Management Studies (2021) Vol. 11, No. 4, 26 – 42

MANAGEMENT STUDIES

journal homepage: www.managementstudies.org

The role of consultants in diffusing general management practices – a consultancy classification framework for the public sector

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Abstract

Management consultancies play a major role when it comes to implementing new standards, practices, or technologies. However, not all prove to be successful. In addition, there are different roles of consulting to consider. I aim to find out if we can conclude from the type of consulting whether the implemented innovation will be successful. I focus on the public sector under the assumption that public sector companies are more similar to each other than private sector companies. This paper is conceptual in nature. I use the typology of four consultant roles by Canato and Giangreco (2011) and connect it with insights from Kennedy and Fiss (2009) concerning the framing of adoption decisions as either opportunities or threats to develop a consultancy classification framework for the public sector in order to help shareholders, stakeholders, supervisory boards, and executives better assess the innovations implemented by consulting firms. I find that the radiance of implemented innovations will depend heavily on which of Canato and Giangreco's (2011) four roles management consultancies have taken. I find that early adopters are more likely to engage knowledge brokers and knowledge integrators depending on the innovation phase in which they need support, whereas late adopters rely primarily on information sources and standard setters. The highest level of innovativeness is expected to come from knowledge brokers, whereas the lowest level of innovation is expected to stem from standard setters. This paper focuses on the public sector. Future research should discuss the applicability for the private sector and consider industry-specific differences. In addition, the propositions stated here should be tested empirically, e.g., in a case study setting. When assessing the use of management consulting in a company, stakeholders should take a critical look at what type of consulting was used to make judgments about the innovativeness and longevity of innovations. This paper is the first to critically evaluate the four roles of management consultants as well as to present a guideline to stakeholders of how to interpret innovations that were developed with management consultancies' support.

1 Introduction

Management consultancies play a major role when it comes to implementing new standards, practices, or technologies in the market (Sturdy et al., 2009). However, not all of these implemented innovations prove to be successful, and many are quickly shelved again. An entire strand of literature has resulted from these observations, specifically addressing the phenomenon of so-called management fashions and fads – a term essentially coined by Eric Abrahamson (Abrahamson, 1991, Piazza and Abrahamson, 2020). Probably the best-known example in the literature of rapidly discarded management practices are quality control circles, which originated in Japan in the 1960s and have been adopted in the U.S. in the following two decades. Strang and Macy (2001) were able to show that it was essentially consultants who contributed to the spread of this type of management practice, although the American implementation was significantly less rigorous and ultimately no longer had much in common with the initial idea. And indeed, it seems reasonable to assume that management consultants, due to their own financial interests, are more concerned with spreading ready-made solutions as widely as possible in the market and even artificially creating problems in order to be able to solve them, instead of developing truly innovative and custom-fit offerings for their clients (Sturdy, 2009, Sturdy, 2018).

However, not all management consultants are created equal. According to Canato and Giangreco (2011) we can distinguish four different roles of management consulting firms: information sources, standard setters, knowledge brokers, and knowledge integrators. Each of these roles is designed to perform specific tasks. Therefore, companies hire different types of consulting firms depending on the innovation phase in which they need support, or whether they are more likely to be in an innovation-generating or innovation-adopting industry (Canato and Giangreco, 2011). Can we then conclude from the type of consulting firm whether an innovation will be successful, long-lasting as well as bring about the desired improvements? Should we be able to answer this question in the affirmative, this would help in the evaluation of management consulting mandates. The reputation of management consultancies is often perceived in a very negative light; public discourse critically scrutinizes whether consultants simply make jobs and companies superfluous or whether there is a positive benefit to be gained from their work after all (Sturdy, 2009, Williams, 2004). By critically evaluating each of the four consultant roles in terms of their sustainable innovation capacity, assessments could be made as to whether funds should be spent on consulting and in which cases this would be useful. So far, a critical illumination of the four roles in terms of their contribution to innovation, novelty, and improvement is still outstanding. Therefore, the research question of this paper is: How can stakeholders classify and interpret innovations implemented as a result of management consulting? In answering this question, I focus on the public sector under the assumption that public sector companies are more similar to each other than companies from the private sector. Since industrial and company-specific characteristics strongly influence the answer to this research question, it makes sense from a theoretical perspective to focus on one section of the economy first.

This paper is conceptual in nature. I use the typology of four consultant types by Canato and Giangreco (2011) and connect it with insights from Kennedy and Fiss (2009) concerning the framing of adoption decisions as either opportunities or threats to develop a consultancy classification framework for the public sector in order to help shareholders, stakeholders, supervisory boards, and executives better assess the innovations implemented by management consulting firms. I find that the radiance of implemented innovations will depend heavily on which of Canato and Giangreco's (2011) four roles management consultancies have taken. Standard setters and knowledge brokers are diametrically opposed to each other. While companies that engage knowledge brokers are concerned with finding truly novel and original solutions, differentiating themselves from competitors, and trying to make the best use of the brokers' knowledge of different markets and technology domains, companies that implement standard setters' generic solutions are more concerned with strengthening their legitimacy, achieving harmonization with competitors, or imitating industry leaders resulting from their perceptions of threats in case they do not adopt certain innovations. In addition, I find that early adopters are more likely to engage knowledge brokers and knowledge integrators depending on the innovation phase in which they need support, whereas late adopters rely primarily on information sources and standard setters. This has important implications for stakeholders. When it comes to evaluating the use of management consulting, stakeholders should first assess what type of consulting firm has been engaged or will be engaged. This allows conclusions to be drawn as to whether the company seeking help is more of an early or late adopter and in which phase of innovation support is requested. Stakeholders can also assess the motivation of the companies: Are they early adopters who want to seize and exploit opportunities, or are they late adopters who see many risks and want to avoid losses (Kennedy and Fiss, 2009). Thereby, stakeholders can critically question whether the use in the latter kind of company is really necessary and if so, more attention must be paid to ensuring that no standard solutions are copied, but that tailored and innovative concepts are created.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: chapter 2 outlines the theoretical underpinnings of diffusion theory, the role of consultants in diffusing general management practices, and the peculiarities of the public sector with regard to management consulting. In chapter 3, I present a consultancy classification framework for the public sector. In chapter 4, I discuss this paper's contribution to theory, insights for practice, limitations as well as avenues for future research. Chapter 5 provides a short conclusion.

2 Theoretical Foundations

2.1 Diffusion of Innovations

According to Rogers (1962), diffusion can be understood as a "process in which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system." Rogers' definition entails the four variables that are decisive in determining how the diffusion of an innovation unfolds. They can be divided into supply-side factors, namely the channels through which the innovation is communicated, e.g., consultancies promoting certain innovations, and demand-side factors which consist of the innovation itself, time, and the social system into which the innovation diffuses (Rogers, 1962).

For a long time, the two-stage model of Tolbert and Zucker (1983) dominated the scientific discourse on actors' motives for innovation adoption. The two-stage model assumes that early adopters implement innovations for economic reasons, but late adopters do so only to appear legitimate to relevant stakeholders and society. In summary, rational reasons are decisive in early phases of innovation diffusion before being superseded by contagion as the main driver in later phases (Strang and Macy, 2001). Kennedy and Fiss (2009) are perhaps the harshest critics of Tolbert and Zucker's (1983) two-stage model, questioning whether economic and social motives are necessarily mutually exclusive. Why should early adopters not also be interested in social gains and, conversely, why should late adopters be indifferent to economic efficiency gains from innovation? Instead, they attribute the distinction between early and late adopters on the adopter's framing of the environment as opportune and profitable (early adoption) versus threatening and loss-provoking (late adoption) (Kennedy and Fiss, 2009, Fiss and Zajac, 2006).

But not all innovations disseminate fully in the market (Etzion, 2014). Actors might decide not to adopt innovations because they do not fit their needs (Ansari et al., 2010) or because efficiency gains are lower for late adopters than for early adopters (Abrahamson, 1991). Furthermore, actors may have already tried the innovation but quickly realized that it did not add the desired value and discard it as a result (Strang and Macy, 2001). Abrahamson (1991) has labeled this misconception that innovations are necessarily beneficial for all adopters "proinnovation bias". It was also believed that innovations remain constant throughout the diffusion process. Strang and Macy (2001) were one of the first to contradict those studies by showing that innovative practices do indeed vary as they spread. Using the example of Japanese quality circles, which were set up in Japan in the 1960s and adopted in the U.S. in the following two decades, the authors showed that the American implementation was significantly less rigorous and ultimately no longer had much in common with the initial idea. In addition, they contend that faddish cycles of management practices emerge as adopters get dissatisfied with the innovation's performance and subsequently look for new innovations (Strang and Macy, 2001). Westphal et al. (1997) suggest that early adopters adapt practices to their requirements, while late adopters adhere to more standardized practices. However, although many scholars have studied the background and causes of management fashions and fads (Piazza and Abrahamson, 2020, Perkmann and Spicer, 2008, Colyvas and Jonsson, 2011), it appears that they are beneficial for some companies, as the constant upgrade to new innovations also creates a desirable image of creativity and innovativeness (Nystrom and Starbuck, 1984, Abrahamson, 1991). Having examined the motives of adopters in this chapter, in the following chapter I illuminate the role of consultants and thus the supply side in the diffusion of general management practices.

2.2 The Role of Consultants in Diffusing General Management Practices

Management consultants are often criticized and seen as the cause for the emergence of short-lived management fads, however, Williams (2004) makes the argument that the relationship between consultants and managers is in fact more complex. He contends that managers have influential decision-making power which of the management practices get adopted. Moreover, he attests them a "fetish for change" (Williams, 2004) resulting from the belief that only through constant adoption of new innovations it is possible to achieve competitive advantage. Sturdy (2018) is a supporter of this view; he observes a co-construction of problems and solutions between management consultants and clients. Additionally, Grint (1997) argues that managers are subject to normative pressures as stakeholders expect them to be visionary to be considered a legitimate leader. But nonetheless, consultants have a financial interest in broadcasting their solutions to a wide audience and therefore have an incentive to create practices that quickly turn out to be fads just to offer the next solution (Abrahamson and Fairchild, 1999, Gill and Whittle, 1993). In part, however, these new solutions may be based on past techniques that have now been rediscovered (Abrahamson, 1996).

Indeed, not all management consultants are created equal. According to Canato and Giangreco (2011) we can distinguish four different roles of management consulting firms: information sources, standard setters, knowledge brokers, and knowledge integrators. Each of these roles is designed to perform specific tasks. Therefore, companies hire different types of consulting firms depending on the innovation phase in which they need support, or whether they are more likely to be in an innovation-generating or innovation-adopting industry (Canato and Giangreco, 2011). In the following I will provide a brief characterization of the four roles:

Information Sources: Management consultancies that act as information sources are considered experts in a particular market or technology based on their many years of experience. In particular, they support companies that want to enter new markets or that want to draw on a certain expertise. Information sources only appear at the beginning of the innovation phase to provide novel solutions, but without becoming too involved in a company's specific business activities; the adoption and implementation phases are accompanied by other consulting types.

Standard Setters: Standard setters are probably the closest match to the image most have of management consultancies. They offer standardized solutions that they try to distribute as widely as possible in the market. If necessary, they first create a discourse in order to then have precisely tailored solutions ready. In contrast to information sources, they are not active at the beginning of the innovation phase but have a supporting role in the implementation and appropriation phases. Their business model requires them to create and distribute new solutions on a regular basis.

Knowledge Brokers: The core competence of knowledge brokers is to transfer knowledge and technologies from industries in which they were developed to foreign industries in order to transfer them innovatively and profitably. To do this, they need professionals with a broad range of experience and education to recombine knowledge from a wide variety of environments. Like information sources, they emerge in the ideation phase and try to develop novel solutions; they play no role in innovation adoption and implementation.

Knowledge Integrators: Knowledge integrators are hired by companies to help them implement sophisticated innovations. Thus, like standards setters, they are active in the implementation and appropriation phases and enable the successful adoption of established approaches. They gain their expertise through numerous similar projects, in which they repeatedly learn how to implement the solutions at the customer's site successfully and, if necessary, make the required adjustments. They can be understood as bridge builders who break down obstacles and provide managers with the required knowledge.

In a literature review conducted by Cerruti et al. (2019), they take a closer look at literature's insights into the roles that management consultancies can take on and therefore review 48 articles. They identify Canato and Giangreco's (2011) paper as a key contribution to the literature on the subject but propose to cluster the four roles into one change agent role and include two additional ones that incorporate aspects of uncertainty and fashion setting. In the remainder of this paper, however, I will adhere to the proposed roles of Canato and Giangreco (2011) and leave them unaltered, as they seem complete for the purpose of this paper.

2.3 The Peculiarities of the Public Sector for Management Consulting

This conceptual paper will focus on the public sector under the assumption that public sector companies are more similar to each other than companies from the private sector. Since industrial and company-specific characteristics strongly influence the answer to this research question, it makes sense from a theoretical perspective to focus on one section of the economy first. Therefore, we will first take a look at the public sector's peculiarities in relation to management consulting.

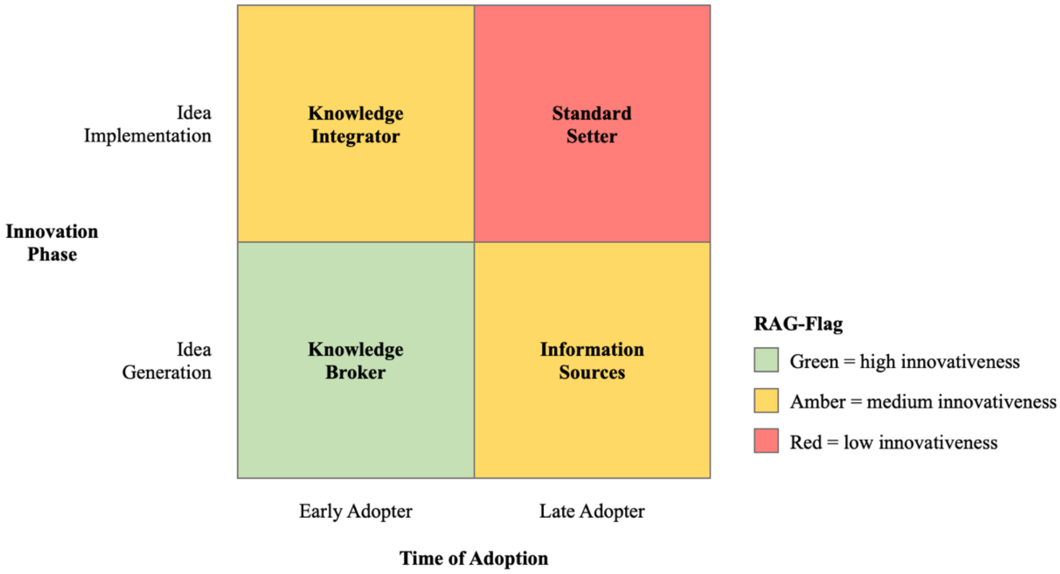
In a literature review conducted by Radnor and O'Mahoney (2013) concerning the implementation of management practices in the public sector, they find that the sector's context influences the collaboration between consultants and clients. The culture prevailing in the public sector in particular differs significantly from that in the private sector: consultants are confronted with a more value-based, bureaucratic, and risk-averse culture compared to the profit-oriented, entrepreneurial, more innovative, and more agile culture of the private sector.

Although there are profound differences between the private and public sectors that need to be taken into account, it can be assumed that public sector companies are more similar to each other than private sector companies. For example, when it comes to organizational structure, requirements for management consultancies as well as operational processes, it can be assumed that universities or hospitals are more similar among themselves than, for example, companies from the retail sector (e.g., Walmart versus Gorillas) or from the pharmaceutical sector (e.g., Bayer versus Ratiopharm). Accordingly, in the following chapter I develop a consultancy classification framework for the public sector.

3 Development of a Consultancy Classification Framework

In order to make an assessment of the different management consulting roles, I present a classification framework in this chapter that categorizes the four roles according to Canato and Giangreco (2011) in a two-by-two matrix and allows conclusions to be drawn about the expected innovative power. Canato and Giangreco (2011) argue that two types of roles appear more in the idea generation phase of innovation, namely knowledge brokers as well as information sources, whereas the other two roles, namely knowledge integrators and standard setters, are more prominent in the idea implementation phase of innovation. This is also related to the type of industry in which these consulting roles typically operate: knowledge brokers and information sources are more likely to be engaged by innovation-developing industries, whereas knowledge integrators and standard setters are more likely to be active in industries that merely adopt innovations. However, I argue that there are nevertheless significant differences between the innovativeness of the individual roles and that they are mandated depending on whether the client is an early or late adopter. I follow the argumentation of Kennedy and Fiss (2009) according to which early adopters adopt an innovation so quickly because they perceive their environment as promising and hope to realize profits with the help of the innovation. In contrast, late adopters perceive their environment as risky and threatening and strive to avoid economic and social losses, which is enough reason for them as late adopters to adopt the innovation. Kennedy and Fiss (2009) argue that non-adoption of an organization becomes a threat for late adopters as they cannot benefit from the performance improvements early adopters have realized and second, they risk appearing illegitimate through non-adoption. In addition, the risks of adopting the innovation become smaller over time as organizations learn from mistakes early adopters have made. One final point I would like to take up from Kennedy and Fiss (2009) at this point is that early and late adopters differ in terms of their level of implementation of the innovation. While early adopters are motivated to implement an innovation early, then they will do so comprehensively, whereas late adopters are distinguished by less comprehensive implementation, as their motivation is mainly to avoid losses and appear legitimate. Building on these argumentative points, Figure 1 shows the consulting classification framework that I will explain below.

Figure 1: Consultancy Classification Framework for the Public Sector



Early adopters that are still in the idea generation phase are interested the most in generating truly novel solutions and are therefore expected to hire knowledge brokers for support. With their view of the environment as opportune and profitable, they are eager and motivated to develop true novelties. Regarding knowledge brokers, it can be stated that with their expertise from multiple markets and technologies they are most capable to transfer and apply knowledge to different contexts to inspire innovations. This type of consultant is the best fit when it comes to idea development; their exposure to different industries and knowledge areas equips them perfectly for this task. Therefore, they appear with a green RAG-flag in the framework as they are expected to foster the most innovative solutions. However, with regard to the public sector we must keep in mind that stakeholders, shareholders, executives, and supervisory boards are still required to assess whether or not this kind of innovativeness is desirable for the situation at hand. In some cases, it can become an impediment if one company diverges too much from other companies, e.g., in hospitals it is especially important to have similar standards among all hospitals, therefore, a knowledge integrator might be more suitable for this special case. The first proposition is therefore formulated as follows:

Proposition 1: Early adopters hire knowledge brokers in the idea generation phase.

Knowledge integrators are likely to be engaged by early adopters in later stages of innovation when it comes to adoption of existing innovations. This is particularly relevant for industries that do not necessarily develop innovations themselves but adopt existing ones, such as health services. Nevertheless, companies in these industries are often early adopters but need support from management consultancies to help them implement complex innovations and avoid potential pitfalls. Knowledge integrators are ideally suited for this, in that they can draw from past experiences where they have already brought this innovation into specific contexts. Knowledge integrators appear with an amber RAG-flag in the classification framework, as they foster harmonization among companies instead of supporting the development of truly novel ideas, which differentiate certain companies from their peers. However, stakeholders, shareholders, executives, and supervisory boards should keep in mind that there are certain public sectors for which knowledge integrators are the best fit, such as hospitals. In addition, what distinguishes the knowledge integrators from the standard setters is that they do not simply implement an off-the-shelf solution, but as a very service-oriented type of consultancy they adapt existing innovations to the specific circumstances of the customer.

Proposition 2: Early adopters hire knowledge integrators in the idea implementation phase.

Information sources are most likely to be engaged by late adopters in the idea generation phase. I argue that this is because these late adopters feel threatened and pressured by their environment to innovate in some way, therefore, they get support from a type of consultancy that is known as an expert in certain technologies or markets.

Even though information sources are also known to support customers in developing original solutions, they are way more detached from the inner workings of their client's company and can only provide off-the-shelf solutions. As a result, they may help public sector companies during the assessment of different ideas, processes, or products, for example when they consider moving into another market or sector, but in contrast to early adopters, the late adopters' motivation stems much more from fear and loss avoidance and results in a lower level of innovation implementation than for example the innovations of knowledge brokers. Therefore, they appear with an amber RAG-flag in the consultancy classification framework.

Proposition 3: Late adopters hire information sources in the idea generation phase.

The last role of management consultancies is the one of standard setters, which I argue will be engaged mainly by late adopters that require support in the idea implementation phase. Because their solutions are the least customized and subjected to a test to determine whether this innovation actually fits the company, standard setters appear with a red RAG-flag in the consultancy classification framework. I expect late adopters to hire them solely for legitimacy reasons; they frame their environment as highly threatening and risky and are on the lookout to imitate successful peers which is why they try to rely on standard management fashions that have broadly diffused in the market. Thereby, standard setters drive harmonization in the market and cannot equip their clients with possibilities to distinguish themselves from competitors. As this type of consultancy gets hired in the later phase of innovation adoption, late adopters miss out on opportunities to develop something new for their company. Moreover, since they merely adopt standardized innovations and probably implement them to a lesser degree than early adopters, the likelihood is greatest here that after a short time it will be determined that the innovation offers no added value and will be abolished again accordingly. Therefore, I propose:

Proposition 4: Late adopters hire standard setters in the idea implementation phase.
Proposition 5: Innovations that are the result of a standard setter's mandate are often discarded in the near future.

4 Discussion

4.1 Contributions to Theory

I make several contributions to theory, but these should be interpreted within the limitations noted below. First, I elaborate Canato and Giangreco's (2011) model of the four management consulting roles by connecting it with Kennedy and Fiss' (2009) model of opportunity and threat framing during the innovation adoption decision. In this way, I offer a possible explanatory approach when and for what motivations consulting roles are called upon to provide support. Early adopters are therefore more inclined to use knowledge brokers and knowledge integrators, depending on whether they need support in idea generation and evaluation or require targeted support in the introduction of complex innovations. In contrast, late adopters are more likely to use information sources and standard setters, again depending on the innovation phase, out of a motivation to circumvent risks and avoid losses. Accordingly, the innovativeness of late adopters is significantly lower than that of early adopters. This is consistent with past literature, which also assumes that early adopters implement innovations more comprehensively and in a more customized way than late adopters (Ansari et al., 2010, Westphal et al., 1997). Second, this paper is the first to evaluate the four management consulting roles in terms of their degree of innovation. Knowledge brokers thus offer the greatest opportunity to produce truly original, novel solutions that can set companies apart from others. Knowledge integrators and information sources offer an intermediate level of innovativeness. While knowledge integrators are concerned with implementing existing solutions, they tailor them precisely to the customer's needs and lower knowledge barriers. Information sources, on the other hand, support their customers in developing new products or processes, but merely supply standardized specialist expertise for a particular market or technology and are therefore significantly further removed from the customer than knowledge brokers. Standard setters deliver the lowest level of innovation. Here, only off-the-shelf solutions are distributed as widely as possible in the market, which customers adopt regardless of organizational fit – usually in order to appear legitimate in the market. Third, this paper contributes to a better understanding of the supply side of innovation diffusion and to a better and more differentiated classification of the role of consultants in this process.

4.2 Insights for Practice

I also contribute insights for practice. To the best of my knowledge, I offer the first framework for supervisory boards, shareholders, stakeholders, and executives to evaluate the use of management consulting as well as the expected innovativeness of the resulting solution in the public sector. While public sector companies that engage knowledge brokers are concerned with finding truly novel and original solutions, differentiating themselves from competitors, and trying to make the best use of the brokers' knowledge of different markets and technology domains, companies that implement standard setters' solutions are concerned only with strengthening their legitimacy, achieving harmonization with competitors, or imitating industry leaders. This has important implications for stakeholders. When it comes to assessing the use of management consulting in a company, shareholders, stakeholders, and supervisory boards should take a critical look at what type of consulting was used in order to make judgments about the potential innovativeness and longevity of the innovations. Likewise, executives should look critically at the motives for engaging standard setters, for example, and whether this can be rationally justified. If necessary, they can also use this reasoning to present to the public and their stakeholders to justify why the specifically decided against adopting an innovation. Particularly in the case of late adopters, it should be critically questioned why support is required; of course, this applies much more to standard setters than to information sources.

4.3 Limitations and Future Research

The insights derived from this conceptual paper are subject to several limitations. First, this line of reasoning as well as the application of the consultancy classification framework is limited to the public sector due to the assumed greater similarity of the companies among each other. Future research should expand this to the private sector and explicitly consider sector differences or company-specific determinants. In some sectors it will be favorable or even vital to be truly innovative, while in other sectors harmonization among competitors is much more suitable. Additionally, sectors can be differentiated according to their innate characteristic to develop (e.g., engineering, design) versus adopt existing solutions (e.g., banking, health care) (Canato and Giangreco, 2011). Second, future research should concern itself with the motives for executives to hire specific consultancy types. Is it truly the case that managing executives striving to achieve legitimacy are more inclined to hire standard setters than other managers? In contrast, what favorable conditions need to be fulfilled in order for executives to hire knowledge brokers? Third, future research should provide more insights for stakeholders, shareholders, and supervisory boards how to identify a certain type of consulting role. In practice, it may not necessarily be that easy to clearly determine what kind of consulting the company at hand has used. The development of distinct characteristics or a decision tree to follow might be of help. Lastly, future research should test the propositions presented in this paper empirically. In a first step, case studies set in the public sector could help shed light on who hired which type of consultancy, what were the management practices that were adopted as a result and were they long-lasting and successful?

5 Conclusion

This conceptual paper set out to develop a consultancy classification framework for shareholders, stakeholders, supervisory boards, and executives to evaluate the use of management consulting as well as the expected innovativeness of the resulting solution in the public sector. I elaborate Canato and Giangreco's (2011) model of the four management consulting roles by connecting it with Kennedy and Fiss' (2009) model of opportunity and threat framing during the innovation adoption decision. In this way, I offer a possible explanatory approach when and for what motivations consulting roles are called upon to provide support. Early adopters are therefore more inclined to use knowledge brokers and knowledge integrators, depending on whether they need support in idea generation and evaluation or require targeted support in the introduction of complex innovations. In contrast, late adopters are more likely to use information sources and standard setters, again depending on the innovation phase, out of a motivation to circumvent risks and avoid losses. Accordingly, the expected innovativeness resulting from knowledge brokers' mandates is supposed to be highest, whereas standards setters are expected to provide the lowest level of innovativeness. Information sources as well as knowledge integrators are expected to offer an intermediate level of innovation. Thereby, I contribute important insights to theory and practice by offering the first evaluation of the management consulting roles in terms of their expected innovativeness, by fostering a better understanding of the supply-side of innovation diffusion and the role consultants play there as well as by providing a simple framework for shareholders, stakeholders, supervisory boards, and executives that helps them classify consulting mandates as well as the resulting innovations. Future research should test the propositions of this paper empirically and also adapt these theoretical considerations for the private sector to consider sector- and company-specific differences. On a final note, however, even with a suitable framework, it is unlikely that businesses can circumvent the introduction of innovations that turn out to be management fads (Williams, 2004). It is the innate character of ideas and innovations that they need to be tried and tested.

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