

Stockklauser, Stephanie; Tomenendal, Matthias

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The value of political consulting: A segmentation of services and evaluation tools

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Hochschule für
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The Value of Political Consulting – A Segmentation of Services and Evaluation Tools

Authors: Stephanie Stockklauser, Matthias Tomenendal

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Editors:

Carsten Baumgarth | Gert Bruche |

Christoph Dörrenbächer | Friedrich Nagel

RESEARCH PAPER

The Value of Political Consulting
-
A Segmentation of Services and Evaluation Tools

Stephanie Stockklauser
Matthias Tomenendal

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Editors:
Carsten Baumgarth
Gert Bruche
Christoph Dörrenbächer
Friedrich Nagel

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Biographic Note:

Stephanie Stockklauser, MA, is currently a research associate at the Berlin School of Economics and Law and is preparing her doctoral studies about sustainable management of SMEs. She studied International Business and Consulting, with a major in Strategic Management at the Berlin School of Economics and Law. Her research interests are in strategic sustainable management, cluster analysis, and competence research. She is a lecturer for strategic management and economic policy at SRH University of Applied Sciences Berlin. Stephanie Stockklauser can be contacted at: stephanie.stockklauser@hwr-berlin.de

Prof. Dr. **Matthias Tomenendal** is Professor of Management and Consulting at the Berlin School of Economics and Law and serves as the Director of the IMB Institute of Management Berlin. He holds business degrees from the Universities of Bielefeld, Georgia (USA) and Saarland, and has worked as a strategy consultant for the Boston Consulting Group. His research interests cluster around the themes of organizational theory, strategic management, along with management consulting. He consults national and international clients on diverse management topics. Matthias Tomenendal can be contacted at: matthias.tomenendal@hwr-berlin.de.

Stephanie Stockklauser, MA, ist wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin an der HWR Berlin und Doktorandin zum Thema „Nachhaltiges Management in KMU“. Sie studierte International Business and Consulting mit Schwerpunkt Strategic Management an der HWR Berlin. Ihr Forschungsinteresse gilt im Besonderen dem nachhaltigen strategischen Management, Clusteranalysen und der Kompetenzforschung. Sie ist Lehrbeauftragte für Strategic Management und Wirtschaftspolitik an der SRH Hochschule Berlin. Stephanie Stockklauser kann erreicht werden unter: stephanie.stockklauser@hwr-berlin.de

Prof. Dr. **Matthias Tomenendal** ist Professor für Allgemeine Betriebswirtschaftslehre, insbesondere Management und Consulting an der Hochschule für Wirtschaft und Recht Berlin und Direktor des IMB Institute of Management Berlin. Er forscht zu verschiedenen Themen der Organisation, des strategischen Managements und des Management Consulting und berät nationale und internationale Unternehmen. Nach dem Studium der Betriebswirtschaftslehre an der Universität Bielefeld, zum Master of Business Administration an der University of Georgia und der Promotion zum Doktor der Wirtschaftswissenschaft an der Universität des Saarlandes arbeitete er zehn Jahre als Strategieberater bei der Boston Consulting Group in Düsseldorf und Warschau. Matthias Tomenendal ist erreichbar unter: matthias.tomenendal@hwr-berlin.de.

Abstract:

Political consulting has been exposed to critical debates about its necessity and usefulness over the past ten years. The question of “how much value has been added?” has not yet been addressed in this field, while in management consulting evaluation of projects has a long tradition. On the one hand, this could be due to the fragmented market for political consulting, with heterogeneous projects, not allowing for methods, and results of these projects being compared to each other. On the other hand, there has not yet been an attempt to segment the market according to which evaluation tools can be applied. This paper will develop a segmentation of the market for political consulting and will shed some first light on the transferability of evaluation tools from management consulting to the segments. It is to be understood as a starting point in the research on evaluating political consulting assignments to open up the field for further empirical investigations.

Zusammenfassung:

Politikberatung ist seit über zehn Jahren anhaltenden kritischen Debatten über ihre Notwendigkeit und ihren Nutzen ausgesetzt. Bisher wurde nicht nach der sogenannten „value-added“ und damit nach der Bewertung der Ergebnisse von Politikberatungsprojekten gefragt, während dies in der Managementberatung eine lange Tradition besitzt. Dies könnte zum einen am stark fragmentierten Markt für Politikberatung liegen, in dem Projekte so heterogen sind, dass sich Methoden und Ergebnisse nur schwer mit denselben Tools evaluieren lassen. Zum anderen wurde bisher nicht versucht, den Markt nach entsprechender Anwendbarkeit von Evaluierungsmethoden zu segmentieren. In diesem Beitrag soll zunächst eine solche Segmentierung des Marktes für Politikberatung stattfinden. Von dieser ausgehend wird die Übertragbarkeit von Evaluierungstools aus der Managementberatung analysiert. Es wird somit ein Ausgangspunkt geschaffen, von dem aus weitere empirische Untersuchungen zur Evaluation von Politikberatungsprojekten ansetzen können.

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1. Introduction: A Call for the Evaluation of Political Consulting Assignments

In ancient times, politicians asked “boards of experts” for their goodwill on political decisions, new laws, or the reorganization of administrative processes. Even if it might have been for religious reasons or traditions, these ancient forms of getting advice from external experts can nevertheless be interpreted as first forms of political consulting. The first manual or guide on how to use external knowledge in politics was presented by Niccolo Machiavelli in 1532 (Hustedt et al. 2010: 15).

Today, political consulting is an important part of democratic decision-making. In representative democracies, people delegate decision-making authority to the members of parliament for the sake of higher efficiency in the decision-making processes (see Mitchell 2000). As representatives often do not possess enough expertise in certain fields, they ask external experts for their specific knowledge (Niedereichholz & Niedereichholz 2006: 137). From a principal agent perspective, political consulting can be interpreted as a delegation of tasks from political actors (principals) to consultants (agents) for higher efficiency in democracies (Geiger 2009 cited in Falk et al. 2010).

For politicians and the public, the work of the agents has to be valuable in order to achieve the efficiency aspired. The lasting critique of the public political consultants supports this argument (Rügemer 2004b, 2004c). Consequently, questions on how to measure the results and their value are only natural. This paper aims at shedding light on how consulting services in the political sphere can be evaluated, using methods applied in evaluating consulting for privately organized clients. Our main research question is whether the evaluation tools of management consulting can be transferred to political consulting assignments.

For this purpose, we first review existing tools from management consulting concerning their application requirements, consulting approach, and task. Next, the market for political consulting will be segmented according to the same criteria. A new segmentation will be presented to which the applicability of proven tools will be analyzed. The paper closes with a matrix on which evaluation tools from management consulting can be transferred to different market segments of political consulting.

1.1. Definition of Political Consulting

Although there is a rough understanding of political consulting tasks, researchers have not been able to agree upon a common definition of the term as of yet. The German Association of Political Consultants (de’ge’pol) provides the following definition: “Political consulting ideally is a service that provides tailored advice at the right time, in the right amount, at needed quality and in the right place to political actors.” (de’ge’pol n.d.: 7). According to Falk and Römmele (2009), political consulting is based on public interests, as opposed to management consulting which is based on private interests.

Niedereichholz (2008) points to differences from a task and a literature perspective. According to the tasks, political consulting includes studies, expert reports, agenda setting, development of concepts,

and implementation strategies, while literature differentiates scientific political consulting by economists, and political consulting by management consultants.

Jeske and Papenfuß (2006: 23) focus on scientific political consulting and the difficulty in defining it due to heterogeneous consulting forms depending on the roles of both actors. Such roles have been suggested in the decisionist, technocratic and pragmatic models. These models were originally described by Habermas (1971):

- The decisionist model suggests that policy makers decide on policy ends, scientists then propose means before policy makers implement them.
- The technocratic model suggests that scientists propose both ends and related means before policy makers implement them.
- The pragmatic model suggests that ends as well as means are discussed democratically before policy makers implement them. As a further development of the pragmatic model Edenhofer and Kowarsch describe the “pragmatic-enlightened model” (PEM) of scientific policy advice, which suggests that “problem framing, ends and means (in their interrelation) are explored by scientists and the public jointly, before there is a public debate on alternative policy options. Policy outcomes are evaluated jointly after the implementation by policymakers“ (Edenhofer & Kowarsch 2012: 21).

The first two models assume that value-neutral scientific research on policy means (decisionist model) and ends (technocratic model) is possible, indicating that scientists can act as value-neutral expert consultants. The pragmatic model denies this assumption and regards scientists rather as process consultants. These assumptions have a major impact on the possibility of assessing the scientists' performance as consultants as will be shown later.

1.2. Development of Political Consulting in Germany

Until the 1960s, the German government almost exclusively relied on the competences of their civil servants. In the 1960s, scientists were incorporated into political processes analyzing the relation between politics and science from a theoretical perspective (Raffel 2006: 11). In the 1970s and 1980s, the relation was observed in reality, until the focus shifted in the 1990s to developing models to analyze this complex relationship. For a long time, political consulting in Germany was set equal with scientific advice (Raffel 2006: 10-11). Historical developments show that since the 1970s, consulting assignments with political content or public clients have increased as political processes and fields have become more complex (Armbrüster & Barchewitz 2004: 18-19).

In the last decade, the market for political consulting has grown significantly, with a yearly growth rate of 6 to 13 percent (Heuermann & Herrmann 2003: 325), and public consulting assignments generated 20 percent of total consulting revenues (Heuermann & Herrmann 2003: 324). Since 2003, political and

public sector consulting has constantly represented the third largest submarket of all consulting activities in Germany, with 9 to 10 percent (Armbrüster et al. 2010: 10; Niedereichholz 2008: 167), and even 20 percent on the European level (Bund deutscher Unternehmensberater (BDU) 2011: 28).

Over the last decade, leading consultancies have been intensifying their work in the political sphere in Germany. McKinsey & Company, Booz & Company, Roland Berger Strategy Consultants, and many others have entered the segment – although not always perceived positively by the public and politicians.

“Where we go, consultants have a really bad reputation. We are heavily struggling to get accepted. I have never experienced that the word ‘consulting’ has such a negative connotation as it has in the public sector.” (A Managing Director of a consulting firm cited in Armbrüster et al. 2010: 5)

“Consultants are the solution for problems that would not exist without them.” (Wolf 2000: 54). In many of the critical contributions, authors complain about the imbalance of high fees consultants charge compared to the quality of their performance. Rügemer (2004a) analyses pitfalls and corruptive behavior of consultants and politicians engaging in consulting assignments. He puts clear emphasis on the need for more accountability and responsibility of results of consultants’ work (Rügemer 2004c: 175).

Due to criticism and skepticism about the benefits of hiring external consultants, evaluating consultants’ performance and project results experienced growing interest and became increasingly important to consulting projects (Technische Universität Chemnitz 2009: 17). Methods for verifying the usefulness and evaluating the effectiveness of political consulting are required.

1.3. Research on the (Difficulty of the) Evaluation of Political Consulting Services

The history of evaluation research began at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century in the United States of America (USA) (Luebbert n.d.: 1). First evaluations focused on the state’s efficacy, paving a political philosophical and scientific way of evaluation research. At the end of the 1950s, the emphasis of evaluation shifted to international aid programs, when the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) published the first manual to guide program evaluation (Luebbert n.d.: 1). Comparable developments started in Germany approximately ten years later, when state expenditure on regional development and reforms increased drastically, along with the need to justify expenditures and to control reform processes (Luebbert n.d.: 1). Evaluation as a controlling instrument of administrative acting was established as part of systemic learning within the reforming process, as well as part of managing the reforms (costs and benefits analysis). It was perceived as one major instrument of parliament to exert control over those who implemented reforms (Luebbert n.d.: 2). First publications such as “Evaluative Research: Principles and Practice in Public Service & Social Action Programs” by Suchman (1967) or “Evaluative

Research: Methods of Assessing Program Effectiveness” by Weiss (1972) set methodological standards for public sector program evaluation.

In early consulting literature (see e.g. works of Eschenbach, Kaplan, Kubr, Maister, Wohlgemuth), evaluation was an important part to assess how resources were used. In all basic consulting literature describing the phases of consulting assignments, evaluation is one major part of the closing phase (inter alia in Kubr 2002; Niedereichholz 2008). Already in 1976, Milan Kubr, a researcher in management consulting, emphasized the importance of evaluation: “Evaluation is the most important part of the termination phase of any consulting process” (Kubr 1976: 248); although clients often do not want to spend any extra money and time on something that does not produce any immediate “value added”.

In management consulting research, assignments for the public sector are sometimes described as well (see Lompe 1966; Kubr 1976). Most authors point to the special characteristics of public sector clients and their unique situation of political pressure and public criticism (inter alia Kubr 2002: 587; Eichhorst & Wintermann 2006: 234-235; Raffel 2006: 11 ff). Aspects such as “[...] complexity, driving and impeding forces, time horizon, resource constraints, hierarchical relations, organizational cultures and traditions, individual motivations and other factors [...]” (Kubr 2002: 589) influence the consultants’ work, and are significantly different to private client consulting assignments. Research in the specific field of process and performance evaluation of consulting assignments in the public sector is still in its infancy especially when compared to that on management consulting services.

Although Kubr (2002), for instance, writes that for consulting assignments in the public sector, it is important to define clear targets (“[...] what results, including their quantity and quality, who will identify and endorse results, who will assess quality [...]” (Kubr 2002: 596)), there is no concrete statement on how evaluation of results should be conducted.

Heuermann and Herrmann (2003) refer to the difficulty of generally measuring the output of public bodies’ work, because it is difficult to compare and transfer the concepts of “product” and “customers” to the public sphere (Heuermann & Herrmann 2003: 326). This is in line with what Glassman and Winograd (2010) see as behavior contra evaluation from public and political clients. Clients perceive the work attached to a larger public good (social good), where indicators to measure it are not available (Glassman & Winograd 2010: 253). Brüggemeier refers to a study describing success criteria of public sector consulting, especially in new public management projects. Collaboration with public administration’s employees, consultants’ ability to understand the specific public sector processes and structures, acceptance of results in public administration, and others are decisive for project success. Again, tools to assess the success criteria are not revealed by the study (Brüggemeier 2005: 89-90).

Falk et al. (2010) describe two decisive criteria that outputs, more specifically knowledge, from political consulting assignments have to fulfill: being epistemically and politically robust. Epistemic robustness refers to scientific verifiability of knowledge and its evidence-based means. Political robustness

describes the possibility of its use in political competition (Falk et al. 2010: 124). These two criteria are feasible, but the authors do not provide concrete methods or tools of how epistemic and political robustness can be analyzed. They further point to a still existing “black box”, especially of informal forms of political consulting that are complicating evaluation (e.g. lobbying on events that are not public or recorded) (Falk et al. 2010: 121).

Armbrüster et al. (2010) explicitly asked consultants and consulted members of political or public bodies how they evaluate the outcomes from eGovernment consulting projects. Clients state that what consultants do was too unspecific to be evaluated, as they worked on several projects with different departments at the same time. They simply lack the time to run after consultants and try to measure what they do (Armbrüster et al. 2010: 108). The evaluation of the consultants’ performance “[...] is difficult to realize, time intensive and methodologically complex [...]” (Armbrüster et al. 2010: 108).

Generally, the supply and demand players in the political consulting sphere have different interests that are difficult to match. Politics ask complex questions, while simultaneously expecting practicable, short, and easy to communicate answers from consultants (Jungmittag 2004, p. 210). Both consultants and politicians do not only have different interests, they sometimes speak very different languages (Raffel 2006, p. 12). Consequently, processing the results in a way which are easy to communicate to the public and usable for public discussions is a challenge (Eichhorst & Wintermann 2006, p. 234). Evaluation is therefore useful only if both sides can find a similar language of communicating and processing results.

Their uniqueness consequently hampers the development of standardized evaluation approaches. In addition, consultants in public spheres work in various projects at the same time, and their work not only has consequences for one department or one group of decision makers (Armbrüster et al. 2010, p. 108 ff). Some projects in the area of new public management might be comparable, but the goals are different, in addition to outcomes. If, for example, the results of a project aiming at reforming police stations should be pooled together, the costs that can be saved through less personnel or cars might be economically measurable, but the consequences on the security of the neighborhood cannot be economically assessed.

Kubr (2002) emphasizes the difficulty of measuring results of consulting projects, as they imply changes in a system (e.g. structures, processes, people) influenced by a considerable amount of internal and external factors. Attributing the changes to the specific factors is what makes evaluation difficult (Kubr 2002, p. 248). Additionally, consultants are hired as clients perceive a deficit of qualification or resources to solve problems in-house. This information asymmetry can complicate evaluations if initial knowledge needed to solve problems is not with the client, and thus judging if measures were appropriate might not be possible (Ernst 2002, p. 15). Starbuck (1992) emphasizes:

“[...] buyers of expertise itself...often have difficulty assessing their purchases. Clients often consult experts because they believe their own knowledge to be inadequate, so they cannot judge the

experts' advice or reports mainly on substance. Clients may be unable to assess experts' advice by acting on it and watching the outcomes [...]” (Starbuck, 1992, p. 731)

Furthermore, consultants are co-producers to problem solutions, making identification of their responsibility to project success or failure difficult (Ernst 2002, p. 52).

What complicates evaluation further is to differentiate between short and long-term benefits. While short term benefits are measurable after consulting projects are finished, long-term benefits are not (see Kubr 2002, see Niedereichholz 2008). They often go beyond what can be observed by evaluation, complicating a direct attribution to the specific consulting project or consultancy (Ernst 2002, p. 17). Additionally, indeterminacy of results to specific departments complicates evaluation (see Ernst 2002; Heuermann & Herrmann 2003). Consequently, predetermined goals might not always be achieved if during the project certain factors deviated from the initial agreement. Additionally, external factors like cyclical changes or technological innovations can influence long-term success of consulting projects, which cannot be foreseen at project beginning (Ernst 2002, p. 54). March and Olsen (1995) summarize this fact:

“Environments are unstable, and their dynamics are not well understood. Many things, not controlled by [...] actors, change simultaneously. Evidence and causal relationships are unclear.”
(March & Olsen 1995, p. 202)

At this point it can be stated that a sound basis for the evaluation of political consulting assignments is still missing. Neither political consultants' associations nor public procurement law or standardization organizations provide their members with effective evaluation tools. They emphasize the importance of showing clients the benefit from consulting, but not how consultants could conduct evaluations. de'ge'pol (n.d.), for example, developed a catalogue on quality criteria without proposing measures of how quality can be assessed. In management consulting literature however, a number of tools have been proposed to evaluate consulting work. Their applicability can be regarded as contingent upon the nature of the consulting approach or task (Tomenendal 2012), a point of view which is also taken in this paper.

1.4. Goal and Method of this Paper

Attempting to fill a gap in political consulting research, this paper aims to suggest evaluation tools for political consulting services by:

- Reviewing proven evaluation tools in management consulting and the preconditions for applying them with regard to the consulting approach or task.
- Segmenting political consulting services considering the above mentioned preconditions for applying management consulting tools.

- Transferring some of the proven methodologies from evaluating management consulting assignments to particular segments of political consulting.

The method applied is a combination of literature review, concept transfer, and an explorative study, including eight expert interviews with seven consultants and one consulting client in the public arena. A qualitative methodology was chosen as it guarantees openness for the results and a high degree of flexibility to adapt to individual situations during the interview (Ernst 2002: 34). Furthermore, it is useful to capture sensitive content and personal opinions, perceptions, and attitudes of the interviewees, although critique is sometimes expressed about lacking representativeness and reproducibility (Foddy 1993: 16). In order to derive a comprising and representative picture, more interviewees would have been needed. But as the purpose of the interviews is to draw a first illustration of the theoretical findings which need further empirical analysis in the future, the sample size of eight was considered to be sufficient.

In a first step, recorded interviews were transcribed according to the answers given to each question. As the researcher decided for a constructionist, interactionist model of questioning and conducting interviews in German, word-by-word transcription was considered to be not useful. Since interviews did not follow a strict order of questions, and nonverbal expressions and gestures were not important for the data analysis, summative transcription was chosen (Flick 2002: 252 ff). In Chapter 3.3, interviewee's statements will be presented in an orderly and comprehensible descriptive framework, and lastly pattern-matched with the theoretical findings (Thomas 2004: 222 ff).

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: After a review of evaluation tools in management consulting in Chapter 2, an evaluation-oriented segmentation of political consulting assignments will be developed in Chapter 3. The transfer of evaluation tools from management to political consulting will be performed in Chapter 4, based on logical reasoning and expert opinions, before a conclusion will be drawn in the final chapter.

2. Review: Evaluation Dimensions and Tools in Management Consulting

Consulting evaluation entails the "description, analysis, and assessment of processes and organizational entities. Evaluation can refer to the context (preconditions, framework requirements), the structure and the process as well as the result (product)" (Reinecke & Bock 2007: 126).

Based on this definition two major evaluation dimensions are differentiated:

- a) Process vs. results: Process focused evaluations analyze the project process itself by assuming that "[...] the process influences its results" (Kubr 2002: 251). Process evaluations might be conducted for example in milestone meetings to control whether the project team is on track and/or within schedule" (see Haferkamp & Drescher 2006; Niedereichholz 2008). In the pragmatic model of policy advice, the process approach is appropriate for evaluation

purposes. Result focused evaluations analyze benefits the consulting project had for the client – the value-added to the client company. The most important questions are whether the goals and results of the project have been achieved, what expected results could not be realized, and what unexpected outcomes are visible (Kubr 2002: 249). Result oriented approaches to evaluation also appear possible in the decisionist and technocratic models of political consulting.

- b) **Measurement vs. explanation:** Measurement tools either focus on how consulting services can be assessed with specific instruments or on how the evaluation process can be conducted. Explanation tools develop hypotheses to describe and test the influence which certain indicators or variables have on the success of consulting assignments (zu Knyphausen-Aufseß et al. 2009: 8).

In the following section evaluation tools used in management consulting and the preconditions necessary to apply them will be presented, based on a review of literature in the field. The tools will be categorized according to the dimensions “process vs. result” and “measurement vs. explanation” (which can be found in brackets in the header). Most quantitative evaluation tools focus on the measurement dimension. Many qualitative tools in contrast can be grouped to the explanation dimension, which seems to be natural. Both qualitative and quantitative tools offer result and process evaluations.

2.1. Quantitative Evaluation Tools

- (1) **Cost-benefit ratio** (dimensions: measurement, result)

Due to increasing competition in and intensified criticism of the consulting industry questions on price and related performance have increased (Dichtl 1998: 119; Heuermann & Herrmann 2003: 270). Clients expect that the price paid for consulting results in measurable economic benefits. Measurability depends on the type of project conducted. If, for example, consultants implement a controlling system or new IT-infrastructure, evaluating the economic benefit is difficult, as such projects do not have a direct influence on operating results, sales, revenues or other economic indicators (Heuermann & Herrmann 2003: 262). Furthermore, costs that have been agreed upon in the contracting phase can increase throughout the project due to unforeseen complications. Studies even show that clients might accept rising costs throughout the project if an increase is justified (Heuermann & Herrmann 2003: 270). The general implication is that if costs are lower than benefits, consulting projects are successful and consultants performed well.

The major precondition for applying cost-benefit calculation is that all costs (including those on the client's side) are known to the client and consultant, and that they are quantifiable. Furthermore,

benefits consultants should achieve have to be agreed upon beforehand and need to be quantifiable, too.

(2) **Capital market approaches** (dimensions: measurement, result)

Capital market approaches assume that consulting success is visible in the company's valuation on the capital market. There is no evaluation of single projects but of the company as a whole.

Solomon (1997) and Bergh & Wrafter (2003) observed market prices of client companies to prove the success of consulting services. Solomon (1997) calculated price deviations based on monthly average prices six months before the consulting project started and six months after the project was finished for 26 companies that employed the same consultancy. By detecting that during the observation period deviations turned from negative to positive values, the author concluded that the consulting project positively contributed to company valuation.

Bergh and Wrafter's (2003) study results show that if companies announce signing a contract with consultants, their share price rises. The authors observed 118 American and 33 British companies to determine the effects of such announcements.

Another measure is Stern Stewart & Co.'s "Economic Value Added" (EVA). EVA is the difference between net operating profit after tax and the opportunity costs of invested capital. Opportunity costs are determined by the weighted average cost of debt and equity capital, and the amount of capital employed. "It shows period-by-period value creation or reduction of a given firm or investment and makes it easy to audit performance against management projections" (Stern Stewart & Co. 2012). As this measure is specifically advertised to justify the use of consultants in front of the shareholders, it is attributed to the capital market approaches. Its applicability depends on the clear identification as well as the significance of the applied financial indicators.

(3) **Return on investment (ROI) and return on consulting (ROC)** (dimensions: measurement, result)

Following an increased need for accountability of the consultant's work, Phillips (2000) applied the widely used return on investment approach to consulting. Applicable to any consulting project following the author, ROI relates a rated benefit from the project to its costs (Phillips 2000: xxi). In percentages, the ROI is calculated as follows:

$$\text{ROI (\%)} = (\text{Net Consulting Benefits} / \text{Consulting Costs}) \times 100$$

Source: Phillips (2000): The Consultant's Scorecard, p. 205

ROI and ROC are identical. Net consulting benefits are consulting benefits minus costs. Benefits are presented in monetary terms, as earnings for example. Consulting costs contain all deployed

resources during the project from the client's side (Kaufung 2007: 177). An ROI or ROC of 50 percent means costs are covered, with an additional 50 percent of costs reported as earnings.

In order to establish a more holistic approach to ROI by taking into account qualitative factors, the ROC scorecard was developed by the Association of Management Consultants Switzerland (ASCO) in 2004 by capturing and visualizing quantitative and qualitative factors. Goals are, among others, to make the client's expectations transparent and show profit from the projects, in order to allow immediate corrections, as well as comparing use of resources and expenses at the end of a project (Fox 2007: 26; Niedereichholz & Niedereichholz 2006: 5-7). ROI and ROC are practicable, easy to apply instruments that should foster transparency in the process of evaluation, increasing the consultant's credibility for the client and the public (zu Knyphausen-Aufseß et al. 2009: 9).

For the application of this tool, a number of aspects are of importance, including proper documentation of project costs, entailing not only consultant's bills but also payroll costs for company staff (which can be a challenge), along with the setting of unambiguous goals which present project benefits as measurable quantities based on key performance indicators, as well as clearly set target values. It is difficult to capture all target values as there are various external (such as the country's economic situation) and internal factors (such as collaboration with the client's project team members) influencing a company's earnings which cannot be presented as target values.

(4) Assignment performance report and project profitability analysis (dimensions: measurement, process)

The assignment performance report aims to showing the client if consultants stick to the agreed plans. Performance states are documented at the end of an observation period (for example a milestone) according to different consultant and cost categories. Fee-based services are calculated from daily fees and time spent. Afterwards they are compared to the agreed assignment budget. Consultants then identify the remaining budget and estimate if it is enough to complete the assignment with the existing number of consultants on the project. If not, the project leader can adapt to the changes in budget with this target-actual comparison.

Project profitability analysis is another controlling tool that is used in keeping track of billed time and expenses of project members. By observing the development of time and expenses by project management, corrections can be undertaken if someone is deviating from the initial plan (Niedereichholz 2008: 372).

Both controlling tools are applicable to all management consulting projects. They allow for adoptions of budget or people assigned to the project. Preconditions for application are an agreed budget and clearly set milestones, as well as proper project documentation.

(5) **Trend analysis** (dimensions: measurement, process)

In contrast to the above mentioned tools referring to the past, trend analysis is estimating future work progress (Niedereichholz 2008: 368; Melcher 1982: 85). Two identical time scales are drawn into a rectangular triangle, where reference variables (milestones, costs or resources) are put to the vertical line, and controlling points to the horizontal line. Consultants responsible for reaching a certain reference variable have to estimate its completion. Those points are drawn into the graph, allowing the project leader to get an impression on the adherence to schedule (Niedereichholz 2008: 369).

Well conducted project documentation and clearly set milestones are essential for the applicability of this tool. Generally, this tool is adaptable to all contract based consulting projects.

2.2. Qualitative Evaluation Tools

(1) **Interviews, questionnaires and discussions** (dimensions: explanation, process and result)

Feedback from clients on a consultant's performance can be given in different qualitative ways. They can include written questionnaires to key stakeholders in the client company, focused interviews, narrative interviews, field questioning, or group discussions (Hauser & Egger 2007: 172-173). Being useful especially for the consultant's quality management, direct feedback from the client is helpful to understand the client's perception of the consulting process and results (Niedereichholz & Niedereichholz 2006: 12), and might enable the consultant to rework results if clients are not satisfied (Wohlgemuth 2006: 111). In 2009, Chemnitz Technical University discovered that 93 percent of consultants (in their sample of 513 consultancies) conduct feedback talks with their clients, as client satisfaction is the most important factor of successful projects for them (mentioned by 95 percent) (Technische Universität Chemnitz 2009: 15). Therefore, ASCO developed a standardized questionnaire for its members to improve quality in management consulting (Wohlgemuth 2006: 111). The questionnaire contains process and results related questions that can be answered within an easy rating scale: "no basis for evaluation", "requires improvement", "adequate/acceptable" and "above average".

Briefing or debriefing sessions involving different project participants are conducted during the project and after its completion (Haferkamp & Drescher 2006; Klenter & Möllgaard 2006). Briefing sessions are often not systematically documented or formally communicated as most companies are lacking a dedicated department and/or people feeling responsible for managing project results (Haferkamp & Drescher 2006: 127). Briefing sessions during the project allow for corrections; consultants can adapt to changing situations and strive for higher client satisfaction (Niedereichholz & Niedereichholz 2006: 13).

There are no special preconditions for conducting interviews or surveys. Participants and interviewees should be willing to participate and answer questions honestly, even if statements are sometimes

unpleasant for themselves or any other project participants. For highly sensitive topics, anonymous questioning may be a solution. Nevertheless, cost aspects should not be neglected. Interviews are time consuming and questionnaires have to be interpreted. Nevertheless, clients and consultants often see benefits of direct feedback higher than the costs attached to it (Niedereichholz 2008: 348). Yet, zu Knyphausen-Aufseß et al. (2009: 6) still criticize this form of evaluation, as it is often not able to explain the reasons why projects are successful or not.

(2) **Success factor analysis** (dimensions: explanation and measurement)

Besides some critical contributions to success factor research as being one of the most unsuccessful fields of research (Nicolai & Kieser 2002: 597), there are several authors pointing to the importance of defining success factors to enable a profound analysis of successful companies, and requirements to be successful in certain industries, sectors or markets (see Dichtl 1998; Grant 2010). In highly competitive markets such as the consulting industry, knowing the factors of success can become especially important for companies trying to enter or sustain their position in the market (Grant 2010: 86-89). Other authors even define so called success factors for consultancies, which can be used as reference for evaluating the success of projects, even though the factors to be evaluated are perceived rather subjectively by clients and consultants (Dichtl 1998: 96).

The approaches presented by Dichtl (1998), Eschenbach and Nagy (2001), and by BearingPoint (2012) focus on what is needed to be a successful consultancy, not pointing towards specific project criteria that need to be fulfilled to successfully conduct assignments. Fritz and Effenberger (1998) analyzed how successful projects differ from unsuccessful ones in 141 companies. They derived, based on different project phases (initiation, selection of consultants, execution, implementation, and evaluation), success factors without giving measurable, concrete variables or numbers. Heuermann and Herrmann (2003) also tried to focus more on project important factors. Still, they do not mention any detailed ratios or concrete variables that consultants should fulfill to achieve client satisfaction.

Appelbaum and Steed (2005) empirically analyzed success factors from management consulting literature. Although admitting to some limitations of the study (e.g. subjective perception of the success factors), they found measurability of results is an important aspect for successful projects from the client's perspective. This also incorporates clear communication about expectations and outcomes. Still, there are no "must-fulfill" success factors that the authors can identify from their analysis (see Appelbaum & Steed 2005).

Consultants and clients must together agree upon the key success factors for their project in advance, and should properly document project progress. Collaboration with determining success factors is most important; otherwise questions will arise if success factors described by the consultant are accepted and agreed by clients (zu Knyphausen-Aufseß et al. 2009: 15). From a scientific viewpoint, success factors are not useful in evaluating the outcomes of an assignment due to their subjective perception and measuring difficulty (zu Knyphausen-Aufseß et al. 2009: 17).

Consultants themselves perceive a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches to evaluate their performance and the outcomes of assignments as most beneficial (Technische Universität Chemnitz 2009: 17). Using only financial indicators would not account for many qualitative factors influencing project results. Additionally, the consultant’s work will rarely be the sole cause for improvements for the client (Poulfelt & Greiner 2010: 455).

Table 1 summarizes the presented evaluation tools, as well as the preconditions for applying them.

Table 1: Project preconditions to the applicability of evaluation tools from management consulting

Tool	Precondition to applicability
Cost-benefit ratio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All types of costs must be known and quantifiable ▪ Goals (which represent the benefits when achieved) must be quantifiable
Capital market approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clients need to act on a capital market
Return on investment (ROI) Return on consulting (ROC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proper documentation of project costs, not only consultant’s bills but also payroll costs for company staff ▪ Setting unambiguous goals that present project benefits as measurable quantities based on key performance indicators ▪ Clearly set target values are of importance
Assignment performance report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agreed budget ▪ Clearly set milestones ▪ Proper project documentation
Project profitability analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agreed budget ▪ Clearly set milestones ▪ Proper project documentation
Trend analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well conducted project documentation ▪ Clearly set milestones
Interviews, questionnaires, discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Willingness, openness and honesty of project participants
Success factors analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consultants and clients together have to agree upon the key success factors for their project in advance of the project start ▪ Proper project documentation according to the key success factors that need to be fulfilled

Source: authors' own compilation

3. Transfer: A Segment-Specific Approach to the Evaluation of Political Consulting Assignments

In the previous chapter, management consulting evaluation tools and preconditions for their applicability have been extracted from literature. In order to transfer tools to the political consulting arena, a segmentation of political consulting services shall be undertaken. The goal of this segmentation is to match some of the tools, via their preconditions for applicability, to some of the political consulting segments. First, literature on existing segmentation approaches will be reviewed. Afterwards, an evaluation-oriented new segmentation will be proposed as a basis for applying evaluation tools from management consulting.

3.1. Segments of Political Consulting Assignments

The extant literature reveals that there are five different approaches to segment the market of political consulting:

(1) Segmentation according to the content of the consulting assignments

Content approaches focus on topics consultants deal with. Kubr (2002: 588) identifies specific client problems as a basis to describe public sector consulting:

- Strategy and policy advice: help with societal or administrative problems from top management consultants
- Designing, developing and managing programs and operations (operational projects)
- Adjustment of the machinery of public sector organization: organizational structures, processes and supporting systems such as finance, procurement, and human resource management to increase productivity or introduce new technologies or information systems (operational projects)
- Facilitation of change processes enabling public organizations to establish continuous learning, quality and performance management, and training of staff (strategic and operational projects)

Raffel (2006: 19-20) presents segmentation according to fields of political consulting that differ in content:

- Technical-functional political consulting: transferring knowledge from educated experts to political actors
- Organizational-economical consulting: managing processes and structures in public organizations
- Programmatic-conceptual consulting: developing programs in various political areas
- Strategic-competitive assignments: creating political, competitive advantage

Falk and Römmele (2009: 29-32) suggest another differentiation according to project contents:

- Fundraising: acquiring resources for political actors
- Image management: strategic creation and maintenance of a public image of persons and institutions
- Issue management: strategic handling of conflicting topics touched by politics, economy and society
- Monitoring: systematic observation of topics
- Lobbying: representation of interests to influence the process of laws and regulations

- Strategy consulting: support of companies and public institutions with strategic planning and implementation

(2) Segmentation according to the goal of the consulting assignments

The current trends for governments to consolidate budgets, finding innovative solutions for labor market, health, social security and education, e-government, and quality management ask for external expertise and represent the general goals the public sector is aiming for when employing consultants (Niedereichholz & Niedereichholz 2006: 138; Niedereichholz & Niedereichholz 2008: 207-208).

Falk and Römmele (2009), along with Sommer and Wehlau (2010), describe three main types of political consulting, following the dimensions of a modern politics term that differ in content and goal of assignments:

- Policy advice: consulting in different political fields to develop political programs for the fields (clients: corporative actors (e.g. ministries, government), collective (e.g. parliament) and individual actors (e.g. politicians) (Sommer & Wehlau 2010, p. 11))
- Politics consulting: strategic communications consulting in the area of political processes to influence public opinion to achieve maximum votes
- Polity consulting: institutional set-up of political systems and processes (especially in radical change situations) (Falk & Römmele 2009: 10).

A new approach of applying business methods to what the authors in the previous paragraph call polity consulting, describes research on new public management (starting in the 1980s in the UK and USA, 1990s in Germany). Reforming the public administration with business management methods shall, among other goals, increase efficiency and customer orientation of the public administration (see Armbrüster 2006, Brüggemeier 2005). Criticism is still expressed, as methods from private business management are transferred to the public sector without accounting for all its specialties and unique features (Mongkol 2011: 2).

de'ge'pol (2010: 8-9) differentiates direct and indirect types of political consulting for different clients following specific goals clients have.

Direct consulting of political actors includes:

- Scientific political consulting: support of the legislative process
- Political field consulting: provision of expert knowledge in different political areas
- Strategic political consulting: developing arguments for political decision makers for public communication
- Organizational political consulting: reforming organization of political bodies and public institutions, formation of interest groups

- Technical political consulting for public administration and public institutions (e.g. introducing new technologies, software systems)

Indirect consulting of political actors:

- Lobbyism: representing the interests of a certain group and indirectly consulting political decision makers by showing consequences of certain regulations and laws for the respective interest group

Direct consultation of companies on political topics:

- Inform companies about politics' processes, how politics works
- Help companies exert influence to ensure their interests are met
- Advice on political perceptions of entrepreneurial decisions concerning for example corporate social responsibility

(3) Segmentation according to clients of political consulting

Falk and Römmele (2009) point to another widely used segmentation approach of differentiating between political consulting and politicians consulting according to the clients of consulting services (see also Priddat & Theurl 2004). Political consulting addresses the citizens, since it is understood as advice on how constitutional and sub-constitutional interest can be supported and information on political processes can be spread (character of a collective good), while politicians consulting addresses the interests of politicians, e.g. how to be reelected (character of a private good) (Falk & Römmele 2009: 10).

A more specific focus on private companies working in public sector consulting is presented by Raffel, who identifies three main clients (2006: 3-4):

- Public companies: on business questions such as strategic planning, organization of financing
- Public administration: new public management to improve efficiency and effectiveness
- Politicians: government advice of expert commissions, public relations (PR), public affairs (PA)

Papenfuß and Thomas describe political consulting segments according to its functions for specific clients. They identify operative, conceptional, educational, legitimating and filtering functions (Papenfuß & Thomas 2011: 430):

- Operative function for politicians and ministries: consulting of political decision makers on planning and implementing economic measures, concrete proposals about how political goals can be reached

- Conceptual function for politicians, ministries and the public: developing major concepts for long-term measures, showing interdependencies and consequences
- Educational function for the public: educating the public about economic correlations of single political measures
- Legitimizing function for the public: already made decision shall be legitimated through scientific expertise
- Filtering function for politicians and ministries: filter possible political decisions concerning their negative impact on growth and welfare

(4) Segmentation according to suppliers of political consulting

Falk and Römmele (2009) point to the general observation that market based companies focus on politics consulting (strategic communications consulting in the area of political processes), and not market based companies focusing on policy consulting (for material politics meaning different contents in different fields of politics). Market based actors, for example, are management consultancies, communication and public affairs agencies, in-house consultancies, or individual consultants. Non market based actors include foundations, non-governmental institutions (NGOs), Enquete and expert commissions, and associations (Falk & Römmele 2009: 36).

(5) Segmentation according to the duration of the consulting assignment

Becker (2004) differentiates between ad-hoc consulting and institutionalized consulting. Ad-hoc consulting is referring to individual experts or a group of experts working on one topic for a limited time, whilst institutionalized expert groups provide long-term consultation just like the US Council of Economic Advisers or the German Council of Economic Experts.

3.2. A New, Evaluation-Oriented Segmentation Approach

The five segmentation dimensions presented above are content, goal, client, supplier, and duration of assignments. It shall be proposed to focus on the first two dimensions for an evaluation-oriented segmentation based on management consulting evaluation tools:

- The duration of an assignment is directly linked with the content or goal of the project. Strategy projects, for example, can last some weeks if the goal is to quickly react to changing environments or adopting an existing strategy to an unforeseeable crisis; they can in contrast also last for several months if the goal is to develop and implement a long-term strategy. It can be assumed that - when appropriately linked to project content and goal - the duration is not an independent determinant for a project's success.
- To differentiate evaluation by suppliers can contradict a major goal of evaluation in the first place, which is to find differences among service providers. Furthermore, consultants mostly

offer several services in more than one segment. Roland Berger Strategy Consultants, for example, not only offer campaign development for parties and federal ministries, but also new public management expertise (Roland Berger Strategy Consultants n.d.). Roland Berger himself also acts as a personal advisor for politicians (Roland Berger Strategy Consultants n.d.; Rügemer 2004b: 94-96).

- Client focused segmentation approaches are rather unsuited for our new segmentation, too. The problem is very comparable to the one on supplier based segmentation. Clients can be in need for various experts for different project contents. A country's public administration, for example, could demand cost-cutting advice (typical new public management (NPM) project) but at the same time need help with developing a sustainable HR strategy. Consequently, general statements like "Client X initiates projects with the topic Y" are not feasible. Additionally, services are likely to be provided by several different consultants.

Consequently, content and goal focused approaches shall be regarded as suitable to build a new market segmentation and to analyze if management evaluation tools can be applied to the segments' projects.

The following table illustrates which segments of the content and goal segmentation approaches are proposed by different authors to be combined to new segments. On the one hand, the table shows segmentation according to content, while on the other hand, segmentation according to goals of the assignment.

Table 2: Combination of authors' different approaches for proposed segments

Approach	Initial segments by different authors	Proposed segments
Content focused segmentation approaches	Kubr: Strategy and policy advice	Strategy consulting
	Raffel: Strategic competitive political consulting	
	Falk/Römmele: Strategy consulting	
	Kubr: Designing and developing programs and operations	Scientific program development
	Raffel: Technical-functional political consulting and programmatic-conceptual political consulting	
	Kubr: Managing programs and operations	Monitoring
	Raffel: Organizational-operational political consulting	
	Falk/Römmele: Monitoring	
	Kubr: Adjustment of the public sector organization and facilitating change processes	New public management
	Raffel: Organizational-political consulting	
	Raffel: Strategic-competitive political consulting	Public relations
	Falk/Römmele: Image management	
	Falk/Römmele: Lobbyism	Lobbyism
	Falk/Römmele: Fundraising	Fundraising
Goal focused segmentation approaches	Falk/Römmele & Sommer/Wehlau: Policy advice	Political field advice and scientific political consulting
	de'ge'pol: Scientific political consulting and political field consulting	
	Falk/Römmele & Sommer/Wehlau: Politics consulting	Public relations
	de'ge'pol: Strategic political consulting	
	Falk/Römmele & Sommer/Wehlau: Polity consulting	New public management
	Armbrüster: New public management	
	de'ge'pol: Organizational political consulting and technical political consulting	
	de'ge'pol: Organizational political consulting, lobbyism	Lobbyism
	de'ge'pol: Direct consulting for private companies	Public affairs

Source: authors' own compilation

In the next step, a comprehensive segmentation for evaluation purposes is derived that combines the final segments of content and goal focused approaches (see Table 3). In case a segment evolved from a combination of differently named initial segments in the content and goal focused approach, it is indicated in the first column in brackets. The origination from the content or goal focused approach can be identified by the letters "c" or "g" respectively. The proposed segments are the following:

- Scientific program development (content focused segmentation approach) and political field advice & scientific political consulting (goal focused segmentation approach) are now representing the segment "*scientific political consulting*". The major goal of projects is to provide expertise with studies, forecasts, and different analyses to support political decision makers and institutions, along with providing expert knowledge in different political areas without directly influencing the legislative process (lobbyism in contrast where expertise is

provided too, aims at influencing the legislative process). Private consultancies, as well as public institutions, universities, foundations, or research institutes offer scientific advice.

Table 3: Segmentation of the market of political consulting

Segments	Tasks	Goals	Clients	Suppliers
Scientific political consulting (combined segments: scientific program development (c) + political field advice & scientific political consulting (g))	Studies, expert reports, future forecasts, impact assessment, scientific papers	Providing expertise and support political decision makers in the decision making process (legislative process), provision of expert knowledge in different political areas	Political decision makers (ministries, government, states, municipalities, parties)	Foundations, research institutes, individual experts (e.g. university professors), universities, management consultancies, public and private associations, political consultancies
Strategic political consulting (strategy consulting (c))	Strategic handling of conflicting topics touched by politics, economy and society, strategic planning and concept development	Short and/or long-term strategy concepts, preparation for future challenges, strategic orientation	Political decision makers (ministries, government, states, municipalities, parties), public institutions	Management consultancies, political consultancies and agencies
New public management (c & g)	Developing concepts to change organizational and process structures, introducing new technologies and software programs, introducing monitoring systems	Increase efficiency and effectiveness, save costs, reduce personnel, monitor developments to identify areas for improvement	Public administration bodies (federal and state ministries, municipalities)	Management consultancies, political consultancies
Public relations (c & g)	Campaigning, developing communication and marketing concepts	Increase votes, achieve competitive advantage, sensitize public for topics	Politicians, parties, political institutions, private companies	PR agencies, marketing agencies, communications agencies, political consultancies
Fundraising (c)	Direct communication (via email and mail newsletters, telephoning, personal appearance on events)	Acquiring money	Political and public actors and institutions, NGOs	Management consultancies, political consultancies, PR and PA agencies
Lobbyism (c & g)	Representing the interests of a group of individuals or companies following the same goals	Placing the interests into the legislative process	Private companies, association's members, unions	Public and private associations, PR and PA agencies, private persons
Public affairs (g)	Giving advice to private companies about how politics work, opportunities for companies to establish relations to and influence politics and about political consequences of entrepreneurial actions	Providing information, educate companies	Private companies	Management consultancies, political consultancies, PA agencies

Source: authors' own compilation

- Strategy focused projects aim at creating short or long-term concepts on how clients can cope with future challenges and changing environments, including strategic handling of conflicting topics touched by politics, economy, and society. Projects might deal with strategic planning and strategic orientation of the government, coalition, opposition, or political parties for a certain period of time (e.g. for one legislative period). Provided for political decision makers or public institutions, management consultancies, as well as political consultancies and agencies offer *strategic political consulting*.
- *New public management* with both a content and goal focused approach represents the major public sphere in which management consultancies work. Management tools are applied to public administration processes and structures. Consultants develop concepts to restructure and reorganize public bodies to save costs or reduce personnel, often by introducing new technologies, software systems, or monitoring programs.
- Major clients of *public relations* projects are political groups or institutions, such as parties or ministries. The main tasks for consultants are to develop campaigns to create competitive advantage (e.g. for parties in election contests) or bring a topic across to the public (e.g. importance of family friendliness of companies by a federal ministry). The central question is how clients can communicate their concerns in the best way to the target audience. Private companies also use PR consultants to develop marketing and communication concepts. Consultancies working in this segment are management consultancies and agencies specialized in marketing or communication.
- *Fundraising projects* aim at acquiring money for political actors, institutions, NGOs, or other public groups or institutions. Carried out by management and political consultancies or PR and PA agencies, projects from this segment do not directly follow political motives or goals, but may indirectly follow them as the money acquired might be used for political issues.
- Foundations, associations, and other unions are actively representing the interests of groups of companies or people foremost in the legislative process in the segment of *lobbyism*. Being discussed very controversially (see Armbrüster 2006; Rügemer 2004b; Wolf 2000), consequences of laws need to be pointed out from the perspective of all stakeholders affected as part of democratic decision-making. Lobbyism can have manifold faces: from officially invited industry representatives, to informal talks between politicians and representatives at events. The goal is always to place interests into the political process by actively influencing political processes.
- *Public affairs* projects are deliberately not included in the category of lobbyism: Public affairs consultants help companies develop relations to politics, but do not actively influence politics. Companies have to do this individually which makes it decisively different from lobbyism. In this segment, the focus rather lies on helping private companies understand political processes, how politics works, and what companies need to do in order to guarantee that their interests are taken into account in political processes. In contrast to the other segments, clients of public affairs consulting are privately organized. Suppliers can be management and political consultancies, and agencies specialized in public affairs.

3.3. Applicable Evaluation Tools of Management Consulting to Segments of Political Consulting

Within the introduced segments, the characteristics of projects determine which evaluation tools can be applied according to the evaluation dimensions “measurement (M) vs. explanation (E)” and “process (P) vs. result (R)”. This argument is supported by results of expert interviews. One interviewee states:

“As there are probably great differences between the segments, different evaluation methods are needed.” (Interview 2-C11)

(1) Scientific political consulting

In this segment, the major goal is to provide expertise from studies, forecasts, and other analytical means. From the nature of the assignments, it can be assumed that public institutions are major clients, be governmental or non-governmental. A member of parliament (MP) describes a typical assignment as a request to the parliamentary scientific service for studies or clarifications of a certain topic, in order to share the expert knowledge of the service employees within legislative processes (Interview 1-A1). It can easily be measured whether studies are available, but whether the statements made in these studies are beneficial for its reader depends on his or her purpose. Some parties might be able to use studies for their already defined opinions on certain political topics, while others might oppositely see the transportation of their opinion even endangered by certain studies. Our interview partner nevertheless points to the importance of scientific political consulting as the internal knowledge is often unavailable to MPs or party members.

Measuring the benefit for the client is very complicated. Explaining whether studies were successful and which factors influenced this success respectively, is equally complicated. What consultants might be able to analyze is an *internal cost-benefit ratio*, in the sense of how many people worked for how many hours on developing an analysis (costs), compared to the payment received for the analysis (benefit). This can be considered a case where preconditions for tool application are fulfilled and the result can be assessed. The client might also be able to express satisfaction with the study or the collaboration with consultants in *personal talks* to the consultant (process and result). In general, there is no quantitative evaluation conducted.

“We are not institutionally or quantitatively evaluating the services we used with specific methods. We rather discuss results within our parliamentary or working group, and then decide which of the presented facts are most suitable to support our own opinion and political direction.” (Interview 1-C8, C9).

The quotation shows that not the work of the consultants but rather the results are assessed according to a subjective position.

(2) Strategic political consulting

In strategic political consulting, an internal measurement of *costs (hours worked) and benefit (payment)* is possible (preconditions are fulfilled). What is measurable is the project process depending on whether clients and consultants agree upon milestones, and properly document all costs which are charged by consultants. In case the preconditions are fulfilled, *assignment performance record, project profitability analysis, or trend analysis* are likely to be applicable. If it is relevant to the client, consultants can provide them with the mentioned analysis.

“Sometimes there is no time for an evaluation or the clients do not want to pay for it; sometimes the results are obvious and evaluation is superfluous.” (Interview 4-C8).

A consultant reports in an interview that, at his firm, most results are evaluated but sometimes interim milestone meetings are conducted to check if everything is on track and on time. Although, specific quantitative methods are not used, evaluation is performed through feedback talks (Interview 4- C9).

Generally, measuring the results of strategically oriented projects is very tricky. Whether a strategic recommendation or plan is feasible and beneficial for the client is often not visible after the project is finished. Thus calculating the ROI is almost impossible. Aiming at long-term preparation of the client, advice can turn out to be helpful only after several years or not at all, since for example the client's internal structures, political goals or orientation had changed before the consultant's work could unfold. Consultants are able to conduct *feedback talks*, as it has been confirmed by several of the interviewees, or *surveys* with the client to analyze the satisfaction with their performance, which is beneficial for both sides to improve for future projects. *Success factor analysis* can be used if clients and consultants agree upon the decisive factors that are able to explain prior to project commencement whether the consulting project has been successful.

(3) New public management (NPM)

If goals such as saving costs or increasing efficiency in public administration bodies are pursued, the results of NPM projects and consequently the consultant's performance are quantitatively measurable. The same applies to process related measurements if both parties properly document all costs and expenses. In contrast to strategic political consulting projects, the *ROI* can also be calculated for NPM projects, since the return can be quantified by costs saved through an increase in efficiency for example. Explanation oriented evaluation tools can be applied in case that client and consultant are interested in identifying opportunities for further improvement of the process, although we can assume that the economically desired outcomes are most important in NPM projects.

There is even an obligation to document, calculate and evaluate the interim and final results in case the NPM project was attributed to a consultant after a public tender announcement. Again, evaluation methods differ between projects. For their internal evaluation, consultants working at a small Berlin consultancy reported that they calculate profits compared to their costs (*cost-benefit-ratio*), in order to

be able to adjust tender offers in future projects in case this ratio is negative (Interview 6-C5,C8,C9). For the external evaluation to the tendering authority, a detailed final report must be carried out, which includes a methodological and financial part. *Feedback talks* with the experts employed, as well as detailed billing within project budget need to be reported. Explanatory and measurable evaluation methods can be used in NPM projects. Consequently, all measures besides capital market approaches can be applied.

(4) Public relations

Measuring results of PR projects in a political context is challenging. Identifying the influence a campaign had on elections is nearly impossible, as too many other factors influence voting results (see Schoen 2005; Völkl 2009). The consulting process is only measurable with a *trend analysis*, an *assignment performance report*, or a *project profitability analysis* if milestones are quantifiable, such as how many posters were hung up two weeks prior to the election. An interview partner who conducts PR projects supported this view:

“Measurable is, for example, how many newsletters have been sent out or how many talks have been conducted, but the effects of the activities is not measurable. Although, we also distribute feedback surveys after conferences we organized which might count as measurement but the impacts of all that is rather an explanatory measure.” (Interview 7-C8,C9).

The same applies to communication or marketing concepts aimed at sensitizing the public for a certain topic. It would be possible to count how many times a certain topic has been mentioned in newspapers or journals, but the influence of the consultant on the public awareness is not directly measurable. Conducting a representative census would be possible, but in all probability too expensive. Manageable in terms of costs and time for consultant and client are *feedback talks* to review collaboration.

“We plan to do more reviews, assessing positive and negative experiences we had with different consultants. Our goal here is learn for future elections – to see what has worked and what has not worked.” (Interview 1-C13).

(5) Fundraising

The goal of acquiring money is easily measurable with a *cost-benefit ratio* and the *ROI* tool as costs/investments if properly documented, as well as if benefit/return in monetary terms are identifiable. As acquiring money is the only goal, explaining how the money has been acquired is of minor importance and interest to the client, thus process related tools are not considered. Consultants asked in Interview 6 confirmed these statements. Clients here are only interested in the result (money acquired). As the result is the most common reason for follow-up project, consultants do not conduct internal evaluations of processes due to additional costs and other resources (Interview 6-C15).

(6) Lobbyism

It might be possible to assess whether lobbyists were successful in placing the interests of their clients in legislation or political processes, when lobbying activities are formally documented and published (e.g. position papers which parliamentary committees take into account when discussing law drafts), says a consultant from a major interbranch and employers' association which we interviewed (Interview 2-B6). In case laws lead to dismissals of workers, the prevention of such laws might be called successful in terms of jobs saved (Interview 4-B6). But this is rather an abstract and difficult to generalize example.

However, activities are often not documented, for example, when lobbyists participate in conferences and events and talk to several people expressing their clients' interests. To what extent such talks influence legislative processes cannot be identified. Only lobbyists can report to their clients in *briefing sessions* or *status meetings* to whom they have talked about what, but whether the interests can be placed into laws is influenced by many other factors. In most cases there is mostly no public access to the results of lobbying processes.

"We do not work for the public and do not publish any final reports or balances as there is no legal obligation to do so. For us there is no economic justification for the additional costs that would arise with such publications. Nevertheless, the interested public could do own comparisons of our press releases and position papers and published laws." (Interview 2-C12).

The consultants of this specific employers' association conduct internal evaluation of their initiatives by checking whether their proposed positions were incorporated into legislative proposals, if they were mentioned in public or parliamentary speeches, press releases, or conferences (Interview 2-C9). Consequently, a qualitative review might be possible, but measuring results would most likely not.

(7) Public affairs

Evaluating public affairs projects is very difficult as consultants do not actively get in touch with the political sphere, which clients have to do themselves. Consultants can merely give advice on how to establish relations. Clients and consultant can *discuss* whether the consultant's advice was helpful but as execution is in the hand of the client, measuring the consultant's performance is impossible. A communication consultant reports that

"often clients are not interested to measure our work. For them the most important success criterion is if we were able to solve the problem with which they had approached us...We do an internal evaluation of what was good and what was bad during the project basically for personnel development. We need to guarantee our client's satisfaction which we test with surveys once a year. At the end of each project we have feedback talks." (Interview 3-B5,C8,C9).

Due to the difficulty of measuring results in public affairs projects, evaluation is conducted with qualitative methods. Results are in the focus of evaluations which interestingly are conducted at

foremost by the consultants themselves to guarantee client satisfaction, but also to identify areas for improvement.

Table 4: Segments-Tools-Matrix

Evaluation tools	Cost-benefit ratio	Capital market approaches	ROI & ROC	Assignment performance report	Project profitability analysis	Trend analysis	Interviews, questionnaires, discussions	Success factors analysis	Dimensions of evaluation in segments
Segments									
Scientific political consulting	X (internal)						X		E: P,R
Strategic political consulting	X (internal)			X	X	X	X	X	M: P E: P,R
New public management	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	M: P,R E: P,R
Public relations				X	X	X	X		M: P E: P,R
Fundraising	X		X				(X)		M:R E: P,R
Lobbyism							X		E: P
Public affairs							X		E:P
Dimensions of evaluation of tools	M, R	M, R	M, R	M, P	M, P	M, P	E, P&R	E, P&R	

Measurement = M; Explanation = E; Process = P; Result = R

Source: Authors' own compilation based on interview results

In sum, capital market approaches are not applicable to any political consulting projects due to the very nature of clients who are publicly organized and thus lacking capital market involvement.

From Table 4, we can see that quantitative evaluation tools from the dimensions “measurement” and “result” can only be applied to those projects which have economically measurable goals, in order to assess a consultant’s performance. If projects follow qualitative goals, but consultants and clients are still able to document project costs and agree to milestones, evaluation tools from the dimensions “measurement” and “process” are well deployable. For projects with qualitative goals where costs and milestones are not possible to identify, evaluation tools come from the “explanation” dimension. For some projects there is even no evaluation of outcomes possible, as the results cannot be attributed to the consultant’s work (lobbyism, public affairs). In these cases only a qualitative assessment through explanation tools like status meetings or final meetings with the client might be possible to explain activities and actions taken.

4. Conclusion: Segment-Specific Applicability of Management Consulting Tools to Political Consulting

After a review of proven evaluation tools in management consulting, we have developed a new segmentation for political consulting services and considered the transferability of management consulting evaluation tools to the derived segments. We have developed a “segments-tools-matrix”, which reveals a number of findings:

- Scientific political consulting entails activities which are hard to assess with proven management consulting tools. Next to an internal cost-benefit ratio only qualitative measures for explaining the consulting process and results are applicable. The concrete way and effectiveness of evaluation is dependent on the paradigmatic view on scientific political consulting according to Habermas (1971) and the concurrent roles of advisors and political actors (as described on pages 6 and 12). Considering management consulting evaluation tools hardly leads to new insights for this segment.
- Strategic political consulting, new public management (NPM), and public relations may benefit widely from proven management consulting evaluation tools. This corresponds with the essential understanding of NPM, which is to regard the public sphere from a management perspective. It implies to evaluate political work and political consulting mainly from an economic perspective. Classical process and result measures may be applied for evaluation purposes.
- Fundraising is a specific segment which is prone to be evaluated in terms of financial results.
- Lobbyism and public affairs form segments of activities which gear to influence actors in the political arena. Sociological and psychological analyses might be suited to evaluate a consultant’s work in these areas. Classical management consulting evaluation tools are mainly unsuited.

Following a rather general approach of rationalizing segments of political consulting and respective evaluation methods, concrete evaluation tools for individual projects could not be developed. Furthermore, the relative suitability of possibly adequate tools against each other has not been assessed. This would imply to consider the purpose of clients (and consultants) for conducting an evaluation of a particular assignment. Clients and consultants have different understandings of successful project outcomes (Heuermann & Herrmann 2003: 258), and both parties alone may have different reasons for conducting an evaluation. Whether an evaluation is performed for reasons of steering and controlling a consulting assignment, legitimizing a project or deriving learnings for the future influences the appropriateness of a specific evaluation approach significantly (Kühl 2008). This leaves room for further research in this area. In addition, fully understanding the complex political arena would need to be researched by applying methods that adequately match the complexity such as network analysis, interdisciplinary approaches or longer and broader qualitative studies. The discipline of management may serve well to propose evaluation methods for certain areas of the political field, but surely not in a fully comprehensive way.

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