

Governance Theory Perspectives on IT Consulting Projects: The Case of ERP Implementation¹

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ABSTRACT

Consulting is a major and established business sector in almost every Western economy. Information technology (IT)-related consulting and especially ERP consulting comprise approximately 29% of this market. Here, the implementation of information systems and the inevitable change to organizational-technical systems is also a political process. An IT consulting project can thus be perceived as an institutional arena for political activities where particular actors, who include management, employees and consultants, negotiate and promote their own interests. Despite the importance of the political nature of socio-technical system design, it has so far been under-researched and understated. Therefore, focusing on this political perspective, we approach the analysis and design of IT consulting projects by drawing on the theory of governance and modern system theory. We seek to develop a theoretical framework that facilitates the analysis and - design of IT consulting projects. An actor-centered systemic view facilitates an analysis of the organization-consultant system, taking into account the different actors' rationales and motivations. The domain of ERP implementation is used to provide an application example in terms of a case study. A governance theory analysis of an ERP consulting project is conducted and relevant aspects for the design of ERP consulting processes are derived.

Keywords: IT consulting, project management, design science research, ERP implementation, governance theory.

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