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**KNOWLEDGE CREATION:
A Study of Consulting Practice in
Corporate Governance**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Management
at Massey University, Palmerston North,
New Zealand

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2004

ABSTRACT

The management consulting industry has been growing exponentially during the last two decades influencing the relationships between business schools, corporations and universities, achieving a significant role as a modern “knowledge creator”. This thesis studies the process of knowledge creation undertaken by management consultants. The academic mode of creating knowledge as described by Kuhn (1996) was used to direct this exploration of consultants as a knowledge creating community. The purpose of using the scientific method of knowledge creation is not to compare or to judge consulting knowledge, but to use it as a way of entry to explore consultants’ practices. In a complementary way to Kuhn’s core concepts, a brief Foucauldian overview identified concepts like inclusion and exclusion, discourse and the notion of practices, which are used in the analysis. An empirical research was conducted focusing specifically on a group of practicing consultants in New Zealand. Thirteen consultants who specialize in corporate governance advice were interviewed. Corporate governance was chosen as a field of advice because it is a clearly separable area of management consulting. In this study, the categories of community and paradigm served as a point of entry to explore knowledge creation practices. The data was analyzed qualitatively in search for evidence of community belonging and patterns in consultants’ knowledge creation practices. It has been found that consultants, in spite not having a formal regulating professional body, behave as a professional community that has entry requirements, exit procedures and credentials for belonging. Consultants define their identities in the intersection of overlapping communities, which sometimes include their former educational backgrounds, their professions and their current practice. Research findings show that consultants in governance share a paradigm, which transcend particular consulting firms and reach a larger group of consultants. This paradigm has quality control processes such as reputation and re-engagement, and common methods in dealing with governance problems. In addition, in terms of the body of knowledge shared, there are certain factors that determine the value of that knowledge for consultants such as novelty, commercial value, utility and accessibility.

To my Grandpa, Abuelo Jorge

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank the NZAID program for granting such a generous scholarship that made it possible for me to study. Without it, the achievement of this Master's would have been just an unaccomplished wish.

Secondly, my supervisors Professor Ralph E. Stablein and Dr. Craig Prichard thank you for introducing me into this world that is to do research. I have thoroughly enjoyed the journey and discovered my vocation in it. You have taught me how to stretch in my thinking and I come out of this process truly empowered. Ralph, I am especially grateful for the confidence you showed in me and for your unconditional support.

I am very grateful to the consultants who so kindly received me and accepted to be interviewed, thank you for your collaborative disposition. This research was possible thanks to your willingness to cooperate. I recognize Deloitte's cooperation in this study.

I would also like to acknowledge staff at Massey University that made these two years in New Zealand a wonderful experience, special thanks to Susan Flynn from the International Student's Office, and Professor Tony Vitalis, Catherine, Josie and Brigit from the Department of Management; thank you for taking care of me.

Our Latin American friends and Desiree, you are amazing people that have made our stay in New Zealand the experience of a lifetime. We feel lucky that God chose to cross our paths. My parents and brothers and sisters, all my family, I missed you so much.

Finally, my utmost recognition and acknowledgement goes to you, Matias. Thank you for giving me the best years of my life and for your encouraging support in everything. Lastly, I dedicate this thesis to our baby, still to be born; your existence is a miracle.

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