CHAPTER 2

COMPETENCIES OF MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS:

A Research Study of Senior Management Consultants

Léon de Caluwé and Elsbeth Reitsma

Drawing on our earlier studies examining the relationship between consultancy context, objectives and interventions (see Reitsma, Jansen, van der Werf & van der Steenhoven, 2003; Reitsma & van Empel, 2004; de Caluwé & Vermaak, 2003), the chapter looks at these relationships in the context of consultant competencies. The basic focus of our investigation is on those competencies that management consultants need to be able to execute different interventions, especially those related to change processes in organizations. The results of this study promise to give insight into the skills and capabilities that management consultants should have and the resulting ramifications for training, development, professionalization and selection of management consultants. Although the International Association of Management Consultants has developed a body of knowledge and skills (ICMCI, 2004), as far as we know, there are no empirical data supporting this work.

The study examines the practice theories (interventions) that experienced management consultants use in practice. Experienced management consultants use implicit and explicit rules, heuristics and models to diagnose situations, and to decide which approach or intervention will fit the situation. In most cases, this knowledge is "hidden" inside their heads, in essence, part of their tacit knowledge. Our goal was to investigate this collective experience, delving into the relationships and insights that are developed in practice – in other words, we attempted to "empty" the heads of 40 highly experienced management consultants.

The research design is based on the contemporary literature in this area. Lists of interventions and competencies were compiled from existing sources and literature and were used to structure the interviews with the consultants. We also documented remarks and insights that were not categorized in these lists. The interviewees were given 2, 3 or 4 cases that represented a broad variety of problem situations. The respondents were asked their views on the problem, the essential elements in the case, which interventions they would choose, and which competencies would be needed. The results provide us with new insights and new research questions for further investigations, which are discussed at the end of the chapter.

RESEARCH MODEL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A goal of this study as to make explicit the relations between: 1) the context in which the change took place; 2) the general approach that was applied; 3) the interventions that were chosen; and the competencies that the consultant needed to undertake the intervention. The research model that guided this work is captured in Figure 2-1.
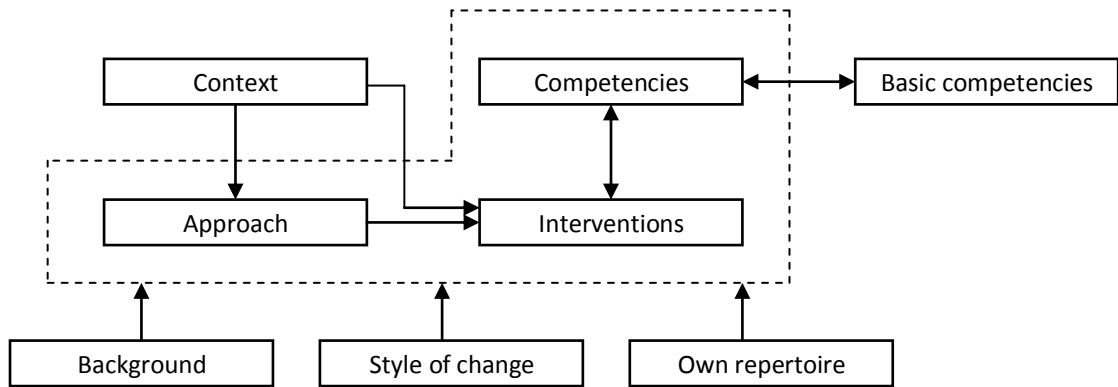

Fig 2-1 Research Model: Competencies of Management Consultants in Change Processes

The rationale for this choice is as follows. A change takes place in a specific situation – the context (i.e., the combination of objectives of the change and characteristics of the situation). On the basis of this context, the consultant decides on an approach and related interventions. To be able to execute these interventions, a consultant needs certain competencies. Some of these competencies are intervention specific (i.e., they are coupled to the intervention) and some are basic competencies (i.e., they are always needed, independent of the context or specific intervention). The approach that a consultant chooses, the interventions that he or she utilizes and the required competencies are related to background characteristics of the consultant. As an example, one can think of the type of training that the consultant followed. The same holds true for the personal style of change that the consultant embraces and the repertoire of interventions and competencies that the consultant thinks he or she has mastered (i.e., their own repertoire).

Operationalization of Context

We define context as the situation in which the consultants does interventions or in which the change take place. Thinking about context has its roots in Lawrence and Lorsch's (1967) contingency thinking. The essence of this approach is that the best way to organize is specified by the situation. The "right" way to intervene in organizations is derived from (a cluster of) variables that play a dominant role in the situation. We assume that two main variables play a significant role in establishing the context: 1) the objectives of the change; and 2) the characteristics of the situation in which the change will take place (see, for example, de Caluwé & Vermaak, 2003).

Objectives of the change

There are several theories that categorize the objectives or content of change. We have chosen 4 types of objectives: 1) strategy and structure; 2) products, services and processes; 3)

culture, interaction and leadership; and 4) knowledge, skills and attitudes (e.g., Cummings & Worley, 2005; de Caluwé & Vermaak 2003, 2004). We wanted to build in a variety of objectives in the research; therefore we constructed four cases in which this variety of objectives was reflected.

Context variables

The literature has a range of variables that are suggested to influence the choice of a specific intervention. For the purpose of the present study, we searched for a theory that was viewed as rather complete, with assumptions on the relationships between the variables, but without an overwhelming number of variables. We selected Otto's (2000) framework with eight variables, in which each of these variables has a certain value and the variables are related. Otto also provides "rules of thumb" about the connection of the variables and the degree in which certain change strategies are possible (or impossible). The value of each of these variables (and especially the configuration of these variables, combined with the objectives of the change) influences the choice of an intervention. This theory and its eight variables were used as the framework for our research (see Table 2-1). We wanted to explore whether there was empirical evidence for the relationships between the objectives, these context variables and the choice for intervention.

Context Variables	Variable Meaning …
1. Time pressure	What is the deadline that something must be solved? Is it close to the deadline already? Time pressure can be great or absent, but there can also be no time to work on the problem because all the energy goes to daily operations.
2. Escalation	Is there tension between parties? How intense is it? Are parties capable of collective reflection?
3. Power differences	Does one party have possibilities to influence the behavior of others? Is there a power center or equilibrium between centers? Is approval needed by one of the power centers? Can someone make the decision?
4. Dependencies	Are the persons involved in their work strongly dependent upon each other? Can they work independently?
5. Rules	Are there rules and procedures for decision making? Are the authorities clearly described?
6. Identification with the organization	Does one identify with the organization? Do many people act as spectators?
7. Capabilities for reflection	Is there opportunity for reflection? Is it present or absent? High or low?
8. Knowledge and skills	Does one have all the knowledge and skills to cope with the problem? Is outside expertise needed?

Table 2-1 Context Variables and Their Meaning

Four cases were constructed in which the variables in Table X-1 were systematically incorporated. These four cases create the context for the study. Each of the interviewees was asked to respond to these cases, focusing on their assessment of: the problem, its essential elements,

which intervention(s) they would choose, and which competencies would be necessary. Table 2-2 provides an example of one of these four cases.

A consultancy firm has experienced poor financial results. Inside the company there is an investigation as to what the causes might be. This investigation is carried out among the senior consultants through intensive talks.

From these conversations it becomes evident that the strategy of the firm is obsolete and that the internal structure does not fit with the developments in the market. The senior consultants argue that the firm needs to reconsider its strategy and adapt its internal structure.
Financial results, however, go down further. Management is faced with a fast decision, because the firm will not survive if the situation continues. There is a lot of unrest within the organization and many of the consultants do not have enough work. Most of them feel very involved in the firm and do not leave. But the situation is precarious. People start looking at each other: do you spend enough time on client acquisition and marketing? Are you doing too much internal work? Are we looking enough to the outside world?

The various groups engage in self assessments, focusing on what they can do to confront the situation. They analyze the market and their conversations focus on what each person can do to clear up this situation. Most of the people are experts in the area of strategic assessment and in the area of the target groups they typically work for.

The discussions are very interesting and valuable. But they do not result in a new strategy or structure. The management does not know how to cope with this problem and is considering turning to external help.

Objective: Strategy and structure
Context variables: Time pressure: Yes
                Escalation: High
                Power differences: Small
                Dependency: Low
                Identification with the organization: High
                Capability for reflection: High
                Knowledge and skills: Extensive

Table 2-2 Example of a Case: Variables in Context

Operationalization of Consultancy Approaches
      We define approach as generic coping with the (problem) situation. There are several categorizations of these approaches in the literature. Each one has different assumptions about change, different ways of steering the change process, and different actors that are involved (see Table 2-3). The study makes a clear distinction between two approaches: design of change and

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development of change. The first is a planned process with a lot of influence from the change manager and experts, without much attention to interaction and participation. The second is a more evolving and emerging process, with a lot of actors who can exert influence and a high degree of attention to interaction and participation.

AUTHOR	APPROACHES			
Boonstra & Vink (2004)	Design		Develop	
Beer & Nohria (2000)	Theory E		Theory O	
Weick & Quinn (1999)	Episodic/Planned change		Continuous/Emergent change	
Huy (2001)	Commanding	Engineering	Teaching	Socializing
Chin & Benne (1970)	Power/coercion	Empirical-rational	Barter/rewarding	Normative re-educative
De Caluwé & Vermaak (2003)	Yellowprint	Blueprint	Redprint	Greenprint	Whiteprint

Table 2-3 Scheme of Change Approaches

Examining the different categories of interventions, we discovered that for all interventions one could choose both of these approaches. For instance, one could undertake a strategy intervention as the expert, in a small group, on the drawing table. But one could also approach the same challenge through a participative process, in a large group setting, as an emergent process. We refer to this as a generic approach.

Our study uses this dichotomy in the degree of participation on a ten point scale, ranging from the expert approach (i.e., expert judgment or proposal, small group) to a more process-oriented approach (i.e., participative, involving large numbers of employees (see Figure 2-2).

Expert approach		**Process approach**
One or small group	1 ------------------------------------- 10	Participative
Judgment or proposal		Involvement of employees
by expert		

Figure 2-2 Operationalization of the General Approach

Operationalization of Interventions

We define interventions as one or a series of intended change activities aimed at improving the functioning of the organization (Cummings & Worley, 2005; de Caluwé & Vermaak, 2003, 2004). While interventions can be aimed at the individual, group or organizational level, the study emphasized the group and organization level.

The literature on this subject is abundant and we were inspired by several authors (Boonstra, 2004; Cummings & Worley, 2005; Keuning, 2007; Kubr, 2000; Schein, 1969, 1999). Based on this work, Table 2-4 presents a categorization of these interventions, capturing the relevant authors and their

main thoughts related to this categorization. Table 2-5 lists the interventions, definitions and examples that were used in the study.

Interventions focused on:	Cummings & Worley	Schein	Kubr	Keuning	Boonstra
Orientation and awareness			Organizational diagnosis and problem solving techniques		Learning and research in action
Strategic questions and images of the future	Strategic programs			Strategy formation	
Adaptation of the structure or ways of cooperation	Technostruc-tural		Structural arrangements Compaign type, action-oriented change programs	Design of organization structure	Structuring organizations
Improvement of business performance and business processes	Technostruc-tural		Compaign type, action-oriented change programs		Business performance
Motivation of employees (with HRM instruments)	Human resources management		Compaign type, action-oriented change programs	HRM-instruments	Employee motivation
Governance and control				Directive tasks	
Training and development	Human process	Coaching and counseling	Training and developing people		Leadership and culture
Processes (social) between people	Human process	Agenda setting interventions Feedback Structural suggestions	Organization development techniques		Group dynamics
Continuous learning and changing by means of interaction					Inquiring, dialogue and narrative; Learning and research in action

Table 2-4 Categories of Interventions

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Interventions focused on:	Description of the intervention and examples
Orientation and awareness: The acknowledgement of the nature and cause of a problem and the awareness of the need for change.	SWOT analysis: mapping the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the own achievements and that of the competitors and to know the developments in the environment and to decide upon the strategy.
	Benchmarking: comparing own achievements with those of the best competitors to see on which parts the organization can improve.
	Balanced Score Card: mapping or measuring indicators for performance on finance, business processes, innovation and customers to see on which parts the organization performs according the expectations.
	Causal loop diagrams: mapping cause-effect relations to see repetitions and patterns. The diagrams show which factors can be influenced easily or only in a very complicated way.
	Other examples: Porter's model; Environment scan.
Strategic questions and images of the future: The formation of images of the future of the organization and sharing of the images.	Strategic change plan: making of a plan with objectives and means to realize a desired long term positioning of the organization in its environment, starting from where we are now.
	Search conference: using a conference method (large scale intervention) to create a well considered desired and reachable future.
	Strategic culture change: developing a strong and shared collective culture that is different of what we have now, but is important for the continuation of the organization
Adaptation of a structure or way of cooperation: The making of provisions and circumstances, fitted to make changes possible.	Project organization: a person, group or entity that executes a clear defined assignment within the organization.
	Temporary groups: task forces that have clear defined tasks (developing new ideas; making priorities).
	Pilot project: experimenting on a small scale with one or some changes.
	New organization entities: the creation of one or more new parts of the organization for example to offer new services
	Adaptation of the structure: the clarification and adaptation of the division of tasks, responsibilities and mechanisms for coordination.
	Outsourcing: placing activities that were executed within the organization outside.
	Other examples: mergers, joint ventures, reorganizations
Improvement of business performance and business processes: Changing the business processes in order to improve results.	Business process redesign: a (large) shift or change in the working processes.
	Total quality: a permanent process to raise customer satisfaction by systematic work on the improvement of products or services.
	The conference model: using a conference method to reconsider working processes and to improve the relations with customers, following the strategy of the organization
Motivation of employees with HRM instruments: Enhancing the motivation of workers to improve the flexibility or the achievements of the organization.	Rewarding system: a system to improve the performance and satisfaction of employees and to decrease undesired behaviour by rules for rewards and promotion.
	Selection: placing the right man or woman on the right place.
	Career development: supporting people in their careers in the organization and the formulation of career goals.
	Task enlargement: expand parts of tasks on the same level.

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Interventions focused on:	Description of the intervention and examples
	Task enrichment: expand parts of tasks with higher level work and more room for decision making.
Governance and control: Developing insight in the progress, quantity and quality of the work.	Control: see to it that the work is done properly.
	Report: making and giving reports on the performance or progress of activities for a certain period.
	Time sheets: reporting on how much time is spent on activities.
Training and development: Learning of new thoughts, concepts, skills or insights.	Training: learning of skills by managers or employees.
	Workshops: making people sensible for the need to change, for trends, for different options or for certain methods or concepts.
	Feedback: letting individuals, groups or the organization see what the effect is of their behavior or performance on others.
	Coaching or counseling: giving individuals feedback to improve the personal effectiveness, to create more self confidence and to provide them with knowledge and skills.
	Gaming/simulations: experiencing through gaming what consequences or effects one's own behavior has.
	Survey feedback: gathering information and knowledge in an active process about problems and solutions and then execute activities based on that information
	Other examples: 360 degrees feedback
Processes (social)between people: Improving social processes in organizations – interpersonal relations, functioning of a team, the relations between teams	Process consultation/teambuilding: helping a group to analyze its own functioning, to find solutions for dysfunctional group processes.
	Search conference: an organization wide meeting in order to find important values and to develop new ways to solve problems.
	Process management: facilitating decision making in complex situations.
	Third party: an independent third party helps the interaction and problem solving between parties.
	Other examples: T-groups; Organization confrontation meeting; intergroup relations; agenda setting.
Continuous learning and changing by means of interaction: Keeping up the process of interaction and communication.	Action learning: creating a context in which one can learn with others. Essential is the exchange of experiences and collective reflection.
	Action research: creating cooperation between researchers and other actors to do research and to learn together.
	Dialogue: creating various ideas about reality, sharing them and constructing new realities on the basis of interaction.
	Narratives/ story telling: creating and finding stories, looking for different views and contradictions, reading between the lines and so creating new stories.

Table 2-5 Interventions, Descriptions and Examples Per Intervention

Operationalization of Competencies

Similar to Hoekstra and Van Sluijs (2003), we define competence as something that someone is good at. Although this definition appears simple, there is a lot of discussion and confusion about the concept. Does competence refer to skill, expertise, attitude, capabilities or knowledge? Competences have to do with generic characteristics of a person, with skills and attitude. The

concept is not clear in detail, but we wanted to use this language to be able to communicate with our interviewees about the essential capabilities of a consultant. We collected several theoretical notions and lists of competencies from the literature and compiled them into a list of competencies that might be important in the execution of a change process. This list is a taxonomy that is based on the domains and competencies proposed by Hoekstra and Van Sluijs (2003), Yukl, Fable and Youn (1993, 2002), and Volz and de Vrey (2000). We have also used many of their definitions. The list used in the present study is presented in Table 2-6.

Domain	Competencies	Description
Enterprising	1. Boldness	Taking certain risks in order to gain expected long-term benefits.
	2. Individuality	Seeking opportunities and taking action to exploit them. Acting on one's own initiative rather than passively awaiting events.
	3. Independence	Acting on the basis of one's convictions rather than on a desire to please others. Steering one's own course.
	4. Entrepreneurship	Identifying business opportunities and undertaking action, including calculated risks, to take advantage of them.
	5. Market oriented	Being well informed about developments in the market and technology. Using this information effectively in actions.
Showing resilience	6. Adaptability	Acting appropriately by expedient adaptation to changing environments, tasks or responsibilities and to different people.
	7. Flexibility	Changing one's style or approach when new opportunities require such a change.
	8. Stress tolerance	Performing steadily and effectively under time pressure, regardless of setbacks, disappointments or opposition. Reacting calmly and in proportion to the significance of the issue at hand.
	9. Restraint	Being able to adequately control one's emotions and react effectively to those of others, even in emotionally taxing situations. Avoiding undesirable commitments and escalations.
Organizing	10. Monitoring progress	Effectively monitoring progress in one's work and that of others, given the available time and resources, anticipating future developments and taken appropriate timely measures.
	11. Planning	Determining objectives and priorities effectively, planning timely measures in order to attain stated goals.
	12. Organizing ability	Identifying and recruiting people and other resources in order to carry out a plan; allocating them in such a way that the intended results are achieved.
	13. Making coalitions	Seeking and using support, help and sponsors to convince a person or a group.
Performing	14. Result orientation	Focusing one's actions and decisions on intended results and giving priority to the realization of stated objectives.
	15. Attention to details	Paying attention to detail; being able to focus on and deal with detailed information in a sustained way.
	16. Persistence	Sticking to a chosen approach or position until the intended results have been achieved
	17. Quality orientation	Setting high demands with respect to the quality of one's own work and that of others, striving continuously for improvements.
	18. Energy	Being able to be extremely active for long periods when

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Domain	Competencies	Description
		necessary. Working hard; having stamina.
	19. Ambition	Demonstrating an aspiration to be successful in one's career; investing in personal development in order to achieve this.
	20. Legitimating	Showing the legitimacy of a request by the authority or claiming the right to do the request or showing that the request is in accordance with the policy, the rules or traditions in an organization.
	21. Problem solving	Signalizing of (potential) problems and solving these one self or with others.
Analyzing	22. Analytical skills	Breaking a problem down into its component parts; describing its source and structure. Seeking possible causes and gathering relevant data.
	23. Conceptual thinking	Providing wider or deeper understanding of situations or problems by applying another frame of reference or by connecting them with other information.
	24. Learning orientation	Showing an interest in new information, taking in new ideas and developments and applying them effectively.
	25. Creativity	Suggesting original solutions for problems related to one's work; devising new ways of doing things.
Considering	26. Balanced judgment	Comparing possible courses of action and assessing available information, applying relevant criteria. Making realistic judgments and decisions based on such assessments.
	27. Awareness of the external environment	Keeping well informed about societal and political developments and relevant issues in the environment; using this knowledge to the advantage of the organization.
	28. Generating vision	Identifying the main direction for the organization in relation to its environment; formulating long-term objectives and strategies.
	29. Innovating	Creating new and original ideas, ways of working and applications by combining formal and informal information, existing and new solutions and approaches.
	30. Awareness of organizational context	Demonstrating an understanding of how things work in an organization, taking the consequences for one's own organization and that of the customer into account in one's action.
Facilitating	31. Customer orientation	Enquiring about the needs and wishes of customers and clients and showing that one's thinking and actions reflect them.
	32. Coaching	Supporting others in the execution of their work. Motivating others and making them think about improving their own behavior. Being a partner for talking and listening.
	33. Co-operation	Contributing actively to achieving a common aim, even when this is not in one's personal interest; fostering helpful communication.
	34. Listening	Picking up important signals and messages in oral communication and giving space to others to express themselves, paying attention to their reactions, responding appropriately and, where necessary, asking further questions.
	35. Sensitivity	Showing that you recognize feelings, attitude and motivation of others and be open for it. Understanding one's own influence on others and taking that into account.
	36. Accuracy	Acting careful and punctual, aimed at the anticipation of failures. Detailed execution of activities.
	37. Inspiring	Creating enthusiasm for a request or proposal by evoking

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Domain	Competencies	Description
		values, ideals and aspirations of a group or person or showing that a person or group has the qualities to do a task or achieve a goal.
	38. Awareness of costs	Taking into account returns and costs in short and long term. Recognize costs.
	39. Personal appeal	Making a personal appeal upon the loyalty or sympathy of a person or group.
Influencing	40. Communication	Communicating ideas and information clearly and correctly so that the essential message comes across and is fully understood.
	41. Presentation	Presenting oneself in such a way that the first impression is positive, turning such an impression into lasting respect or sympathy.
	42. Persuasion	Presenting ideas, points of view or plans convincingly to others so that they agree and approve, even after initial hesitation.
	43. Sociability	Making contacts easily and maintaining relations with others, when required for work purposes; mixing easily with all kinds of people.
Managing	44. Decisiveness	Making decisions by taking action or expressing an opinion, even when the situation is unclear or inherently hazardous.
	45. Leadership	Giving direction in an inspiring way. Being a role model. Encouraging and bringing about teamwork and maintaining good cooperation to achieve an intended goal.
	46. Delegation	Assigning clearly delimited tasks and responsibilities to the appropriate individual(s) when necessary, being able to entrust one's work to others.
	47. Communicating vision	Communicating the direction in which the organization is developing in an appealing way and creating support for strategic objectives.
	48. Consultation	Letting people participate in the strategy, activity and change when support and assistance of them is required. Changing a proposal in such a way that interests and suggestions are taking in.
	49. Negotiating skills	Acting in the interest of one's own unit or organization in direct contacts with counterparts, in such a way that profitable results are attained without loss of mutual respect.
	50. Diplomatic	Capability to recognize interests of others, to assess them and take them in account tactfully.
	51. Awareness of risk	Recognize and assess risks and hindrances. Assessing the influence of them on persons, organization or environment.
	52. Networking	Developing and maintaining contacts and cooperation with others.
Integrity	53. Integrity	Maintaining social and ethical standards at work, even when under pressure to be less particular. Inspiring confidence in one's professional integrity.
	54. Reliability	Keeping to arrangements and promises and accepting their consequences. If things don't work out, taking responsibility for their consequences and, whenever possible, avoiding a negative impact on others.
	55. Loyalty	Complying with the policies and interests of the organization and group to which one belongs. In situations where there are conflicting interests, supporting the position of one's own group or at least avoiding damage to that position.

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Domain	Competencies	Description
	56. Creating a favorable atmosphere	Giving compliments, seducing, being friendly or helpful to create a good mood with a person or a group.

Table 2-6 Consultant Competencies: Domains, Competencies and Descriptions

Operationalization of Other Variables

Three variables were used to delineate the background of the consultant. First we documented characteristics of the interviewee: gender, age, experience, specialization, and market sector expertise. Second we gave the interviewees a test that measures their change preferences (referred to as the "puntentest"). This twelve-item (forced choice) test measures individual preferences and feelings of irritations for five theories of change. The result is an individual profile of one's score on these five theories in terms of preferences, blind spots and feelings of irritations. Finally, we asked the respondents about the interventions and competencies that are part of their own repertoire. The underlying assumption is that these preferences might influence their choice of interventions and competencies.

METHODOLOGY

The study draws on four case vignettes, which were constructed on the basis of two main variables: 1) the different objectives of the change; and 2) the eight variables in the context/situation (see Table 2-1). These four cases (see Table 2-2 for an example) provide a wide variety of problem situations that management consultants might encounter. As noted earlier, for virtually all interventions there is the fundamental choice between an expert approach and a participative approach, captured on a ten-point scale with each approach as polar opposites (see Figure 2-2). As summarized in Table 2-5, we compiled a list of interventions under 9 main categories, with examples and definitions. Finally, the same approach was used to construct a list of competencies, with 10 domains and each domain having several competencies (56 competencies; see Table 2-6). The background characteristics of the interviewees, their change preferences, and their own repertoire of interventions and competencies were also measured.

Selection of Respondents

The 40 management consultants who were interviewed were selected from the list of members of the Dutch Association of Management Consultants and from the network of the researchers themselves. A reputation method for the selection was used: a minimum of 10 years of experience was needed; and all respondents had to have a solid reputation in the field and in the country. Consultant reputation was based on responses from an independent group of professional peers when asked for names of the best consultants in the country. No one who was approached refused to cooperate, and most of them were flattered that they were asked for their cooperation. Together the consultant respondents represent more than 900 years of consultancy experience.

Interviews

The interviews took each 1.5 to 2 hours. Depending on the available time and pace of the interview, we did 2, 3 or in some instances 4 cases per interviewee. After the respondents had read a case, they were asked: 1) what they saw as the essentials of case; 2) the approach they would choose; 3) which intervention(s) they would use; and 4) what competencies were needed for

success. This process was repeated for each case. Finally we asked the respondents for their views on the basic competencies of a consultant and their own self-reported repertoire of competencies.

Processing and Analyzing the Data

Three methods were used to process the data. Responses from the interviews were coded and analyzed (quantified). The answers and choices the interviewees gave reflected their general approach (see Figure 2-2) and the lists of interventions (see Table 2-5) and competencies (see Table 2-6). These responses are quantitative data. These data were analyzed through counting and correlating the variables through the SPSS program. The interview transcripts were coded with the help of Atlas.ti. We then used the method of "snow cards" (Geurts, de Caluwé & Stoppelenburg, 2000). Parts of the coded sentences were combined under similar concepts or categories, which were both quantitative (how many times they appeared) and qualitative (what was exactly meant). Representative quotes and examples were also taken from the interviews as illustrations.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Using SPSS we looked for significance and strength of relationships between the variables. Figure 2-3 summarizes the significant relationships ($p<0.05$) between the variables. The solid lines reflect over 60% of the respondents mentioning this relationship. The arrows give the direction of the relationship.
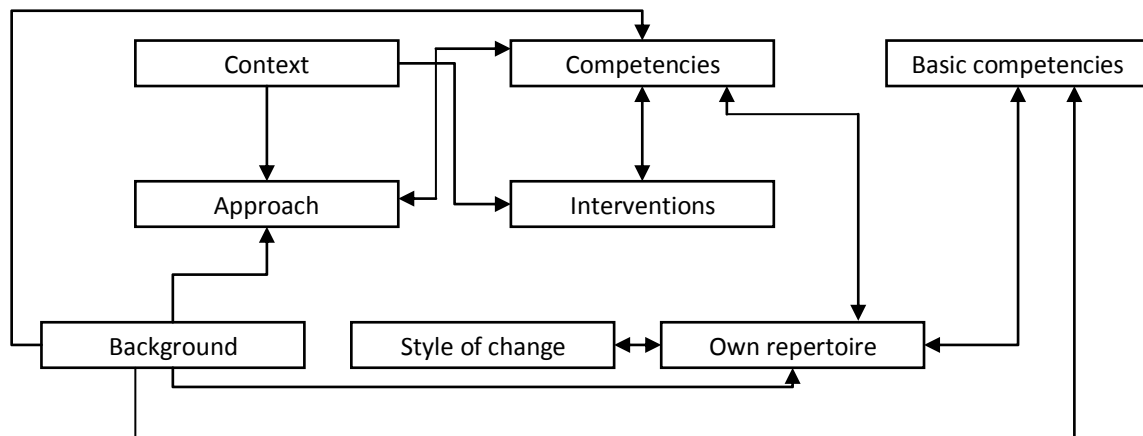

Figure 2-3 Overview of Significant Relationships in the Research Model

Most of the relationships depicted in Figure 2-3 were expected. One interesting finding was that there was no direct relationship between approach and intervention. Based on the views of the consultants in the study, it appears that the choice for a generic approach and an intervention is tenuous. As noted earlier, most interventions can be done in either an expert-based or process-oriented approach.

Competencies

We began with the assumption that there are basic competencies that every consultant should have – without any distinction by age or experience. The respondents were asked which competencies management consultants (independent from their experience and from specific interventions) need with respect to the ability to deal with change processes. Table 2-7 provides a

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summary of the basic competencies mentioned by at least 40% of the respondents. The basic competencies belong to six of the ten domains: showing resilience, analyzing, considering, facilitating, influencing and inspiring confidence. There were no basic competencies mentioned in the enterprising, organizing, performing and managing domains.

Domain	Basic Competency
Enterprising	-
Showing resilience	Flexibility
Organizing	-
Performing	-
Analyzing	Analytical skills
	Conceptual thinking
	Learning orientation
	Creativity
Considering	Balanced judgment
	Awareness of external environment
	Generating vision
Facilitating	Listening
	Sensitivity
Influencing	Communication
	Presentation
	Persuasion
Managing	-
Inspiring confidence	Integrity
	Reliability
	Loyalty
	Creating a favorable atmosphere

Table 2-7 Basic Competencies of Management Consultants

There were several relationships between approach and competencies (see Table 2-8). The expert approach and the process approach have relations with some of the basic competencies as mentioned in table 2-10 and they have relations with other competencies (not mentioned as basic competencies) as well. The latter we call 'approach-specific competencies'. In Table 2-8 the expert approach counts sixteen competencies. Nine of them are approach-specific competencies: entrepreneurship, market oriented, boldness, independence, result orientation, quality orientation, leadership, consultation and risk awareness. From the competencies that consultants need in a process approach, eight of the twelve competencies are approach-specific competencies: restraint, organizing ability, making coalitions, energy, awareness of organizational context, coaching, personal appeal and decisiveness.

Expert approach	Boldness, Independence, Entrepreneurship, Market oriented, Result orientation, Quality orientation, Analytical skills, Conceptual thinking, Generating vision, Persuasion, Leadership, Consultation, Awareness of risk, Reliability, Loyalty, Creating a favourable atmosphere
Process approach	Restraint, Organizing ability, Making coalitions, Energy, Conceptual thinking, Learning orientation, Awareness of organizational context, Coaching, Listening, Sensitivity, Personal appeal, Decisiveness

Table 2-8 Competencies Consultants Need in Expert and Process Approaches

Table 2-9 provides a summary of the competencies that management consultants need for the execution of interventions, containing the nine interventions (see Table 2-5) in seven rows because some of the interventions (structure, business process, HRM-instruments) have a relationship with the same competencies. These so called *intervention-specific competencies* are planning, organizing ability and being result oriented. Some of the other listed interventions are related to basic competencies, intervention-specific competencies and mostly both of them. Intervention orientation and awareness is only related to basic competencies (analytical skills, conceptual thinking, listening and sensitivity). In other words, orientation and awareness seems to be an intervention that every consultant should be able to practice.

There were three patterns in the relationship between interventions and competencies:
- The 'hard' interventions, which are more instrumental (in the area of structure, business processes, HRM instruments, governance and control) correlated with competencies from the Organizing and Performing Domains.
- The interventions aimed direction seeking (strategy) and processes between people correlated with competencies from the Analyzing, Considering and Facilitating Domains.
- The 'soft' interventions (training and development and continuous, processes between people and learning and changing) correlated with the Considering and Facilitating Domains.

Orientation and awareness	Analytical skills, Conceptual thinking, Listening, Sensitivity
Strategy and images of the future	Analytical skills, Generating vision, Awareness of organizational context
Structure, Business process HRM	Planning, Organizing ability, Result orientation
Governance and control	Boldness, Planning, Result orientation, Attention to details, Problem solving
Training and development	Coaching, Inspiring
Processes between people	Awareness of organizational context, Listening, Sensitivity
Continuous learning and changing	Coaching, Sensitivity, Inspiring

Table 2-9 Competencies Needed for Different Interventions

Summary: Basic competencies, approach-specific competencies and intervention- specific competencies

Combining Tables 2-7 to 2-9 provides an overview of the competencies that management consultants need as basic competencies and for the execution of different approaches and interventions (see Table 2-10).

At the bottom of Table 2-10 are the basic competencies that every consultant needs. At the left are the two generic approaches: expert and process. The competencies needed for these approaches are listed. At the right are the four clusters of interventions that we found, with the competencies needed for each of these clusters:

- Strategy and images of the future and processes between people;
- Structure, business processes and HRM instruments;
- Governance and control; and
- Training and development and continuous learning and development through interaction.

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In Table 2-10 the basic competencies are not listed in the approach-specific and intervention-specific clusters anymore.

Approach-specific Competencies	Intervention-specific Competencies
• *Expert approach*: Entrepreneurship, market oriented, boldness, independence, result orientation, quality orientation, leadership, consultation and risk awareness • *Process approach*: Restraint, organizing ability, making coalitions, energy, awareness of organizational context, coaching, personal appeal and decisiveness	• *Strategy and processes between people*: Awareness of organizational context • *Structure, processes and HRM*: Planning, organizing ability en result oriented • *Governance and control*: Boldness, planning, result oriented, attention to details and problem solving • *Training, development and continuous learning and changing*: Coaching and Inspiring

Basic Competencies
- **Showing resilience:** Flexibility
- **Analyzing:** Analytical skills, Conceptual thinking, Learning orientation, Creativity
- **Considering:** Balanced judgement, Awareness of external environment, Generating vision
- **Facilitating:** Listening, Sensitivity
- **Influencing:** Communication, Presentation, Persuasion
- **Inspiring confidence:** Integrity, Reliability, Loyalty, Creating a favourable atmosphere

Table 2-10 Overview of Basic Competencies and Approach- specific and Intervention-specific Competencies

Context Variables

Based on the analysis of the coded interview data, it appears that in contexts with low time pressure and high escalation the consultants recommended a process-oriented approach. When there is a lack of pressure and when there is much conflict or disagreement, the process model seems the only way out. People need to be captured (on a voluntary basis) in an arena where they want to come to agreement. In contrast, an expert approach was preferred in contexts with high time pressure, reasonable degree of escalation, great power differences, high dependencies and low identification, low ability to reflect, and low knowledge. Then there is no time for much discussion, there is an (accepted) locus of power which can act and people are not inclined to come to action themselves and they miss the capabilities to do so.

It also appears that the management consultants in the study always look especially for two of our eight variables: time pressure (i.e., if not present, there is not a problem!) and power

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differences (i.e., if there is not a powerful management, the consultant cannot help). Escalation is sometimes a relevant variable, especially when escalation is high: at this point something needs to be done, because the organization itself is not capable to do so. The other context variables were not seen as relevant.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Overall, this study was a learning experience. The conceptualization of the study itself was a discovery trip through the relevant literature and concepts. The construction of the cases and compilation of the lists of interventions and competencies were also enormous learning processes. In addition, most of the interviews produced learning moments for the respondents as well.

Competencies

Is every consultant capable of using all approaches and interventions? Are there clusters of competencies that are needed for certain interventions and certain types of consultants?

The respondents felt that the basic competencies were important for all consultants. They should, therefore, be part of every training program for consultants. The study suggests that consultants need to know both approaches – the expert and process-based approaches – being aware of the choice between them, and when one might be more appropriate than the other. This suggestion does not mean that one has to be strong in both approaches: one can choose not to execute certain change processes, because one knows already that one's effectiveness is likely to be low.

Most interventions require competencies that are specific for a particular intervention. These competencies are related to clusters of competencies and interventions and thus to profiles of consultants. In this way we discovered on an empirical basis four clusters of interventions and related competencies. These clusters can be seen as a typology of four kinds of consultants: Strategy and Futuring-consultants; Improving the Business- consultants; Governance and Control-consultants; and Training and Learning-consultants, each with its own set of interventions and competencies (see Table 2-10).

What type of consultant do you need for which kind of problem and for which context?

Certain contexts ask for specific approaches, interventions and competencies. Although we found strong relationships between these factors, we do not have simple prescriptions or recipes. The overview Table 2-10 provides is the clearest picture we can make. The typology that develops from these relationships refers to different consultants with specific interventions and competencies. We also discovered that consultants all need certain basic competencies.

Do background characteristics of the consultant influence the choice of an approach or intervention?

It appears that this is not the case. Based on the views of this group of experienced consultants, the choice of an intervention is situational. They choose interventions, independent from their own style, preferences or repertoire. They tend to make similar choices in similar situations, suggesting that there is a professional body of knowledge within consulting.

Can we develop a typology of profiles for consultants with related competencies?

Yes, a key point that is an outcome of this study. We found basic competencies that everybody needs: young, old, experienced and new consultants. Every consultant needs to know the two generic approaches and, if possible, have the ability to execute them. Every consultant should also have one or more dominant (clusters of) interventions in his or her repertoire, with the related competencies that are needed for these to be successful. However, it is also clear that the ability to master all interventions and competencies could very well be an impossible task, even for skilled consultants. In other words, consultants need to specialize.

Limitations and Future Research

In the four cases used in the study not all the competencies were mentioned. Nevertheless we maintained the list of 56 competencies for two reasons. First, the four cases are a selection that does not cover all the possible problem situations for consultants. Second, we want to gain some more experience with the present list of competencies and reconsider a possible reduction in a later phase of this work.

A major limitation of this research is that it studies espoused theory (i.e., what consultants say that they are going to do, not what they actually do). We have tried to minimize this disadvantage through the use of real practice-based cases, stimulating the respondents to paraphrase the text in their own words and understandings. We noticed that all of the respondents could see the cases as real. In a future study we want study consultants in a simulated environment, in which the consultancy process is done by role play. This design might enable us to focus on what consultants actually do in practice.

The study is also based on highly experienced consultants, with a goal of "emptying the heads" of these individuals. This selection, however, could also reflect a truncated range in the consulting world, a potentially biased view from older consultants who were trained "in the past" and in the Dutch tradition. The younger generation or a consultant working in a different culture might have quite different perspectives.

Implications for Practice

We expect that this study can be used by consultants, consultancy training institutions and consultancy firms. Many aspects of this study can also be used for learning purposes – a through introspection: duo-learning, intervision (i.e., a form of collegial feedback between individuals) , coaching, action research, reflective talks, assessments and so forth. To support this, we created a Self Test based on the materials in this research. The Self Test is a 360-degree feedback instrument (see Figure 2-4). A consultant fills in the lists of interventions (based on Table 2-5) and competencies (Table 2-6) and questions for reflection (e.g., have I executed this intervention and/or do I have this competency? Can I develop it?). The consultant would then ask a colleague, his boss and/or his employees to fill out the same information on him or her. By comparing the lists and by opening the dialogue about the differences and similarities, one can explore strengths and weaknesses and discover chances and points for development and learning.
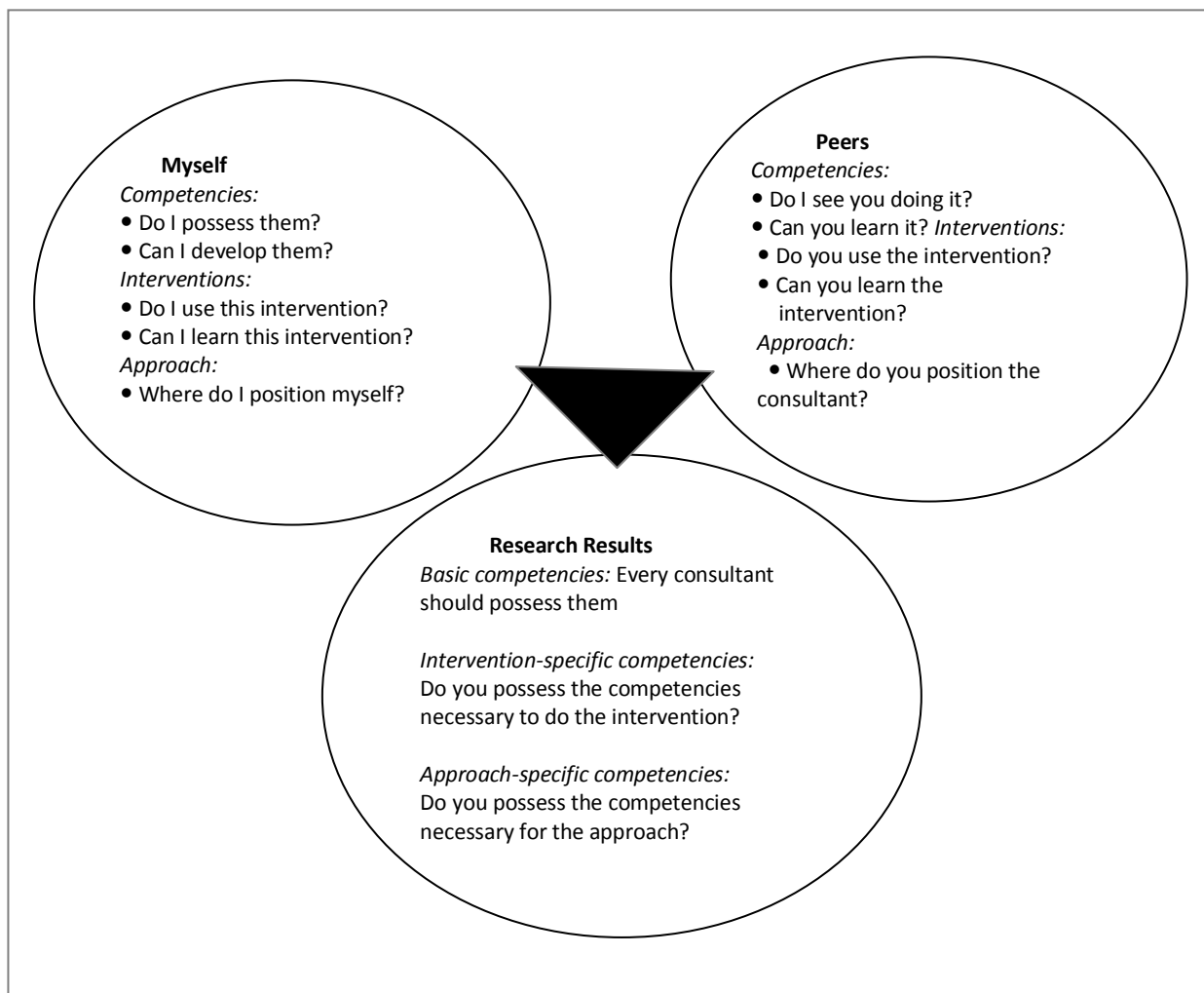
Figure 2-4 The Self Test

The data in the study also allow us to create a categorization of the competencies in terms of how they can be developed and learned. Some of them, for example, can be learned in school. It is basically a question of studying and applying the theory. The Analyzing competency is an example. Other competencies can only be learned in practice. Feedback, assessments, duo-learning, and supervision are ways to develop this type of competencies, for example, Listening and Building Coalitions. Still other competencies might be far more difficult to learn, as they are an inherent part of the talent and disposition of a person. If you have these talents – for example, the ability to create a favorable atmosphere – you might just have the capability to become a good consultant.

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