, databases, selling, knowledge is experience.**

- **II:** The consultant expresses that she works with collecting, refining and distributing knowledge.
- **II:** She sees knowledge largely as a product of networking: sharing experiences.
- **II:** Knowledge is stored and shared through knowledge databases.
- **II:** The difficulty lies in finding and distributing knowledge, but the Internet, social media and wikis have helped this.
- **II:** The consultant expresses that knowledge is paramount for being able to sell the consultants services.
- **II:** The consultant highlights that learning by doing is one of the basic, but yet important, ways of obtaining experience. Previous experience from other clients is an important source of knowledge.
- **II:** There is a distinction between knowledge that can be transferred and knowledge that cannot be transferred.

### Innovator or legitimizer

**I1: Facilitator, tools, packaging knowledge, workshops, discussions, interpretation.**

- **II:** The consultant brings new models into the organizations and gives some examples of this.
- **II:** In workshops, the consultants work as a facilitator since the knowledge is resided within the individuals present in the workshop.
- **II:** The consultant explains how she brings the tools for creating a good discussion, the employees' gives their knowledge and insights and the consultant interprets and packages this.

### Client-consultant relationship: communication, trust, fit, contracting process, informal mandate.

- **II:** Trust, communication, information, fit, contracting process, informal mandate.
- **II:** A good relation to the client is the most important factor for success. You have to respect everyone equally because you don’t know who holds the informal mandate.
- **II:** The consultant explains how there are both active and passive clients, and that this shapes the consultants work. An active client makes it easier to deliver, while a passive client makes it difficult to perform. A passive client may force the consultant to decide what have to be done, which is not always best for the client.
- **II:** A passive client may introduce consultants into the organization to solve a problem. The difficulty is finding out the real issue when the client does not actively participate. This increases the risk of failure for a project even if you can perform even given such circumstances. The most satisfied customers are normally active.
- **II:** One of the most important factors for the client-consultant relationship is that there is communication, understanding. There is always a time to talk and a time to listen. Communication with the client is important for getting the feeling of being in the clients “shoes”.
- **II:** The type of relationship towards the client affects the outcome. A client to whom you have a friendship is easier to engage and interact with, even if some clients want a certain amount of distance, which you have to respect as a consultant.
- **II:** The client expresses that she has very good or “friendly” relationship towards the client.
- **II:** The contracting process was good, although the work has changed over time. We do not have a specific target even if the goal is clear. Sometimes it there is explicit goals, processes and targets that have to be met, but not in this case.
- **II:** The client is very active. This is related to the contract.

### New or existing knowledge?

- **II:** The consultant talks about her colleagues knowledge and databases of best practice as important tools for her job.
- **II:** The consultant expresses that it usually better to make the client realize that they have a problem rather than telling them they have one.
- **II:** The consultant talks widely about both best practice and experience.
- **II:** The consultant talks about the importance of technical solutions.
Critique towards reforms and consultants as fraudsters

Reformers

I1: Shortcut, right, best-in-business,

• I1: The consultant believes reforms are to “take shortcuts”, be quicker than the competitors, being more efficient and cost effective and be more profitable. Wanting to become “best-in-business”.

I1: The consultant talks about that the reform has to fit the situation in order to be successful. To implement reforms you need a good communication to why reforms are initiated and how the reform is going to impact the employees working condition. Last but not least, you need someone to manage and administrate the reform.

I1: The consultant believes that she is a catalyzer in regards to reforms, speeding up the process.

Fraudsters

I1: Hope, doing things you don’t believe in, temporary solution, outsider, perform

• I1: The consultant argues that she hopes and believes that she has made an improvement, although she believes that some employees may not see the benefit.

• I1: Sometimes consultants can be contracted to do things they do not believe in but is something that the client wants done. If your contractor is far from you, you may have no choice but to do as you are told.

• I1: The consultant is always a temporary solution. They can provide a quick change, but not a long-term solution.

• I1: The consultant argues the fact that they comes form the outside has two implications. First this is one of the benefits of contracting consultants: they see things differently. Second they don’t feel a sense of belonging and do not feel safe. You always have to perform better than average Joe and always have to be on your toes.

MANAGERS ANSWERS

Question | Keywords | Summary | Observation | Transcript
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---
Background to the project, and why consultants were contracted. | I2, I3, I4: Changing mindset, behavior, competence, competitive advantage, create shortcuts, outside expertise, effective solution, centralized, decentralized, communication, anchoring, joint effort, unify | • I2: Introduction of “corporate learning model” to strengthen competence development, create clear roles, understand what competence gaps that exists so that we can close them.
• I2: The learning transformation is all about changing mindsets and behavior in order to be reach customer excellence. We need to provide learning as a support for everyday work: learning on demand, learning kits etc.
• I2: Competence is our main tool for reaching a competitive advantage, which is especially important since our industry is subjective to extremely high competition and is questioned by our customers.
• I2: We contacted the consultant in order to create shortcuts. The consultant is working towards me at a strategic level as an advisor.
• I2: It is important with networks, and we do not have all the latest competence within niche areas, therefore we have to bring in outside experts to help us with the strategic direction and business intelligence.
• I2: This project demands a lot form you management skills. We have had both a centralized and decentralized organizational structure, so this time we have to make it right.
• I4: What is most difficult with this kind of project is communicating and anchoring within the organization. The easiest thing is that we have a common goal and united perspective on how to go forward towards the next generation of E&T.
• I2, I3: Depending on what perspective one uses consultants can be seen as cost effective | • I2: is very clear about the goals and objectives of using the consultant. Gives many practical details on what, why and how the project is done. | IP2, pp. 1, 2, 3
IP3, pp. 1
IP4, pp. 1
or not. If you want to create a transformation team with specific knowledge not present within the organization, the consultant may be efficient since accumulating this kind of knowledge would take too much time, excessive overhead costs can be avoided. This is a sort of shortcut.

- **I3:** The learning transformation is to create faster processes surrounding the way we deal with organizational learning.
- **I3:** The consultant was contracted in order to provide expertise, best practice and business intelligence.
- **I4:** The purpose of the learning transformation is to make a joint effort for a stronger unity and to create synergies within organizational learning.
- **I4:** I believe that consultants were contracted to create a common plan and to unify our efforts to make us work towards mutual goals.

### Functional perspective

**I2, I3, I4:** Documented knowledge, previous experience, coming from the outside, outsider, theories, tangible results, efficient, feedback mechanism, entrepreneurs, adding value, best practice, recommendations, strategic advisor, common understanding, facilitator, doctor

- **I2, I3, I4:** The consultant has documented knowledge and experience from previous projects that have been similar in nature.
- **I4:** Consultants brings outside knowledge and experience. With the right knowledge also comes legitimacy. As an individual they have to be a good listener and facilitator, be able to simplify complex matters. The consultant should also be inspiring. Consultants bring methods of working and steering and best practice but also provides an important start-up effect. The consultant should also be a neutral speaking partner. The ones that want to induce change has to be a combination of consultant and responsible within the business. Which minimizes resistance and facilitates change.
- **I2:** Consultants comes from the outside and it is important for them to understand the organizations internal language, they need to be able to both collect information but also transform it to be distributed to the target group.
- **I4:** Consultants are outsiders, experts and providers of best practice.
- **I4:** Consultants are objective neutral partners that make it so that we stay within our frameworks, coming with external input and references.
- **I2:** The consultant has to come with theories and show tangible results.
- **I2, I3:** Organizations use consultants for various reasons. For one, it is an efficient way to decrease overhead costs. Other reasons are finding solutions in complex questions, providing expertise and they can also be a form of feedback mechanism: you can discuss complex matters with them and get their perspective as an outsider. Consultants can work as entrepreneurs providing an outside perspective, providing added value.
- **I2, I3:** The consultant’s practical work involves working as an expert, outlining a plan for development so that we can understand the way to the next generation of E&T.
- **I2:** The consultant is a strategic advisor, provider of best practice, recommending solutions, following latest research, providing models and theory. I need the consultant as an expert, but at the same time as an operative support.
- **I2:** The consultant has helped to create a common understanding of what has to be done, and quickened the process making us work more proactively.
- **I3:** The consultant should transform and distribute knowledge, come from the outside as an expert. The fact that the consultant brings expertise is the most important factor for using consultants.
- **I3:** The consultant also has a facilitating role.
- **I3:** The consultants mostly work as a doctor, finding the issue, suggesting a solution and implementing that solution.

### The consultant’s work, practical job tasks and work-process.

The consultant’s role, difficulty with consultants.
### Critical perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I2</th>
<th>I3</th>
<th>I4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I2</strong>: In great transformations there is a trust component that is extremely important. This does not mean leaving the responsibility and steering to the consultant but rather using the consultant as legitimizer: legitimizing the quality, freshness and viability of the project.</td>
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<td><strong>I3</strong>: Consultants are experts, and legitimators. Their expertise gives them legitimacy. Using consultants to receive legitimacy is probably a part of the power play at the top of the organization.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>I2</strong>: The consultant has to work with narratives understanding culture, norms and values, not taking anything for granted. Not applying previous experience</td>
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<td><strong>I2</strong>: we evaluate consultant’s to see what went well and what went less smoothly to learn from our mistakes. The cooperation between client and consultant has to be developed. Sometimes there are questionnaires distributed to managers and employees that have been affected by the consultants work.</td>
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<td><strong>I3</strong>: In order to evaluate the consultant’s work we need to have a clear mission statement towards the consultant so that we can rewind and look at he purpose, goals and activities.</td>
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<td><strong>I4</strong>: we need to become better at evaluating the consultant’s work. We try to evaluate through previous experience, contacts. Evaluations are normally conducted at the end of the project, but should be done more throughout the process.</td>
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<td><strong>I2</strong>: A problem with using consultants is that when the consultant leaves there is a vacuum of knowledge, and it is important to makes sure that the consultants idea is carried on. It is crucial to have someone to carry on the consultant’s work after he or she leaves. It is also a good idea to not have too many consultants; this can create confusion among employees.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>I3</strong>: One of the most difficult obstacles to manage when implementing the consultant’s knowledge is to create an administrative organization surrounding the consultant’s work in order to manage the newly acquired knowledge.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>I2</strong>: The consultant works as the engine in the change process, having the will and power to rive the change since there is resistance to change.</td>
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<td><strong>I2</strong>: The consultant can be more detached from the organizational setting, that is, detached from colleagues, opinions and others social codes. Although this is not the case with this consultant.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>I3</strong>: Consultants cost money, this is widely known, it is therefore not the same thing when a consultant asks for something and when a regular colleague asks for something. You try to make yourself more accessible.</td>
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<td><strong>I4</strong>: There are indirect issues with using consultants. If there had been an internal alternative we would have kept the competence in-house, and if an internal resource would have been able to do the same thing, it would have been cheaper.</td>
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<td><strong>I4</strong>: It is important that the prerequisites are right; otherwise the consultant will only cost a lot of money. Many believe that there is not enough analysis and anchoring of the change projects.</td>
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### How do you work with knowledge, how does the consultant work with knowledge?

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<th>Tacit and explicit knowledge</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>I2</strong>, <strong>I3</strong>, <strong>I4</strong>: Knowledge, skills, behaviors, mindset, coaching holistic perspective, best practice, expertise, models of knowledge transfer, too much structuring, shared value, buying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I2</strong>: I normally distinguish between knowledge and skills. The consultant helps to translate the skills I need.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>I2</strong>: I get a form of executive coaching, the consultant provides a holistic perspective on projects, which the consultant helps me with.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>I2</strong>: The consultant introduces best practice, expertise and models on how knowledge can be transformed and developed within the organization.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>I2</strong>: The structuration and methods, solutions and processes is one of the major benefits of using consultants. On the other hand, too much structuring can be bad, methods are sup-</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>I2</strong>: talks about how consultants provide the “how” in how to use knowledge, and the employees provide the “what”, that is supposed to be done, and what is the problem.</td>
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<td><strong>I2</strong>: expresses that experience can be more important than</td>
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knowledge? New or existing knowledge?

Consultants implement and distribute knowledge. Consultants use both new and existing information. Consultants bring new knowledge, explaining that the employees sometimes feel that consultants bring new knowledge, however, this is in the context of lifting up existing knowledge within the organization. That is, knowledge on how to leverage within the organization. It is not the consultant that tells us about our problems, we already know what the problem is; the consultant helps us with finding the solution. Through questions and models, the consultants can quickly find the problem, and identifies whether it is lack of competence or situated in the culture. The consultant has been in the organization before, and can therefore highlight previous projects and their success.

The consultant works more with best practice and managers works more with experience and knowledge. We do not have the time to look for the latest and greatest in scientific research, this is the consultant's job.

Consultants bring new knowledge, explaining that the employees sometimes feel that consultant tell them what they already know, but that it may still be necessary to induce change and create and understanding.

Consultants bring new knowledge, explaining that it is sometimes a little bit of both.

Innovator or legitimizing

Consultants bring new knowledge, explaining that it is sometimes a little bit of both.

Consultants bring new knowledge, explaining that it is sometimes a little bit of both.

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Consultants bring new knowledge, explaining that it is sometimes a little bit of both.
Client-consultant relationship: communication, trust, fit, contracting and other factors.

| I2, I3, I4: Brave, ask questions, cope with different people, communicate, partnership, minimize resistance, cooperate, good relationship, success, interested in the organization, shared goal, conflict of interest, good contracting process, mutual speaking partner |
| I2: A consultant has to be brave, ask many questions, be able to cope with people from different levels of the organization, be prepared with good questions before every meeting, being able to interpret and listen to answers in a good way. |
| I2, I4: Communication is essential. You need to receive confirmation that both parties have understood the task at hand; otherwise, you as client may receive a result in the end that does not correspond to the initial contract. You have to communicate why the consultant was contracted. Partnerships are all about trust, and therefore it is important that we work together to leverage our strength and minimize resistance from employees. What can the consultant do, and what does she provide, we need to show that the consultants do something we cannot create you, avoiding to create an environment of cooperation and uncertainty. |
| I3: There are employees that are change adverse. The will try to resist the consultants change efforts. If you as an employee is an expert in a certain area, you are not very keen on changing things just because a consultant tells you it is the way to do it. |
| I3: Communication is essential. It is often her project fails. Clarity in the contracting process is essential. It is crucial that everyone understands the consultant’s role. Is the consultant here as an expert? Is the consultant here as a resource? An understanding of this explains what relationship we will have towards the consultant. |
| I2: I feel that I have a partnership towards the consultant where we know each other rather well. Our relationship is easy, and we mostly take good decisions together. I would say that we have a very good relationship. The consultant is here to make me succeed, and there is a need for close dialogue, mutual respect and a strong relationship. |
| I3: I feel a partnership towards the consultant, even if we are not really friends. |
| I4: Practically we are mutual speaking partners that reach our goals together. |
| I2: The consultant has to be interested in our organization and the success of our work. It is also important to share the vision, not working for your own interests, but rather working together to fulfill the organization’s goals. |
| I2: There are different thoughts and perspectives on how to treat the consultant since there is a duality in the contract: between the consultant and the client and the consultant and the procurement division. You don’t want to create a conflict. |
| I2: It is absolutely necessary to have a partnership with trust where the consultant respects the organizational coeds and secrecy that comes with this business. Moreover, you have to be honest and professional, it’s a long-term relationship. |
| I3: Trust is absolutely crucial. Without trust we have nothing. Relationships without trust tend to be shot. |
| I4: Trust between client and consultant is absolutely essential component and a prerequisite. Trust is also to a certain degree about division of labor. |
| I2: I would say that the contract process was good, and we had a common understanding of the goals of this project. |
| I3: The nature of the contract determines what role the consultant undertakes and therefore also the relationship. Will the consultant be the executioner or the facilitator? |
| I3: I believe that the consultant is active. She is always one step ahead and well prepared. |

and communication. The consultant can both bring new and existing knowledge within a project, which is the case in this learning transformation.

I3: the consultant fill a role as a knowledge expert. I do not have the time or space to be one myself. Since we don’t have constant change within the same area all the time we do not need this kind of resource. Leadership is important.

I2: Talks strongly about the importance of good communication between manager and consultant and consultant and employees.

I2: Explains that she is an active partner towards the consultant, but does not micro-manage practical work that she believes the consultant can do.

I3: Talks a lot about the practical job task of the consultant as determinant of the client-consultant relationship.

I4: The informant believes the organization to be very active towards the consultant.
I3: the relationship between client and consultant is much more than a transaction, it is a mutual relationship and there has to be a feeling of partnership.

I4: I believe that in the long term it is very important with a long-term contract. Sometimes there are critical situations where there is immediate need for a consultant and there is a need to start before writing down the details. In these situations it may be sufficient to write down the overall goal and later on write down the nitty-gritty of the contract.

Reformers

I2, I3, I4: pressure from board, pressure from environment, resistance to change, deal with unpleasant work, keep us at our toes, increase performance, keep and attract employees.

I2: Reforms are created due to pressure from the board and the environment to increase profitability, CSR and satisfy customers. Then you need a change.

I2: Many times there are not many people that are eager to introduce reforms, you have to work with communication an rhetoric: explaining why there is a obvious reason for the reform. As a manager your task is to get everyone on board. The more you can convince the more will follow, reducing bout and resistance. This has to be done at earliest occasion in a reform-process.

I3: Consultants can deal with unpleasant work since they are only temporarily within the organization. Organizational politics is a not wholly irrelevant topic.

I3: Consultants may not always understand the big picture and may drive a project in a way that does not really fit well into the organization. This is due to a lack of understanding of the historical context. How did we get here, what was the issue before? The consultant may try to implement an already tested solution that failed before.

I3: reforms are important to keep us at our toes so that we do not become lazy and loose our nimbleness. Reforms can have both internal and external reasons.

I3: in order for a reform to be successful there has to exist knowledge in how to drive a change project. This, to a great degree, involves communication and clear goals.

I4: I believe that organizations many timed engage in change projects to attract good employees, keep employees and let them grow, and to help the organization survive and earn more money. In order for a reform to succeed, there is important that it is well motivated and defined; that there is a structured plan and that there really is a need.

Critique towards reforms and consultants as fraudsters

Fraudsters

I2, I3, I4: would not do things she does not believe in, politicking, internal problems, overcharge, create change that is not wholly supported.

I2: I would never bring in a consultant to a project that I don't believe in 100%, however, I think that other companies in other situations may bring in consultant to handle situations they rather not handle themselves, or to support organizational politicking. The consultant can create an outsider perspective and a fair image of an internal problem.

I3: consultants can overcharge and sometimes they do not possess the expertise the claimed to have. If you are passive as a contractor the consultant may do as he or she wishes or the consultant can simply become passive him/herself.

I4: I believe that there are risks associated with leaving consultants to do as they please since the project may end up in a way that does not correspond to the organizations need. If the contractor is too passive you loose your chance to affect the process and communicate best practice and information that can help to anchor the project within the organization.

I4: I believe and know that consultants may sometimes be contracted in order to create a change they do not wholly believe in, just to make something happen.

I2: Believes that there are various organizational reasons for using consultants for politicking or avoiding to do unpleasant work, but distances she from such actions.

IP2, pp. 11, 12, 13
IP3, pp. 2, 3, 6, 7, 8
IP4, pp. 6, 7
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Keywords</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Transcript</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Background to the project, and why consultants were contracted.</td>
<td>I5: complex issues, organizational learning, framework, knowledge transformation</td>
<td>I5: The background to this project is mapping and process larger and complex issues surrounding organizational learning. I5: mapping larger and complex questions and consultants are contracted to provide a good framework.</td>
<td>I5:</td>
<td>IP5, pp. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The consultant’s work, practical job tasks and work-process.</td>
<td></td>
<td>I5: We are experts in organization, but seeing this from another perspective: with an outsiders perspective collect and draw conclusions. The fact that someone new doesn’t have so much knowledge can provide for great insight. I5: We as employees do not know the answer to anything. Consultants have competences and can execute thing that we cannot. That is why we use them. I5: Sometimes the projects are routinely and do not require a lot of know how and is a lot about administration. I5: A consultant may work with many different projects at the same time. I5: Practically the consultant could be compared to a doctor. However, it is normally not that simple, the consultant spends more time in our organization than a doctor spends with a patient. This gives the consultant a holistic perspective on the organization. I5: The consultant works the structuring of information, being an objective and neutral partner. The consultant role is to make the project run smoother and faster.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The consultant’s role, difficulty with consultants.</td>
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<td>I5: working with many different projects at the same time may result in a divided focus on the consultant behalf.</td>
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<td>IP5, pp. 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical perspective</td>
<td>I5: divided focus</td>
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<td>IP5, pp. 1, 2, 5, 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>How do you work with knowledge, how does the consultant work with knowledge?</td>
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<td>I5: What tools the consultant uses is dependent on the context. I5: The consultant’s tools and methods are easy to understand, but it is important to know what people you will be facing and tailor the information towards them. I5: When the model are implemented and introduced, it is important to make time for evaluation and adjustments.</td>
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<td>IP5, pp. 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you work with the consultant to identify, implement and distribute knowledge?</td>
<td></td>
<td>I5: The consultant comes with new knowledge all the time.</td>
<td>I5:</td>
<td>IP5, pp. 1, 2, 5, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New or existing knowledge?</td>
<td></td>
<td>I5: Consultants need certain knowledge about the organization to be able to do a good job. They have the required experience, but they also need to know more about our organizational culture, goals and strategies in order to be able to apply their knowledge in good way. I5: The consultant is a neutral partner that says this or that is good or not good. Those who seek legitimacy would trust the consultant without question. I5: The employees fill the consultants equation with the numbers so it becomes solvable. I5: I believe that there is a need for new knowledge in order to leverage existing information. I5: The employee has trouble explaining the difference between different kinds of knowledge and has a hard time exemplifying when the consultant comes with new and leverage existing knowledge.</td>
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<td>IP5, pp. 1, 2, 5, 8</td>
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**Transcript**

The employee describes the consultant as someone who only comes with the methods and frameworks, and the employees as those who fill this framework with information. The employee has trouble explaining the difference between different kinds of knowledge and has a hard time exemplifying when the consultant comes with new and leverage existing knowledge.
### Client-consultant relationship: 
communication, trust, fit, contracting and other factors.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Reformers</th>
<th>Critique towards reforms and consultants as fraudsters</th>
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| I5: collegial relationship, trust, respect, trust, communication, goal clarity | I5: I would say that I have a collegial relationship towards the consultant. It does not diverge from the relationship I have with other colleagues.  
I5: Communication always matters in between people, and the client-consultant communication is no different. I think that it is important that the consultants role is clarified and so that all employees feel comfortable with the consultants work within the organization. They have to know why the consultant is there and what she is doing.  
I5: It is important for the consultant to gain the employees trust for the mission to be successful.  
I5: Another important factor is that the consultants show respect for the employees and their opinions and vice versa. |
| I5: I think that reforms are done since there is a belief that things are not run as good as the could be.  
I5: Reforms are being part of the development and rationalize costs.  
I5: In order for a reform to be successful, it has to be anchored from top down and from the bottom up.  
I5: If a consultant enters a change project that affects employees on many different employees on various levels of the organization it is important to know the company culture so that they can understand the reactions they get from the employees so that they can explain purpose of the change process and what it is contained of. It is important to detail what is expected from us, and what is expected of the consultant.  
I5: In a change project, the consultant acts as a neutral an objective partner. The consultant is not emotionally attached within the change project and can maintain his or her subjectivity.  
I5: Projects may be different when started and when implemented, therefore it is important to make room for adjustments after the project have been implemented.  
I5: On a general level I believe that change projects are good. In theory they are always good, but in practice they might diverge depending on execution. | I5: talks about respect in a way that none of the other informants have.  
I5: Talks about how reforms must be thoroughly evaluated and not only implemented right away. Also talks more about evaluating the consultant’s work than the consultant. |
| I5: efficiency, development, rationalization, change, company culture, neutral and objective observer, project changes over time | I5: Talk about how reforms must be thoroughly evaluated and not only implemented right away. Also talks more about evaluating the consultant’s work than the consultant. |

**Fraudsters**

| I5: passive, activity determines role and outcome | I5: the activity of the client and the consultant is reflected in the relationship. You may hand over the project to the consultant until he or she shows results, then you become active.  
I5: The circumstance surrounding the consultant determines the consultant’s work and ability to deliver. But the consultant also needs to be clear about what is needed. Cooperation and clarity is important. |

I5: An active consultant that is part of a team can lift and develop knowledge on daily basis. A consultant that gets a task and performs it on his or her own, gives knowledge that we would like to buy and is standardized. Either we need a system or then the consultant can provide it, and then the client can be passive. Or we need to now how to use it, and the consultant need to teach us, and thus be more active. When we only need the system, we are less interested in how the consultant does hos or her work. But sometimes we want both the process and the knowledge, and then we need to work actively with the consultant as a partner.
APPENDIX III: organizational learning and the learning organization

ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING AND THE LEARNING ORGANIZATION

Consultants work with knowledge. What knowledge is used depends among other things about what is ubiquitous among scholars and therefore in “fashion”, as exemplified by Whittle (2008). One such concept is the theory on organizational learning and the learning organization that grew as a subject among managers during 1990s and remains present today.

Some author postulate that the first time learning was presented as a relevant organizational process, was as early as the 1940s when Argyris & Schön published "Organizational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective" which greatly contributed to the emergence of the theme where they proposed organizational learning as a process (Rebelo & Gomes, 2008). This fact could be disputed, as some authors refer to Weber as the founder of the concept (Dodgson, 1993). Yet others claim that the term "organizational learning" was coined by Garratt in 1987 (Örtenblad, 2004) or that the concept was introduced by Garret in 1953 (Rahim, 1995). No matter the origin, the concept has a brief history of development and has received attention by scholars originating from various disciplines and perspectives (Dodgson, 1993). Some authors suggest that some disciplines, such as sociology, philosophy and anthropology have been under-explored in regards to leadership development (Stewart, 2001) and that benefits can be achieved through cross-disciplinary theories (Dodgson, 1993). Argyris & Schön examined organizational learning from a normative standpoint providing advanced descriptions through detailed case studies with high utility (Robinson, 2001). Their theory focuses on learning as detection (cognitive) and correction (action) of errors (Rahim, 1995). Dodgson (1993) explains that in this manner, industrial economists such as Arrow in the "Implications of Learning by Doing" (1962) argued that organizational learning affected productivity. Here, according to Yeo (2005), learning was regarded as a machine that needed constant repair and upgrading. This was closely linked to the mechanistic view of the organization. However, this perspective failed to account for human dynamics resulting in only temporary benefits. Later on, in the 1960s and 1980s the subject emerged in the mind of managers, and at the time, emphasis was put on examining the learning from an outside-behavioral perspective. Some authors looked at the learning of the individual and how they learn in different levels such as Bateson and scholars such as Argyris and Schön have studied the phenomenon from a multi-dimensional perspective (Stewart, 2001). The view of the organization changed during the late 1960s when the perspective of the organization was transforming from that of a technological structure to that of an organic entity. Organizational efficiency was discussed as "organizational health" and management began to diagnose organizations as physicians, promoting healthiness (Yeo, 2005).

Even today, there are many and diverging definitions of OL and LO (Yeo, 2005; Molainen, 2005;
Rahim, 1995) creating an unclear picture on the concept (Örtenblad, 2001 & 2004; Stewart, 2001) with rarely any agreements across disciplines (Dodgson, 1993). The unclarity also affects the understanding of how and at what level learning is supposed to take place (Small & Irvine, 2006). According to Örtenblad (2001), the confusion is such as these two concepts are, many times, used interchangeably. What part of the organization that learns, be it individual25, collective26, superperson or organization27, remains a subject for discussion (Örtenblad, 2001).

There are diverging reasons why OL and LO is important. A common explanation is that organization helps to deal with managing change. Psychologists have defined OL as the "highest form of adaption" while organizational theory has referred to OL as a need to respond to external variables (Dodgson, 1993). Through a management and innovation perspective, OL is a quest for improving competitiveness (Senge & Sterman 1992; Dodgson, 1993), productivity and capacity for innovation as well as a response to changes in technology and markets (Dodgson, 1993). According to Dodgson (1993) some authors have distinguished between organizations at different stages. Organizations at initial stages of growth may focus on overcoming uncertainties while organizations that have reached a more mature state may focus on reaching benefits through economies of scale or focus on regeneration. Other authors state that the goal of OL and LO is to adapt to changing environments (Dodgson, 1993; Stewart, 2001) or as a response to an increasingly knowledge intensive world (Engelhardt & Simmons, 2002). Örtenblad (2001) states that organizational learning could be characterized as something occurring without effort, and learning organization as something that occurs through deliberate effort, meaning that a company can be subject to organizational learning without being a learning organization28. Presenting learning organization in a normative way would further complicate things by making it an ideal (Stewart, 2001; Örtenblad, 2001). Stewart (2001) explains that an ideal can be both preferable and not desirable (natural may be a more correct description). Furthermore, ideals are not necessary but desirable or necessary and non-desirable. The first perspective would make organizational learning non-mandatory, while the latter would mean that organizations couldn’t exist without learning. Moreover, ideals can be unreachable or obtainable as well as known or unknown making a normative definition of OL and LO problematic.

As discussed, the concept of OL and LO remains very ambiguous in most ways: how it is defined, where it takes place, and why it is important. Still, organizations continue to use consultants to implement and improve OL and LO.

25 See Rahim (1995) for further information on learning at the individual level.
26 See Stewart (2001); Cook & Brown (1999) for further information on learning at the collective level.
27 See Örtenblad (2001); Örtenblad (2005); Cook & Yanow (1993) for further information on organizations as learning entities.
28 If learning occurs automatically, the organization is always a subject of organizational learning while this does not necessarily imply that the organization engages deliberately in learning activities (learning organization).