

# **The Analysis of the Four Paradigms of Business Management consulting in Portugal in the Light of the Research Field of Strategy-as-practice**

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## **Abstract**

In a historical retrospective, although the existing literature names the sector of management consulting industry as an extraordinary and unique phenomenon in business and in fact these claims have not been substantiated by academic studies that will assess these same interpretations. This article therefore aims to address the lack of studies in this emerging field, and, from the analysis of a set of semi-structured interviews and questionnaires with management consultants and managers of SMEs, aims to discuss the paradox of the concept of management consulting, presenting the results of a prospective analysis linked to the search field of strategy-as-practice and four business paradigms that constitute it.

**JEL classification numbers:** L00, L1, L10, M00, M11

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## **1 Introduction**

The increasing pressure from markets characterized by intense competition and instability, leads organizations and people to rethink their strategies in dealing with other parts. As

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organizations are guided to their central areas (core business), freeing themselves up from areas / activities that they do not dominate, so the dependence on external sources of supply increases.

The complexity and instability described here undoubtedly enunciate the thought of Bruce Henderson (1979), the creator of the consultant Boston Consulting Group (BCG), based on the assumption that the business world is a true natural selection, as it exists at the level where the focus should be primarily directed to a good understanding of the natural context (surrounding).

Organizations are analyzed from this point of view from an economic, political, organizational and individual perspective, where free market and customer are fundamentally two focus points in terms of social relations (Dugay, 2000) and developments such as portfolio, employment contract, internal markets, "outsourcing" and fundamental organizational change continuously to dominate organizational research worldwide (Beer & Nohria, 2000; Barley & Kunda, 2004).

The developments named here, on the same line as other fields of the management, are what establish the evolution of the strategic subjects in organizations and have been largely disseminated by the management consulting industry, which is the main reason why Canback (1998) describes this sector as the path of success that should be embraced by companies in the context of its strategic orientation and its professionals as the true purveyors of the complex phenomenon known to date as business developments.

This same thinking was evidenced by several authors over the last years defending the industry as an influential and powerful tool for organizational change, bringing new life to organizations and its procedural chains.

However, many of the considerations described about the sector of management consulting relate to how to manage organizations are being increasingly discussed and questioned. The increasingly complex world we live in, where apparently disparate events are interrelated, technological developments blur the boundaries between the sectors of economic activity (Anthony, 2006), accounting scandals and tax fraud and cases of corporate insolvency are repeated over and over again, and pointed out much of what remained to exist as something untouchable, guaranteed success and requiring a journey of reflection.

The crisis in the U.S. and the UK real estate market, the public debt of Portugal, Spain, Japan, Ireland and Italy [higher than 100% of its GDP (gross domestic product)], the collapse of the Dotcom in the U.S. and scandals of Enron's Corporation and WorldCom, are only a few reports of economic setbacks that have led to many entrepreneurs to view the consultants as "weapons" used in the pursuit of success and attempt to create a set of proficiencies and decrease costs enabling them to acquire true competitive advantages.

The result has led to the consulting industry trying to fight the best possible way to maintain the gains in an era characterized by reduced growth in economic activity, resulting in an increasingly overcrowding of consultants that can get work in the market (Freire, 2008).

According to Fincham, Clark., Handley and Sturdy (2008), this is due to companies that start believing that consultancy costs are too high compared to the earnings they generate, which means that customers are increasingly hesitant in hiring this type of service, which represents a change of 180 degrees relative to what had been observed since 1980 through a growing demand for such services.

In this same line of understanding, Grob and Kieser (2006) mention that the management consulting industry cannot acclaim itself a knowledge structure, nor can be compared to classic industries like accounting, medicine or law (Perkin, 2002) in terms of knowledge production.

But, although there are some opinions that relate management consulting to hesitation in hiring or to their inability to produce knowledge, a fact that was noted is that much of the academic literature is unanimous in associating the knowledge as one of the most important motivations for seeking these services, recognized even by Dawes, Dowling, and Patterson (1992), Alvesson (1993, 1995) and Engwall and Kipping (2002) as the activity of "knowledge intensive".

It is thus important to consider that the management consulting industry portrays not a mere industry whose approach focuses only on financial and economic growth (Fincham & Clark, 2002a), because the knowledge that it generates for the business activity, projects it to levels of importance where the simple economic and financial significance can not.

In a historical retrospective, the benefits of the management consulting industry were already clear, in terms of contribution and what they generated for the growth of industries in the fifties (Stryker, 1954), and for this reason named by Drucker (1979) twenty-five years later as an extraordinary industry and a unique phenomenon in the business context and not just by the single, natural, independent and objective aid that translates into resolving specific problems (Greiner & Metzger, 1983; Canback, 1999), but also by the given experience and that often appears associated with high productivity results.

The truth is that beyond this perceived activity in an organizational context, the preponderance management consulting continues to be an integral part of relationships created between companies and financial institutional sources, representing often a prerequisite for certain strategies and organizational styles. That is, however there may be a reversal in terms of financial results [which does not come out in practice - see Freire (2008)], the truth is that it remains a vital industry for experts and scholars of component business management and for the fascinating knowledge that can be obtained (Fincham et al., 2008).

Although we take into account the ambivalent status of consultants and the failures that eventually the industry may have known, this is and will be a major step in the study of management and all its structural composition by sector proliferation of ideas and management techniques, the development of new organizational forms, diffusion of innovations, and their connection to properties of economies of scale in spreading information, knowledge and experience that many organizations individually would not be able to do, being seen by Semadeni (2001), Armbruster (2006) and Fincham (2010) as the true strength of corporate power, the lever of organizational and economic change and the source of developing ideas that cross continents and nations today.

In an era clearly marked by the growth of organizational complexity, the benefit of management consulting also appears linked to the fact that its professionals are usually considered "outsiders", allowing them to accumulate, with their years of experience, impossible to generated internally, and being most of the times not only auditors but also consultants, something that companies should not decline, but rather understand it as something that is an advantage in terms of producing organizational efficiency and easy access the good practices that may regenerate a higher individual productivity (Canback, 1999).

Paraphrasing Drucker (1979), the management consulting sector should not be seen as an art, but it should always be something to be considered in uncertain scenarios and the challenges faced by companies in the beginning of the XXI century, although some authors do not have this view about this phenomenon (as we later will observe through the development of this thesis), a conclusion drawn is the ability to solve problems, and apply

the techniques that they show in the global economy will not fade and certainly this industry will continue to be a focus study for many people, regarding not only the annual income growth of 20 % since 1980 (Freire, 2008) , but also the preference for this career choice for most students for their professional future activity and that undoubtedly makes the industry a field of opportunities, it is expected that researchers continue to arouse interest in the analysis of this industry and the search for the ideal concept of "management consulting".

## 2 Preliminary Notes

### 2.1 The Concept of Management Consulting

The definition of management consulting emerged in the early 1980s, at the same time the management consulting industry began to generate high economic growth and the first academic work began to appear on this subject. From this phase, we witnessed the development of a theory, which not only produced but also has refined the concept of "management consulting." There are several ways to approach this definition, it should, however, point out that there is only need to provide a consultancy service to management when there is a specific problem for which there are alternatives in terms of solution.

Greiner and Metzger (1983) were the first to raise this question. Accordingly to the authors, management consulting emerges as an advisory service contracted with the goal of providing organizations, through trained and qualified personnel, independent assistance trying to identify management problems, analyze such problems, recommend solutions and, provide assistance, when requested, in the implementation of those solutions [(this definition is also shared by Kurb (1986) and Mohe (2003)].

In turn, Harris (1999:6) adds to the definition of Greiner and Metzger (1983) the existence of a successful evaluation, defining the management consulting as an "advisory service contracted and provided to organizations by specially trained qualified personnel to assist in an objective and independent manner, the management of a client's organization in a participatory manner to identify system problems and through synthesized solutions, help to solve the problems in its implementation, demonstrating the level of success in innovation by evaluating".

In another perspective of analysis, "Management Consultancies Association" (MCA, 2001:22) defines management consulting as the "provision of independent advice and assistance on management issues. This typically includes identifying and investigating problems and / or opportunities, recommending appropriate actions and assistance in implementing these recommendations". In turn, the "Institute of Management Consultants" (IMC 2012) describes as management consulting service to public and private companies, in identifying and investigating issues concerning policy, organization, procedures and methods, recommending appropriate actions and assisting in implementing these recommendations by one or more independent and qualified persons.

The magazine "The Economist" (1997:3), contextualizing the definition into another prism, it may refer the matter to a broader sense of analysis to a contingency, inserting the definition in the first case of the company "McKinsey and a handful of other companies strategy" and the second in outsourcing companies, "especially those that have to do with the installation and integration of information systems."

For Oliveira (2006), management consulting is an interactive process of a change, an

external agent to the company, whose main objective is to be able to develop behaviors, attitudes and processes that enable the client's company to obtain or consolidate proactively and / or interactive competitive advantages with the various factors of business environment and, simultaneously, to assume responsibility for assisting managers and professionals of these companies in strategic decision making.

There are authors such as Kipping and Armbruster (1998), that prefer to analyze the nature of management consulting and the respective service providers in this sector in three different approaches, distinguishing between those who advocate the management consulting as an industry, highlighting its nature as a profession and those who define it as a structured area of activity.

According to Canback (1998), counseling, may be of strategic, organizational or operational nature, and to acquire formal character it must be institutionally organized, being the quality of service the single responsibility of the consultant, not involving this, a matter of formal authority or managers replacement in the development of contract.

From the different described types of visions and approaches, one realizes that there is still no widely accepted definition of management consulting, and this is mainly due to the wide range of areas that may be subject to consulting jobs - such as those identified by "Institute of Management Consultants"<sup>5</sup> and Table1 - that make the concept of management consulting to be interpreted strictly, so it is linked to broader concepts that can be adjusted according to changes and opportunities as management consultancy, consulting for business and organizational consultancy (Kubr, 2002).

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<sup>5</sup>Cooperative and Entrepreneurial Development Policy, Financial Management, Management, Marketing and Sales, Production, Distribution and Transport, Information Technology, Economic Planning, Human Resource Management, Management Science, Management of Technology

Table 1: Types of management consulting and respective areas of intervention

Types of consulting	Strategic	Procedure	Operational
<b>Intervention areas</b>	Cooperative and Entrepreneurial Development Policy Administrative Management Marketing and Sales Distribution and Transportation Economic Planning Management Sciences production Financial Management Information Technology Management HR Management Technologies		
<b>Scope</b>	Business vision and understanding of market - Evaluation of opportunities for reinvestment - Revitalization of brands - Structured theoretical action plans - Perfect mathematical models - Feasibility of the project	-Processes of Drawing -Benchmarking - Implementation of new systems and media -Knowledge of business -Technical Component Specialty -Economies of experience	-Analysis of profitability -Optimization of stores -Analysis of relationship benefits pay- -Administrative management of human resources -Accounting / taxation
<b>Focus</b>	Consulting catalyst as a means to faster decision making	Consultancy and facing more technical detail and what is logical, such as the introduction of a new computer system that allows to develop a new product, a new product line or a new channel.	Specific analysis of the human and financial resources equating eg administrative reforms, analysis of profitability or ways to reduce costs in light of respect for the legal legislation in force
<b>Logic</b>	Logic diagnosis and counseling and not implementation	Consultancy that normally beyond the recommendations is on the client to implement the changes. Typically involves changes in habits, culture, people, procedures, processes, models and systems	Logic diagnosis and counseling and not implementation

Source: Elaboration by the authors

That is, although the definition is a little different in terms of their approach, the entire field of management consulting can be briefly defined as a professional service, capitalized on key features of professional business services to solve specific problems and complex structures of their clients (Fincham & Clark, 2002b; Werr & Styhre, 2002). Given the growth

of the sector it can be concluded that it is a concept that hardly will be static on a clear definition (Greiner and Metzger, 1983), and its explanation an ongoing task (Fincham& Clark, 2002b), it is not expected that its refining will decrease in the coming decades because of the growth of this sector.

Thus, to combat the lack of studies in this emerging field it is necessary to penetrate this market and understand this activity, bringing to the academic field a considerable volume of information that contributes concretely to the development of this research field, and one way to do so, is to comprehend and define the characteristics and factors that lead to the identification of the identity of this industry, realizing their relationship with the market in terms of knowledge, rather than just identify with applying a set of static techniques (Fincham& Clark, 2002a).

To ensure the relevance of the problem formulated here, given the lack of studies and information concerning this sector and particularly in terms of definition of management consulting, this article aims to contribute, firstly, to redefine the concept of paradox management consulting from the analysis of consultants and customers perspective in Portugal, and a secondly, to develop this concept in a perspective related to the search field of strategy-as-practice, focusing on the four paradigms of business management consulting and macro and micro perspectives analysis that constitute the search field of strategy-as-practice.

## **2.2 Methodology**

In terms of verification and demonstration of what is stated in terms of research, about the purposes that underpin this investigation, an implicitly character was applied and exploratory features. In the first case, the applied nature resulted from attempting to investigate a contemporary phenomenon in real-life context (Yin, 1994), which was also assisted with the presentation of an exploratory aspect present in the absence of a large systematic knowledge about the complex social management consulting phenomenon and the contribution it brings to the development of the business strategy of SMEs in Portugal, still having the purpose of classifying concepts and generating new ideas and theoretical knowledge on the subject, with the intention of gaining new "inputs" on the contribution of consultants for business strategy, these responses were only possible to find by searching the causes of certain effects (internal validity).

Regarding the means, this research was based on a pragmatic or inductive character, and was conducted from a non-probability sample of convenience composed according to the availability and accessibility of addressed elements (Ferreira &Carmo, 1998) in this case, management consultants and senior managers of Portuguese SMEs. In this sense, 300 questionnaires to SMEs and the 350 management consultants (which include 50 independent consultants) were emailed and sent fortnightly "reminders". 37 questionnaires from managers of SMEs and 29 management consultants were answered, totaling 66 questionnaires with a response rate of 10.15%.

However, given that the interest of this research that has focused on discovering the meaning and represent experiences of multiple realities, it was still used as a qualitative method of analysis to conduct 17interviews with 9 senior management consultants and 8 managers of SMEs in Portugal, and the sample in terms of interviews, had an intentional character, because participants were selected that best represented the investigated phenomenon in terms of knowledge.

Thus, qualitative methodology resulted from the analysis of a set of interviews, seeking to

measure the phenomenon under study in terms of social, individual and holistic dynamics of human being related to the thematic and management consulting in the definition and implementation of strategic management in SMEs, trying to understand the meaning that people attribute to the analyzed phenomena, more than properly interpret it, making it possible to analyze inductively data, which is only possible to achieve from the observation, collection and analysis of scientific facts in loco.

In terms of the technique, it was used a qualitative analysis to interpret the reproduced data from the interviews that led to a content analysis, trying to relate the semantic structures (significant) to the sociological structures (meanings) of statements, to the articular surface of the texts with the factors that determine their characteristics (psychosocial variables, and cultural context, context, processes and message playback) - Figure 1. Consequently, from reproductions of voice, later documented in written texts, the process of clarification, organization and expression of the content of the messages promoted by content analysis, was organized in three chronological poles, i.e., initially organizing and systematizing ideas, secondly all the material was explored, and in the end the respective interpretations of the results was made.

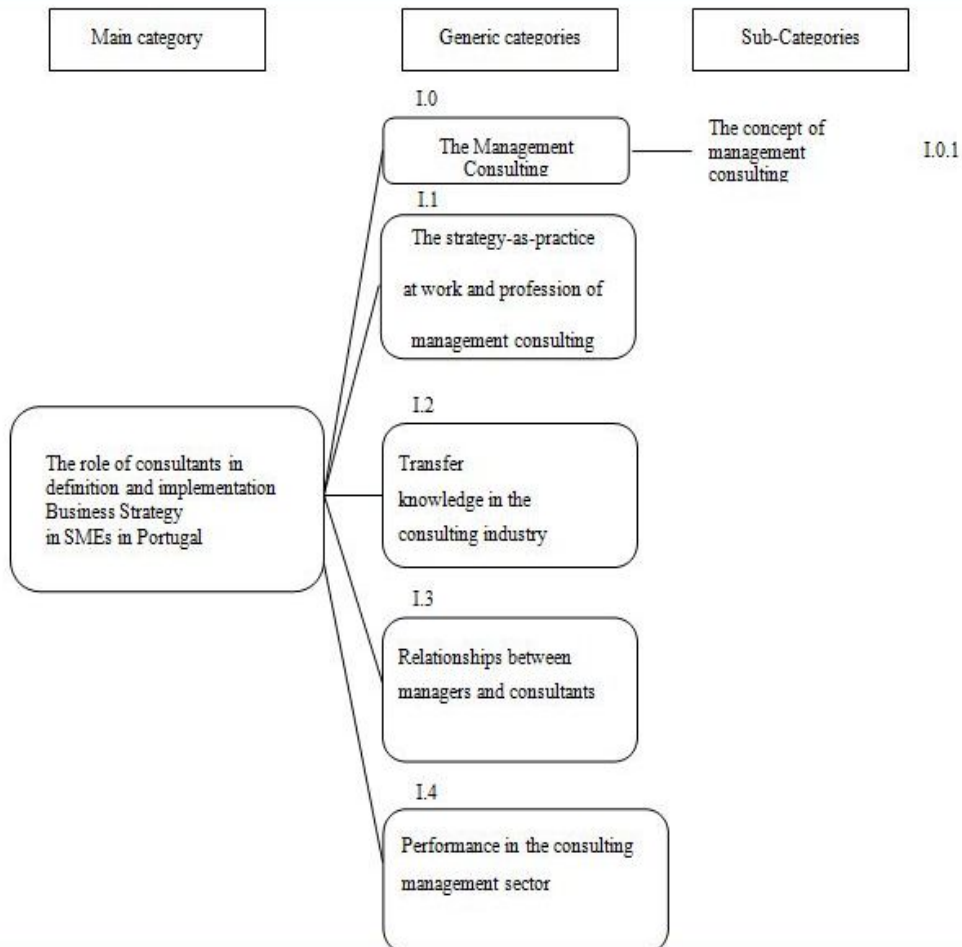


Figure 1: Categorization and coding the "corpus" of the interview for qualitative analysis  
Source: Elaboration by the authors



It should also be noted that the semi-structured interview technique used was developed in a more or less structured based questions, implicit in adaptive and non-rigid character, being the conversation almost always fluid. That is, despite having previously prepared questions, most of them were generated as the interview took place, allowing me and the interviewed the flexibility to deepen or confirm certain data when proven necessary. I.e. it was a planned interview but also spontaneous, allowing me to collect many important database of qualitative information.

So the interviews were more spontaneous and informal, although ruled by a list of points of interest from a pre-structured script. So when the respondent approached the identified themes the speech flowed according to the interviewee's wish.

In short, this research was based on a set of primary sources, from the application of surveys in the form of 17 semi-structured interviews to 9 consultants and 8 SME managers and the questionnaires with open and closed questions to 29 consultants and 37 SME managers of Lisbon, Douro, Leiria, Porto, Madeira, Minho, Beira and Algarve (Portugal), with a representative sample of a set of respondents covered predominantly by men (63%), whose ages have an arithmetic average of 37. Almost all respondents have a higher academic education and are working in their current businesses on an average of about 8 years. Also note that the sample in SMEs is fundamentally linked to the area of retail and consultancy to several sectors of activity that makes up the area of business management.

### **3 Main Results**

The paradox of the definition of consultancy, as its own evolution, formally initiated in the early twentieth century (Kipping et al, 2006; Kipping, 2002; Canback, 1998), when it was formed in the U.S. the Engineering Association in Management Consulting, has been always susceptible to new fashions, ideologies and management models (Abrahamson, 1996), which has shown over the years that its explanation is not really constricted, but an ongoing task that has been refined over time by several authors (Greiner & Metzger, 1983; Harris, 1999; Kipping & Armbruster, 1998; Canback, 1998; Kurb, 2002; Fincham & Clark, 2002; Styhre & Werr, 2002; Oliveira, 2006) and institutions (Management Consultancies Association, Institute of Management Consultants, The Economist).

Indeed what could be understood through this research is that management consulting is something profound, not limited only to required questions, because it includes a detailed study of the client's world and what it intends to offer to optimize processes or outcomes.

From what we could see, management consulting is strongly linked to the context of competitiveness of companies, regardless of their fields of intervention, above all the added value that this activity can bring, is closely linked to the release of resources, optimization processes, knowledge, profitability and earnings, either through the market or the strategy of positioning itself.

On the other hand, management consulting should bring an innovation factor, depending on the objectives, also bring new skills, "know-how", new experiences, new ideas and a deep understanding of what makes the level of competition and the market so that there can be presented the best solutions against a set of priori identified requirements. It is under this perspective that the management consulting industry as a true knowledge structure can effectively provide difference and efficient solutions.

The development of a consulting process is not easy, because these days the specificities of

business are countless. Knowing the business, analyzing correctly the problems, defining good action plans, focusing on goals, and challenge, questioning and criticizing procedures and operations are therefore considered by managers in enterprises as key factors for success and quality seals, the consultant works in this process as a catalyst capable of challenging companies to incorporate in its new organizational system concepts and working methodologies.

Something that turns out these days is that the expression of management consulting starts to be a commonplace, and suddenly everything is considered management consulting, leading to believe that management consulting is what one makes of it today and that is everything. It is for this reason that management consulting should mean "zero" knowledge when one is dealing with a customer for the first time. Everything a consultant knows to initiate an action of consultancy should be forgotten, otherwise these are addicted to their own reasoning, and the biggest asset that one can hold is their ability to question. As some of the managers interviewed mentioned "that's what it's for" to question the current reality, beliefs, guide lines and their own strategies. This challenging action does not mean that you are questioning ideas and perspectives, it only means the required help so many times requested by the client ( Tilles , 1961; Greiner & Metzger , 1983; McGivern , 1983; Heller , 1986; Hollway , 1991; Kurb , 1986, Watson , 1994; Canback , 1999; Fincham & Clark , 2002a ; Mohe , 2003; Haas , 2006; Karantinou & Hogg , 2009), leading him to rethink what he considered to be a fact.

The idea of the consultant as a doctor of management fell into disuse. If, fundamentally in the 1980s the needs of customers suggested this figure or role played by the consultant (Turner, 1982; Greiner & Metzger, 1983), portraying a pretentious image, today it is overthrown by an approach that can be translated as non-traditional, the consultant must provide himself with a large dose of humbleness to put the rational and emotional resources available to the client, selling what he really wants, brain and creativity.

#### 4 Conclusion

As seen from the empirical analysis of this theme, consultancy is linked to the concepts of competitiveness, media release, process optimization, knowledge, profitability and earnings, news, racing, new experiences, new ideas, market knowledge and business, good reading problems, good action plans, focus on goals, and the rational and emotional factors, resulting in the construction of four business paradigms in the management consulting sector (Figure 2).

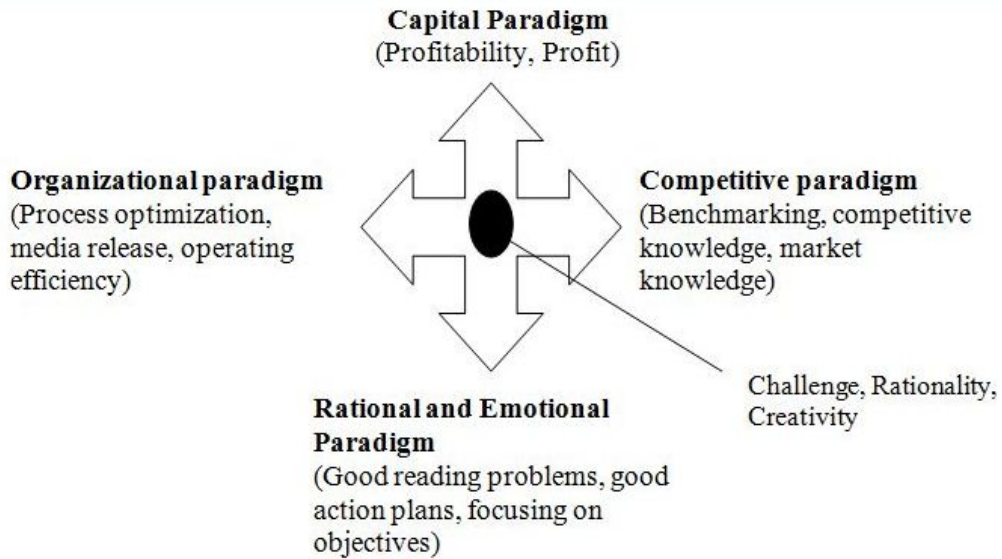


Figure 2: The four paradigms of business management consulting

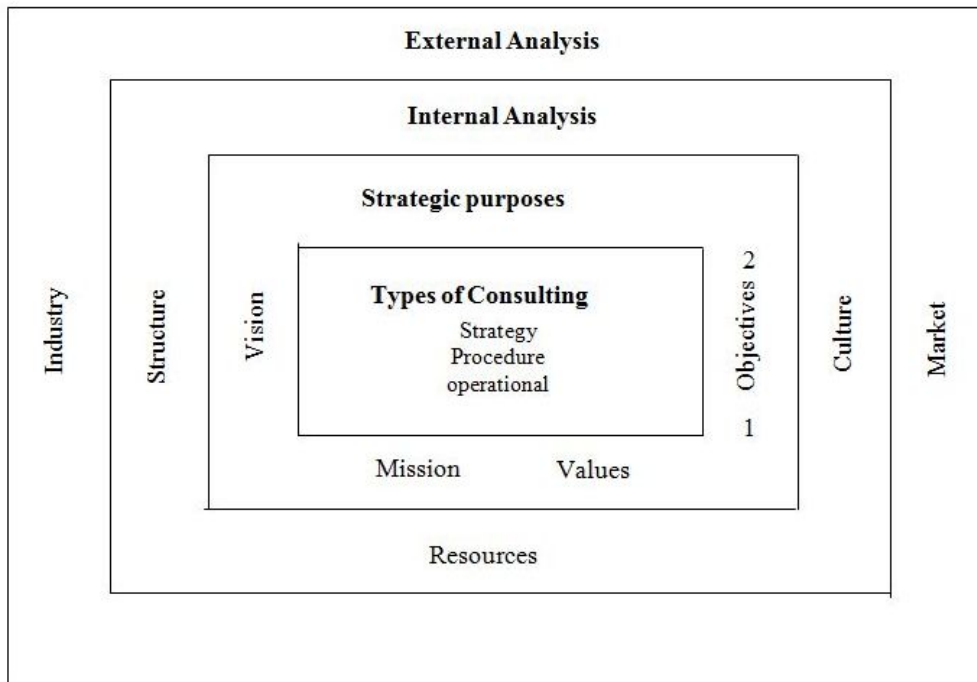
Source: Elaboration by the authors

To this extent, the management consulting can be set regardless of its numerous areas that work as a support to strategic and operational functioning of companies; it is seen from outside and operates in a rational, emotional and creative client service system and may only recommend appropriate actions or go further to the implementation of those recommendations.

Management consulting, must be seen from this description as an unknown way, because even if the work is of the same area in the same industry or the same number of people, the cultural reality, the measures to implement the organizational diagnosis, the actions of "coaching" and training to develop the team to incorporate workshops, or any other actions of operating development to be considered can always be completely different.

But even this definition may be extensive, it is necessary to emphasize, as identified by the "Institute of Management Consultants", that your reading should always be made in light of the different approaches of analysis in relation to the disciplines that make up the sector of management consulting - Figure 4.

Approximately, it all starts with a general analysis of the strategic aspects such as the market, going from outside to the inside to reach the structure, culture and resources in order to establish a vision, a mission and the identification of critical success factors and goals for the development of a strategic formulation, and this may be connected to one of the most strategic, operational or procedural consultancy(Figure 3).



1 - Logic objectives. Goals (more general). Objectives (more specific) - Smart, small, measurable, able to be revised, achievable and that includes the time variable.

2 -The objectives are to enter a budget plan or a "balanced scorecard" of a measuring "performance".

Figure 3: Strategy formulation processes in management consulting

Source: Elaboration by the author

Only from now on consultancy is directed to certain areas and to more specific areas of intervention, particularly those identified by the "Institute of Management Consultants" as intervention areas of management consulting, including policy and cooperative business development, financial management, administration, marketing and sales, production, distribution and transportation, information technology, economic planning, human resource management, administration and technology management sciences.

In short, however alternatives are sought or there is the intention to have a single criteria for defining management consulting, the truth is that the strategy of any business process in this area should always refer to a set of means (resources and competences) seeking that they can generate capabilities to meet objectives, the process should be conducted in a logical diagnosis and counseling, but also deployment because as advocated by Porter (1980) and sustained by Anthony (2006) a quality strategy must take into account the formulation, but also the implementation, because work can not end with the designation of a proposal.

To this extent, the analysis presented here allows to build a new definition of management consulting, which may be defined as a strategic, procedural and / or operational functioning

support of companies from outside and an external and internal analysis, which include their respective purposes, so that they can be placed at the service of customers in a rational, emotional and creative way, a set of means to consolidate competitive advantages of proactive and / or interactively with the various factors of the business environment, the process should be conducted in a logical diagnosis and counseling, but also deployment of the proposed recommendations, allowing this unknown path initially to reach results with the least possible effort, in line with the rational and emotional, organizational, competitive paradigms and capital.

The context of this definition leads us, in the search field of strategy-as-practice, the prospects for macro and micro analysis, relating the concepts, tools and structuring elements that reflect the management consulting industry (macro) with social interactions resulting from these same strategic processes (Whittington, 2001; Jarzabkowski, 2003; Whittington et al, 2004; Jarzabkowski & Wilson, 2004), resulting in the observation of "what" is done and "how" strategic work of management consultants is done.

The definition will thus define the client-partner relationship as a strategic process that includes actions, interactions and negotiations of multiple actors in the construction of a set of practical situations that result later on "practices" (social tools, symbolic and material that strategy is taken) and "praxis" (the flow of activity in which the strategy will be implicit), constituting what Jarzabkowski (2005), Whittington (2006), Jarzabkowski et al. (2007) and Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009), called strategy or "strategizing".

The management consulting industry has therefore emphasized the links between macro and micro perspectives (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007), not only focusing the study on what the organization does, but what managers (clients) and consultants jointly make, concerned with organizational research and simultaneously with humane management (Pettigrew et al., 2002).

To conclude, obviously we have to take into account the findings presented in this study, the result of the inherent limitations in terms of a reduced sample size (respondents) and the fact that it reproduces the results of a given context (SMEs), in particular research country (Portugal).

Thus, in terms of external validity, i.e., the ability to generalize the findings to other settings or samples, although this study has been to strengthen some of the existing theory on the concept of management consulting, this is only an exploratory study and can not be generalized or representative.

On the other hand, despite the secondary sources that have been used, other analyzes have been developed to supplement the results, also this factor can not justify that the results presented here can be viewed as necessarily universal in terms of consulting practice.

Finally, another limitation was related to the inability to observe "in loco" consultant-client interactions and therefore the consequent peculiarities of problems, ideas and techniques that could result from this same interaction.

Thus, while this article primarily aims to combat the lack of studies in the sector of management consulting it is necessary to further penetrate this market and realize this activity, bringing to the academic field a considerable amount of information that brings originality and above all contribute concretely to the development of this research field.

One way to address this "gap" is by focusing, establishment and institutionalization of practices and activities used in the management consulting industry and the implications in terms of organizational outcomes, seeking to obtain a range of new developments in constructing the literature with the introduction of new theoretical and empirical perspectives in this field.

In short, it is important to extend these studies to a deeper background on all these matters, so that the nature of the practices, activities, and relationships of the steps in the management consulting sector is explored in the future, and forthcoming research includes the construction of a model that permits to link all these variables, so that the most crucial aspects to the success of a project in management consulting can be identified. The continuous task of the study of the sector should also not forget the impact that all this may have, namely in the degree of satisfaction of the client regarding the work carried out by the consultants and what recommended suggestions can improve performances. .

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