An investigation of the Consulting Styles of Training Planning Specialists in a Government Sponsored Training Consulting Service

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Abstract: In 1986 the Ministry of Skills Development in the province of Ontario launched 'Ontario's Training Strategy' to help companies and organizations use training as a strategic tool for economic success. A major component of the program is the 'Training Consulting Service' which provides advice and expertise to organizations in the area of training and human resource planning and implementation. The Training Consulting Service is staffed by training consultants skilled in training planning and design at offices across Ontario. A study was conducted to determine the consultation styles of the training consultants working within the Training Consulting Service. A Training Consultation Style Survey was sent to all training consultants which required them to indicate their likely behavioral responses to a series of typical consulting scenarios. Responses were categorized into three different consulting approaches or "styles'; product orientation, prescriptive orientation, and process orientation. Results Indicated a mixed use of consulting style with a tendency towards process oriented consulting except in the evaluation phase of consultation and when clients are perceived to have training experience. In these conditions product oriented consulting dominates.

Resume: En 1986, le Ministry of Skills Development en Ontario lança une strategie de formation pour aider les compagnies et les organisations à se servir de ta formation comme un instrument strategique pour la reussite economique. Une piece majeure de ce programme est le Training Consulting Service qui fournit un consell et une competence aux organisations en ce qui concerne la formation, l'execution et la planification des ressources humaines. Le Training Consulting Service se compose de conseillers qualifies habiles dans le domaine de la formation, de la planification, et de l'elaboration a travers l'Ontario. Une etude s'est tenue pour determiner les genres de consultation utilises par des conseillers qualifies travaillant au Training Consulting Service. Un sondage Training Consultation Style fut envoye à tous les conseillers qualifies leur demandant d'indiquer leurs comportements plausibles à des scenarios typiques de consultation. Les reponses furent classees par categories de trois façons differentes ou "genres" de consultation: une orientation de resultat, une orientation normative, et une orientation de methode. Les resultats indiquent un emploi variable envers un genre de consultation et une tendance envers une consultation d'orientation methodologique, sauf lors de la periode d'evaluation consultative et lorsque les clients ont une pratique de formation. One voit la predomlnance d'un resultat oriente consultatif dans ces circonstances.

Interest in the consultation process as it applies in instructionaldesign has grown over the past several years, Authors have begun to point to the need for more research in the area (Durzo et al 1979; Rutt, 1980; 1984; Hedberg, 1980) and professional associations have recognized the importance of "consulting skills" as a key competency area for the profession (Nadler, 1980; Bratton, 1984; Deden-Parker, 1979; Schiffman, 1986). With the recent interest in consulting as a profession, there has been renewed interest in consulting approaches to instructional design in the training field (e.g., Phillips & Shaw, 1989; Champion, Kiel, & McLendon, 1990). In general, there seems to be an increased recognition that application of the instructional design process does not necessarily guarantee an appropriateand successful solution to an instructional problem. The human system, specifically the consulting relationship, must also be fully considered (Davies, 1976, 1979; Rutt, 1984).

If we are to effectively apply the instructional design process we must understand the consulting relationship in which it is practiced. One aspect of the consulting relationship that previous research suggests influences the instructional design process is the consulting style of the ID practitioner. The purpose of the study described in this article was to investigate the consulting style used by training specialists working in a very specific environment: the 'Training Consulting Service" provided by the Ontario government to businesses in Ontario. This service is part of the "Ontario's Training Strategy," a series of programs designed by the Ministry of Skills Development to provide advice and expertise to organizations in the area of training and human resources planning.

The Consultation Process and Instructional Design

Consulting is a general classification which includes thevariousstrategies and tactics used for establishing a helping relationship (Rutt, 1980). Authors from different disciplines (psychology, organizational development, counselling, management) have suggested definitions of consulting (Gallessich, 1974; Caplan, 1970; Schien, 1988; Block, 1981).

Steele (1976) defines consulting as ". . .any form of providing help on the content, process or structure of a task or series of tasks where the consultant is not actually responsible for doing the task but is helping those who are" (pp. 2-3). Bell and Nadler (1985) concur that consultation is fundamentally the act of helping but add that it is in fact a two way process of seeking, giving and receiving help: "It is the provision of information or help by a professional helper (consultant) to a help-needing person or system (client) in the context of a voluntary, temporary relationship which is mutually advantageous" (pp. l-2). Both Steele and Bell and Nadler emphasize that consultation is aimed at some improvement in the future functioning of the client system rather than simply at getting the immediate task completed.

Given these definitions, we can consider instructional designers working in education or training as consultants. Consulting may not be a strict occupational role, but rather a function that can be applied within various

occupational capacities (Lippitt, 1985). The instructional designer usually works in conjunction with a subject matter expert (SME) on an instructional problem. Designers also help managers of *client* departments analyze and solve human performance problems and make recommendations for appropriate training or non-training remedies. They can then assist in the implementation and evaluation of whatever solution is recommended (Laird, 1985). In all of the above cases designers provide help in the context of a temporary and mutually advantageous relationship as defined by Bell and Nadler (1985). The application of the instructional design process whether provided by internal or external consultants involves the development of a *consulting relationship* with a client or client system.

Models of Consulting

Given that instructional designers must indeed enter a consulting relationship with a client or subject matter expert, what models of consulting can they draw upon? Several authors have proposed consulting models which reflect various professional points of view (e.g., Kurpius, 1978; Kurpius & Brubaker, 1976; Hedberg, 1980; Schien, 1969; Tilles, 1961). Each consulting model differs in the assumptions that are made concerning the roles and needs of the client and the consultant as well as the ultimate goals of the professions in which they are applied. Davies (1975, 1979) has preaented the most extensive theoretical discussion of the instructional designer/client relationship. He discussed the relationship in terms of dominant assumptions (or models) that the consultant brings to the interaction. These dominant assumptions are: Product Oriented, Prescription Oriented and Process Oriented. Their associated behavior assumptions will now be discussed.

Product model behauior. As the label suggests, this consulting style is heavily product-oriented. Very often the client has made up his/her mind about the best solution in advance and is searching for a *product* that will meet the identified need. The consultant is expected to "deliver the goods" as requested which will usually take the form of information, a service, or a product (e.g., identify training sources, design a training plan, produce training materials) In all cases it is assumed that the client has correctly identified the problem and objectively identified the appropriate solution (Davies, 1975).

This model may be appropriate if the problem has, in fact, been clearly diagnosed by the client. The consultant can simply provide what is necessary to implement the solution. If, however, the goal is to influence the long term behavior of the client organization, there are problems inherent with this model. It is unlikely that the client would become constructively and collaboratively involved in the consulting process and, thus, he/she may not become committed to purposeful change in the organization (Butt, 1979).

Prescription model behaviors. Under the prescription model the client generally presents the consultant with a problem and asks the consultant to diagnose and suggest a solution. It is assumed that the consultant has the authority and skills to carry out a diagnosis and that the solution will be accepted by the client.

The model, based on a medical model, can be potentially difficult for the consultant. As Schien (1978, p. 350) points out, the model assumes that the client has correctly interpreted the *symptoms,* that the client is willing to accept and implement whatever *prescription* is given and that the *patient/* client will be able to remain healthy after the *doctor/ consultant* leaves. When the client is unable or reluctant to accept or implement the suggested solution, any long-term effects upon the client organization may be minimal.

Hedberg (1980) suggests that many instructional design/training consultants, by virtue of their specialist training, tend to operate in the prescriptive mode and many clients prefer the prescriptive or product models.

Process model behaviors. The shortcomings of the above models in achieving long term organizational outcomes suggest the need for more an approach which relies on greater client involvement. The essence of the process model is that the client is involved in the diagnosis of the problem and the generation of the solution. It is assumed that the client requires help with the diagnosis of the problem and will benefit from participation in the solution (Schein, 1969). The instructional designer/training consultant helps the client (who still owns and controls any changes in the project) to view the relationship as a ". . .process directed towards the achievement of some mutually agreed and valued instructional result in accordance with the organization's mission" (Davies, 1975, p. 359). The process involves a system of decisions which are reached by agreement concerning what is expected to be achieved, the nature of the help required and the changing roles that will be exercised (Rutt, 1979).

The goal of this model is to increase trainee achievement consistent with organizational objectives. A second equally important goal, however, is to enable the client to apply the skills learned during the performance analysis/ instructional design process to future performance and instructional problems. This will hopefully reduce and eventually eliminate the need for consultant involvement in future projects. Problems can arise in the use of this model in situatons were the scope of the project or the time available is limited, and when the client or the consultant are not receptive to the collaborative demands of the relationship.

Although the process model is clearly favored in most consulting literature, instructional designers must select an appropriate consulting role based on the organizational situation, the characteristics of the client, the characteristics of the consultant and the client-consultant relationship.

Rutt (1980, 1984) investigated the consultation models used by instructional design practitioners through the use of a consultation style inventory developed by the author. He identified four models which he felt most accurately represented and communicated the role of the instructional designer. They were Product model, Prescription model, Collaborative/Process model and Affiliative model (a model that describes consulting relationships where the consultant is mostly concerned with avoiding conflict with the client). The major finding of the study was that, in general, instructional designers working in higher education environments equally favoured the product,

prescriptive, collaborative/process and affiliative models. When an instructional problem was at the curriculum or system level, however, instructional designers tended to use the product model. If the problem was at the unit level and involved some sort of media augmentation then collaborative/process models were used. Also, instructional designers chose to move from a product model orientation to a more collaborative/process orientation with the client as the relationship progressed.

The research literature in the client- instructional designer relationship has largely involved consulting behaviors of instructional designers in higher learning institutions (Coscarelli & Stonewater, 1980,1984; Rosenberg, 1978; Price 1976,1984). No studies have investigated the consultation models used by training consultants in business environments. There are many other accounts which provide tips or suggestions for skills that can be employed to improve client interactions (Leitzman et al 1979-80; Lippitt & Lippitt 1978; Price, 1984; Spottswood 1980; Deden-Parker, 1979; Bratton, 1984; Bellman, 1983). Although much of the literature on the consulting process proposes using a process/collaborative model as the model of preference (Block, 1981; Bratton, 1980; Davies, 1975,1979; Schein,1978, 1988), there is no evidence that the process model is in fact what is actually being used by instructional design/training consultants. In fact, Rutt (1979) found that a significant amount of "model switching" takes place. Hedberg (1980) suggests that most instructional design consultants would tend to operate within the prescriptive mode by virtue of their specialist training.

Ontario's Ministry of Skills Development promotes the goals of transfer of training planning skills and client self sufficiency for the Training Consulting Service (Ontario Skills Development Office operating guidelines, 1988). The consulting model required for the goals to be achieved is the process model. There have been no studies conducted, however, to determine if the training consultants administering the service are in fact providing process oriented consultation.

It is reasonable to assume that there will be factors within the consultants task environment that could have an influence on the consulting models used. This study looked at two of these: phases within the consultation process, and the perceived expertise of the client in training planning skills. The literature on consultation styles in instructional design has not studied the possible influence of various client dimensions on consulting styles used by consultants. Rutt (1984) has in fact suggested that client factors would be an important area for further research.

Considering the preceding discussion, this study had the following goals:

1) To provide an initial investigation of the consulting models used by training consultants in a business environment.
2) To determine the extent to which Ontario Skills Development Office training consultants are using theprocess model of consulting as pre scribed by the Ontario Ministry of Skills Development.

3) To identify any relationships between consulting model used and the phase of consulting in which the consultant is engaged.

4) To identify any relationships between consulting model used and consultant's perceptions of the client's training and development expertise.

METHOD

The Training Consulting Service of Ontario's Training Strategy

The Training Consulting Service goal is to "...provide expert advice to firms to create competitive training strategies for their workers. The service helps firms identify training needs and develop training plans" (*Breaking New Ground*, 1986; p.18). To meet this goal, the training consulting service provides professional advice and assistance with the following training and development tasks: Conducting needs analysis; human resource planning; developing and validating training plans; training plan implementation, and evaluation of training (Ontario Skills Development Offices 1988-89 Operating Guidelines, 1988). These services are delivered through a network of Ontario Skills Development Offices (OSDO) managed by community colleges throughout Ontario. The consulting service is consistent with the definitions of consulting provided earlier in that the help provided by the consultant is temporary and aimed at some improvement in the future functioning of the client system rather than simply getting the immediate task completed.

The Ontario Skills Development Offices are staffed by training consultants skilled in the application of instructional planning and design methods. Though not explicitly stated, the trainingconsultingservice as described above is based on the process model of consultation described earlier. Client participation is seen as essential to successful change and the goal is self-sufficiency on the part of the client. The consultant works with the client as facilitators and information sources to help develop client skills and awareness of instructional planning and design methods.

Subjects

The population for this study was Training Consultants employed at the Ontario Skills Development Offices at each of Ontario's 22 community colleges. The entire population of 192 Ontario Skills Development Office Training Consultants were mailed training consultation style survey described below. The questionnaire was returned by 147 subjects for a return rate of 76.6%.

The background and experience of the training consultants ranged from individuals who have worked in the college system for a number of years to those who have had extensive private sector experience. Educational backgrounds of the subjects were equally varied. Many have college or undergraduate university education in business or social sciences but a significant number also have less formal education and extensive business experience. All were

involved in a professional development program designed by the Ministry of Skills Development to develop consulting, needs analysis, human resource planning and basic training design skills.

Measurement Instrument

The ideal way to assess the behavior of consultants is to observe their interaction with clients. This method, however presents practical limitations in terms of time involved and the lack of control that is possible in field situations. An alternative approach is to develop a survey instrument that provides training consultants with a number of scenarios they might encounter with clients and a range of possible responses to the scenario. The concern of inferring behaviours from self reports can be reduced by taking steps to ensure the validity of the instrument, Previous studies have relied on such instruments e.g, the *Intervention Style Survey* (Arbes, 1972); the managerial grid developed by Blake and Mouton (1978) and the *Instructional Development Consultation Survey* (Rutt, 1979). Rutt's survey served as the model for the instrument developed for this study: The Training Consultation Style Survey

The Training Consultation Style Survey (TCSS) was designed to accurately assess the variables of interest in this study. These variables and their levels are:

1) *Consulting Models:* Product orientation; Prescriptive orientation; Process orientation.
2) *Consulting Phases:* Entry; Analysis; Solution; Evaluation.
3) *Client Expertise:* Inexperienced; Moderately Experienced, Experienced.

The TCSS presented subjects with three familiar client situations. After reading each client situation the subject was required to select one of three possible statements which most closely described his or her actual behavior given that client situation. The statements described behavior consistent with each of the three consulting styles prevously described. The subject was required to choose 1 statement (from 3 presented) for each of the 4 phases of the consulting process. Identical prompts were provided for each scenario to clearly identify each phase of the consulting process. For each client situation, then, the subject was presented with four groups of three statements each (see the Appendix for an example of one of the three cases presented).

The phases of consulting used in this study were based on those proposed in the consulting literature (Bell & Nadler, 1985; Block 1981; Davies, 1975, 1979; Hedberg, 1980; Lippitt & Lippitt, 1978; Rutt, 1979; Schein, They were defined as : Entry, Analysis, Solution, and Evaluation. Each phase corresponds directly to a step prescribed in the OSDO consulting service.

It was important, when developing the TCSS scenarios, that they reflected real consulting situations OSDO training consultants encounter. To ensure this, the scenarios were written based on actual case studies developed by

OSDO training consultants as part of a professional development seminar they attended. Three case studies were selected to reflect a diverse range of client consulting situations in various economic sectors. The case studies, once selected were edited into a format suitable for the TCSS. Based on Rutt (1979) the following contextual factors were taken into consideration in the design of the scenarios to ensure a uniform presentation:

1) *Background:* The background of the performance/instructional problem was provided.
2) *Client:* The name of the client was included along with information about the client's experience/expertise in training and development.
3) *Organizational Level:* All scenarios were written in a way to make it clear the client was an individual with decision making empowerment (e.g., management level).
4) *Time:* Each scenario was written so as not to suggest a crisis situation.
5) *Problem:* Each scenario contained a reference to the problem situation and a suggested solution advanced by the client upon which the consultant is expected to act.

These five points of information ensured that the same type of response cues existed in each case scenario. The last two items, time and problem, were particularly important. A crisis situation was not suggested because it might cue the subject to assume that a comprehensive consulting intervention was not required. Having the client define the *problem* and ask for help from the consultant, set up an action orientation on the part of the subject which was required for the TCSS questions that followed. The three client scenarios that were created all contained the above contextual factors. Client scenarios were presented on the final TCSS in random order.

The client scenario descriptions were also used to manipulate the "client expertise" condition by embedding key information about the client's experience in training and development. One scenario described a client with no training and development expertise, another with moderate expertise and a third with extensive expertise.

Face Validity Pilot Test. In order to ensure that the TCSS response statements had face validity a draft TCSS was presented to six validity judges (five OSDO training consultants and one educational technologist). Beside each response statement the judges were asked to indicate whether the statement accurately communicated behavior representative of each model of consulting (yes/no). The judges were instructed on the assumptions underlying each model and were provided with a consulting model summary sheet to assist them in making their judgments.

After the results of the validity test were reviewed, a discussion was held with each judge to identify appropriate changes or modifications. At least 2 of the 6 judges had to indicate a problem with a response statement before it was changed. If the modifications were serious enough to warrant changes in

content rather than style, the revised statement was again discussed with each of the six judges. As a result of these discussions, three statements were changed in content and one in style. The consultation scenarios, being based on actual case studies developed by OSDO Training Consultants, were considered valid.

Procedure

The TCSS with cover letter briefly explaining the study and instructions for completion was mailed to 192 Training Consultants working at Ontario Skills Development Offices across Ontario. A package of TCSS's each with return envelopes attached was sent to the Office Manager with a cover letter explaining the study and a request for help in distributing and returning the surveys. Adeadline of three weeks was given with a follow up phone call after the first week.

Data Analysis

The TCSS was designed to ellicit responses which allow the training consultant to be categorized according to consulting style. The forced-choice format of the questionnaire resulted in nominal data. Since the study was descriptive in nature and sought to classify behavior into categories, only descriptive statistics were applied. The specific analyses that were conduced are as follows:

Overall response rates for each model of consulting. In order to determine the overall consulting style tendencies of the population, the frequency of product, prescriptive and process responses were collapsed over phase of consulting and client experience conditions.

Determination of individual consulting styles. Another approach to help determine the general use of consulting styles is to categorize each subject by their personal consulting style. This provides a more individualistic assessment of the types of consulting models being used. Each subject in this study was therefore defined (categorized) *as* one of *product oriented, prescriptive oriented orprocess oriented* if at least 7 of 12 responses (58%) fell into any of these categories. They were defined as "mixed if they did not choose at least 7 responses in any one category. This categorization was arbitrarily determined. It was assumed that 58% of responses falling into any one category indicated a clear orientation towards that consulting style.

Multiple response analysis. The above analyses were designed to provide an indication of overall consulting style independent of the other variables of interest in the study (phase of consulting and level of client expertise). Cross tabulations were also conducted to determine if there are any trends in consulting style depending on the phase of consultation the consultant is engaged in (entry, analysis, solution, evaluation) or the level of training expertise of the client (inexperienced, moderately experienced, experienced).

Finally, cross tabulations were conducted to determine the trends in consulting model responses made during each phase of theconsultingproceas within each client condition.

RESULTS

Overall Response Rate
The overall response frequencies for each consulting category are provided in Figure 1. The analysis indicates a mixed use of consulting models (product, prescriptive, and process) with a tendency towards a process orientation model.

Figure 1.
Frequency of Responses for Each Consulting Model Collapsed Over Conditions.
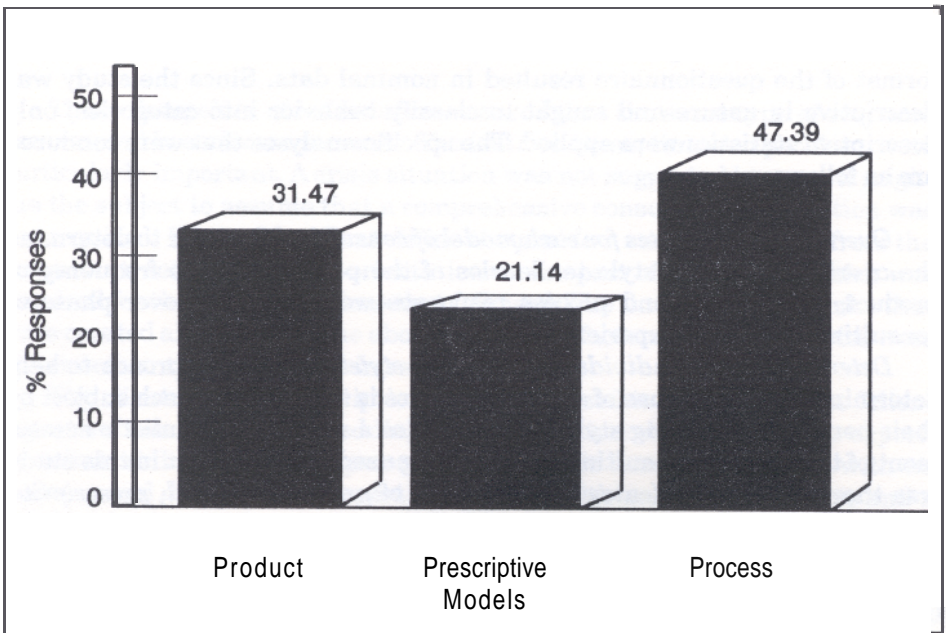

Individual Consulting Style
The results of the individual consulting style analysis are presented in Figure 2 (see following page). They reinforce the results of the overall response analysis presented in Figure 1 in that it seems most training consultants are using a variety of consulting models. The majority of consultants (62.6%) did not choose at least 7 responses that were consistent with any consulting model category and therefore have a *mixed* consulting style. It was found that 30.6%

of consultants were process oriented, 6.8% were product oriented and no consultants were prescriptive oriented.

Figure 2.
Percentage of Subjects Consistently Operating Within Each Consulting Model.
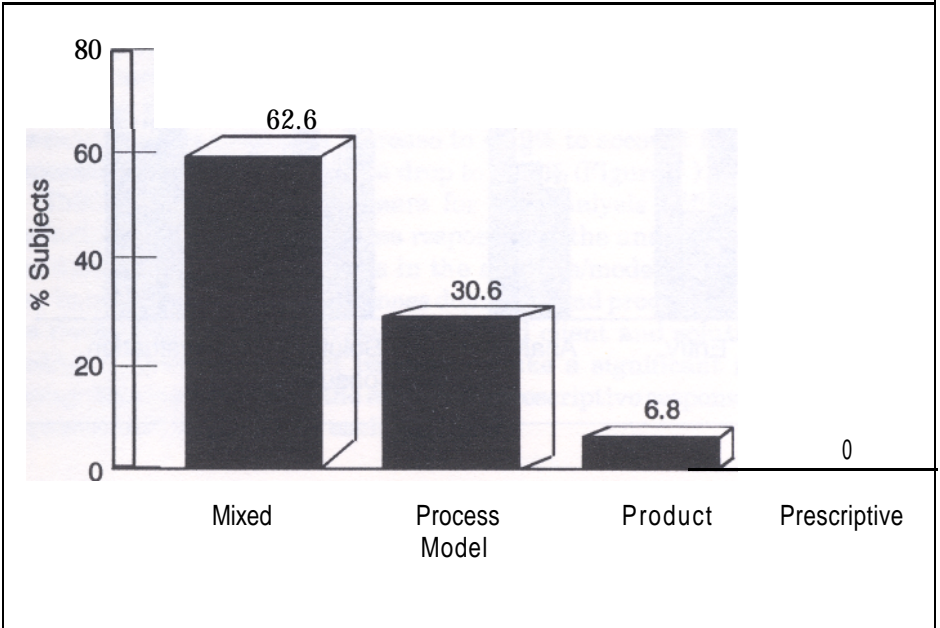
Multiple Response Analyses

The above analyses clearly indicate that OSDO consultants are using a variety of consulting models. The next obvious question is under what conditions does a consultant choose one model or style of consulting over another? To answer this question, multiple response analyses were conducted on the data to determine the percentage of product, prescriptive, and process responses in each level of the independent variables of this study - phase of consulting and client expertise.

Figure 3 (see next page) presents the percentage of product prescriptive and process responses in each phase of the consulting process, Process responses dominate in the entry, analysis, and solution phases (50.1%, 59.6%, and 54% respectively) but drop significantly in the evaluation phase where product responses dominate (49%).

Figure 4 (see next page) presents the percentage of product prescriptive and process, responses for each client experience condition (no experience, moderate experience and experienced). Once again process responses domi-

Figure   3.
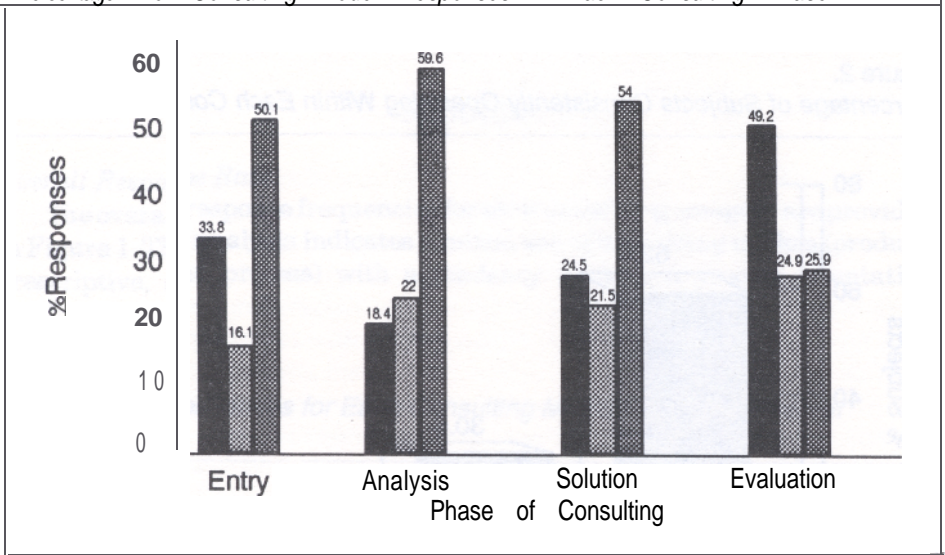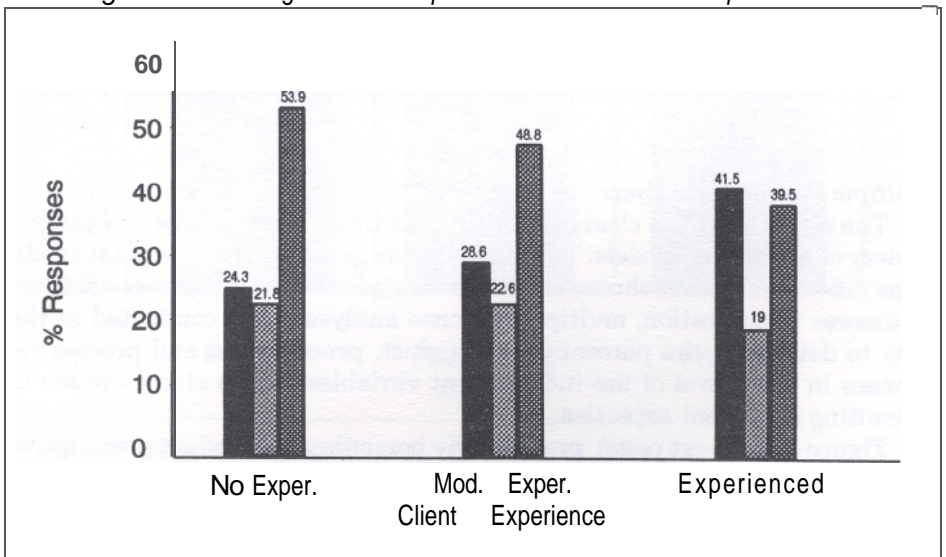*Percentage   of   Consulting   Model   Responses   in   Each   Consulting   Phase.*

Figure   4.
Percentage   of   Consulting   Model   Responses   in   Each   Client   Experience   Condition.

nate in the no experience (53.9%), and moderate experience (48.8%) conditions, but falls slightly below product responses in the experienced condition (product, 41.5%; process 39.5%).

Figures 5,6 and 7 present the results of the cross tabulations conducted to determine consulting model trends during each phase of the consulting process within each client condition. These results indicate that in the entry phase process responses dominate in both the non-experienced (Figure 5) and moderately experienced (Figure 6) client conditions (57.8% and 55.8% respectively). In fact, product, prescriptive and process responses are almost identical in these two conditions. In the entry phase/experienced client condition however, product responses increase to 46.9% to account for the majority of responses and process responses drop to 36.7% (Figure 7).

This same trend also appears for the analysis and solution phases, Product, prescription and process responses in the analysis/non-experienced condition parallel the responses in the analysis/moderate experience condition, In both cases process responses dominate and product responses occur in less frequently. In the analysis/experienced client and solution/experienced conditions however, product responses make a significant increase in frequency. This is primarily at the expense of prescriptive responses since process responses still dominate in each condition.

Figure 5.
Consulting Model Responses Made During Each Phase of Consultation in the Non-Experienced Client Condition.
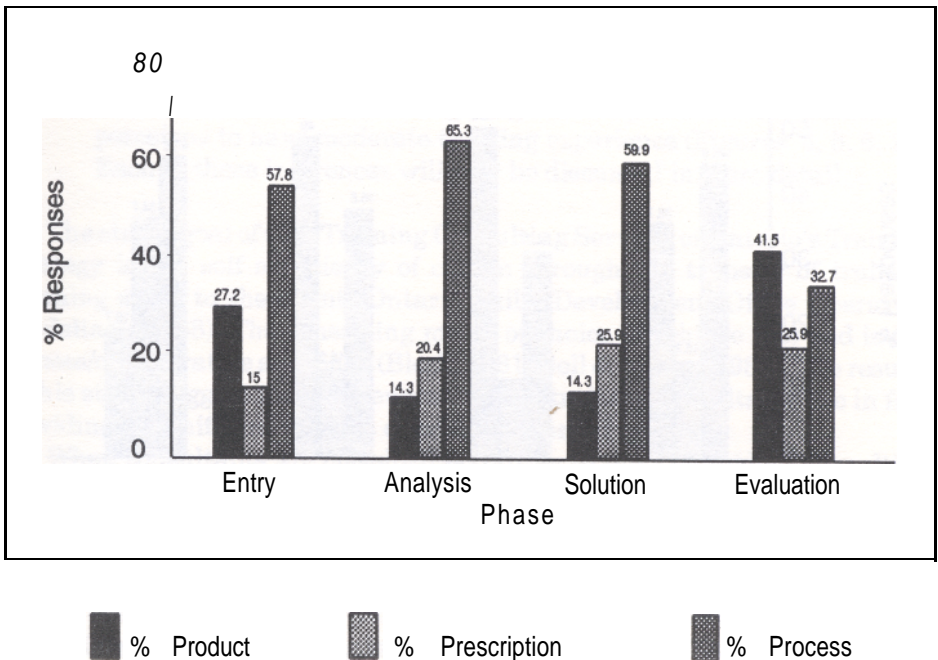
Figure 6.
Consulting Model Responses Made During Each Phase of Consultation in the Moderately Experienced Client Condition.
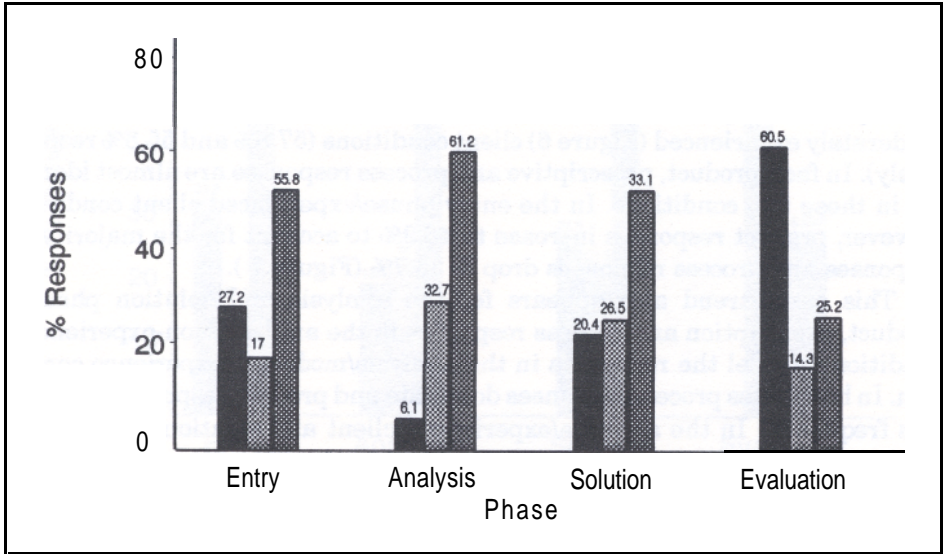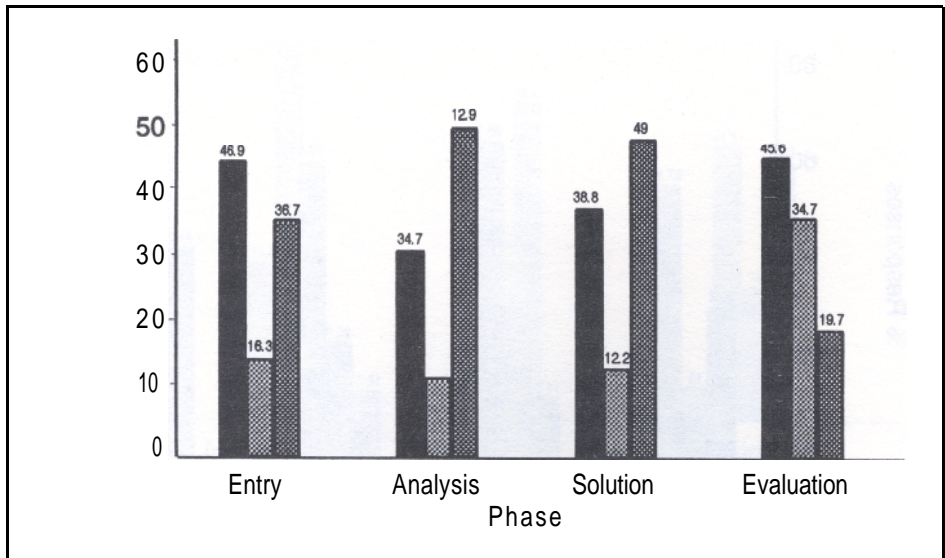

Figure 7.
Consu/ting Model Responses Made During Each Phase of Consultation in the Experienced Client Condition.

In the evaluation phase, product responses dominate in all three client conditions and are particularly pronounced in the moderately experienced client condition (60.5%). Also of note is that prescriptive responses are at their highest frequency (34.7%) and process responses are at their lowest frequency (19.7%), than at any point in the study, in the evaluation/experienced client condition.

DISCUSSION

Taken together, the results presented above support the following inferences about the nature of the consulting offered by the 'Training Consulting Service":

1) OSDO clients are receiving primarily process oriented consultation services (Figure 1).
2) Most OSDO training consultants are not operating consistently within one model of consulting but rather seem to be "model switching' depending on specific consulting circumstances (Figure 2). The remaining points describe those circumstances.
3) Clients who are perceived to be experienced in training are receiving slightly more product oriented services than either moderately experienced or non-experienced clients (Figure 4).
4) Clients perceived to be experienced in training are receiving primarily product oriented consulting services during initial consultations (entry phase, Figure 7).
5) Clients are receiving primarily product oriented consulting assistance in evaluation of their training programs, especially those clients perceived to have moderate training experience (Figures 4,5,6,7). Each of these inferences will now be discussed in more detail.

The stated goal of the "Training Consulting Service" of Ontario's Training Strategy is the self sufficiency of clients through the transfer of training planning skills to the client (Ontario Skills Development Office Operating Guidelines, 1988). The consulting model of choice to achieve this end is the process/collaborative approach (Block, 1981; Bell & Nadler, 1985). The results of this study suggest that, in general, OSDO training consultants are in fact providing a significant amount of process oriented services.

When consultants are classified according to their individual consulting style however, it becomes clear that they are often switching to product or prescriptive approaches or can be said to have a "mixed" consulting style. This finding is consistent with the results of Rutt (1979,1984) who determined that instructional designers did not adhere to one particular consulting model and in fact equally favoured the product, prescriptive, collaborative/process and affiliative models. The finding is inconsistent, however, with the suggestion by

Hedberg (1980) that training consultants would tend to be *prescriptive* oriented by the specialist orientation of their training and professional development. In the present study *prescriptive* oriented responses were the lowest in frequency in all client scenarios. Rutt (1984) also found a very low percentage of prescriptive responses in most conditions. It would be reasonable to expect that at certain points in the consulting relationship it would be appropriate to tell the client the best course of action. Why OSDO training consultants do not do this often may be due to some feeling on the part of the consultant that it is not their professional responsibility to tell the client anything, or alternatively, that they do not feel professionally secure in doing so.

When consultants are not providing process oriented consultation they seem to be switching primarily to product oriented consultation. This switch is determined by the phase ofconsultation the consultant is engaged in, by the perceived expertise of the client in training issues, and by the interaction of these two variables. Each of these will now be discussed.

In analysing the effect of consultation on consulting style Rutt (1984) found that instructional designers moved from a product model orientation to a collaborative model orientation with the client as the relationship progressed 1984). The results of the present study were not consistent with this finding. In fact, the opposite seems to be true for OSDO Training Consultants. The data indicates that product responses increase as the relationship with the client progresses (i.e., as the consultant moves through the phases of consultation) and are at their highest in the evaluation phase where product responses dominate. There are a number of possible explanations for this:

1) Consultants are not comfortable with their skills and knowledge level in the area of evaluating training programs and therefore tend to accept client wishes more readily in this area.

2) The Training Consulting Service as designed by the Ministry of Skills Development does not place a strong emphasis on the value of evaluating the effectiveness of training delivered or the success of the consulting services they provide. It therefore becomes easier for the individual consultant to accept client wishes in regards to evaluating a training program rather than working collaboratively with the client to establish an effective methodology to determine the organizational impact and effectiveness of training that has been delivered.

3) The Training Consulting Service also requires OSDO training consultants to meet a quota of clients during the course of the year and given the situation described in number 2, the evaluation phase may be the easiest step to pay less attention to in order to allow time to meet quota requirements.

4) Many clients are traditionally resistant to thorough evaluation of training programs and might be less accepting of collaborative approaches to this stage of training development.

The most plausible explanation is likely some combination of the above. For example, if the Ministry of Skills Development program does not emphasise or demonstrate a strong commitment to evaluating the effectiveness of training then the consultants have likely not had the requirement or opportunities to develop a strong skill base in evaluation methods and techniques. Further studies focusing on the evaluation phase of the OSDO consulting process would be required to determine if the above interpretation is in fact the case.

One factor not investigated by the Rutt (1979) study was the influence that various client dimensions might have on the choice of consultation model. He suggested that it was an important area for further research for a full understanding of client-consultant relationships. The present study clearly indicates that this is an important factor indeed, at least in terms of perceived client expertise in training planning. Clients experienced in training received much more product oriented consultation than inexperienced or moderately experienced clients. Product responses increase and process responses decrease as consultants move from non-experienced to moderate experience to experienced clients.

The most likely explanation for this is that consultants perceive more experienced clients as competent (possibly more competent than themselves) in the area of training planning and therefore defer to that expertise during the consultation process. Many training consultants have only recently been hired to the program and to the training profession in general and therefore may be somewhat insecure about their competence especially when confronted by a client with significant experience in the area.

The influence of client expertise becomes even clearer when it's effects are examined in interaction with phase of consultation. It seems that experienced clients are receiving predominantly product oriented consultation in the entry phase of consultation, whereas non-experienced and moderately experienced clients continue to receive process oriented consultation in this phase. The explanation for this may again be found in the lack of confidence on the part of the consultants to question the initial assessment of a training problem provided by a client with considerable training expertise. Also, if an experienced client rebukes a consultants attempt at a more collaborative approach, the consultant may be less willing to pursue it than with less experienced clients.

Block (1981) has described consulting styles or roles more from the client perspective than the consultant perspective as presented in this study. He suggests that when clients consider themselves expert in a particular area they tend to seek consulting assistance in the form of an "extra pair of hands". This parallels the product approach described in this study and supports the interpretation of the findings described above. It also suggests, however, that the analysis stage would also be more product oriented with expert clients which was not the case in this study Perhaps experienced clients, after initial consultation, are agreeing with the approaches/strategies suggested by the

consultants and are more accommodating to the process approach during the subsequent analysis and solution phases.

The consulting phases by client expertise interaction also confirmed the finding, which has already been discussed, that all clients are receiving primarily product oriented assistance in the evaluation of their training programs, The interaction analysis however suggests that this is especially true with moderately experienced clients. Why this is true is unclear. It may reflect the fact that experienced clients recognize, to a greater extent than less experienced clients, the value of evaluating training programs (both in terms of learning and organizational impact) and may therefore be more willing to work collaboratively with consultants in this area. This interpretation is also supported by the high percentage of prescription responses found in the experienced client/evaluation condition. In general, experienced clients may have a slightly more "open ear to the evaluation process. The results of this study indicate that client variables may have a much stronger influence on consulting style than past studies have considered.

Two promising directions for future research in the area of consultation in instructional design arise from this study The first is further investigation into the impact that client expectations might have on consulting style of consultants. Secondly, it would be interesting to determine the consulting styles used by experienced vs. inexperienced consultants. If the consultant's confidence in his or her consulting and training planning skills do influence consulting style as this discussion has suggested, then more experienced (and therefore more skilled) consultants might have the confidence in their skills and in the value of the process approach to consulting to apply this approach in a larger number of consulting situations.

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APPENDIX

Client Situation#2

New Styles Ladies Wear is a small independently owned chain of live retail stores selling women's fashion clothing and sportswear.

The owner, Robert James, is concerned because his business is growing rapidly but he is experiencing a significant turnover rate of his store managers. Mr. James feels that if he could provide management training to his current sales staff and subsequently promote them to store managers, this would significantly reduce his turnover problem.

He is determined to solve this problem but has had no experience in planning training programs and is not sure what type of training is require

During the initial consultation with this client I would:

> Help Mr. James clarify the goals he has in mind for this project so we will both have a clearer understanding of what will be involved.
> After listening to Mr. James' concerns on the situation, outline for him the problem as I see it.
> Ask Mr. James the nature of the help he expects from me for dealing with the turnover problem.

In conducting the needs analysis, I would:

> Work with Mr. James to help him analyze the situation to identify factors which may be causing the turnover problem.
> Ask Mr. James to summarize the cause of the problem as he sees it.
> Explain to Mr. James my analysis of the causes of the problem after collecting the required data.

Assuming training is an appropriate solution, I would next:

> Develop a training plan for the management training as suggested by the client.
> After mutually deciding that management training would be an appropriate solution, help Mr. James determine the best approach to plan and implement the training.
> Inform Mr. James how the training would best be planned and implemented with an explanation of possible consequences, both positive and negative for not following my advice.

In conducting an evaluation of the training I would:

> Inform Mr. James of the beet methods for evaluating

ment training and proceed to do so.
Work with Mr. James to determine and implement an evaluation method discussing the advantages and disadvantages of each method.
Meet with Mr. James and ask him how he would like me to conduct the evaluation.

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