The academic non-consultation phenomenon revisited: a research agenda

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THE ACADEMIC NON-CONSULTATION PHENOMENON REVISITED: A RESEARCH AGENDA

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of the present article is to revive interest in the question, never definitively answered, that Stephen Watson raised in the title of his 2000 paper *"Why is it that management academics rarely advise on their own institutions?"* We argue that finding the answer to the question would not only be interesting in and of itself but could also lead to valuable contributions to the theory of the learning organization.

Design/methodology/approach – Taking inspiration from Watson's original article and a new interview we made with him in 2017, we discuss the possible explanations for why management academics rarely advise on their own institutions and set out an agenda for future research.

Findings – We suggest a simple three-way categorization of the nine hypotheses identified by Watson (2000), grouping them by the themes of management knowledge, motivation of HEI (higher education institution) managers, and incentives for academics to engage. We propose an integrated framework to illustrate how these three categories of hypotheses are connected and can jointly explain the observed phenomenon. We provide theoretical underpinnings for the most promising hypotheses and suggest an agenda for future research, emphasizing the potential of such research to contribute to the learning organization field.

Research limitations/implications – This article should not be interpreted primarily as an attempt to provide support for any particular hypothesis. Rather, our principal aim is to sketch out a future research agenda and inspire others to contribute empirical evidence that can help shed light on the paradox of why management academics rarely advise on their own institutions.

Originality/value – The theoretical contribution of this article is to revive the important research topic of "why management academics do not seem to be widely engaged in advising university managers" (Watson, 2000, p. 99) and to introduce a research agenda that can help realize the potential contribution of this topic to the learning organization literature. The practical contribution is to re-address the difficulties of HEIs in becoming full-fledged "learning organizations" and to suggest that HEI managers re-examine the possibilities for using hitherto untapped internal expertise.

Article:

In 2000, Stephen R. Watson published the article *"Why is it that management academics rarely advise on their own institutions?"* in which he proposed various hypotheses to help answer the question posed in the article's title, while leaving empirical testing for future research. 17 years later, little progress appears to have been made in solving the puzzle of why management academics rarely play a role in advising the managers of their own institutions. The purpose of the present article is to revive this debate. Solving the puzzle would not only be interesting in and of itself but could also contribute to the theory of the learning organization. Taking inspiration from Watson's original article and a new interview we made with him in 2017, we discuss the possible explanations for why management academics rarely advise on their own institutions and set out an agenda for future research.

INTRODUCTION

There is no compelling reason to believe that higher education institutions (HEI) should be easier to manage than most organizations. On the contrary, managing HEIs can pose daunting challenges: HEI leaders must steer their institution along a path of financial viability while faced with ever-changing political and cultural attitudes towards education, and while overseeing a staff of independent-minded academics with a sometimes lackluster enthusiasm for implementing orders from above.

Fortunately, leaders of business schools and their parent universities appear to have an ace up their sleeve: access to in-house expert advice. Whenever they grapple with intractable decision problems, such leaders can at least turn to the management professors in their own faculty for fresh ideas, perspectives, and strategies.

Except that they don't. In his self-explanatorily titled, informally written article *"Why is it that management academics rarely advise on their own institutions?"* (2000), Stephen R. Watson, who had served as dean of several business schools in the United Kingdom, expressed his puzzlement at this apparent waste of opportunity on the part of business school leaders, which he had observed over the course of a long academic career. The objective of his article was to raise awareness of the question and suggest some tentative answers. But Watson, now retired, has not seen evidence that much has changed in the meantime and believes the question is as relevant as ever, according to an interview we made with him in 2017.

In this paper we aim to breathe new life into the debate by several means. First, we supplement Watson's original article with his own up-to-date reflections from 2017. Second, we define a framework in which to fit Watson's original list of loosely structured hypotheses, facilitating systematic future research on the reasons for the lack of in-house consulting activity in HEIs. Third, we strengthen the theoretical underpinnings of some of the hypotheses by linking them to relevant contemporary theory. Fourth, we argue that solving the wasted-opportunity puzzle can contribute important insights to the field of organizational learning.

The structure of this paper is as follows. We start by revisiting the original nine hypotheses from Watson's (2000) article *"Why is it that management academics rarely advise on their own institutions?"* and summarizing Watson's up-to-date reflections with 17 years of hindsight on the three hypotheses (Hypotheses 7, 8, and 9) which "would seem to have greater explanatory power than others" (Watson, 2000, p. 99). Then we connect the article to learning organization theory in the context of HEIs to explain why Watson's research question is both interesting and important to the development of this field. Next, we propose a framework that categorizes the original nine hypotheses into groups and suggest a research agenda based on this framework. We close with a conclusion and a discussion of implications for theory and practice.

WATSON'S ORIGINAL HYPOTHESES AND HIS REFLECTIONS, 17 YEARS ON

In his 2000 article, Watson lists nine hypotheses, selected for their intuitive, theoretical, or other appeal, which might potentially explain the surprising phenomenon that "so little use of internal management experts takes place in universities" (p. 94). Discussing each hypothesis in turn, he downplays the first six as unconvincing or, at best, insufficient as a general explanation of the paradox, either on logical grounds or because these hypotheses are inconsistent with his empirical observations. But he emphasizes that each manifestation of the wasted-opportunity paradox needs to be explained individually, and that more than one factor might be at work in any given case.

The nine hypotheses in Watson (2000) are:

> *"Hypothesis 1:* There are limits to the knowledge base of any one management academic." (p. 91)

> *"Hypothesis 2:* Most knowledge about management has been derived from the private sector, and so it is not applicable to universities." (p. 92)

> *"Hypothesis 3:* To know about management does not entail an ability to practice management; so management academics should not necessarily be expected to be able to manage well." (p. 93)

> *"Hypothesis 4:* Analysing an organization in which the analyst works is much more difficult than analysing any other organization." (p. 94)

> *"Hypothesis 5:* Management prescriptions very rarely work anyway and so are not likely to be useful in higher education." (p. 94)

> *"Hypothesis 6:* Management theories affect practice implicitly rather than explicitly, and thus cannot be conveyed by simple advice." (p. 95)

> *"Hypothesis 7:* Higher education managers are unwilling to seek advice." (p. 96)

> *"Hypothesis 8:* It is difficult for university managers to believe that their own academics could be adequate advisers." (p. 97)

> *"Hypothesis 9:* There are few incentives and several disincentives for a management academic to be involved in advising the managers of his own institution." (p. 97)

Table 1 summarizes the rationale for each hypothesis and its likely explanatory power according to Watson's 2000 article. Readers are referred to the original article for Watson's detailed reflections on each hypothesis. At present it suffices to say that Watson gives the most credence to Hypotheses 7, 8, and 9. While there might also be some truth to the other six hypotheses, they do not "provide a satisfactory explanation for the observation that

management academics are rarely used as management advisers in their own universities"
(Watson, 2000, p. 96).

Table 1. Summary of Watson's (2000) nine hypotheses

Hypothesis	Explanation	Explanatory power & argumentation	
"Hypothesis 1: There are limits to the knowledge base of any one management academic." (p. 91)	No single scholar can be expected to know everything.	Weak	Limited knowledge base is not a problem that prevents university managers from gaining some benefits from in-house expertise.
"Hypothesis 2: Most knowledge about management has been derived from the private sector, and so it is not applicable to universities." (p. 92)	The structure and culture of universities are different from those of private-sector firms; hence, management knowledge derived from the latter might not be applicable to the former.	Weak	- All aspects of workplace law apply equally to both universities and private firms. - There is a substantial literature on the management of the public sector, including HEIs.
"Hypothesis 3: To know about management does not entail an ability to practise management; so management academics should not necessarily be expected to be able to manage well." (p. 93)	This is self-explanatory.	Weak	This might explain why many academics are not directly engaged in university management, but it cannot explain why so few of them are asked to provide advice.
"Hypothesis 4: Analysing an organization in which the analyst works is much more difficult than analysing any other organization." (p. 94)	The analyst's objectivity is compromised.	Weak	The difference between analyzing one's own organization and a different is hardly sufficient to explain why so little use is made of internal management expertise in universities.
"Hypothesis 5: Management prescriptions very rarely work anyway and so are not likely to be useful in higher education." (p. 94)	Reality is much more complicated than a simple step-by-step management guide.	Very weak	In many cases, management advice is both valid and valuable, resulting in improved outcomes.

"Hypothesis 6: Management theories affect practice implicitly rather than explicitly, and thus cannot be conveyed by simple advice." (p. 95)	"Simple short comments are insufficient to impart the subtleties of management theories" (p. 95).	Weak	"[It] is possible to provide useful management advice on the base of a simple intervention of limited duration." (p. 96)
"Hypothesis 7: Higher education managers are unwilling to seek advice." (p. 96)	It is not that managers are unwilling to seek advice from their own experts in particular; rather, they don't see the need to seek advice from anyone.	Strong	This might be one of the causes of the phenomenon.
"Hypothesis 8: It is difficult for university managers to believe that their own academics could be adequate advisers." (p. 97)	This is due to mistrust and a prior belief in the incompetence of the other side (academics vs managers).	Strong	"[Management] academics are not asked for advice because, by and large, they are not trusted by university managers." (p. 97)
"Hypothesis 9: There are few incentives and several disincentives for a management academic to be involved in advising the managers of his own institution." (p. 97)	Academics do not wish to be involved in providing management advice to their institutions.	Strong	"[The] disincentives for agreeing to provide management advice to their universities outweigh the incentives" for most academics (p. 98).

Notes:
- Regarding explanatory power, "weak" means that the hypothesis "does not adequately explain the observed phenomenon" (a phrase used by Watson on p. 92); "strong" means that the hypothesis has "more explanatory plausibility" (p. 96).
- In this table, "academics" refers to management academics, and "knowledge" refers to management knowledge.

Watson's reflections today

In January 2017 we interviewed Stephen Watson in order to learn whether he still considered the phenomenon he wrote about in his 2000 article relevant, and to let him expand on the personal experiences that inspired the article and led him to conclude that his

Hypotheses 7-9 were particularly convincing potential explanations of the phenomenon of internal academic non-consultation in HEIs.

The intriguing backstory of Watson's paper is that while the paper suggests the attitudes of HEI managers are partly to blame for the failure to make practical use of the vast repository of in-house academic knowledge in an HEI, Watson was himself a long-time HEI manager, having been the dean of several business schools. We asked him whether he had ever solicited the help of his own professors to make major management decisions.

Watson explained that he had done so on several occasions, but with mixed results. In a couple of cases the in-house experts gave advice which, though theoretically sound, lacked the specificity to make much difference in practice. In retrospect, rather than blaming the experts for the indifferent results of their involvement, Watson believes he might have obtained a better outcome by giving the academics stronger incentives to get engaged in the process and treat the task as an important part of their job. These reflections on incentivization support Hypothesis 9 on Watson's own list of hypotheses.

But in our interview Watson also recounted several anecdotes illustrating how the skill sets of many management academics, while well suited to teaching and research, may not be directly applicable to solving the problems faced by HEI leaders. Most management academics do not have extensive experience of tasks such as managing department budgets or making actual strategies at a detailed practical level. This suggests that the skepticism of managers expressed by Hypothesis 8 is not always unfounded. Moreover, if HEI managers tend to form a negative perception of the value of their own experts' advice, this might well reinforce their skepticism towards seeking advice in general, which strengthens support for Hypothesis 7. As Watson has consistently pointed out, his hypotheses should not be seen as mutually exclusive.

Watson's professional observations, as exemplified by the anecdotes he told us, indicate that the divergence between management academics' assessment of their own practical capabilities and the perception of these capabilities by business school managers can be sharp. In situations where managers turn out to have exercised poor judgment, resident academics are sometimes confident in their belief that if only they had been involved in the decision-making, a superior outcome would have ensued, while the responsible managers are just as confident in rejecting this notion. Such a strong asymmetry of mutual evaluation is hardly conducive to the smooth cooperation of managers and academics in decision-making. Overall, while Watson in retirement continues to disclaim knowledge of the ultimate answer to the question he posed in his 2000 article, his experience suggests that the overlapping involvement of managers and academics in business school decision-making is a matter fraught with challenges.

In the next section, we connect Watson's article to the literature on *learning organizations* in the context of HEIs and examine why the research question raised by Watson is interesting and important for this stream of research.

CONNECTION TO THE *LEARNING ORGANIZATION* LITERATURE IN THE HEI CONTEXT

Watson, in our recent interview with him, stressed that he did not have any theories of learning organizations in mind when he wrote his 2000 article. Nevertheless, HEIs, by their nature, are logically linked to the concept of learning organizations. The broad spectrum of criteria used to define a "learning organization" covers four aspects, as outlined by Örtenblad (2002, p. 226):

- An organization where employees learn while working, not by taking courses: the "learning at work" perspective. According to Örtenblad (2002), studies that understand the idea of a learning organization according to this perspective include Jones and Hendry (1992), Watkins and Marsick (1993), and Jones and Hendry (1994).
- An organization where a positive atmosphere for learning is facilitated: the "learning climate" perspective. According to Örtenblad (2002), studies adopting this perspective include Garratt (1990), Lessem (1991), Pedler *et al.* (1991), Watkins and Marsick (1993), Marquardt and Reynolds (1994), West (1994), and Pedler and Aspinwall (1998).
- An organization with an organic structure characterized by being flexible, decentralized, informal, and team-based, so that individuals are enabled to make their own decisions: the "learning structure" perspective. As studies representing this perspective, Örtenblad (2002) lists Senge (1990), Jones and Hendry (1992), Watkins and Marsick (1993), West (1994), and Pedler and Aspinwall (1998).
- An organization where the need for learning is recognized and knowledge is stored in the organizational memory: the "organizational learning" perspective. Here Örtenblad (2002) lists the following studies as representative: McGill *et al.* (1992), Garvin (1993), Watkins and Marsick (1993), Jones and Hendry (1994), Marquardt and Reynolds (1994), and West (1994).

There is an overlap of studies representing the different perspectives, signifying that the definitions need not be seen as mutually exclusive. Arguably an organization can be considered a "learning organization" as long as it satisfies the criteria of at least one perspective (Örtenblad, 2002). In view of the four perspectives, HEIs are inherently learning organizations to a certain extent (Örtenblad and Koris, 2014). Lecturers and researchers learn while they teach and do research (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Örtenblad and Koris, 2014) so HEIs are learning organizations according to the learning at work perspective (Örtenblad and Koris, 2014). From the learning climate perspective, HEIs are learning organizations since academic staff members are encouraged to apply for research grants and conduct research (Örtenblad and Koris, 2014). Since they are relatively decentralized (Watkins, 2005), HEIs can be considered learning organizations from the learning structure perspective (Örtenblad and

Koris, 2014). Finally, as knowledge is stored in university knowledge repository centers such as libraries and online database systems, HEIs are learning organizations according to the organizational learning perspective.

As HEIs are to some degree "learning organizations" by their innate nature, as explained above, one might naturally assume that HEIs excel in learning, and especially in extracting knowledge from their academic employees. Surprisingly, as Watson (2000) has pointed out, this is not the case: "[There] is very little evidence that explicit use of the management knowledge possessed by management academics takes place in the management of higher education" (pp. 89-90). It is paradoxical that "despite employing leading experts on the practice of management, business schools and their parent universities seem not to take advice from such experts in running their own affairs" (p. 99). This phenomenon of academic non-consultation seems to go against the common sense of the learning organization idea. By challenging assumptions about HEIs that one might take for granted, Watson's article opens up opportunities for interesting new theory development – "interesting" theories being, according to Davis (1971), ones that "constitute an attack on the taken-for-granted world of their audience." On the other hand, the conclusion that HEIs are learning organizations only to a limited extent is in line with an observation by Örtenblad and Koris (2014): "HEIs seem to single-loop learn (learning within the current mind-set) much more than they double-loop learn (questioning the current mind-set and learning a new one), which makes HEIs already organizational learning organizations only to a limited extent" (p. 199).

The fact that managers of HEIs are either unable or unwilling to draw on the prolific knowledge of their own staff implies that barriers exist to learning within these organizations, making them only partial rather than full-fledged learning organizations, to the possible detriment of their development. These barriers might not be unique to HEIs, even though they manifest themselves most conspicuously in these organizations. To the extent that they represent a more universal phenomenon, resolving the puzzle formulated by Watson would constitute an important contribution to the field of learning organizations. In the hope that such a contribution will materialize, we will propose an agenda for future research into the puzzle of academic non-consultation in HEIs.


A GENERIC FRAMEWORK

We believe Watson's 2000 article deserves renewed attention and wish to encourage more research on the paradox of the persistent absence of an in-house consulting role for management academics. A helpful first step in this endeavor could be to classify the many possible explanations for the paradox according to some of their basic characteristics, in order to see better how they relate to each other, to ease the later task of systematically testing the hypotheses, and even to facilitate the development of new hypotheses. As

Watson points out in his article, his list of hypotheses is not necessarily exhaustive. This means that the classification scheme should be generic enough to accommodate other hypotheses than those initially proposed by Watson.

With these aims in mind, we suggest a simple three-way categorization of the hypotheses. The shared characteristic of the hypotheses in the first category is that they pertain to *management knowledge*, i.e. whether sufficient management knowledge exists that is suitable for providing valuable advice on how to run HEIs, or whether there are management academics available with this knowledge. Watson's first six hypotheses fall into this category. The second category concerns the *motivation of HEI managers* to consult their own academics regarding managerial problems. This would include Watson's Hypotheses 7 and 8. Finally, the third category relates to *incentives for management academics* to get involved in such advisory activity. Watson's Hypothesis 9 belongs in this category. Figure 1 provides an integrated framework that illustrates how these categories are connected and can jointly explain the phenomenon in question.

Figure 1. Integrated framework explaining the phenomenon of academic non-consultation in HEIs
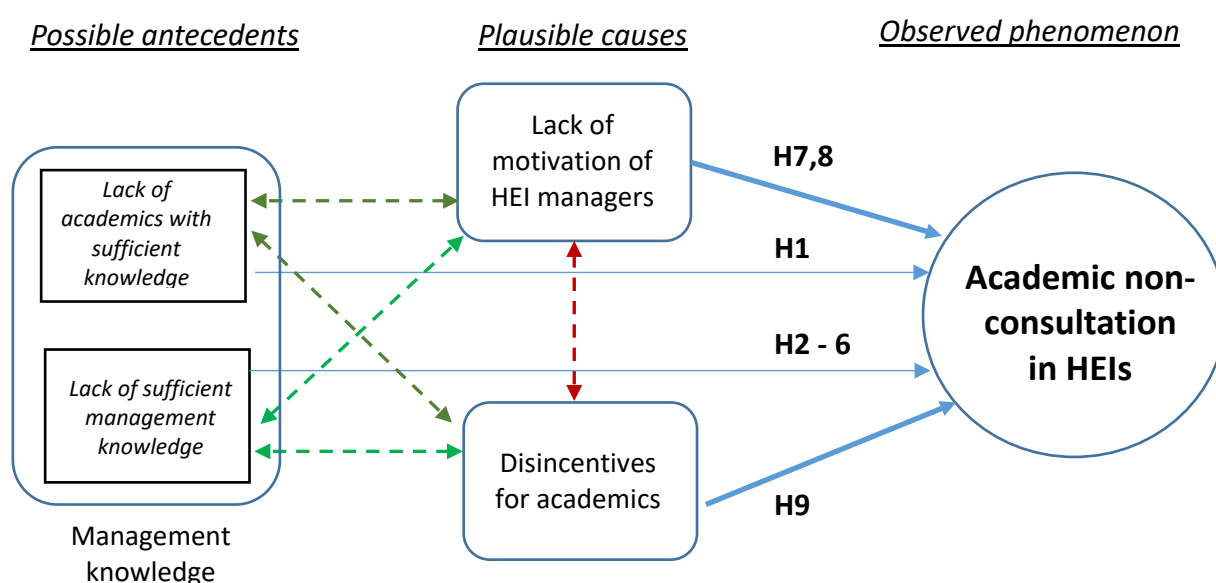
Notes:
- "Academics" refers to management academics, and "knowledge" refers to management knowledge.
- Bold arrows refer to strong explanatory power while thin arrows refer to weak explanatory power as hypothesized in Watson (2000).
- Dotted arrows refer to possible interactions between factors that we believe warrant examination.

In Figure 1, we illustrate the three categories of hypotheses and use arrows to indicate the expected strength of their explanatory power. Although hypotheses in the category of management knowledge are weaker, we believe they might play important roles as possible antecedents explaining the lack of motivation and incentives for HEI managers and academics to interact with one another. This is a potential venue for future research.

A RESEARCH AGENDA

The integrated framework in Figure 1 can be used to identify possible future research directions and relevant theories. Table 2 presents suggestions for future research on the phenomenon of academic non-consultation in HEIs, with the directions for empirical testing structured according to the three generic causes of the phenomenon we have identified: management knowledge, motivation of HEI managers, and incentives for academics to engage. A fourth group of research suggestions pertains to the interaction between these factors.

1) Management knowledge:

In the first category, management knowledge, we agree with Watson that these hypotheses most likely do not directly explain the investigated phenomenon. However, it is possible that management knowledge can play an antecedent or moderating role in the causal mechanism. For example, lack of sufficient management knowledge, or a lack of academics with such knowledge, can reduce the motivation for HEI managers to consult their in-house advisers. Likewise, insufficient knowledge disincentivizes academics to propose ideas to managers. Therefore, besides testing Hypotheses 1-6 directly, we also recommend that future research should test the antecedent or moderating effect of management knowledge on two linkages: (1) between HEI manager motivation to seek advice from academics and the outcome of academic non-consultation, and (2) between the incentives for academics to engage and the outcome of academic non-consultation. Theoretical background for *management knowledge* can be sought in the knowledge management theory stream of research (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Nonaka and von Krogh, 2009; Argote and Miron-Spektor, 2011; Argote, 2013), which has identified three main sub-processes of knowledge management: knowledge creation (Nonaka, 1994; Gupta *et al.*, 2007), knowledge retention (Hedberg, 1981; Moorman and Miner, 1997; Starbuck and Nystrom, 1997; Majchrzak *et al.*, 2004; de Holan and Phillips, 2011), and knowledge transfer (Bandura, 1977; Levitt and March, 1988; Van de Ven and Polley, 1992; Szulanski, 1996).

2) HEI manager motivation:

Among the three categories of hypotheses in Watson's 2000 article, we speculate that the motivation of HEI managers is the most important factor causing the phenomenon of academic non-consultation. Therefore, we will make a modest attempt to expand and refine the theoretical basis of Watson's Hypotheses 7 and 8, which refer to this factor. This will facilitate future research into these hypotheses.

Hypothesis 7 says that HEI managers are unwilling to seek advice. Watson suggests that managers of HEIs, unlike the managers of many other organizations, simply may not recognize any need for advice, but he leaves the reasons for this as a black box to be opened in future investigation. We speculate that answers could be sought in the bounded rationality of managers, in the power structure of HEIs, and in the emotional consequences for managers of involving their academic staff in decision-making, even in a mere advisory role.

Because of bounded rationality (Simon, 1965), which refers to human cognitive limitations in searching for and processing information (Hogarth, 1980; Chariri, 1999) and in attributing causality (Weiner, 1985), managers may not recognize the need for advice from internal experts. Furthermore, if top HEI managers were to consult in-house experts for advice on important management decisions, they would have to disclose sensitive strategic information to the experts, who in turn could hardly be prevented from spreading this information to others throughout the organization. Such managers would be giving up a monopoly on information that they might see as a valuable personal asset. They would also face the risk of receiving biased advice from the experts, who might be personally affected by any decisions made by management and therefore disinclined to give impartial advice. Finally, the managers might perceive that they would lose face and authority within the organization simply by seeking advice, as this would amount to an admission of ignorance and a recognition of the superiority of the knowledge of their subordinates compared to their own.

Hypothesis 8, as stated by Watson ("It is difficult for university managers to believe that their own academics could be adequate advisers"), allows for two mutually incompatible implications: either the managers' skepticism is justified or it is not. If it is not – that is, if managers ought to give the academics more of a chance to prove themselves as advisors – the reason for the reluctance of managers to consult their own staff might be illuminated by theories of bounded rationality. Managers may not have the capacity to see how the perspectives of their staff can add value to their own ideas, especially if those perspectives conflict with their own preconceived notions.

Empirical testing of Hypotheses 7 and 8 can explore the dynamics of the phenomenon by both quantitative and qualitative methods. Regarding the theoretical foundation of HEI manager motivation, one may refer to the work motivation theory stream of research. A comprehensive review of work motivation theory is provided by Latham and Pinder (2005, p. 487), whose elaborate motivational framework includes the following factors (selected references are from Latham and Pinder, 2005): "needs" (Kanfer, 1990; Haslam *et al.*, 2000; Hogan and Warrenfeltz, 2003), "personal traits" (Allport, 1951; Barrick *et al.*, 2001; Schmitt *et al.*, 2003), "values" (Locke and Henne, 1986; Foreman and Murphy, 1996; Verplanken and Holland, 2002; Malka and Chatman, 2003), "context" (Erez and Earley, 1993; Gustafson and Mumford, 1995; Ambrose and Kulik, 1999; Leung, 2001; Morgeson and Campion, 2002;

Scholz *et al.*, 2002; Steers and Sanchez-Runde, 2002), "personal-context fit" (Schaffer, 1953; Cable and DeRue, 2002; Hulin and Judge, 2003), "cognition" (Latham and Locke, 1991; Latham *et al.*, 1994; Ashford and Black, 1996; Gollwitzer, 1999; Seijts and Latham, 2000; Vancouver *et al.*, 2001; Locke, 2002), and "affect/emotion" (Greenberg, 1987; Mowday and Sutton, 1993; Erez and Isen, 2002; George and Zhou, 2002; Grandey, 2003).

3) Incentives for academics:

The third factor, incentives for academics to engage in in-house consultation activities, can explain the observed phenomenon directly but may also interact with the second factor discussed above (HEI manager motivation). For example, issues of power (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1977; Pfeffer, 1992) and face-saving (Daly *et al.*, 2012) may affect the incentives given to academics by managers, while in turn managers' perception of the incentives of academics may affect their willingness to seek advice from them. Therefore, aside from testing Hypothesis 9 directly, we suggest testing the moderating effect of incentives for academics to engage in in-house consultation on the relationship between HEI manager motivation and academic non-consultation. Measures of incentives can be found in the motivation theory stream of research.

Finally, we suspect there may be interactions between these three factors that can jointly lead to the phenomenon of academic non-consultation. Therefore, future studies examining the interplay between factors and their joint effects are encouraged.

Combining the three factors that might cause the phenomenon of academic non-consultation while conjecturing that the motivation of HEI managers is a vital component, we suggest a research agenda as follows (Table 2).

Table 2. Suggestions for future research

Factors	*Management knowledge*	*Motivation of HEI managers*	*Incentives for academics*	*Interaction between factors*
Possible directions	1) Test H1-6 empirically. 2) Test the moderator effect of knowledge on the relationship between HEI manager motivation to seek advice from academics and academic non-consultation, as well as the relationship between the incentives for academics to engage and the academic non-consultation.	3) Test H7-8 empirically. 4) Test the mediator effect of HEI manager motivation on the relationship between management knowledge and the academic non-consultation, as well as the relationship between the incentives for academics to engage and the academic non-consultation.	5) Test H9 empirically. 6) Test the moderator effect of incentives for academics to engage on the relationship between HEI managers' motivation to seek advice from academics and the academic non-consultation.	7) Examine the possible interaction effect between factors. 8) Examine the possible effect of such interaction on the phenomenon of academic non-consultation.
Possible relevant theories	* Knowledge management theory (knowledge creation, retention, sharing, and transfer). * Motivation and incentive theory. * Learning organization theory. * Power and legitimacy theory. * Psychological theory on emotions. * Bounded rationality theory.			
Possible relevant methods	* Extensive surveys. * Quasi-experiments. * Comparative case studies of successful vs unsuccessful academic consultation. * Explorative case studies in different settings (countries, university types, departments, etc.), so as to examine the conditions for successful and unsuccessful academic consultation.			

Watson, in our conversation with him, reiterated the need for empirical studies to test the hypotheses and explain why the phenomenon of internal academic non-consultation in HEIs persists over time. We agree and believe that a variety of empirical research methods could be useful. Quantitative methods, such as extensive surveys combined with appropriate techniques, e.g. factor analysis and regression models, are advised as a way of testing and validating the framework and its associated hypotheses. Similarly, quantitative techniques developed for experimental designs can provide crucial insights into the motivations and behaviors underlying the causal mechanisms that lead to the phenomenon. Also, simulation studies could help expose unforeseen consequences arising from the interactions between

the mechanisms and parameters (Harrison *et al.*, 2007) of our suggested framework. Qualitative methods, such as case studies, can shed light on the phenomenon by comparing successful and unsuccessful academic consultation cases. Explorative case studies in different settings – e.g. different countries, university types, departments, etc. – can help examine the conditions for successful and unsuccessful academic consultation and provide clues as to how HEIs can become fully learning organizations.

CONCLUSION

The puzzle identified by Watson in his 2000 paper – that management academics do not advise the managers of their own institutions on management decisions – has not yet been resolved. In the present article, we have argued for the theoretical soundness of several of Watson's hypotheses and stressed the importance of his research question for the field of organizational learning, but this article should not be interpreted mainly as an attempt to provide support for any particular hypothesis. Rather, our aim has been to sketch out a future research agenda and inspire others to contribute empirical evidence that can help shed light on the paradox of why management academics rarely advise on their own institutions. The hypotheses discussed in this paper are not necessarily exhaustive; indeed readers are encouraged to think of alternative solutions to the interesting puzzle.

The theoretical contribution of this article is to revive the important research topic of "why management academics do not seem to be widely engaged in advising university managers" (Watson, 2000, p. 99) and to introduce a research agenda that can help realize the potential contribution of this topic to the learning organization literature. The practical contribution is to re-address the difficulties of HEIs in becoming full-fledged "learning organizations" and to suggest that HEI managers re-examine the possibilities for using hitherto untapped internal expertise.

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