Management consulting & academic research and theory
– jointly connected or increasingly separated?

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ABSTRACT

The management consultancy profession has shifted from being a deeply academically rooted profession to a profession where the connection to academic institutions is more indistinct. Where the knowledge within management consultancy firms comes from is more and more unclear. The gap between management practice and academic research is sometimes described as unbridgeable for several reasons. Our purpose of this study is to see how important academic research and theory is to management consultancy firms’ knowledge base and what impact obstacles and outer pressure can have on this.

As our theory base for this study we have the “Three Basic Elements of the Knowledge System and their Interrelations” model by Werr and Stjernberg (2003). We have redefined and also added some elements to this model and thereby designed our own model “The Knowledge Base System in an Institutionalized Environment” which functions as a ground for our analysis.

We have performed this study by using the quantitative method of questionnaires where we have used two types of questionnaire, one for the companies and one for the consultants. The conclusions that we can draw is that academic research and theory is very important to management consultancy firms’ knowledge bases. However, the consultants say they have greater usage of their experiences in their daily work, even though they use academic research and theory as a mean to communicate with each other within the consultancy firm. A conclusion of this is that experience and academic research and theory might not be in conflict but have different functions and complement each other.
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background and problem statement

In Sweden, up until the mid 1970’s, there were clear rules for those who wanted to be active as consultants (Furusten, 2003 p. 17). The consultants combined their work with academic research; this was since academic knowledge was highly valued and believed to provide a guarantee for true knowledge. The academic researchers were supposed to be better and to have more knowledge than their job submitters, in other words they were experts in their field. However, around the mid 1970’s the environment changed and the competition increased both in the management consulting market and in the academic market. This has lead to that the academic research is still important but not a necessary part in order to guarantee expertise (Furusten, 2003 p. 15-17).

In this paper we study the knowledge base of management consultancy firms. It is assumed that management consultants have unique knowledge and that they work in a knowledge industry (Werr, 2002 p. 191-192). However, where this knowledge comes from is to some extent unclear. The whole content of consulting is not easy to define or code (Kipping and Engwall, 2002 p. 4). Professors of business schools are said to provide scientific legitimacy to different management trends that management consultants wish to explore (Kieser, 2002 p. 169). The development of today, where knowledge is such an important aspect makes us question if the management consulting firms wouldn’t gain legitimacy if they more expressly used academic research in their work. You could say that the legitimacy of management consultants is about them creating trust for themselves, their consultancy firm and for their services (Furusten, 2003 p. 45). It is also said that it is easier to convince clients about something specific and not just a vague concept like competence (Kieser, 2002 p. 168).

Previous literature claim that some educational background is required from the management consultancy firms when recruiting new employees, but experience is even more stressed (Furusten, 2003). Experience is highly emphasized in the whole working environment of the management consulting firms. One of the big issues is to make the experience, which is looked upon as tacit knowledge, into explicit knowledge that can be used in the whole organization (Werr, 2002 p. 98-101). One way of doing this is to formulate the experience as cases and turn them into methods and tools that are used in the organisation (Werr and Stjernberg, 2003).
Werr and Stjernberg have designed a model of the knowledge base of management consultancy firms. It has three basic elements; experience, cases and methods and tools. These elements are put together in a figure with the variables of tacit/articulate knowledge and specific/general knowledge. We will base lot of our study on this model and it will be further described and discussed in 2.6. *Management Consultancy Firms and their Knowledge Management.*

Brulin, noted in 1987 that the connections between academic research and Swedish management consultancy firms seemed to be cutting off (Brulin, 1987). There are several obstacles related to the use of academic research and theory and today, 22 years after Brulin’s study, the gap between academic management research and practice is declared. The gap is sometimes described as unbridgeable because, for example, of the different languages and styles between science and practice (Kieser and Leiner, 2009 p. 517). The failure of conducting research with practitioners and to communicate with them is also discussed by Fincham and Clark (2009).

Even though that gap concerns management practice in general the management consultancy firms are a part of that practice and must also be considered a quite crucial group because of their expertise. It seems as knowledge management theory (see also 2.2. *Knowledge management*), especially regarding management consultancy firms, not have been related to the problem with the gap between the academic management research and practice.

We want to investigate this gap by using knowledge management theory, and placing the concept of academic research and theory into theories of how management consulting firms build a knowledge base. For example, is academic theories a part of consultancy firm’s methods and tools? In knowledge management theory, the importance of always adding more knowledge to your knowledge base is often stressed as a competitive advantage, especially by picking up knowledge from the environment. Still it seems, as in a study by Werr and Stjernberg, that management consultancy firms mostly add elements that originate from their own experience (2003, pp. 889-890).

According to Werr and Stjernberg, methods and tools provide a language for them to communicate their experiences (2003, pp. 896-897). If these methods and tools consisted of recognized academic theories it might also be simpler for the firm to communicate with people in its environment. Then they could benefit from the experiences of new employees, customers and media, given that they all have an academic education of course.
One can find many possible advantages with management consultancy firms having strong connection to the academic world. However, as said earlier, these strong links are unclear and often replaced by an emphasis on personal experiences. Hence, we want to investigate if there really is a gap and look at possible explanations to it.

1.2. Research questions

- How important is academic research and theory compared to experience in a management consultancy firms’ knowledge base?
- What impact can obstacles and outer pressure have?

1.3. Purpose

One of the purposes of this thesis is to investigate the flows of primarily knowledge between management consultancy firms and academic institutions and to test if obstacles for this mentioned in previous research is accurate. We will test the accuracy of Werr and Stjernberg’s model of the management consultancy firm’s knowledge base, and see if academic research and theory play any part of that knowledge base. Previous research also brings up different external pressures on the management consultancy to have strong connections with the academic world, and we aim to see if these tend to have any impact on the usage of academic research and theory.

1.4. Delimitations

We will only look at management consultancy firms that are present in Sweden and only at their Swedish market activity. When selecting the management consultancy firms and selecting among the consultants that work there, we chose those who work in a way that comports with the definition of the management consultancy profession by Kubr (2002) (see 2.1. Management consultancy firms – A definition).
2. THEORY

2.1. Management Consultancy Firms – A Definition

So then, what exactly is a management consultancy firm? The Swedish Association of Management Consultants (SAMC) makes the following definition:

“A management consultant respectively management consultancy firm is a consultant or a consultancy firm which independently provide advice or help in management issues. (...) Management consultants work with needs of temporary management competence for people in leading positions i.e. such employees that have permanent general management responsibilities – or employees that have been authorized influence over the organization’s management system.” (SAMC, 2009).

This is quite alike the definition in the book *Guide to the profession* by Kubr (2002), a definition that has become widely spread and reasonably accepted;

“Management consulting is an independent professional advisory service assisting managers and organizations in achieving organizational purposes and objectives by solving management and business problems, identifying and seizing new opportunities, enhancing learning and implementing changes.” (Kubr, 2002, p. 10)

2.2. Knowledge management

The definition above implies that management consultants are some kind of experts of management who are being hired when companies can’t solve their management issues themselves. One could say that the service that management consultancy firms offer consists of the application of specialized skills and knowledge, which is also consistent with a lot of research within the knowledge field, for example by Vargo and Lusch. They also assert that knowledge is the fundamental source of competitive advantage for companies (2004, pp. 6-9).

The stated importance of knowledge has lead to new questions such as how to create ideas and knowledge, how to transfer it within the company and how to store it (Nonaka, 1991). If one formulates questions like this one probably has a view on knowledge as mainly articulate and as well as make the assumption that knowledge can be detached from a specific actor and situation (Werr and Stjernberg, 2003, pp. 883-884).

Another view is that a lot of knowledge is tacit and internalized in individuals and hard to articulate, as a contrast to explicit knowledge, and therefore hard to transfer. That
problem gets even harder to tackle since the tacit form of knowledge often is seen as more important to companies’ success than the explicit one (Patriotta, 2004). Nonaka is of a slightly different opinion, which is that you can transfer tacit knowledge to explicit and vice versa (1991, pp. 97-99).

There are also those who do not view knowledge as theory but as practice; that knowledge as such doesn’t really exist until someone takes articulate knowledge and apply it in a specific situation, something that requires a "knowing subject" who can translate the knowledge (Werr and Stjernberg, 2003, p. 884). Companies tend to copy others’ ideas and/or translate them and apply them in new contexts, often referred to as editing (Sahlin-Andersson and Wedlin, 2008,). However, this is also to prevent other firms from stealing their own ideas and copy their knowledge, as investigated by for example Zander and Kogut (1995). All of these questions about how to manage the knowledge within a firm in the best way, are often referred to as knowledge management, but as Gunnar Hedlund says “…there is much silence on what more precisely should be meant by knowledge and its management…” (1994, p. 74).

2.3. The Management Knowledge Industry

Knowledge management must not be mistaken with management knowledge. Management knowledge is knowledge about management in general, how one should manage not only knowledge but also other issues such as finance, personnel, logistics, risks etc.

Management knowledge can be created by different actors, and Kipping and Engwall (2002) present a model of these actors and their relationships, illustrated in figure 1 below.

As you can see, consultants are part of the management knowledge industry were they compete and collaborate with academic institutions and media companies in order to create the management practice (Kipping and Engwall 2002 p. 5). The relationship between academic institutions and consultants is emphasized as perhaps the most important one, where the academic institutions creates management knowledge and supply the market with possible managers and consultants (Kipping and Engwall 2002 p. 5). Management consultants could
use these relationships that are illustrated in figure 1 above in order to produce new ideas (Kipping and Engwall 2002 p. 7). The recruiting of new consultants has an important role in a knowledge company since the education and experience of that consultant has an impact on what kind of service the company can provide (Fursten 2003 p. 137). Producing new ideas and management concepts could be a way for management consultants to create a need of the service that they provide (Kieser 2002 p. 167). In this way management concepts are described as a fashion and can be pictured as an arena. In this arena the legitimacy is considered contributed by the professors of business schools. (Kieser 2002 p. 169)

2.4. Management consultancy firms and academic research and theory

So, what have the Swedish management consultancy firms’ connections to the academic institutions looked like over the years? We find a few answers to this question in a study from 1987 made by Brulin. He performed a study on management consultants in Sweden with the purpose to map out their knowledge base. He interviewed them with a focus on how the consultants developed knowledge and competence and from where they got their ideas (Brulin 1987 p. 1). He found that from time to time different consultants have tried to connect research and consulting to create a professional, or rather scientific, status. In his briefing of the consultancy firms he gives a lot of examples of this such as consultants working part-time with research and other kinds of connections. He also brings up the former consultancy firm Scandinavian Institutes for Administrative Research, SIAR which was founded in 1966 by Eric Rhenman and three of his research colleges at the Stockholm School of Economics (also described in Engwall, Fursten and Wallerstedt, 2002 p. 43). They began working with only research, and then complemented it with consulting. During that time SIAR’s consultants had to have a background as graduates or actively do research but when Brulin wrote his study this was not the case anymore and SIAR’s connections to research had declined (Brulin 1987 p. 9). Brulin wrote that on the whole the need to connect consulting with academic research seemed to have declined but that individual consultants on the contrary often mentioned that they wanted to have a connection to the research community (Brulin, 1987 p. 10). We can find an example of this in Brulin’s review of the company INDEVO;

“The academic institutions don’t play such a big part for INDEVO’s own development work anymore. There is now a hesitation to the academic institutions. These are considered to lack connection to the practical life and not being efficient. INDEVO’s development work now takes other forms.” (Swedish quote translated from Brulin, 1987 p. 11)
2.5. Academic management research - not relevant for practitioners?

Today one can find indications of that Brulin probably was right back in the 80’s when he talked about management consulting firms disconnecting from academic research. The problems that INDEVO mentioned back in 1987 concerning academic institutions seem to be accurate today. As late as May 2009, Journal of Management Studies had a series of articles that discussed what they called “the rigour-relevance gap”. They discuss business schools’ consequent (in)ability to develop and conduct research with practitioners and then communicate the results of this research to a practising audience (Fincham and Clark, 2009, p. 529). Drawing on Shapiro et al. this broad debate can be framed as either a ‘knowledge transfer problem’ (what they term ‘lost in translation’) or a ‘knowledge production problem’ (what they term ‘lost before translation’) (2007, p. 249). In one article Alfred Kieser and Lars Leiner say that the gap is unbridgeable due to different languages and styles in the scientific community, but also to different logics – to differences in defining and tackling problems – that prevail in the systems of science and practice (2009, p. 517). Though, Gerard P. Hodgkinson and Denise M. Rousseau do not agree and say that there are lots of examples of collaborations between researchers and practitioners which have resulted in both socially useful and academically rigorous research (2009, p. 534).

2.6. Management Consultancy Firms and their Knowledge Management

We have previously talked about knowledge management in general, but are now going to narrow our focus down to management consultancies and their knowledge management. Werr and Stjernberg have examined the nature and the generation, dissemination and translation of knowledge in large, global management consulting organizations in their article “Exploring Management Consulting Firms as Knowledge Systems” (2003). Building on what they found they made a model of the knowledge system, see figure 2 below, consisting of three knowledge elements; methods and tools, cases and experience, which they placed in a matrix with the axes tacit/explicit knowledge and general-specific knowledge.
Methods and tools are general descriptions of a sequence of activities in the change process, and they are articulate and abstract and therefore easily transferable and widely applicable. Cases are documents produced in projects, e.g. process maps and proposals. They are also articulate and easy to transfer but specific and therefore limited in their applicability. Experience is accumulated experience from practice and its tacit form makes it hard to transfer. The transfer process requires face-to-face interaction. It is also individual on the contrary to methods, tools and cases which are organizational. Methods and tools are continuously updated from the experience from earlier cases (2003, p. 889-890). Werr and Stjernberg also analyzed the interplay between the knowledge elements and found that methods and tools provide a common language and a knowledge structure so that the experience and the cases can be articulated. Cases articulate experience and specify and exemplify methods and tools and finally experience is needed to be able to translate methods, tools and cases when using them in new contexts (2003, p. 895).

2.7. Theory conclusion – our model “The Knowledge Base System in an Institutionalized Environment”.

To conclude our theory section, we want to present our own model “The Knowledge Base System in an Institutionalized Environment”, see figure 3 below, which contains elements from others’ research studies on the subject, but also a few own hypotheses. The model forms a structure for our empirical study, in which we will test the accuracy of the different parts of it. We will also use the model as an instrument for our analysis.
The model consists of two actors in the management knowledge industry mentioned by Kipping and Engwall: academic institutions and management consultancies. We use Kubr’s definition of management consultancies (see 2.1. Management Consultancy Firms – A Definition) and by academic institutions we mean publicly owned and private universities and colleges. Kipping and Engwall mention flows of people and knowledge in between these two actors and say that they both collaborate and compete.

To get a greater understanding of the knowledge exchange between management consultancies and academic institutions we need to have a clear picture of their knowledge bases. We will use Werr and Stjernberg’s model of the knowledge base of management consultancy firms, consisting of methods and tools, cases and experience. In order to limit our research we have specified a term which is commonly used in the theory and in the previous research about management consultancy, namely experience. We have delimited it in this study to; experience from both wage and voluntary work within companies and other organizations.

To get a more fruitful study we also wanted to develop a knowledge-base model of academic institutions, similar to the one of management consultancy firms. In the right corner
of the triangle we find research studies performed in academic institutions. Like the management consultancies’ cases, these are articulate and specific. In the left corner of the triangle we have academic theories; concepts, terms, hypotheses etc. These are also articulate but abstract and thereby widely applicable, which is similar to the methods and tools of management consultancies. The third corner of the knowledge base of academic institutions is the same as in Werr and Stjernberg’s model; accumulated experience from practice, tacit and individual with varying levels of abstraction.

We think these three elements interrelate in ways similar to the ones in Werr & Stjernberg’s model. Just like cases, research articulate experience and make it visible. Academic research also specifies and exemplifies academic theory. Werr and Stjernberg say that methods and tools provide a language to articulate cases and experience in management consultancies, and our personal experience is that academic theory often becomes a language in academic institutions. The theories are used in academic research and often when articulating personal experiences. In the same way as consultancy firms update their methods and tools with experience from new cases, academic research also often result in new academic theories.

In our study we are interested in the interplay between experience and more articulate forms of knowledge in management consultancy firms, such as methods, tools and cases. As mentioned earlier, there are flows of knowledge between academic institutions and management consultancy firms. We wonder what this exchange look like and how important academic research and theory is compared to experience for management consultants.

Though, in previous research we have also found outer factors affecting this knowledge exchange and we want to add these to our model. There can be obstacles for a management knowledge exchange between academic institutions and management consultancies, such as irrelevance and different languages, as mentioned by Kieser. The knowledge exchange might not entirely be totally self-chosen by the management consultancy firms. We must not forget that there might be pressures from the environment that can affect the occurrence of this exchange and the consultancies’ valuations of knowledge, such as demands from clients and present trends, as mentioned above. This environment is inevitable institutionalized and demands for legitimacy and trustworthiness most likely have a big impact on both management consultancies and academic institutions.
3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Choice of method

We have chosen to do a study that is descriptive, comparative and explanatory (Saunders et. al. 2009 p. 140); descriptive since we wonder if academic research and theory play an important role in certain areas, comparative since we compare that role to the role of experience in these areas, and explanatory since we test a few theories of why it looks like this.

For this we have chosen a quantitative method, namely questionnaires. There are two reasons for this. First, we want to compare the importance of experience to the importance of academic research and theory in different situations in general, and that is more easily done with a quantitative method. Secondly, we aim to test several theories of both others and of our own, and are thus more interested in yes-or-no responses, rather than the in-depth answers one gets with a qualitative method. There are some difficulties with questionnaires that we had to be aware of before choosing this method and before distributing our questionnaires. It is for example hard to design a questionnaire that will give us the precise data that we need to answer our research question. It is also hard to go back and collect additional data (Saunders et. al. 2009 p. 361-362). We took these issues under consideration and put lot of effort in designing the questionnaires.

We wanted to know how management consultancy firms work with knowledge management as a company, but also how their consultants value and use knowledge of different kinds. Therefore we decided to make one questionnaire designed to be answered by the management of the companies regarding e.g. recruiting and further education, and one to their consultants. We believe that it will strengthen our reasoning that we have chosen to perform two separate studies that explore two different levels in each of the chosen companies.

We refer to the company questionnaire as “1” and the questions in it by using their numbers. This gives a system where for example “1:2.3” relates to question 2.3. in the company questionnaire.

We refer to the consultant questionnaire as “2” and the questions in it by using their numbers. This gives a system where for example “2:3.2.” relates to question 3.2. in the consultant questionnaire.
3.2. Sample - the Companies

We wanted to have ten different companies as a part of our empirical study. For this we contacted 20 different companies and twelve showed an interest to participate. However, only eight of these did in the end chose to participate in our study, thus they are the only ones present in our empirical data.

To find the companies we first used the search engine Google looking for the Swedish key word “Managementkonsulter”. We picked out ten companies that we found matched our definition of the management consultancy firms and the management consultancy profession (see 2.1. Management Consultancy Firms – A Definition). As a second step we used the website www.eniro.se to supplement the list. We made ten random samples based on the same premises as we had when using Google.

Beforehand we thought about issues that might occur concerning our access to these companies. They might have a policy on not to take part in student theses since it is taking too much of their time. They might also find the nature of our study a bit sensitive since it’s concerning the knowledge management. The core competence and the competitive advantages in the management consultancy firm’s are highly based on the knowledge within the firm’s and therefore they might not be easily convinced to participate in our study. (Saunders et. al. 2009 chapter 6) We had hoped to overcome these issues of gaining access by guaranteeing that the participating companies and the respondents remained anonymous through the report. However, we found that access was one of the main problems for us when collecting the data hence the main reason for not participating was the companies’ lack of time.

We also want to point out that one of the eight companies that did participate in our study is not a company in the common definition but more of a network or supplier of consultants spread all over Sweden. All parts of our questionnaire are therefore not applicable to this company but we will use all the information we got from them since we have seen that there are more companies in the management industry that function similar to this and therefore their answers are of equal importance as others’.

The other seven companies are all present in medium to large cities in the south and middle of Sweden, mainly Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmo. They have three to 45 employees in Sweden (1:1.11), with an average of 20 employees. Most of the companies are also present in one to five countries outside of Sweden (1:1.2.).
3.3. The Company Questionnaire

To get to know more about the companies’ knowledge management we had to get in contact with one person from each of our chosen companies, for example a person from the HR-department or the CEO. In the beginning we wanted to conduct a telephone interview. The questions in the interview were supposed to be read out as a questionnaire with pre-coded answers, (see Appendix 1). (Saunders et. al. 2009 p. 320) Since the interview will be read out with pre-coded answers we would like to describe our method of choice as an interviewer-administrated telephone questionnaire (Saunders et. al. 2009 p. 363). We chose this method since we then hoped to have a high response rate and also that the right person would answer our questions. (Saunders et. al. 2009 p. 364 Table 11.1). By conducting the questions over phone we hoped to easier gain access to the information that we needed and to decrease the time and costs associated with interviews (Saunders et. al. 2009 p. 349). However, from the start we found that the respondents preferred to have the questionnaire emailed to them instead of a telephone interview. The reasons they gave us for this was that they experienced that it would take less of their time if they could read and fill in the questionnaire themselves. Since we found that we were quite positive about that we had contact with the right person, or were able to locate for our selves who the right person was, we took the decision of emailing them the questionnaire instead in order to be able to receive any answers at all.

3.4. Sample – the Consultants

We aimed at having five management consultants in each of the participating management consultancies to answer our questionnaire. We could also have had different criteria’s for these consultants, for example the oldest and the youngest etc, but because of management consultants’ lack of time we thought it would take too long time to wait until the right consultant had the time to answer.

There were only eight companies that had the ability to answer the company questionnaire; however, there was also one company whose consultants could participate although the management of that company were unable to do so. We chose to include those consultants in our study. This gave us a total of 45 consultants but we have only received filled-in questionnaires from 28 of these, and therefore our results will only build on these.

The titles of our 28 respondents vary from junior and senior consultant to CEO, but most of them filled in just “management consultant”. 79 % of them are men and 21 % women (2:1:1.). 21 % of them have staff liability that varies from the responsibility of one to 20
persons (2:1.2.). The average consultant has worked eight years as a management consultant (2:1.3.), but it varies between two and 28 years. The average consultant has worked seven years at their present company (2:1.4.), and this varies between less than one year and 28 years.

3.5. The Consultant Questionnaire

The questionnaire (see Appendix 2) is designed as a self-administrated postal questionnaire (Saunders et. al. 2009 p. 363). The consultants were sent an e-mail with the questionnaire attached as a word document. They then filled in the questionnaire directly in the file and e-mail it back to us.

We have chosen to do the questionnaire in Swedish and then translate the results when presenting them in this report. This is mainly since we believe the respondent rate and also the understanding for the questions will be better if the questionnaire is in the respondent’s main language.

3.6. Operationalisation

Since we wish to do a quantitative study, the theory cannot be tested in its present form. We have to specify the terminology in order to get more accurate answers (Holme and Solvang 1997 p. 159-160).

The questionnaires that we sent out were tested beforehand so that we had the ability to refine and rephrase questions that might be unclear (Saunders et. al. 2009 p. 394). We tested the questionnaire on ten people since that is considered a minimum for student questionnaires (Saunders et. al. 2009 p. 394), and one of these was a management consultant employed by the management consultancy firm Accenture. The results in the tested questionnaires were not collected though. The feedback from our test persons resulted in a few changes, e.g. a specification of the word experience to experience from both wage and voluntary work within companies and other organizations (see 2.7.). After this we tested the questionnaires again on a few of our test persons and the responses were very positive, they now had no difficulties with understanding the questionnaires.

We also wanted to have a clear view on how much time the questionnaire would take to fill in for the participants. This was so we could inform our “real” respondents of the time that they had to invest in our study. The result was that it took our test respondents about ten to 15 minutes to fill in the questionnaire, which they perceived not to be too long.
3.7. **Credibility**

In order to reduce the risk of us getting misinterpreted answers to our questions we have to look at the credibility of our study. This can be done by stressing the importance of reliability and validity. (Saunders et. al. 2009 p. 156)

You might argue that we could have a problem with the reliability since the respondents in our study are anonymous. This in some way could make it more difficult to redo our study and to get the same results. However, we did the evaluation that this study would not have been possible for us if we would not have guaranteed the respondents anonymity. We have tried to be as transparent as possible in our method section without revealing our respondents.

Concerning the validity of our study we believe that we have done our best to assure that our findings are about what they appear to be about (Saunders et. al. 2009 p. 157). We have done this by having a strong connection between our questionnaires and the theory that we have used for this study. One problem to our study’s validity that we feared, was the possibility of mortality, which refers to the respondents dropping out of the study (Saunders et. al p. 157). Since management consultants are, as we have come to realise, very busy and we had very limited time to collect our data, we feared that this was going to be a main problem for our study. Also the sensitive nature of our study (see 3.2. *Sample - The companies*) made us fear that it might have an influence on the response rate. However, we believe that we have overcome this issue by being flexible (see 3.3. *The company questionnaire*), and also by guaranteeing the respondents anonymity. We believe that the limited time that the respondents had to answer the questionnaire also works in favour for our study. This in one way decreases the possibility of maturation, which refers to that events might occur during the time of the study that could result in changes in the company that in turn could affect the result of the study (Saunders et. al. 2009 p. 157).

Another problem concerning the validity of our study is the fact that the respondents believe that having a strong connection to academic research and theory is the political correct answer to give. The management and the consultants could have instructions to say that they have a strong connection to academic institutions as a PR strategy, even though they do not have that strong connections to academic institutions in their actual work.
3.8. Analysis of the response

In this study we had a total response rate (Sunders et. al. 2009 p.220) of 40% for the company questionnaire and 62% for the consultant questionnaire. This is to be considered quite high since studies on this level, involving top management, have an approximate response rate of 35% (Sunders et. al. 2009 p. 222). The method of postal questionnaires that we chose for our study has an even lower response rate, approximately 10-20% (Sunders et. al. 2009 p. 222). We tried to overcome the lack of response by sending out reminders to all of the participants that did not respond at our first send-out.

Although this study has a high response rate there still were a few companies that chose not to participate. Mainly it was the bigger companies that did fall off. We believe that the reason for this is that they are often asked about participating in students surveys, like this one, and simply do not have the time or resources to take part in all of them. However, we do not think that this had an impact on the result of our study since we still found the model of Werr and Stjernberg (2003) applicable to the companies in our study. It also was something that we easily could control and present in our empirical data.

One concern that we have, that is not easily controlled, is that the companies that did chose to participate in our study have a strong connection to the academic world and therefore are interested in our study. This also goes vice versa; the companies that chose not to participate might not have any connection to academic research and theory and thereby might not have an interest in participating in our study. This is something that could affect the results and also the conclusions that can be drawn based on the empirical data.
4. EMPIRICAL DATA

4.1 Flows of people between academic institutions and consultancy firms

We have to know more about the management consultants’ personal experiences of academic institutions to better understand why they relate to academic theory and research the way they do. 96% of the consultants have an academic education (2:2.1). The educational level they had when they began working (2:2.2.) is illustrated below in diagram 1.

![Diagram 1](image)

Only 11% of the consultants have been involved in academic research but no one on a doctor level or higher. Neither of them has been involved in research within the private sector.

We asked the consultants to grade from one to five how much they agree on that they to a great extent do research within the academic world on the side of their job as a management consultant (2:3.1.). 79% of our respondents totally disagree and the rest of the answers are quite equally distributed on the five graded scale. 18% totally agree or fill in a four on that many of their colleagues do research within the academic world beside their job as a management consultant (2:3.2.). 32% fill in a three and 50% totally disagree or fill in a two.

We also asked the companies if any of their consultants perform research within the academic world beside their job as management consultants (1:3.1) and the results are presented in table 1 below. 63% of the companies we asked perform research of their own (1:3.2).
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answering alternative</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No, no one</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, a smaller part</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, around half</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, a big part</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, all</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.1. Recruiting

A part of the management consultancy firm’s value about academic research and theory compared to experience is shown in their recruiting. We asked the companies how they generally value academic education (1:2.1), experience from research (1:2.3) respectively experience from wage and voluntary work within companies and other organizations (1:2.3) when they recruit new consultants. The results are presented below in diagram 2. We can see that academic education is a condition for new employees in three quarters of the companies. The consultancy firms agree on that experience from wage and voluntary work is important but there is a big variation in how important they think it is. Experience from research is not as important and in about a quarter of the companies it is not important at all.

Diagram 2

4.2. The knowledge base of the management consultancy firms

Since a lot of our study builds on the knowledge base model by Werr and Stjernberg, we first had to investigate if it was consistent with the reality of the consultancy firms of our study. 88% of the consultancies agree on that they document what they have done in separate projects
to be able to utilize that experience at later occasions (1:4.1), which we interpret as cases. Equally many agree on that their firm has down-written frameworks, methods and tools (e.g. process descriptions) that their management consultants use in their daily work (1:4.5). This is confirmed by the consultants of whom 82 % mark a four or totally agree when being asked how much they agree on that their company uses frameworks, methods and tools to a great extent (2:4.1).

4.2.1. Is academic theory and research a part of the methods and tools?
We also wanted to see if academic theory and research could be a part of these methods and tools, and if so, to what extent. When asked how much of the methods and tools that consists of academic theory and research (1:4.2.), 71 % of the consultancy firms that said they had methods and tools answered that these for the most part consisted of academic theory and research, and the rest said that it consisted about half of it (see diagram 3).

Diagram 3

We also asked the consultants how much they agree on that they of their company’s methods and tools recognize a lot from what they learned during their academic education. The consultants are of very different opinions, giving us an average of 2,8 on the five graded scale.(2:4.2) See diagram 4 below.

Diagram 4
4.2.2. Methods and tools as means of communication

We also wanted to test Werr and Stjernberg’s statement that the companies’ methods and tools provide a language to articulate experience and cases. When the consultants answered to what extent they agreed on that they in the communication with their colleagues use terms from the company’s methods and tools (2:4.7), we got an average of 3.9, on the five graded scale. Since we compare academic theories to methods and tools we wondered if the academic theories also could be used as a language in the communication between consultants (2:4.8), and this gave an average of 3.5, thus less than methods and tools. Here the responses were also more widely spread compared to methods and tools where the consultants were quite unanimous, see diagram 5 below.

**Diagram 5**

We asked if it is simpler to communicate with colleagues when using terms from academic theories compared to the company’s methods and tools (2:4.9), and that gave us an average of 2.0 (see diagram 6).

**Diagram 6**
4.2.3. Updating the methods and tools

Werr & Stjernberg (2003) also state that management consultancy firms continually update their methods and tools from the experience they get in their cases. We tested this statement by asking the companies if they do this and if so, how often (1:4.3). Since we compare company cases to research projects within academic institutions we wondered if these could also provide any inspiration for updates of the companies’ methods and tools. Therefore we asked the same question but replaced experience from cases with results from academic research and theory (1:4.4). A comparison between the responses to these two questions is shown in diagram 7 below.

Diagram 7

4.3. Flows of knowledge between academic institutions and consultancy firms

Updating methods and tools from academic theories and research is one way of gaining knowledge from external actors in the environment. Another is a more formal knowledge exchange. We asked the companies if they have some form of knowledge exchange with other companies, organizations etc. All of them say yes; 62,5 % in the form of long-term cooperation and 37,5 % more short-term at special occasions (1:6.1). When specifying this to only academic institutions, 88 % of the companies say that they have some form of knowledge exchange with these (1:6.2). When exemplifying this, the companies mention things such as working together in consulting assignments, research projects and education,
and exchange of databases (1:6.3). When asking the consultants how much they agree on that management consultants gain by having cooperation with researchers within management we got an average of 4.1 on the five graded scale (2:3.5).

4.3.1. Further education
The knowledge exchanges mentioned above are on a more organizational level, but a more individual form is further education of employees. 75% of the companies say that they offer their employees some form of further education or course carried through by external actors (1:6.4), just as many, 75% of the consultants say that they through their company have taken part of a further education or course carried out by an external actor (2:6.1). When asking the companies that offer their employees further education if they study research results as a part of this further education, all of them say yes; 20% do it continually, 40% often and 40% say that it has happens at rare occasions (1:6.5).

68% of the consultants have through their company taken part of a further education or course that has connection with academic research or theory (2:6.3), but as many as 86% of the consultants have taken part in one without connection with academic research or theory (2:6.4).

We also wanted to know more about the consultants’ wishes concerning future further education. 86% of the consultants say they would like to take part of a further education or course (2:6.2) and all of these would like to participate at a seminar, a course or further education with connection with academic research and theory (2:6.5). When we finally forced the consultants to choose between a seminar/course/further education where a prominent management consultant shared her/his experiences and one where a prominent management researcher shared her/his research, 64% chose the last-mentioned (2:6.6).

4.4. Valuations of knowledge
The results presented above all have to do with how the consultancy firms and their consultants value different kinds of knowledge in specific situations. We also wanted to know something about their valuations of different knowledge types in general.

4.4.1. What kind of knowledge do they use the most?
So what form of knowledge is most valuable for management consultants when it comes to the daily work? We asked the consultants to what extent they agreed on that they in their daily work have great usage of the company’s framework, methods and tools (2:4.3), earlier experiences from wage and voluntary work within companies and other organizations (2:4.4.)
respectively *the academic theory* they took part of during their education before their working career (2:4.5.). The results are shown in diagram 8 below. Earlier experiences got the highest rating with an average of 4,5. Then came the company’s methods and tools with an average of 4,0 and last academic theory with an average of 3,0. Concerning academic theory the responses were also more widely spread over the scale.

**Diagram 8**

4.4.2. *What kind of knowledge is most important to management consultants?*
What usage one has of a special knowledge type most likely affects how one values it. The valuation might also be affected by for example what status that knowledge possesses. Therefore we also wanted to put a more general question to the consultants and asked what level of importance experience from both wage and voluntary work within companies and other organizations (2:2.5.) respectively academic education (2:2.6) have for the work as management consultant. The results are shown in diagram 9 below.

**Diagram 9**

4.4.3. *General values regarding knowledge*
We also asked the consultants if they think that the main source of knowledge is to be found in *academic research* rather than own experiences (2:3.7), and got an average of 2,5. When we turned the question around, asking if the main source of knowledge is to be found in *own
experiences rather than academic education (2:3.8) we got a higher average of 3.7. See diagram 10 below.

Diagram 10

4.5. Knowledge exchange obstacles regarding academic institutions

We also wanted to see if these results were affected by the institutionalized environment of the consultancy firms, both in terms of obstacles and pressures. Based on Kieser and Leiner (2009) we tested the irrelevance of and difficult language in academic research and theory.

The consultants were asked to grade from one to five, where one was totally disagree and five was totally agree, if academic research is relevant in general (2:3.6.) and the responses differed from a two to a five. This resulted in an average of 3.5 on the five graded scale. When we asked if academic research about management specifically was useful to them in their work as consultants (2:3.3.) 11 % marked one or two, 18 % a three and as much as 71 % filled in a four or five, giving us an average of 3.9. When it comes to the obstacle concerning different languages among academic research and practice, 62.5 % of the companies answered that they do not think that the language in the research results that are presented is an obstacle for them to be able to study it easily (1:6.6.).

4.6. Pressures from an institutionalized environment

4.6.1. Trends

87.5 % of the companies say that they see an increased demand from their clients when a new trend is figuring the market (1:5.5), but the rest 12.5 % do not see an increase at all. So then, if new management trends create an increased demand, then management consultancy firms might follow academic institutions if they produce any of these trends. When asked if the trends that figure within management comes from academic research (2:3.4.) none of the consultants totally disagreed and only 4 % totally agreed. Most of the respondents, 39 %,
ticked a three on the five graded scale. This resulted in an average of 3.2 on the five graded scale.

4.6.2. Demands from clients
Demands from clients tend to be one of the greatest pressures on a company and that led us in to asking the companies more about their experiences of the demands from clients and what type of competence they value. How important is experience from wage and voluntary work within companies and other organizations (1:5.1.) respectively knowledge about academic research and theory (1:5.2.) for companies that are hiring management consultants? The results are shown in diagram 11 below. Neither of the two knowledge types is totally unimportant. The companies’ experiences of clients’ valuations of experience tend to vary quite much, but a great majority of the companies experience that clients think knowledge about academic research and theory is very important.

Diagram 11

4.6.3. Legitimacy and trustworthiness
As mentioned above one might highly value a type of knowledge because it comes to great usage, but one can also procure a certain knowledge type because it gives you legitimacy and trustworthiness.

All of the companies think that a clear connection to the research society gives management consultancy firms an increased legitimacy.

We also asked the consultants to rate on a scale from one to five, where one was that they totally disagree and five that they totally agreed on if they experience that their clients have more trust in their work if the consultant refer to his or her academic education (2:5.5.), we got an average of 2.9. When we replaced academic education with referring to experience
from both wage and voluntary work within companies and other organizations (2:5.6.) we got an average of 3.9. See diagram 12 for a comparison of the two.

We also asked if they experience that the clients have more trust to the solutions that the consultants present if the solutions have a connection to academic research and theory (2:5.7.), and the responses gave us an average of 3.6. See diagram 13 below.
5. ANALYSIS

5.1 Flows of people between academic institutions and consultancy firms

A majority of the companies say that when they recruit new management consultants, academic education is often a condition to get employed. The rest of the companies say that academic education at least is of great importance. This is also shown in the results from the consultants were almost everyone has an academic degree. Experience from research is less important when recruiting consultants and this is also shown in the answers from the consultants. Most of them neither have previous experience of research nor do it today parallel to their consulting job. The last-mentioned is a contrast to how it was when the management consultancy industry matured in Sweden and a lot of the management consultants had strong connections to research. If one connects these results to our own model that we presented in the theory section (see 2.7), one can say that the flow of people is big from the left corner of the knowledge base of academic institutions, i.e. academic theory, but very small from the right corner, i.e. academic research.

The companies agree on that experience from wage and voluntary work within companies and other organizations is good to have, but there is a great variation in how important they think it is.

Although we see in our study that having an academic education is very important we find that a higher level of academic research is not so important. This also goes hand in hand with the devolvement that is mentioned by for example Brulin (1987).

Brulin also said that many of the consultancy firms also started their own research when the hesitation to the academic institutions increased, and 63 % of the companies we have asked do research on their own. We think that 63 % is such a big part of the consultancy firms that one can argue that the knowledge element cases should be complemented with one of research in both our own and e.g. Werr and Stjernberg’s model of knowledge bases of management consultancy firms. Reasons behind this increase in own research could be that management consultancy firms find obstacles connected to usage of academic research and theory, for example regarding irrelevance and language (see further 5.5.) It could also be that they do this to create management trends that could provide more work opportunities for them (see further 5.6.).
5.2. The knowledge base of the management consultancy firms

Werr & Stjernberg say that management consultancy firms use methods, tools and cases, and this seems to be an accurate description of the management consultancy firms in our study. We see that the companies get a lot of the contents of their methods and tools from the academic institutions; a great majority of the companies say that their methods and tools mostly consist of academic research and theory. All of them say that they update their methods and tools with results from academic research, even though they vary in how often they do it. An interesting thing here is that it is more than twice as common to continuously update methods and tools from academic research and theory, than to continuously update them after experience from cases, something that is more often done only when the companies have something to add. The latter is a result that is not consistent with the findings of Werr & Stjernberg who say that management consultancies update their methods and tools after almost every finished consulting project.

It is interesting to see that so many of the companies claim that their methods and tools consist for the most part of academic research and theory, but that so few of the consultants agree on that they recognize a lot of their company’s methods and tools from their academic education. We have thought of reasons for why these answers do not correlate so well with each other and one likely reason for this might be that the consultants have different academic educational backgrounds. Education programs can vary much in their content, leading to a big variation in the consultants’ recognition of different concepts and theories. Another possible answer is that the methods and tools have been updated with academic research and theory that is so new that it was not part of the consultants’ academic education.

The fact that academic theories play an important role in the management consultancies’ knowledge bases makes us believe that academic research and theory is highly evaluated by the management consultancy firms and considered useful for them, contrary of what for example Kieser and Leiner (2009) have presented in their research. However, our results are only based on what the company representatives have told us. The reality of the importance of academic theory could differ from this since we could argue that it could be considered to be politically correct to have a strong connection to the academic world. The consultancy firms therefore might want to image themselves as a “better” company in this aspect than what really is the case.

Werr and Stjernberg’s state that the companies’ methods and tools provide a language to articulate experience and cases, and our consultants partly agree on that. Since we compare
academic theories to methods and tools we wondered if academic theories also could be used as a language in the communication between consultants. The consultants’ responses vary, but the average consultant use academic theories to some extent in their communication, but not as much as he/she uses methods and tools. The respondents neither agree on that it is simpler to communicate with colleagues when using terms from academic theories compared to company methods and tools, an average gives us 2,1, that they. Once again these results can depend on differences in the quality of the academic education of the consultants, and of course, how many of the colleagues that have an academic education, which this communication of course presuppose.

5.3. Flows of knowledge between academic institutions and consultancy firms

The expansion of a consultancy firm’s knowledge base can be done “organically” (i.e. expanding from within), such as updating methods and tools from experience from cases, or by adding elements from the external environment, such as updating methods and tools from academic theories and research. We see that a majority of the consultancy firms have some kind of knowledge exchange with academic institutions and all of them study research results as a part of their further education, but to different extents. This is confirmed by the consultants of whom a majority has taken part of such a further education, though even more of them have taken part of further education without connection to the academic world. This is somewhat surprising because when consultants can make the choice themselves, a majority of them chooses a seminar/course/further education where a prominent management researcher shared her/his research, over one where a prominent management consultant shared her/his experiences. Though, we do not know if this choice is the result of a greater valuation of research or just a will to get something else than experiential further education for a change.

5.4. Valuations of knowledge

When we asked the consultants about their usage of methods and tools, experience respectively academic theory in their daily work, the tacit form of these knowledge types, experience, was considered more valuable. This is consistent with a lot of previous research that emphasize the importance of tacit knowledge in contrary to articulate knowledge, such as the methods and tools and academic theory.

The consultants find greater usage of methods and tools than of academic theory. A reason for this might be that a lot of the methods and tools already consist of a lot of academic
theories, which probably are chosen among others because of their applicability to the company’s activities.

When we ask the consultants what level of importance experience respectively academic education have for the work as management consultant, we got results correlating with the above. Both these things seem to be of great importance even though experience got a slightly higher average.

The consultants are quite unified in partly disagreeing on that academic research is the main source of knowledge. When asking them if they think personal experience is the main source we get a slightly higher average, but even here we don’t get any clear answers. One reason for this might be that there are other things they consider the main source, things we haven’t taken into account, e.g. analytical or social skills. Another might be that they have difficulties in choosing between academic research and personal experience. Maybe the fruitful base for knowledge is the combination and interaction of tacit and articulate knowledge. As Werr and Stjernberg says; methods and tools provide a language for experience and experience translates methods and tools.

5.5. Knowledge exchange obstacles regarding academic institutions

According to Kieser and Leiner (2009), management research is irrelevant for practitioners, but our study shows other results. A great majority of the consultants agree more or less on that academic management research is useful to them in their work as consultants. Though, they are more hesitant to the relevance of academic research in general.

One of the main reasons for Kieser and Leiner’s statement of irrelevance were that practice and academic research have two different languages but a majority of the companies participating in our study said that they do not find the language in research results an obstacle for them. This can however depend on that almost all of our consultants have an academic education in which they have been taught this language.

5.6. Pressures from an institutionalized environment

The companies were asked if they see an increased demand from their clients when a new trend appears in the market. The consultants were asked if they think that any of the trends that figure within management come from academic research. The reason for this is that a positive response to both these questions would result in a pressure on the consultancy firms to keep track of the academic institutions not only to get more knowledge, but also to be able to attract new customers. A big majority of the companies answered that new management
trends resulted in an increased demand, all according to previous studies we have read. Though, the consultants’ opinions on if many of these trends originated from the academic institutions varied. Since our question included the word *many*, our result may however imply that *some* of the trends originate from the academic world. Thus the clients’ pressure on consultancies to have academic knowledge, might be present but not significant.

Knowledge about academic theory and research seem to be of great importance, when it comes to the companies’ experience of what kind of competence that their clients ask for. Concerning their opinions on how their clients’ value experience from wage and voluntary work within companies and other organizations, the consultancies are quite disunited. All of the companies thought that a clear connection to the research society would increase the legitimacy of management consultancy firms, but the responses differed a lot when it came to practice.

When it comes to the consultants’ perceptions of what increases their trustworthiness, referring to their experience seems to have a bigger impact than referring to their academic education. One explanation to this might be that almost every one of the consultants seems to have an academic education, and therefore their experiences might be what distinguish them.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

6.1. *How important is academic research and theory compared to experience in a management consultancy firms’ knowledge base?*

We have found in our study that having an academic education is to be looked at as a precondition when being employed as a new consultant. Experience from research is however less important to the management consultancy firms of today. The consultancy firm’s opinion about experience from both wage and voluntary work is widely spread and therefore it is hard for us to draw any certain conclusions from this. However, all of them think that it is important to some extent.

We have found the model by Werr and Stjernberg (2003) to be accurate and also to be applicable to the smaller and mid-size consultancy firms that have been in focus for this study. We can draw the conclusion that academic research and theory is very important to the management consultancy firms since more than 70 % of their methods and tools consists of it. The consultants themselves however, do not find it equally important as the companies. This
could be because they are not totally informed about that the methods and tools in their company consist of so much academic research and theory as it does.

We have also seen that a majority of the consultancy firms have some kind of knowledge exchanges with academic institutions and all of them study research results as a part of their further education. However, they do this in different extents. The consultants claim that they have taken part in more further education without connection to academic research and theory compared to further education with this connection. However, they would prefer to attend any further education with this connection to academic research and theory. A conclusion to be drawn from this is that the management consultants value academic research and theory and find it important to them in their work.

When it comes to what the consultants consider that they use the most; experience, the methods and tools or academic research and theory, the result was that experience was highest rated. We believe that this is because the tacit experience is a personal interpretation of the companies methods and tools and therefore is what the consultants use in their daily work. However, as we have showed most of the methods and tools consists of academic research and theory.

Another implication of the importance of academic research and theory is that 43 % the consultancy firms constantly watch over the academic world to update their methods and tools.

6.2. What impact can obstacles and outer pressure have?

The consultants agreed on that academic research about management is useful to them in their work. They also agreed on that they communicate by using terms both from the company’s methods and tools and from academic research and theory. The language does not appear to be a problem for the consultants or the consultancy firms.

Since the method and tools consist so much of academic research and theory we also draw the conclusions that they consists of the academic research and theory that is relevant for them in their work. That is why they do not find it easier to communicate with academic terms that the terms from their methods and tools.

We have been able to show that the consultancy firms do find an increase in demand from their clients when a new management trend is figuring the market. However, based on these results it is hard to draw conclusions on where the management trends originates from, but some of them seem to come from academic research and theory.
The companies all agree on that the clients find knowledge about academic research and theory very important and they all agree on that a clear connection to research society would increase the legitimacy of management consultancy firms. However, the consultants are more disunited regarding these issues. They do not find that referring to their academic education increase their trustworthiness. One assumption to draw from this is that the clients might assume that the consultants have academic education and therefore it does not add to the perceived trust. One conclusion that we can draw from the difference in the answers from the consultants and the consultancy firms is that this too have to do with that the consultants are not fully informed about the level of academic research and theory that the companies methods and tools consists of.

6.3. Suggestions for future research

We believe that many of the results in our study could be more thoroughly researched. You could pick a few of the questions in the questionnaires and study them more for example by using in-depth interviews. We had no space left to present or analyse some of the results in our study, for example the questions regarding the communication between the management consultants and their clients. This could be studied for example from the legitimacy perspective to see if the consultants act in a certain way to provide legitimacy for themselves although they do not actually see value in it. This could be described as a form of hypocrisy (Brunsson 2003). Another interesting perspective that we did not have room for in this study was the management consultant beliefs for the future development of the management practice. This is an interesting perspective to study when performing a study over a longer period of time to see if there is any changes and what it might have to do with. You could also look at factors like gender or employment duration as management consultant and see if that has an impact on the results.

In this study we looked at academic research and theory in contrast to experience. However, there are other factors that also might be important to investigate further. For example the personal quality and social skills of the consultants that is mentioned in Furusten (2003) could be other examples of important factors.

We also made some delimitations and specifications of the concept of experience. This could have been done in a different way. We believe that future research should try to agree on a more specific definition to the concept of experience within management consultants and the management consultancy firms. The tacit nature of
experience makes it very open for interpretation and you could focus research on social experience, just experience from paid jobs, educational experience and so on.

One other aspect that we found interesting when analysing our result was that 63% of the companies that we asked do research of their own. Why they do this and in what way could have been interesting to learn more about since we think it could be argued to testify of a dissatisfaction or disbelief in the academic research and theory, or as a way to create management trends and thereby create work opportunities.

We have in this study been able to see that the 43% of the companies update their methods and tools continually based on results from academic research and theory. However, in what way they do this could be a subject for future research.
REFERENCES

Articles

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Articles in books


Books


Working papers


Web pages

APPENDIX 1: The company questionnaire

7 January 2010
Uppsala

Vilka är vi?
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Vad handlar uppsatsen om?
Vi skriver om hur managementkonsulter använder sig av akademisk teori och forskning i sitt arbete. Detta kommer att genomföras genom en kvantitativ studie där flera företag kommer att delta för att på så vis ge en bred bild av hur praktiken ser ut. Vi hoppas att med er hjälp kunna få svar på några av de frågor som intresserar oss och forskarvärlden i dagsläget.

Anonymitet?
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Bästa hälsningar,

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Efternamn:
Företagsnamn:
E-post:
(OBS! Dessa uppgifter kommer att hållas anonyma och är endast för oss vid behov av kontakt.)
Var vänlig och sätt ETT kryss i rutan som stämmer bäst med ditt svar oavsett antal alternativ eller skriv in ditt svar i det grå fältet. Vid andra typer av svarsalternativ, följ de instruktioner som finns vid den aktuella frågan.

1. Allmänt
I denna del vill vi ha lite mer information om ert företag.

1.1 Hur många anställda har ert företag i Sverige?  
anställda

1.2 Om ni finns i utlandet, i hur många länder finns ni?  
☐ 1 - 5 länder  
☐ 6 -10 länder  
☐ >10 länder

2. Rekrytering
Hur värderar ert företag generellt följande saker då ni ska anställa nya managementkonsulter?

2.1. akademisk utbildning?  
☐ Inte alls viktigt, det gör varken till eller från  
☐ Fördelaktigt, men inte jätteviktigt  
☐ En stark merit  
☐ Viktigt, sällan anställs konsulter utan detta  
☐ En förutsättning för att få jobb

2.2. erfarenhet av att forska?  
☐ Inte alls viktigt, det gör varken till eller från  
☐ Fördelaktigt, men inte jätteviktigt  
☐ En stark merit  
☐ Viktigt, sällan anställs konsulter utan detta  
☐ En förutsättning för att få jobb

2.3. erfarenhet från både avlönat och ideellt arbete inom företag och andra organisationer?  
☐ Inte alls viktigt, det gör varken till eller från  
☐ Fördelaktigt, men inte jätteviktigt  
☐ En stark merit  
☐ Viktigt, sällan anställs konsulter utan detta  
☐ En förutsättning för att få jobb
3. Forskning
I detta avsnitt vill vi veta mer om ert företags kopplingar till forskningsvärlden.

3.1 Sysslar några av konsulterna på ert företag med forskning inom den akademiska världen vid sidan av sina tjänster som managementkonsulter?

☐ Nej, ingen
☐ Ja, en mindre del
☐ Ja, cirka hälften
☐ Ja, en stor del
☐ Ja, alla

3.2 Bedriver ert företag någon egen forskning?
☐ Ja
☐ Nej

4. Företagets kunskapsbas
I detta avsnitt vill vi veta lite mer om de hjälpmedel ni har för att lagra kunskapen i företaget.

4.1 Har ert företag nerskrivna ramverk, metoder och verktyg (t.ex. processbeskrivningar) som managementkonsulterna använder i sitt dagliga arbete?

☐ ja
☐ nej (hoppa isf till fråga 4.5)

4.2 Om ja - består dessa metoder och verktyg idag av någon akademisk teori och forskning?

☐ ja, endast
☐ ja, till största del
☐ ja, ungefär till hälften
☐ ja, en mindre del
☐ nej, inte alls

4.3 Om ni har nerskrivna metoder och verktyg, uppdaterar ni dessa efter den erfarenhet ni får genom era konsultjobb?

☐ Ja, kontinuerligt efter varje projekt
☐ Ja, då vi har något att lägga till
☐ Ja, vid speciella tillfällen då metoder och verktyg gås igenom och uppdateras
☐ Nej.

4.4 Om ni har nerskrivna metoder och verktyg, uppdaterar ni dessa efter nya akademiska teorier och/eller forskningsresultat?

☐ Ja, vi bevakar ständig den akademiska världen av denna anledning
☐ Ja, vid behov om något speciellt dyker upp
☐ Ja, vid speciella tillfällen då metoder och verktyg gås igenom och uppdateras
☐ Nej.

4.5 Dokumenterar ert företag hur ni gått till väga vid enskilda projekt för att vid senare tillfälle kunna ta tillvara på denna erfarenhet?

☐ ja
☐ nej
5. Kundrelationer
I detta avsnitt vill vi veta mer om vilken roll akademisk forskning och teori respektive erfarenhet spelar i och för kundrelationerna.

Vilken typ av kompetens upplever ni att företag som skall anlita managementkonsulter efterfrågar?

5.1 Erfarenhet från avlönat och ideellt arbete inom företag/organisationer

- Helt oviktigt
- Inte så viktigt
- Viktigt
- Mycket viktigt
- Helt avgörande

5.2 Kunskap om akademisk teori och forskning

- Helt oviktigt
- Inte så viktigt
- Viktigt
- Mycket viktigt
- Helt avgörande

5.3 Upplever ni att kunderna lätt förstår de metoder och verktyg ni använder er av på företaget eller måste ni ofta förklara dem?

- Ja de förstår dem lätt.
- De kräver viss förklaring
- De kan vara lite svåra att förstå för kunden, men huvudsaken är att vi på företaget känner till dem väl.

5.4 Tror ni att det skulle vara lättare att kommunicera era metoder och verktyg om de bestod av mer vedertagna akademiska teorier?

- Ja
- Troligen.
- Kanske.
- Antagligen inte.
- Nej.

5.5 När ett nytt managementkoncept är i ropet, märker ni då av en ökad efterfrågan från kunder som vill få hjälp av er med implementering av detta?

- Ja, en stor ökning
- Ja, en ökning
- Ja, en mindre ökning
- Inte alls

5.6 Tror du att en tydlig koppling till forskarsamhället ger managementkonsultföretag ökad legitimitet?

- Ja
- Nej
6. Kunskapsutbyte med omvärlden

6.1 Har ert företag något kunskapsutbyte med andra företag, organisationer etc?
- Ja, i form av långsiktigt samarbete.
- Ja, men mer kortsiktigt vid vissa tillfällen.
- Nej

6.2 Har ni någon form av kunskapsutbyte med akademiska institutioner?
- Ja
- Nej (hoppa till fråga 6.4)

6.3 Om ja, vad består detta kunskapsutbyte av?

6.4 Erbjuder ert företag sina anställda någon form av vidareutbildning eller kurs som genomförs av extern aktörer?
- Ja
- Nej (hoppa till fråga 6.6)

6.5 Tar ni del av forskningsresultat som en del i denna vidareutbildning?
- Ja, vi gör det kontinuerligt
- Ja, vi gör det ofta
- Ja, det har hänt vid enstaka tillfällen
- Nej, det har inte blivit så
- Nej, vi ser inget värde i det

6.6 Anser ni att språket i de forskningsresultat som presenteras är ett hinder för att enkelt kunna tillgodogöra sig dem?
- ja
- nej
APPENDIX 2: The consultant questionnaire

7 January 2010
Uppsala

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1. **Allmänt**
I denna del vill vi ha lite mer information om dig som svarar på enkäten.

1.1 Kön. 
   KVINNA [ ] 
   MAN [ ]

1.2. Om Du har personalansvar, hur många personer har Du ansvar för? [ ] personer.

1.3. Hur länge har Du arbetat som managementkonsult? [ ] år.

1.4. Hur länge har Du arbetat på ditt nuvarande företag? [ ] år.

2. **Bakgrund**
I detta avsnitt vill vi veta mer om den utbildning och erfarenhet du hade innan du började arbeta som managementkonsult.

2.1. Har Du akademisk utbildning? 
   JA [ ] 
   NEJ [ ]

2.2. Om Du har akademisk utbildning; vilken utbildningsnivå hade Du vid den tidpunkt då Du påbörjade ditt arbete som managementkonsult?

   Fristående kurser [ ]  
   Högskoleexamen (2 år) [ ]  
   Kandidatexamen (3 år) [ ]  
   Magisterexamen (4 år) [ ]  
   Masterexamen (5 år) [ ]

2.3. Har Du bedrivit forskning i den **akademiska världen**? Markera i sådana fall högsta nivå.

   Licentiatexamen [ ]  
   Doktorsexamen [ ]  
   Högre än doktorsnivå [ ]  
   Annat [ ]

2.4 Har du bedrivit forskning inom **privat sektor**? I sådana fall, var och hur länge?

   Var: [ ]  
   Antal år: [ ]

2.5 Vilken betydelse anser Du att **erfarenhet** (från både avlönat och ideellt arbete inom företag och andra organisationer) har för arbetet som managementkonsult?

   Helt oviktigt [ ]  
   Inte så viktigt [ ]  
   Viktigt [ ]  
   Mycket viktigt [ ]  
   Helt avgörande [ ]

2.6 Vilken betydelse anser Du att **akademisk utbildning** har för arbetet som managementkonsult?

   Helt oviktigt [ ]  
   Inte så viktigt [ ]  
   Viktigt [ ]  
   Mycket viktigt [ ]  
   Helt avgörande [ ]
3. Forskning
I detta avsnitt vill vi veta mer om din erfarenhet av och personliga syn på akademisk forskning. Vi ber dig att Du kryssar i EN av rutorna i skalan 1-5. Siffran 1 innebär att Du inte alls håller med och siffran 5 innebär att Du håller med helt och hållet.

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</table>

3.1. Jag bedriver i stor utsträckning forskning inom akademiska världen vid sidan av arbetet som managementkonsult.

3.2. Många på mitt företag bedriver forskning inom den akademiska världen vid sidan av arbetet som managementkonsult.

3.3. Jag anser att den akademiska forskning som bedrivs inom management är användbar för mig i mitt arbete som managementkonsult.

3.4. Av de trendor som figurerar inom management anser jag att många härstammar från akademisk forskning.

3.5. Managementkonsulter tjänar på att ha samarbete med forskare inom management.

3.6. Generellt anser jag att den akademiska forskning som görs idag är relevant.

3.7. Den främsta källan till kunskap finns att hämta från akademisk forskning snarare än egna erfarenheter.

3.8. Den främsta källan till kunskap finns att hämta från egna erfarenheter snarare än akademisk forskning.
4. Det dagliga arbetet
I detta avsnitt vill vi veta mer om vilken roll akademisk forskning och teori respektive erfarenhet har i ditt dagliga arbete med dina managementkonsulkollegor.

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<tr>
<td>4.1. Mitt företag använder sig i stor utsträckning av ramverk, verktyg och metoder (t.ex. processbeskrivningar).</td>
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<td>4.2. Av företagets metoder och verktyg känner jag igen mycket från det jag lärde mig under min akademiska utbildning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.3. I det dagliga arbetet har jag stor användning av företagets ramverk, verktyg och metoder.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.4. I det dagliga arbetet har jag stor användning av tidigare erfarenheter från avlönat och ideellt arbete inom företag och andra organisationer.</td>
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<td>4.5. I det dagliga arbetet har jag stor användning av den akademiska teorin som jag tog del av under den utbildning jag gick innan arbetslivet.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.6. Jag använder mig mer av akademiska teorier idag i mitt dagliga arbete jämfört med vad jag gjorde när jag först började arbeta som managementkonsult (för mindre, välj 1).</td>
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<td>4.7. I kommunikationen med mina kollegor använder jag mig av termer från företagets metoder och verktyg (se 4.1.).</td>
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<td>4.8. I kommunikationen med mina kollegor använder jag mig av termer från akademiska teorier.</td>
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<td>4.9. Jag anser att det är enklare att kommunicera med mina kollegor när vi använder oss av termer från akademiska teorier, jämfört med när vi använder oss av termer från företagets metoder och verktyg.</td>
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5. Kundrelationer

I detta avsnitt vill vi veta mer om vilken roll akademisk forskning och teori respektive erfarenhet spelar i och för kundrelationerna.

| 5.1. Jag använder mig av termer från akademisk forskning och teori då jag kommunicerar med våra kunder. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| 5.2. Jag använder mig av termer från mitt företags metoder och verktyg då jag kommunicerar med våra kunder. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| 5.3. I mötet med kunderna upplever jag att de enkelt kan förstå mitt företags metoder och verktyg. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| 5.4. Jag anser att det är enklare att kommunicera med våra kunder när vi använder oss av termer från akademiska teorier, jämfört med när vi använder oss av termer från företagets metoder och verktyg. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| 5.5. Jag upplever att mina kunder finner större trovärdighet och tilltro till mitt arbete om jag refererar till min akademiska utbildning. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| 5.6. Jag upplever att mina kunder finner större trovärdighet och tilltro till mitt arbete om jag refererar till min erfarenhet från avlönat och ideellt arbete inom företag och andra organisationer. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| 5.7. Jag upplever att mina kunder finner större trovärdighet och tilltro till de lösningar jag presenterar om lösningarna har anknytning till akademisk forskning och teori. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

6. Vidareutbildning

I detta avsnitt vill vi veta lite mer om hur du ser på vidareutbildning i form av akademisk forskning och teori jämfört med övrig.

| 6.1. Har Du genom ditt företag tagit del av någon vidareutbildning eller kurs som genomförts av en extern aktör? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| JA | NEJ |

| 6.2. Skulle Du vilja delta ta del av någon sådan vidareutbildning eller kurs? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| JA | NEJ |
6.3. Har Du tagit del av någon vidareutbildning eller kurser från ditt företag med anknytning till akademisk forskning eller teori?

JA ☐ NEJ ☐

6.4. Har Du tagit del av någon vidareutbildning eller kurser från ditt företag som inte anknöt till akademisk forskning eller teori?

JA ☐ NEJ ☐

6.5. Skulle Du vilja delta vid ett seminarium, en kurs eller vidareutbildning med anknytning till akademisk forskning eller teori?

JA ☐ NEJ ☐

6.6 Om du skulle gå på seminarium/kurs/vidareutbildning och fick välja mellan följande, vilket skulle du då välja?

☐ ett där en framstående managementkonsult delade med sig av sina erfarenheter

☐ ett där en framstående managementforskare delade med sig av sin forskning

7. Framtiden

Och så till slut två frågor om framtiden.

7.1. Ser Du att akademisk forskning och teori kommer att få större betydelse för arbetet som Managementkonsult i framtiden?

JA ☐ NEJ ☐

7.2. Ser Du att erfarenhet från avlönat och ideellt arbete inom företag och andra organisationer kommer att få större betydelse för arbetet som managementkonsult i framtiden?

JA ☐ NEJ ☐

Vi vill tacka för din tid och visat intresse!

Vill Du att vi skickar resultatet av studien till er som e-post? JA ☐ NEJ ☐