

A Qualitative Study on Teachers' Perspectives of Educational Consultants
in Public School Districts

Michael Flanagan and Marla Kilfoyle

The Badass Teachers Association

Abstract

The Badass Teachers Association (BATs) conducted a qualitative study on teacher's perspectives of the use of outside educational consultants in public school districts. The literature review examined the costs of educational consulting contracts, research on professional development training, and teachers' perceptions of educational consultants in their local school districts. The research indicated that many school districts across the nation are pushing for more accountability of consulting contracts or are trying to cancel their consulting contracts altogether.

There were $N = 1580$ teachers and staff who responded to a nine question, online survey about educational consultants. The results showed that 88.5% of the participants responded that their school districts contracted out with educational consultants, and 82.9% responded that their districts hired professional development consultants. 72.4% of the participants rated those consultant services only marginally effective or ineffective, and 95.6% agreed or strongly agreed that the services contracted out to educational consultants should be provided by teachers from within their own school districts. This paper recommends that school districts look to the experienced educators within their own schools to provide professional development for teachers.

Keywords: Educational Consultant, Badass Teachers Association, Professional Development

A Qualitative Study of Teachers' Perspectives on Educational Consultants
in Public School Districts

Every year, as teachers return to school at the beginning of the semester, they take part in professional development (PD) training. Many will receive additional PD throughout the school year. When teachers attend professional development sessions, it should be a chance to share best practices among colleagues. It can be an opportunity to learn from experienced educators, as well as new teachers who may be tech-savvy or proficient in the latest pedagogical strategies. Dedicated teachers should continue to hone their academic skills by incorporating proven techniques into their repertoire (Beatrice, 2011). There is research that shows professional development programs can increase content knowledge when they are individualized to the needs of the teacher (Zapeda, Parylo, & Bengston, 2014), while conflicting research shows not all teachers feel professional development programs are effective or worth the costs associated with the training (Dalton, 2010). Although there is debate as to its effectiveness, this paper accepts the premise that professional development should continue, and be directed towards teacher growth and student achievement (Glover, Nugent, Chumney, Ihlo, Edward, Guard, Koziol, & Bovaird, 2016). The question is, what are the most effective methods of providing professional development to public school teachers?

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to implement professional development standards in order to receive federal education funding (Lestch, 2016). In New York, teachers must accumulate professional development

hours throughout the year in order to maintain their certification (NYSUT, 2015). While some districts provide professional development from within the local school communities (Education World, 2016), many others contract out with private consulting firms which provide educational support services for profit (Public Schools First NC, 2016). The focus on education reform and an increase in “school choice” spending nationally has led to the growth of educational consultant companies over the last decade (Mathis, Jimerson, 2008). This qualitative study examines the perspectives of teachers toward outside educational consultants and the services they provide in our public schools. It questions whether teachers feel they themselves could provide those services more effectively.

Literature Review

This literature review examines the issues surrounding educational consulting contracts in public schools. It researches the costs of those contracts at the national, state and local levels, as well as the effectiveness of professional development programs on teacher pedagogy.

Educational Consultants

Educational consulting increased as a result of the “No Child Left Behind” initiative (NCLB) in 2001, which mandated “Adequate Yearly Progress” (AYP) for all schools nationwide. In 2008, only 70% of schools made AYP, leading to an increased market for consulting firms designed to train teachers to teach better (Wilkerson, S.B., Shannon, L.C., Syers, M.K., & Grant, B.J. 2012). Many teachers will point out that the

AYP statistic does not account for the role poverty plays in students' lives and how it adversely affects their academic achievement.

Consultant Job Description

Educational consulting is an expanding field, and which type of education consultant is recruited the most depends on the needs and budget of a school district. People go into the field of educational consulting for various reasons. Many come from the corporate world, and move into education as a career change. They may enter the field with limited to no experience. Others are former teachers who have either retired, or are looking for a way to leave the classroom, but remain in education (Fruin, 2015). They are recruited to consulting firms like Pearson's Professional Development and Consulting Service (Pearson, 2016). Potential consultants are enticed by higher average pay than teachers and the promise of making a difference in students lives by training their teachers (Generation Ready, 2016), but not actually teaching children themselves.

Throughout the country, job offers for educational consultants are plentiful. The job description for most educational consultants includes language such as: Conducts or participates in workshops; prepares recommendations on instructional materials, teaching aids, and related equipment, manuals, and guidelines; prepares reports on state educational policies and practices for distribution to school districts; advises school officials on implementation of state and federal programs and procedures; and

conducts research into areas such as teaching methods and techniques (Salary Expert, 2016).

Consultant Salaries

Salary estimates range from \$35,000 - \$85,000 for full time, part time and contract work (Indeed.com, 2016). The average salary nationally for consultants is \$62,075 dollars (Payscale.com, 2016). The average salary for a public school teacher is \$53,868 (Salary.com, 2016). 78% of educational consultants are female, and 56% have more than 10 years of experience. What constitutes that experience is not clear, but the more years experience consultants have, correlates with higher salaries. The average hourly rate for per diem work is \$35.31 (Salary Expert, 2016). Compensation for company executives is many times that, with top consulting firm CEOs like Kurt Landgraf of ETS, John Whitmore of ACT and David Coleman of the College Board earning millions (Strauss, 2015).

Consultant Costs - National Level

Investigating bottom line costs per state and local school districts is a convoluted process and contracts are often steeped in political corruption and cronyism (Malinconico, 2016). Private educational consulting companies are a business, and they look at public education tax dollars as an irresistible investment opportunity.

First and foremost, educational consulting firms seek out large contracts at the federal level through the Department of Education. Educational spending for the 2016-2017 school year is estimated to be approximately \$584.4 billion throughout the

United States, with an average per pupil expenditure of \$11,600 per year (NCES, 2015). As of October 3rd, 2016, the US Department of Education listed 561 open educational consultant contracts at the federal level, totaling \$3,202,866,940. Those contracts were awarded to more than 275 individual recipients. These recipients can be broken down into six major categories: Education Science Contracts Group with 144 contracts, Programs and Contracts Groups with 128, Federal Student Aid with 125, Operations Contract Group with 107, Performance and Logistic Groups with 49, and National Assessment Governing Board with eight contracts. The contracts range from the smallest, at \$100,000.00 going to First Generation Visual Services, to the largest, \$423,118,208.00, committed to Dell Services Federal Government. The majority of educational consultant companies are based in the US and the UK.

The educational consulting companies with the most federal contracts include: 26 with the American Behavioral Institutes for Research in the Behavioral Sciences, 25 with Westat Inc., 22 with the Applied Engineering Management Corporation, 16 with Mathematica Policy Research Incorporated, and 16 with Research Triangle Institute. Some of these contracts began in 2005 and last until 2026 (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Needless to say, the value of these companies increases with each federal contract awarded.

Three of the most well-known standardized testing consulting companies with federal government contracts are: Educational Testing Service, Pearson, and Westat Inc. (U.S. Department of Education, 2016), and two of the largest college consulting counseling contracts are with the Higher Education Consultants Association and the

Independent Educational Consultants Association (Jaschik, 2010). In addition to contracts with consulting companies at the national level, the federal government also distributes more than a billion dollars annually to state and local districts to spend on professional development contracts. New York City alone was given \$100 million to spend on private consultants in 2011. There is often little oversight of these services to determine whether they are effective or not (Fertig, 2012). Suffice to say, private consulting firms are well represented at the national level.

Consultant Costs- State Level

In addition to securing contracts with the U.S. Department of Education, consulting firms seek to obtain lucrative deals at the individual state level. The 50 states combined spend an estimated \$960,000,000 on education funding. California alone spends an estimated \$94,000,000 on state and local school funding while Wyoming spends an estimated \$2,000,000. Most states spend 25% or more of their education budgets on consultant services (U.S. Government Spending, 2016). In 2013 the average per pupil spending by state was \$10,700, with New York being the highest at \$19,818 and Utah the lowest at \$6,555 (Brown, 2015). School Improvement Grants from the 2009 federal stimulus package increased the focus on schools needing improvement--so called "turnaround schools"--and led to the huge increase in educational consultants. The federal School Improvement Grant distributed \$4.6 billion to states in order to help these turnaround schools improve rapidly. With that amount of money available, there are many consulting companies positioning for professional development contracts (Klein, 2012).

State governments have pushed for more accountability from schools for the money spent on private educational contractors. The strategy of classifying schools as “turnaround schools” (low performing schools) is to justify providing an influx of money and resources in order to get them to show fast improvement (Cucchiara, M.B., Rooney, E., & Robertson-Kraft, C. 2015). The push to identify more schools as needing improvement led to an increase in consultant contracts, resulting in less focus on oversight of taxpayer money.

Many states do not require review of these contractors. There is also no consistent method of measuring the effectiveness of these contracted services on student success or school turnaround metrics (Tomassini, 2016). Colorado, for example, in 2012, spent 35% of its educational stimulus funding on educational consultants, but there are few consistent measures to track that money (Brown, 2012). How do we know how that money is being spent, and if it is actually helping children?

With all the money involved in these contracts, there have been questions raised about the influence of lobbyists--pushing the education reform movement’s agenda, in order to profit at the expense of the most needy school districts (Mette, 2013).

New York and other states have been embroiled in scandals involving the hiring of bureaucrats who have either been fired, or were involved in litigation while in control of hundreds of millions in grant money (Edelman, S., Short, A. 2016). When there is no accountability, there is an increased chance of financial mismanagement, which in turn hurts children and the teaching profession.

Consultant Costs- Local Level

The local school districts are the final step in the educational consulting process, and it is at the local level that the effects are most evident. School districts contract with educational consultants to analyze data, operate various student services, assist in budgets, manage school operations and provide professional development (Wisegeek, 2016). Many educational consultants focus on college placement and data collection for local school districts (Independent Educational Consultants Association, 2016).

Some consultants are contracted as private management companies for public schools, others are contracted for operational contracts, to provide infrastructure or for auxiliary services (LaRocque, 2007). When companies like Pearson Publishing are added into the equation, very often the only non-privatized spending a state does is on the physical school building itself. Standardized exams, textbook purchases, online learning, teacher certification exams, and training are often all provided by for-profit companies and contractors. This system of privatizing has been created by lobbyists for the business community and nonprofits such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, with the supposed view that free-market ideologies are the best way to innovate the public school systems (Rapoport, 2011). In addition, there is also the opportunity for enormous profit.

Consultant Costs- Mismanagement and Corruption

Many school superintendents and CEOs have been criticizing the use of private consultants and contractors during times of huge budget shortfalls. Chief Academic Officer Dr. Gregory King of Tukwila, Washington, in a speech to the school board in

August 2016, pointed out the \$300,000 dollars in consultant contracts while there was a three million dollar budget shortfall for the 2016-1017 school year. He questioned not only the spending, but also the services contracted out. King described what he saw as questionable spending on consultants, including a round of “executive coaching” that he and other high-level administrators in the district were required to attend on a weekend.

King said:

‘We would write down reflections – things we wanted to accomplish and then how she could help us,’ King said of his sessions with Dr. Janice Marshall, an educator and consultant from Ohio. King said the training felt more like something appropriate for a Fortune 500 company, not a small school district that serves just 3,000 students. ‘I have no idea what benefit it has in terms of our school district,’ King said. The school district confirmed to KING5 that Dr. Marshall was paid \$65,000 to coach the group of mostly young and inexperienced administrators. Spokesperson Sara Niegowski said there’s a lot of turnover in the administrative office and the coaching helps the district retain upper level employees.” (Ingalls, 2016).

One of the more infamous cases of corruption involved Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel’s hiring of former consultant Barbara Byrd-Bennett as chief of Chicago Public Schools, only to see her award a \$20.5 million dollar no-bid contract to SUPES Academy to train principals, with the promise of kickbacks and a consulting job when she left CPS (Chicago Tribune Editorial Board, 2015). Lobbyists and think tanks push the narrative that schools are failing, and that the free market is the only way to bring about educational equity (Simon, 2012). This allows both the for-profit and not-for-profit consulting firms to push for public education contracts at all levels of government.

Local school districts is also where the effects of mismanagement and corruption are most evident. Joe Malinconico (2016) writes of cronyism at the local level. In August

2016, school officials in Paterson, New Jersey approved \$340,000 in contracts to consulting firms. This, after making a commitment to cut \$1.3 million. The four contracts that made up the approved \$340,000 in work were not among those targeted for cuts. More than \$225,000 worth of those contracts were awarded to former administrators from the district, who had retired and become consultants (Malinconico, 2016). This is a clear example of what happens when lucrative contracts, with few regulations, are awarded by local politicians and school boards to opportunists seeking to profit from public school budgets and tax dollars meant for the children.

School boards, like one in Tennessee, have cut their contracts with consultants because what was proposed in those agreements had no real connection to the needs of the school district. Frederick County Public Schools terminated its contract with a consultant hired to work with the district for three years to help revise services for special education students. The consultant company, District Management Council, was to be paid \$225,000 for three years of work, but will receive approximately \$75,000 even after the contract was canceled, Chief Financial Officer Leslie Pellegrino said. The DMC came under fire by parents, staff members, and members of the Frederick County Board of Education for developing an initial report generally described as too “cookie-cutter” and not individualized to the needs of the school system. Similar criticisms came up in interviews with school board members (Bauer-Wolf, 2016).

The Chicago Teachers’ Union released a report in August 2016 detailing the hundreds of millions of dollars in outsourcing of school district functions to private corporations, many of which have clear conflict of interest and political connections.

This is after laying off more than 1,000 teachers and staff. Chicago's Public Schools budget for 2017 includes two billion dollars for private contracts with little to no oversight. Most of those contracts were approved by Mayor Emanuel's hand-picked board (CTU Communications, 2016).

Verger, Lubienski, and Steiner-Khamsi (2016) noted in *The Global Education Industry* that education is a multi billion-dollar enterprise, where corporations and "philanthropists" are carving out as much profit as possible (Verger, Lubienski, & Steiner-Khamsi, 2016). Multi-millionaire Jowhar Soultanali, was indicted on federal charges for bribing education officials with cash and Caribbean cruises to gain contracts for his tutoring service, Brilliance Academy, and his online education program, Babbage Net School Inc. (Seidel, 2016). And that is just few examples of financial malfeasance at the local level.

Consultant corruption occurs nationwide. A school district in Iowa had to cancel a large consultant contract, and lost \$70,000 because of fraudulent resumes used by the consulting company (Jordan, 2016). School districts often do little to protect themselves from consultants who have substantial conflicts of interest. Many states do not even mandate disclosure of prior litigation against consultants. Many consultant contracts with districts do not require conflict of interest clauses (Appelton, 2016). Fraud and corruption are made easier with less regulations at the local level.

Professional Development

The general consensus of the research is that professional development is important for teacher proficiency. The costs of professional development consulting contracts has increased over the past decade (Fertig, Garland, 2012). The National Education Association (NEA) supports the need for professional development and wants to see it continued throughout a teacher's career, in order to maintain rigorous standards (National Education Association, 2015). Interestingly, some consulting companies like Learning Forward link teacher success through professional development directly to increased real estate prices, more tax revenue, and increased success for the overall community (Mizell, 2010). Increased real estate prices are of course, a fringe benefit for the hedge fund investors who own stock in the consulting companies. For all of these reasons and more, there has been an increase in the push for educational consulting contracts in public school districts.

Effective PD

There is research that shows professional development, delivered by private consultants, has positive impacts on teacher pedagogy. One professional development program studied, which was conducted outside of school time, showed positive effects. That math professional development was conducted through an intensive summer program. There was a positive impact on student achievement in math when teachers took an 80-hour summer program that involved one-on-one coaching, and an additional 13 hours of analyzing student work (Garet, Heppen, Walters, Parkinson, Smith, Song, Garrett, Yang & Borman, 2016).

When examining professional development from 1996-1999, the same researchers found that PD focused on specific instructional practices increases a teacher's use of that practice in the classroom (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002).

Ineffective PD

There is contradicting research on the effectiveness of the training that outside professional development consulting companies actually provide. One study on the perceptions of teachers on their needs for professional development showed teachers respond best to professional development that takes into account their own professional goals (Avidov-Ungar, 2016). In another study less than 40% of teachers receiving contracted professional development services reported re-enacting those techniques in their classes. Most reported getting more from instruction-based standards than non-instruction based standards (Shakman, Zweig, Bocala, Lacireno-Paquet, Bailey, 2016).

Another study examined 32 professional development programs. Only five met the standards of the federal online resource known as the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC). Only two of those programs demonstrated positive effects on students in math proficiency (Gerstan, Taylor, Keys, Rolfhus, & Newman-Gonchar, 2014). Another study contradicting the assumptions of professional development programs showed that teachers who were enrolled in professional development courses in colleges and universities were unsatisfied with the caliber of those courses. Participants in the study

felt that the programs were not practical or effective when they attempted to employ the skills of the training to deal with real classroom-related problems (Malik, & Tabassum, 2015).

A study on the effects of a Wested ESL program on student academic success conducted over five years showed no significant effects on student learning. The professional development program was known as the “Evaluation of Quality Teaching for English Learners” (QTEL). The study examined QTEL’s effects on student outcomes in English language arts and English language development, as measured by the California Standards Test and the California English Language Development Test. There were no significant effects shown in student achievement as a result of the QTEL professional development program. Likewise for teachers, there were no significant effects found on attitudes, knowledge, or practice, as measured by teacher surveys, teacher knowledge assessments, and classroom observation protocols. The study sampled middle schools in both urban and suburban areas of three Southern California counties from 2006 - 2011 (Bos, J.M., Sanchez, R.C., Tseng, F., Rayyes, N., Ortiz, L., Sinicrope, C., 2012).

Teacher-Directed PD

For years rank-and-file teachers have been advocating for fewer privatized professional development programs delivered by educational consultants, and more teacher-directed professional development. Many teachers feel that no matter what company or program the school districts contract out to, that the majority of teachers

tend to come away feeling like they've learned nothing that will actually help them in their classes (Vilson, 2013).

There have been studies showing that when teachers determine their own professional development needs and work with their peers, they get more out of the training. Gandara, Maxwell, and Driscoll (2005) in their study *Listening to Teachers of English Language Learners: A Survey of California Teachers' Challenges, Experiences, and Professional Development Needs* state:

“teachers with all kinds of certification at all grade levels generally agreed about the overall range of professional development topics that would most help them improve their teaching of English language learners. Their top choices included second language reading/writing, various kinds of teaching strategies, and English language development. Teachers also reported that one of the best formats for learning these skills was by observing skilled teachers. Teachers wanted professional development structured around in-class opportunities to work alongside a skilled professional. All of these data support the need for developing policies to strengthen professional development and preparation for teachers of English learner students that take into account differences in teacher knowledge, expertise, and experience, and plan programs accordingly” (Gandara, Maxwell, & Driscoll, 2005).

In another study, teachers reported they preferred a workshop model over a study group, and--perhaps most importantly-- to work collaboratively with a group of teachers from the same school, grade, or subjects. The main features of professional development activities for teachers were shown to be significant if the focus was on content knowledge, active learning, and coherence with other learning activities (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2002).

No-stakes peer observations in conjunction with school colleagues delivering professional development to one another to foster pedagogical growth has been a

practice for years. Observations, feedback, discussion, and advice in a non-evaluative atmosphere has been proven to be a highly effective method of professional development (Education World, 2016). There is quite enough evidence to show that consulting contracts, especially those dealing with professional development, do not consistently demonstrate effective results.

Summary

The research makes clear that educational consulting is a big business, and has become even more profitable in the past 10 years. Consultant contracts encompass all levels of government and can significantly affect the budgets of local school districts. The types of consulting contracts vary, as do the background of people who go into educational consulting. There is mixed research on the effectiveness of private professional development contracts on student achievement and on the perceptions of teachers who participate in those professional development programs. There is clear evidence of conflict of interest, mismanagement and corruption in the awarding of educational consultant contracts at all levels of government.

Method

Participants

The participants in this study were teachers and school staff from across the United States, recruited through the Badass Teachers Association's social networking platforms. There were $N = 1580$ "teachers" who answered the survey. The researchers did not require participants to identify their gender or ethnicity. Of those participants, 42.9% taught in urban schools, 41% taught in suburban schools and 16.1% worked in

rural communities. 40% of the participants who took the survey had been teaching for more than 20 years, 23.9% had been teaching between 16 and 20 years, 18.9% had been teaching between 11 and 16 years, and 11.9% had taught between 6 and 10 years. 5.4% of the participants had less than five years teaching experience. 61.3% of teachers surveyed indicated they worked in low-income communities, 31.4% worked in middle class communities, and 7.3% worked in affluent communities.

Materials

BATs conducted this qualitative study using an online questionnaire to assess teachers' perspectives on educational consultants. The authors of this paper created a Google Forms document entitled "The Educational Consultant Survey" to use as the instrument for this study (Survey, 2016). The Educational Consultant Survey included nine multiple-choice questions, written by the authors, inquiring as to participants' demographics, if their school contracted with educational consultants, the types of services provided by those consultants, teacher input on consultant contracts, and perspectives on the effectiveness of educational consultants. Finally, participants were asked if they believed teachers in their districts could and should provide those educational services more effectively themselves (see Appendix A).

In an effort to establish content validity, the Educational Consultant Survey instrument asked participants questions specific to educational consultants, and their perceptions of the effectiveness of the services those consultants provide. The external validity of the instrument was evident as a result of the large sample size, $N = 1580$, out of the approximately 3.1 million teachers in the United States (NCES, 2016). There was

a $\pm 3\%$ error for the results of this survey based on a needed sample of $N \geq 1100$ for a population between 1,000,000 - 10,000,000 (Kalpana, 2011). To ensure reliability, a pilot of the survey was conducted by the researchers prior to posting it online, in order to identify any potential problems with the directions or the questions themselves. The results of the pilot survey, taken by members of the BAT leadership team, were consistent with those of the full survey results.

Procedure

The Educational Consultant Survey was posted and shared online through the BAT's social media networks. BATs has an open Facebook group with over 35,000 "likes", a closed Facebook group with 59,000 members, and various other specialty groups including 50 individual state groups. The BAT Twitter feed has 30,000 followers, and their email list has over 10,000 members. Participants were encouraged to share the educational consultant survey on their own social networking pages and in other teacher groups. The Educational Consultant Survey was open and circulated online for 11 days, from August 19, 2016 through August 30, 2016.

Results

Survey Responses

88.5% of the sample, $N = 1580$, who responded to the survey indicated that their school districts contracted out with educational consultants (see Appendix B). When asked if they had any input in the selection of educational consultants who were brought into their districts, 88.2% said they had none, with only 4% saying they did have some input. When asked about the services consultants provided, 82.9% said their district

contracted out for professional development, 48.1% contracted with data consultants, 37.5% said their contracted with academic coaches, and 30.8% contracted out for assistance with student services. 15.5% of the participants indicated that their districts contracted out for other types of consultants or did not use consultants at all.

84.3% of teachers surveyed said they felt that teachers could provide those services instead of consultants, with only 7.3% of the participants saying teachers could not provide those services. 8.4% had no opinion. Of the 1431 participants who did feel teachers could provide better educational consulting services, 67.2% “strongly agreed,” and 26.4% “somewhat agreed” that teachers could provide those services and would be more effective in their delivery. When asked to rate the effectiveness of consultants, 27.8% of teachers felt that the educational consultants were ineffective, and 44.6% answered that the services educational consultants provided were only marginally effective. 17.3% rated them as somewhat effective and only 1.9% of teacher participants rated the work of educational consultants in their schools as highly effective.

Sample Anecdotes

In addition to taking the Educational Consultant Survey, some participants wrote comments about the topic of educational consultants in the various Facebook group postings of the survey. The following are samples of anecdotes taken from those threads, shared with permission from the commenters:

From a consultant:

“I'm a consultant / teacher coach now, after 19 years in the classroom. One reason I can justify this move is that even world-class Olympians have coaches. If your consultant doesn't listen more than they speak, if they don't

learn about you and your community and your students, get rid of them! Administration is responsible for evaluation, hiring and firing, and general teaching feedback. Administration is expected to have strong relationships with teachers, students, and families. My role is to provide non-evaluative, content-specific feedback. I taught math for 16 years, so I work primarily with math teachers on their math instruction. District administration is like the front office. Principals and other building leaders are the head coach and assistants.”

From a teacher (in favor of consultants):

“We have a SIP TEAM for each building getting title one funds and we can use \$\$ for consultants, or coaches and if so we have a choice of selecting what we as a building want.”

From a teacher (against consultants):

“We had several years of West-Ed on campus. They flew them to HI several times a year, because apparently there are NO people in HI qualified to "consult". Their only mission was to get us all to simply post objectives. Then, and this will kill, you, they determined that Hawaiians were over-represented in SpEd, and that they are ALL visual learners, so we ALL needed to increase our use of graphic organizers! ARE YOU KIDDING ME? Price tag: \$350,000 a year!!! And when they did the occasional (laughable) PD for faculty, they were consistently late, unorganized and unprepared!”

From a teacher (against consultants):

“Detroit has had a consultant parade and not one of them has been from Michigan. We have to fly them in and put them up in hotels and rent them cars. Continuously. Every month at the least for the past 5-6 years.”

By far, most comments were critical of educational consultants. The overarching theme was that consultants were outsiders, costly to the school districts, and had limited teaching experience. Many comments highlighted corruption in the awarding of contracts and the uselessness of the services provided.

Discussion

The results of the survey show that teachers clearly feel the services consultants are providing to local school districts could and should be delivered by employees from

those districts. Teachers who make a career of the profession must eventually earn at least one master's degree, with some acquiring more than one masters or earning doctorate degrees. Many teachers also pursue National Board Certification. Teachers are assigned student teachers, and most importantly of all, are trusted every day to educate our children. Why, then, should they not be trusted to provide professional development for their colleagues? Teachers who participated in this survey overwhelmingly responded that they had no input in the selection of the educational consultants who would be training them. In other words, teachers do not feel they have a voice in the selection of the consultants hired, nor are they allowed to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the services provided. Professional development programs mandated at the state or district level, often in conjunction with corrupt consulting contracts, do not benefit the average teacher. Teachers at the school level know what it is they need training in, yet have no means to convey that to the bureaucrats at the top. High-priced consulting contracts benefit the private companies, but they do little for the actual needs of teachers, their students, and their academic success.

The review of the literature showed that enormous sums of money have been shifted away from public schools into the hands of the private sector consultants (Public Schools First NC, 2016). Both the for-profit and not-for-profit organizations utilize public education as an investment opportunity (Faux, 2012). Services that could be provided by the employees and educators of local school districts are now going to consultants who often have less experience and ability than the teachers they are supposed to be

training and supporting. The money for these consultants is being taken directly from the school districts and deposited into the hands of outside consulting firms (Mass, 2011).

In reality, the high costs of consultant services are increasing the inequity of poorer districts, as the schools in those communities often are the subject of the highest consultant spending (Mass, 2011). It is a perpetual cycle of creating the disease in order to sell the cure. Cut funding, claim the school cannot provide training and services, and then use the remaining budgets to contract out the services, which had already been cut. Teachers recognize this as a gross misuse of funds. When our children do not have desks to sit in, new textbooks, or supplies but the district can spend \$350,000 on consultants, it is disheartening and demoralizing to the entire teaching profession. Teachers and parents can no longer turn a blind eye to such mismanagement.

Recommendations

At a time when education activists and concerned parents are fighting off the incursion of charter schools, Common Core, vouchers, school closures, state takeovers, high stakes testing, and competency based education, educational consultants are raking in billions while remaining largely out of the glare of the public eye. Consultants are taking tax dollars that should be used to fund our public schools and to provide the services that our children need.

Some advocates for privatizing public schools argue that education consultants provide necessary services and that competition is the best way to improve schools (Lewis, 2015). They feel that private educational consulting firms are more concerned

with the business aspects of managing budgets, which will make for a more effective educational system. However, to many educators who suffer through drastic school budget cuts and the layoffs of our most dedicated educators, the push to privatize education services in order to enrich corporate profits is a luxury that we can no longer afford (Malinconico, 2016).

Diverting funds from our community schools to consulting firms contradicts all the excuses school districts give for teacher layoffs, school closures, wage freezes and dilapidated conditions in our schools. These cuts to basic services have often left teachers with no recourse but to pay for basic school supplies out of our own pockets (Ruiz-Grossman, 2016). Yet public education tax dollars continue to enrich the bottom line of private education consulting companies while teachers use their own funds to pay for the resources that our children need.

High-priced educational consulting contracts are a financial hardship on cash-strapped school districts. The majority of teachers surveyed, who are working in our schools every day, feel they could provide better professional development services than private contractors, at less cost. School boards throughout the country should not be contracting out professional development and other services to private consulting firms. School boards need to engage in purposeful and successful outreach to the faculty in order to provide powerful PD to their staff. Those school districts should look to the talent and expertise of the educators within their own schools, to enhance the professional development of the teachers in those communities. School boards should

put their faith, and their budgets, behind the same professionals they entrust their children to every day.

References

- Appelton, R. (2016, June 25) Local school districts do little to protect themselves from conflicted advisers. *The Fresno Bee*, Retrieved from <http://www.fresnobee.com/news/local/education/article85936892.html>
- Avidov-Ungar, O. (2016) A model of professional development: teachers' perceptions of their professional development. *Teachers Teaching: Theory and Practice* 22(6) 653-669 Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?q=professional+development+&id=EJ1100589>
- Bauer-Wolf, J. (2016). Frederick County Public Schools ends contract with controversial special education consultant. *Fredericknewspost.com*, Retrieved from http://www.fredericknewspost.com/news/education/learning_and_programs/frederick-county-public-schools-ends-contract-with-controversial-special-education/article_f7d0e3fa-46a6-5298-8630-70907c32b37d.html
- Beatrice, A. (2011). Teacher professional development in “teaching and teacher education” over ten years *Teaching and Teacher Education: An International Journal of Research and Studies*. 27, 10-20. Retrieved from ERIC Database. (EJ906406). <https://eric.ed.gov/?q=professional+development+effectiveness&id=EJ906406>
- Bos, J.M., Sanchez, R.C., Tseng, F., Rayyes, N., & Ortiz, L. (2012). Evaluation of Quality Teaching for English Learners (QTEL) Professional Development.

National Center for Education Statistics, Retrieved from

<https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=REL20124005>

Brown, E. (2015, June 2). The states that spend the most (and least) on education, in one map. *Washington Post*, Retrieved from

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/local/wp/2015/06/02/the-states-that-spend-the-most-and-the-least-on-education-in-one-map/>

Brown, J. (2012, February 18). Cost doesn't spell success for Colorado schools using consultants to improve achievement. *Denver Post*, Retrieved from

<http://www.denverpost.com/2012/02/18/cost-doesnt-spell-success-for-colorado-schools-using-consultants-to-improve-achievement/>

Chicago Tribune Editorial Board (2015, October 8). Corruption at the top of Chicago public schools. *Chicago Tribune*, Retrieved from

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/editorials/ct-edit-cps-byrd-bennett-corruption-indictment-edit-1009-jm-20151008-story.html>

CTU Communications (2016). New CTU report reveals rampant, unaccountable outsourcing is impoverishing and undermining schools. *Ctunet.com*, Retrieved from

<http://www.ctunet.com/blog/new-ctu-report-reveals-rampant-unaccountable-outsourcing-is-impoverishing-and-undermining-schools>

Cucchiara, M.B., Rooney, E., & Robertson-Kraft, C. (2015). "I've never seen people work so hard!" teachers working conditions in the early stages of school turnaround. *Urban Education*, 50(3) 259-287 Apr 2015. Retrieved from ERIC

Database. (EJ1053490).

<https://eric.ed.gov/?q=turnaround+schools&id=EJ1053490>

Dalton, E.A., (2010). Relationship between professional development expenditures and student achievement Ed.D. Dissertation, Tarleton State University. Retrieved from ERIC Database. (ED520702) Retrieved from

<https://eric.ed.gov/?q=professional+development+effectiveness&id=ED520702>

Desimone, L. M., Porter, A. C., Garet, M.S., Yoon, K.S., & Birman, B.F. (2002). Effects of professional development on teachers' instruction: results from a three-year longitudinal study. *American Educational Research Association*, Retrieved from <http://outlier.uchicago.edu/computerscience/OS4CS/landscapestudy/resources/Desimone-Porter-Garet-Yoon-and-Birman-2002.pdf>

Edelman, S., Short, A. (2016, October 23). City has scandalous bureaucrats overseeing its struggling schools. *New York Post*, Retrieved from <http://nypost.com/2016/10/23/scandal-ridden-and-ineffective-officials-oversee-city-s-struggling-schools/>

Education World (2016). Teachers teaching teachers: professional development that works. *Educationworld.com*, Retrieved from http://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin/admin459.shtml

Fertig, B., Garland, S. (2012). Millions spent on improving teachers, but little done to make sure it's working. *Hechinger Report*, Retrieved from <http://hechingerreport.org/millions-spent-on-improving-teachers-but-little-done-to-make-sure-its-working/>

- Fruin, C. (2015). From classroom to consultant in 6 easy steps. *EdSurge News*, Retrieved from <https://www.edsurge.com/news/2015-07-19-from-the-classroom-to-consultant-in-6-smart-steps>
- Gandara, Maxwell, and Driscoll (2005). Listening to teachers of English language learners: a survey of California teachers' challenges, experiences, and professional development needs. Retrieved from ERIC Database. (ED491701). <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED491701>
- Garet, M.S. Heppen, J.B., Walters, K. Parkinson, J., Smith, T.M. Song, M., Garrett, R., Yang, R., & Borman, G.W. (2016). Focusing on Mathematical Knowledge: The Impact of Content-Intensive Teacher Professional Development. *National Center for Education Statistics*, Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=NCEE20164010>
- Garet, M.S., Porter, A.C., Desimone, L., Birman, B.F., & Yoon, K.S. (2001). What makes professional development effective? Results from a national sample of teachers. *American Educational Research Association*, Retrieved from http://www.imoberg.com/files/Unit_D_ch._24_--_Garet_et_al._article.pdf
- Generation Ready (2016). Partnering for school success. *Generationready.com*, Retrieved from <http://www.generationready.com/who-we-are/education-consultants/>
- Gersten, R., Taylor, M.J., Keys, T.D., Rolffhus, E., & Newman-Gonchar, R. (2014). Summary of Research on the Effectiveness of Math Professional Development

- Approaches *National Center for Education Statistics*, Retrieved from
<https://nces.ed.gov/pubSearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=REL201401>
- Glover, T.A., Nugent, G.C., Chumney, F.L., Ihlo, S., Edward, S., Guard, K. Koziol, N., & Bovaird, J. (2016). Investigating rural teachers' professional development, instructional knowledge, and classroom practice *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 31(3). Retrieved from ERIC Database. (EJ110917).
<https://eric.ed.gov/?q=professional+development+&ff1=subProfessional+Development&id=EJ1101917>
- Indeed.com (2016) Educational consultants. *Indeed.com*, Retrieved from
<http://www.indeed.com/q-Educational-Consultant-jobs.html>
- Independent Educational Consultants Association (2016). IECA. Retrieved from
<http://www.iecaonline.com/>
- Ingalls, C. (2016). Academic chief blasts school district's use of consultants. *KING5.com*, Retrieved from
<http://www.king5.com/news/local/investigations/academic-chief-blasts-school-districts-use-of-consultants/299990653>
- Jaschik, S. (2010) Private counselors policing themselves. *Inside Higher Ed*, June 7 2010 Retrieved from
<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/06/07/counselors>
- Jordan, E., (2016, February 12) Cedar Rapids, Iowa City school district terminate consultant. *The Gazette*, Retrieved from

<http://www.thegazette.com/subject/news/education/k-12-education/cedar-rapids-iowa-city-school-districts-terminate-consultant-20160212>

Kaplana, C. (2011). How many people do I need to take my survey? *Survey Monkey Blog*, Retrieved from

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/blog/2011/09/15/how-many-people-do-i-need-to-take-my-survey/>

Klein, A. (2012). What's the payoff for \$4.6 billion in school Improvement grants?

Hechinger Report,

<http://hechingerreport.org/whats-the-payoff-for-3-billion-in-school-improvement-grants/>

LaRocque, N. (2007). Contracting for the delivery of education services: a typology and international examples. *Harvard.edu*, Retrieved from

<https://www.hks.harvard.edu/pepg/PDF/events/MPSPE/PEPG-05-07larocque.pdf>

Lestch, C. (2016). School CTO's eager to tap ESSA for tech, teacher training.

Edscoop.com, Retrieved from

<http://edscoop.com/school-ctos-eager-to-spend-more-money-on-tech-professional-development-under-new-essa-law>

Lewis, T. (2015). Free market approach to education could improve quality.

Collegiatetimes.com, Retrieved from

http://www.collegiatetimes.com/opinion/free-market-approach-to-education-could-improve-quality/article_35ed2d62-0e44-11e5-b5b4-57b0c2415bfd.html

- Malik, S.K., Nasim, U., & Tabassum, F. (2015). Perceived effectiveness of professional development programs of teachers at higher education level. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(13), 169-181. Retrieved from ERIC Database. (ED1080484).
<https://eric.ed.gov/?q=professional+development+effectiveness&id=EJ1080484>
- Malinconico, J. (2016). Four consultants get \$340K in contracts from Paterson Public Schools. *NorthJersey.com*, Retrieved from
<http://www.northjersey.com/news/four-consultants-get-340k-in-contracts-from-paterson-public-schools-1.1645761>
- Mass, E. (2011, May 25). Districts hire outsider to trim special ed. costs. *Education Week*, Retrieved from
<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/05/25/32futures.h30.htm>
- Mathis, W.J., Jimerson, L. (2008). A guide to contracting out school support services: good for the school? Good for the community? *Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice*, Retrieved from
http://greatlakescenter.org/docs/Policy_Briefs/Mathis_ContractingOut.pdf
- Mette, I. (2013, May). Turnaround as reform: Opportunity for meaningful change or neoliberal posturing? *Interchange. A Quarterly Review of Education*. 43(3) 317-342. Retrieved from ERIC database. (EJ1001565).
<https://eric.ed.gov/?q=turnaround+schools&id=EJ1001565>
- Mizell, H. (2010). Why professional development matters. LearningForward.org, Retrieved from https://learningforward.org/docs/pdf/why_pd_matters_web.pdf

National Center for Education Statistics (2015). Current expenditures and current expenditures per pupil in public elementary and secondary schools: 1989-90 through 2025-26. *Digest of Education Statistics*, Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_236.15.asp

National Center for Educational Statistics (2016). Fast Facts: Back to school statistics. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372>

National Education Association (2015) Providing ongoing professional development. *NEA.org*, Retrieved from <http://www.nea.org/home/20785.htm>

New York State Union of Teachers. (2015). FAQ's about certificate registration and CTLE requirements. *NYSUT.org*, Retrieved from <http://www.nysut.org/resources/all-listing/2016/january/faqs-about-certificate-registration-and-ctle-requirements>

Payscale.com (2016). Education consultant salary (United States). *Payscale.com*, Retrieved from http://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Education_Consultant/Salary

Pearson (2016). Professional development & consulting services. *PearsonEd.com*, Retrieved from <http://www.pearsoned.com/prek-12-education/products-and-services/professional-development-and-consulting-services/>

Public Schools First NC (2016). Privatizing our public schools. *Publicschoolsfirstnc.org*, Retrieved from

<http://www.publicschoolsfirstnc.org/engage/know-the-issues/privatizing-our-public-schools/>

Rapoport, A. (2011). Education Inc.: How private companies profit from public schools.

Common Dreams.org, Retrieved from

<http://www.commondreams.org/views/2011/09/08/education-inc-how-private-companies-profit-public-schools>

Ruiz-Grossman (2016, May 4). How to help teachers forced to buy supplies with their own money. *Huffington Post*, Retrieved from

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/teacher-appreciation-week_us_5728d095e4b0bc9cb044a767

Salary Expert (2016). Education consultant salary in the United States. Retrieved from

<https://www.salaryexpert.com/salariesurveydata/job=education-consultant/salary>

Salary.com (2016). Public school teacher salaries *Salary.com*, Retrieved from

<http://www1.salary.com/Public-School-Teacher-Salary.html>

Seidel, J. (2016, August 23). Father, son, who scammed schools out of millions, plead guilty. *Chicago Sun Times*, Retrieved from

<http://chicago.suntimes.com/news/father-son-who-scammed-schools-out-of-millions-plead-guilty/>

Shakman, K., Zweig, J., Bocala, C., Lacireno-Paquet, N., Bailey, J.,(2016). Stated

briefly: teacher evaluation and professional learning: Lessons from early

implementation in a large urban district. *National Center for Education Statistics*,

Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=REL2016120>

Simon, S. (2012, August 2). Private firms eyeing profits from U.S. public schools.

Reuters, Retrieved from

<http://www.reuters.com/article/usa-education-investment-idUSL2E8J15FR20120802>

Survey on educational consultants (2016). *Google Forms*. Retrieved from

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd6ltHa80Bblq_4nXdV7QFvWVtTplW6yX6Tk9W32Tssma-U_Q/closedform

Strauss, V. (2015, September 30) How much do big education non-profits pay their

CEO's? Quite a bit it turns out. *Washington Post*, Retrieved from

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2015/09/30/how-much-do-big-education-nonprofits-pay-their-bosses-quite-a-bit-it-turns-out/?utm_term=.867749869806

Tomassini, J. (2012). School turnaround report examines ed. consultants.

Marketbrief.Edweek.org, Retrieved from

https://marketbrief.edweek.org/marketplace-k-12/education_week_the_hechinger_report/

U.S. Department of Education (2016). Active contracts. Retrieved from

https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:JqtzQ5GKVckJ:https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocfo/contracts/active_contracts_list.xls+&cd=3&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us

U.S. Department of Education (2016). Office of the chief financial officer contracts.

Retrieved from

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocfo/contracts/contracts.html>

U.S. Government Spending (2016). Compare state education spending. Retrieved from

http://www.usgovernmentspending.com/compare_state_education_spend

Verger, A., Lubienski, C., & Steiner-Khamsi, G. (2016). The Emergence

and structuring of the global education industry: towards an analytical framework.

World yearbook of education 2016: The global education industry. London:

Routledge. Retrieved from

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282101082_The_2016_World_Yearbook_on_Education_The_Global_Education_Industry

Wilson, J.L., (2013) Why teachers need to start their own professional development.

Center For Teaching Quality, Retrieved from

<http://www.teachingquality.org/content/blogs/jos%C3%A9-luis-wilson/why-teachers-need-start-their-own-professional-development>

Wilkerson, S.B., Shannon, L.C., Syers, M.K., & Grant, B.J. (2012). A study of the

effectiveness of a school improvement intervention (success in sight). *Institute of*

Education Science National Center for Educational Evaluation and Regional

Assistance, Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED530416.pdf>

WisegEEK (2016). What are the different types of educational consultant jobs?

WisegEEK.net, Retrieved from

<http://www.wisegeek.net/what-are-the-different-types-of-educational-consultant-jobs.htm>

Zapeda, S., Parylo, O., & Bengtson, E. (2014). Analyzing principal professional development practice through the lens of adult learning theory. *Professional Development in Education*, 40, 295-315. Retrieved from ERIC Database (EJ1028766).

<https://eric.ed.gov/?q=professional+development+&ff1=subProfessional+Development&id=EJ1028766>

Appendix A
Survey Questions

10/23/2016

Survey on Educational Consultants

Survey on Educational Consultants

* Required

1. What type of district do you teach in? *

Mark only one oval.

- Rural
 Urban
 Suburban

2. How many years have you been teaching? *

Mark only one oval.

- 1-5
 6-10
 11-15
 16-20
 over 20 years

3. What type of community do you teach in? *

Mark only one oval.

- Affluent community
 Middle class community
 Low income community

4. Does your district contract out for consultants? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
 No

5. Do you have input into the consultants brought into your district? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
 No
 Does not apply

10/23/2016

Survey on Educational Consultants

6. What services do consultants provide? (Select all that apply) **Check all that apply.*

- Coaches
- Data consultants
- Professional development providers
- Student service providers
- Does not apply
- Other:

7. Do you feel that those services could be provided by teachers within the district or school? **Mark only one oval.*

- Yes
- No
- No Opinion

8. If you answered yes to the question above, how strongly do you feel that teachers should provide those services?*Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

9. If your district hires consultants how would you rate their effectiveness? **Mark only one oval.*

- Highly effective
- Somewhat effective
- Marginal
- Ineffective
- Does not apply

10. If you would like the results of this survey emailed to you please provide your email below.

.....

Powered by
 Google Forms

Appendix B
Survey Results

10/23/2016

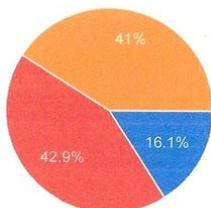
Survey on Educational Consultants - Google Forms

rkaunion@gmail.com

1580 responses

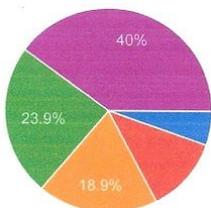
Summary

What type of district do you teach in?



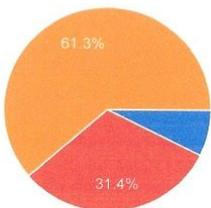
Rural	254	16.1%
Urban	678	42.9%
Suburban	648	41%

How many years have you been teaching?



1-5	85	5.4%
6-10	188	11.9%
11-15	298	18.9%
16-20	377	23.9%
over 20 years	632	40%

What type of community do you teach in?

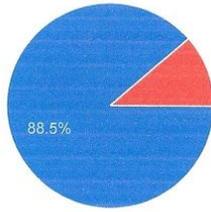


Affluent community	115	7.3%
Middle class community	496	31.4%
Low income community	969	61.3%

Does your district contract out for consultants?

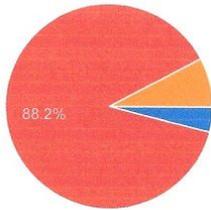
10/23/2016

Survey on Educational Consultants - Google Forms



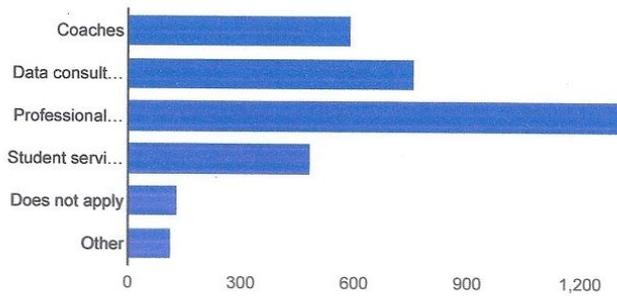
Yes	1399	88.5%
No	181	11.5%

Do you have input into the consultants brought into your district?



Yes	63	4%
No	1393	88.2%
Does not apply	124	7.8%

What services do consultants provide? (Select all that apply)



Coaches	593	37.5%
Data consultants	760	48.1%
Professional development providers	1310	82.9%
Student service providers	486	30.8%
Does not apply	130	8.2%
Other	115	7.3%

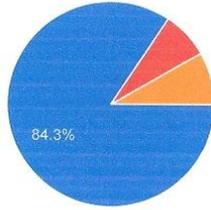
Do you feel that those services could be provided by teachers within the district or school?

Yes	1332	84.3%
No	116	7.3%

10/23/2016

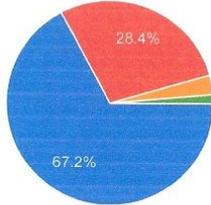
Survey on Educational Consultants - Google Forms

No Opinion 132 8.4%



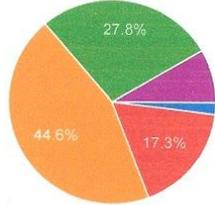
should provide those services?

strongly do you feel that teachers



Strongly Agree	961	67.2%
Somewhat agree	406	28.4%
Somewhat disagree	44	3.1%
Strongly disagree	20	1.4%

If your district hires consultants how would you rate their effectiveness?



Highly effective	30	1.9%
Somewhat effective	273	17.3%
Marginal	704	44.6%
Ineffective	440	27.8%
Does not apply	133	8.4%

If you would like the results of this survey emailed to you please provide your email below.

Yes

No