

Management consultancy as practice

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Project description: Little is known about how management consultancy interventions emerge and unfold. Therefore, an opportunity exists to contribute to developing academic knowledge of how consultancy work is accomplished. We would like to invite interested parties to submit their applications to undertake Ph.D. research that explores how consultants work with clients on consultancy projects. We are open to the type of consultancy focused open, be it strategy, organization development, or some other form; our main interest lies in understanding how consultants undertake consultancy work. We have an interest in the people that do such work. So we would like the successful candidate to consider consultants as rounded human actors whose identities are in part formed through multiple human relationships that include but are not restricted to colleagues, bosses, clients, formal professional networks and informal contacts. We are also interested in the tools of management consultancy: that is the models, frameworks, concepts, ideas and theories that consultants draw from and utilise during their work. We take the view that these tools also 'act' in the sense that they mediate and to some degree shape, constrain and enable consultants to do their work. Consultancy 'work' is also ill-defined in the current literature, to some degree it remains shrouded in mystery. It seems to us that much of what consultants do is quite mundane, but it is this very mundanity that we feel demands inquiry. So perhaps it is in the conversations and writing that consultants do where greatest insight into what consultancy is can be crafted - we don't know, but we're keen to work with our student to find out. We also feel where consultants work matters to what is achieved. This highlights an interest in the places and spaces where consultancy work is undertaken, be it the consultancy office, the client's premises, hotel rooms, restaurants, cars, cafes, or the consultant's home. All of the above should indicate that the topic is rich in potential; it should also suggest that while we have some ideas we are keen to work with our student so that she/he has the freedom to focus on those aspects of consultancy work that are of interest to her/him - our role in this is to ensure that an appropriate theoretical base is drawn from as ultimately a Ph.D. must make a contribution to theory. The above should also indicate that we foresee this research as a qualitative inquiry. Being qualitative, we would anticipate an ethnographic-inspired piece of research that could be a single case study or a comparative analysis of two or three cases. We invite applications from a variety of backgrounds. You may be a practicing management consultant, you may be a manager who has had experience of working with consultants, or you may be someone with an interest and curiosity about management consultancy and consultants. If our outline appeals to you we are keen to hear from you.