Interpretive Theorizing on the Development of Management Accounting in Russia: Constructivist Grounded Theory Approach

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Abstract

In this paper, the author discusses a method of interpretive theorizing to construct a grounded theory and discusses its application to management accounting research. It is exemplified by the study of the development and the current state of management accounting in Russia and is conducted by the author with a main phase of investigation between 2014 and 2019. These studies employed various methods including archival research, an extended survey study, and a longitudinal case-based study of particular companies, all of them having produced diverse results. An interpretive approach, as demonstrated in this paper, is an effective vehicle to pursue the ambitious goals of reconciling findings from multiple studies while searching for patterns among them. Such a process allows the author to explore, formulate, and explain a holistic, but a systematic picture of the state and development of management accounting and contribute to the development of theory. The paper demonstrates how the author applied a cornerstone of the qualitative analysis—various coding approaches—to develop categories as foundations for formulated theoretical propositions. The emerging theory claims that the influence of external factors on the development of management accounting in Russia has been spontaneous and unsustainable, while management accounting competencies of the decision-makers of mid-sized companies (internal factors) were not sufficient to arrange a proper management accounting function, which led to the "managerial dead-end" and created a "vicious circle" that does not give rise to financial leadership.

Keywords: Emerging Markets, Grounded Theory, Interpretive Theorizing, Management Accounting, Russia

Introduction

The transition to a model of a developing economy in Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union has led to the need to build and implement new systems and institutions that operate on the basis of market mechanisms in all social and economic areas. These processes experienced many hardships and still are far from their completion. The development and implementation of management accounting—a key element of business infrastructure—had an especially thorny path. The inertia of the external environment, lack of leadership, lack of understanding the essence, possibilities and objectives necessary for management accounting by the majority, opportunism and selfishness of a small number of those who had some expertise, along with other similar factors all determine the way management accounting in Russia has been emerging over the past three decades (Lebedev, 2014; 2015; 2018; 2019e; 2019d; 2019f).

In general, the research on management accounting in Russia is scarce. At a global level, there are only a few attempts to look systematically into its dynamics and scope. Some studies only have a local outlook, meaning that they are never disseminated beyond national boundaries since most of them do not comply with internationally acceptable standards of academic work and Russian is their only working language. Most of the research that has scientific value and is worthy of attention is explorative and qualitative in nature, thus naturally possessing a certain degree of subjectivism and uniqueness of the employed methodology. This accounts for an objective need to provide a common basis for summarizing the existing attempts to explore and explain the phenomenon. Even in the case of a study conducted by a single researcher, like the study by Lebedev mentioned earlier, there is a need to bring some structure into the project on the meta-level to facilitate the development of generalizations and higher-level propositions. An interpretive methodology and a grounded theory approach can effectively support researchers in their meta-level assessments. This paper summarizes the key components of the interpretive approach and demonstrates its application at the concluding phase of the research project conducted by the author.

The next section discusses opportunities from qualitative studies and interpretive methodologies for management accounting research and, in particular, for the abovementioned study of the development of the current state of management accounting in Russia. This is followed by a section presenting the conceptual framework of the research project. The two subsequent sections focus on a constructivist grounded theory approach and cover its main aspects including an overall framework for interpretive theorizing, an overview of coding and sense-making practices, and an application of the constructivist grounded theory approach used in the undertaken study. The concluding section provides a summary of the emerged explanatory theoretic propositions regarding the evolution and current state of management accounting in Russia.

1. The Study of Evolution and Current State of Management Accounting in Russia: Justification for an Interpretive Methodology

The interpretive research genre in management accounting has truly come of age, and the ongoing discussion about it affirms the broad scope of what currently counts as ‘‘good practice” for such methodology (Lukka & Modell, 2010). Since the 1950s, positivism and normative approaches to finance have developed in response to the unstructured and unsystematic nature of prior research and theory provided that the world has changed much. Qualitative research methods were established elsewhere in the social sciences and were recognized by authors in finance and accounting as practical ways to directly explore the “how” and “why” of complex interpersonal and social interactions that influence and determine the dynamics of the financial function (Stoner & Holland, 2004).

Vaivio (2008) argues that qualitative studies can address fundamental, practical problems related to how management accounting is used and transformed in different settings. He claims that qualitative research in management accounting takes us beyond a narrow and functionalist view of the management accounting phenomenon—beyond the textbook view. Qualitative research also protects us against a scientific imperialism that reduces management accounting to an issue of mere economic choice, and it critically scrutinizes normative prescriptions for improving management accounting.

Qualitative research may be conducted in dozens of ways. Saldaña (2011) describes more than twenty different qualitative research genres, with many more are available to investigators, noting that when you have been doing qualitative research for a long time, the genres start to blur. However, the core approaches include ethnography, grounded theory, case studies, and content analysis can be clearly distinguished. Most genres of qualitative inquiry share the following common features that distinguish their interpretive nature:

qualitative research is conducted through intense and/or prolonged contact with participants in naturalistic settings to investigate the everyday lives of individuals, groups, societies, and organizations;

the researcher’s role is to gain a holistic overview of the context under study: its social arrangements, its ways of working, and its explicit and implicit rules;

relatively little standardized instrumentation is used. The researcher himself is essentially the main instrument in the study;

the researcher attempts to capture data on perceptions of local participants from the inside through a process of deep attentiveness, of empathetic understanding, and of suspending or bracketing preconceptions about the topics under discussion;

most of the analysis is done with words. The words can be assembled, subclustered, or broken into segments. They can be reorganized to permit the researcher to compare, contrast, analyze, and construct patterns;

reading through these empirical materials, the researcher may construct certain themes and patterns that can be reviewed with participants;

the main task is to describe the ways people in particular settings come to understand, account for, take action, and otherwise manage their day-to-day situations;

many interpretations of material are possible, but some are more compelling for theoretical reasons or on grounds of credibility and trustworthiness (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

The interpretive approach accounts for the social nature and the contextual peculiarities of management accounting. Interpretive theories aim to understand meanings and actions and how people construct them. Interpretive theories are

helpful for several reasons. First, they help conceptualize the studied phenomenon to understand it in abstract terms. Second, they help articulate theoretical claims pertaining to scope, depth, power, and relevance of a given analysis. Third, they help acknowledge subjectivity in theorizing and hence recognize the role of experience, standpoints, and interactions, including one's own standpoint. Finally, they offer an imaginative theoretical interpretation that makes sense of the studied phenomenon (Charmaz, 2014).

Qualitative research and interpretive approaches may produce especially fruitful results and contributions if applied in the context of dynamically changing environments. The lack of status-quo in design and functioning of economic and social mechanisms encourage the researcher to explore, understand, and explain the emerging relationships and their underlying factors since qualitative data are a source of well-grounded rich descriptions and explanations of the human process. The scope of possible studies includes research in management accounting. In contrast to the relatively well-established systems of management accounting in the West, they are more dynamic in the context of emerging markets, where often they are still in search of its identity as in the case of Russia (Lebedev, 2014). As directly prescribed by Kasanen, Lukka, & Siitonen (1993), researchers may consider the constructive approach when management accounting looks for its identity as a respectable discipline. Another important reason is to consider the gap between management accounting theory in the West compared to locally developing (Eastern) practices.

So far, studies about the evolution of management accounting in Russia produce diverse results. Thus, as evidenced by a study of Lebedev (2014; 2019b), the external factors[1] such as academics, education of students and employees, government intervention and regulation, professional associations, consultants, technology, and transfer of management accounting ideas and practices across national boundaries, did not have any significant influence on the development of management accounting in Russia (except consultants, who have had a rather strong but very specific impact). At the same time, the influence of these factors had been spontaneous, lacking leadership and unsustainable, driven by ignorance, opportunism, and self-interest of main actors. Another historical study based on archival methods found some similarities in how Russian management accounting developed compared to advanced economies in terms of the transformation of its' roles—from more technical to advisory functions (Lebedev, 2019e). However, this same study had found that the driving forces of the development of management accounting were different in regard to how external shocks accelerated the change in Russia. Further, the benefits of management accounting to the overall corporate success were not evident or significant. Two different extended survey-based studies (Lebedev, 2018, 2019d) investigated the use of management accounting practices by mid-size Russian companies; the findings disputed this position in that the economic development was similar to the paths covered by companies from developed economies, showing that:

this is a rather idealistic position reflecting wishful thinking. The desired goal, in this case, is formulated and articulated in the relatively artificial environment of the academic and consulting community, as well as in the rare public relations attempts of individual companies to present to the general public the results of their implementing certain "best-practice" instruments. (Lebedev, 2018, 2019d)

The abovementioned study also demonstrated that management accounting practices in mid-size Russian companies generally exist in a very rudimental form with core practices consisting of cost management, compliance, and commonly used practices like budgeting, resource management, and external reporting. However, the extent of their usage and their contribution to the management accounting principles are modest. Other practices of management accounting were classified in this study as the "occasional", the "emerging", or the "ignored". This view was supported by findings from a case-based study of management accounting practices in mid-size Russian companies. It revealed that there are no significant influences of management accounting on the decision-making process in Russian mid-sized companies; management accounting rather acts as a decoration (Lebedev, 2019c).

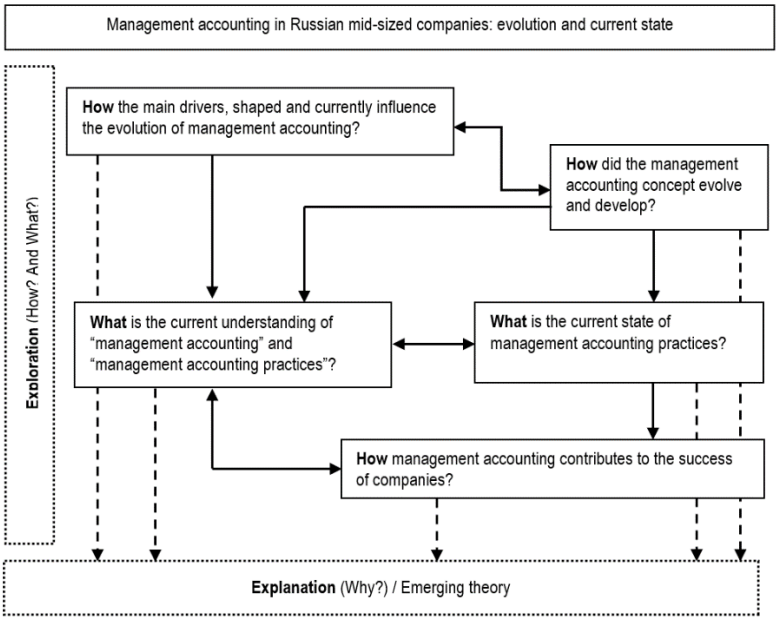
Reconciling these findings with others while searching for patterns allows investigators to explore, formulate, and explain a holistic, but a systematic picture of the state and development of management accounting, and it could reveal important contributions to the development of the theory. The interpretive approach, as discussed above, is an effective vehicle to pursue these ambitious goals and offers a necessary toolset to effectively assist a researcher along this journey.

[1] The study follows the model originally used by Bhimani (1996) in his research on the evolution of management accounting in European countries.

2. The Conceptual Framework of the Study of Evolution and Current State of Management Accounting in Russia

A conceptual framework for a qualitative study explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main factors, variables, or constructs along with the presumed interrelationships among them (Miles et al., 2014). Figure 1 presents a conceptual framework for the research project of the evolution and the current state of management accounting in Russia, conducted by the author with the main phase of investigation between 2014 and 2019.

Figure 1. The conceptual Framework of the Study



Note: The figure is the author's original depiction of the conceptual framework for the present study.

This is a case study in a broad and narrow sense of the term. Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña (2014) define a case as a phenomenon of some sort occurring within a bounded context, suggesting that a case is in effect a unit of analysis. Accordingly, in a broad sense of the term, the case under investigation is the Russian way of developing management accounting during the three decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The study has a narrowing focus on the state of management accounting in mid-sized companies since the most market-oriented representatives of the country's economy. In a narrow sense, the research includes detailed longitudinal case studies of management accounting practices in three Russian regional market leaders and fully adopts an interpretive approach and grounded theory perspective.

Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña (2014) argue that a researcher should keep in mind the focus of the study and what will not be studied since the boundary defines the edge of the case. These boundaries, and accordingly the focus of the study, are to be set within several dimensions of the case: its conceptual nature, its social size, its physical location, and its temporal extent.

In Table 1, the abovementioned dimensions are presented for the discussed research project. The dimensions cover its broad perspective since the boundaries of the company's focused case studies are discussed elsewhere.

Table 1. Dimensions of the Research Project

Dimensions	Description of Dimensions
Conceptual nature	A study of evolution and current state of management accounting
Social size	Focus on the "soft" side of management accounting, stressing the first word in the term and looking at the phenomenon through such dimensions as change, leadership, and stakeholders' roles and aspirations
Physical location	Russia
Temporal extent	Three decades after the collapse of the USSR

Source: own work.

3. Constructivist Grounded Theory Approach: A Framework for Interpretive Theorizing

Corbin and Strauss (1990) provide a systematic overview of canons and procedures of the grounded theory approach. They include the following:

- data collection and analysis are interrelated processes;
- coding;
- concepts are the basic units of analysis;
- categories must be developed and related;
- sampling in grounded theory proceeds on theoretical grounds;
- analysis makes use of constant comparisons;
- patterns and variations must be accounted for;
- process must be built into the theory;
- writing theoretical memos is an integral part of doing grounded theory;
- hypotheses about relationships among categories are developed and verified as much as possible during the research process;
- a grounded theorist needs not to work alone;
- broader structural conditions must be brought into the analysis, however microscopic in focus is research.

Evidently, in the heart of qualitative analysis lies coding. Codes are labels that assign symbolic meaning to the descriptive inferential information compiled during a study; they are attached to data "chunks" of varying size and can take the form of a straightforward, descriptive label or a more evocative and complex one (e.g., a metaphor) (Miles et al., 2014, p.71). A classic set of analytic moves in qualitative analysis follows the next sequence:

- assigning codes or themes to a set of field notes, interview transcripts, or documents;
- sorting and sifting through these coded materials to identify similar phrases, relationships between variables, patterns, themes, categories, distinct differences between subgroups, and common sequences;
- isolating these patterns and processes, and commonalities and differences, and taking them out to the field in the next wave of data collection;
- noting reflections or other remarks in jottings, journals, and analytic memos;
- gradually elaborating a small set of assertions, propositions, and generalizations that cover the consistencies discerned in the database;
- comparing those generalizations with a formalized body of knowledge in the form of constructs or theories (Miles et al., 2014).

Saldaña (2013) divides coding into two major stages: First Cycle coding and Second Cycle coding. First Cycle coding methods are codes initially assigned to the data chunks. The portion of data to be coded during the First Cycle coding process can range in magnitude from a single word to a full paragraph to an entire page of text to a stream of moving images. Second Cycle coding methods generally work with the resulting First Cycle codes themselves. In Second Cycle coding processes, the portions coded can be the exact same units, longer passages of the text, analytic memos about the data, and even reconfigure the codes developed thus far. First cycle coding methods include up to 25 different approaches, each one with a particular function or purpose. However, a researcher does not need to stick with just one approach, rather they can be compatibly combined as needed (Saldaña, 2013).

Table 2 presents an overview of particular coding approaches.

Table 2. An Overview of Particular Coding Approaches

Coding Approach	Summary of the Approach	Possibilities for Application	Type of Methods
Descriptive Coding	A descriptive code assigns labels to data to summarize in a word or short phrase (most often a noun) the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data	Provides an inventory of topics for indexing and categorizing. Especially helpful for ethnographies and studies with a wide variety of data forms	Elemental methods
In Vivo Coding	Uses words or short phrases from the participant's own language in the data record as codes	Appropriate for all qualitative studies and for the beginning researchers learning how to code data	
Process Coding	Uses gerunds ("-ing" words) exclusively to connote observable and conceptual action in the data.	Appropriate for all qualitative studies, but particularly for grounded theory research that extracts participant action/interaction and consequences	
Emotion Coding	Labels the emotions recalled and/or experienced by the participant or inferred by the researcher about the participant	Particularly appropriate for studies that explore intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions.	Affective methods
Values Coding	Application of three different types of related codes onto qualitative data that reflect a participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his or her perspectives or worldview	Appropriate for studies that explore cultural values, identity, intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences, and actions	
Evaluation Coding	Applies primarily nonquantitative codes onto qualitative data that assign judgments about the merit, worth, or significance of programs or policy	Appropriate for policy, critical, action, organizational, and evaluation studies, particularly across multiple cases and extended periods of time	
Dramaturgical Coding	Applies the terms and conventions of character, play script, and production analysis onto qualitative data	Is appropriate for exploring intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions	Literary and language method
Holistic Coding	Applies a single code to a large unit of data in the corpus, rather than line-by-line coding, to capture a sense of the overall contents and the possible categories that may develop. The coding unit can be as small as one-half a page in length or as large as an entire completed study	Often serves as a preparatory approach to a unit of data before a more detailed coding or categorization process through First and Second Cycle methods	Exploratory methods
Provisional Coding	Begins with a "start list" of researcher generated codes, based on what preparatory investigation suggests might appear in the data before they are collected and analyzed. Provisional codes can be revised, modified, deleted, or expanded to include new codes	Appropriate for qualitative studies that build on or corroborate previous research and investigations	
Hypothesis Coding	Application of a researcher-generated, predetermined list of codes onto qualitative data specifically to assess a researcher-generated hypothesis. The codes are developed from a theory/prediction about what will be found in the data before they have been collected and analyzed	Is appropriate for hypothesis testing, content analysis, and analytic induction of qualitative data set, particularly the search for rules, causes, and explanations in the data	
Protocol Coding	Coding of qualitative data according to a preestablished, recommended, standardized, or prescribed system. The generally comprehensive list of codes and categories provided to the researcher are applied after her own data collection is completed	Appropriate for qualitative studies in disciplines with previously developed and field-tested coding systems	Procedural methods

Causation Coding	Extracts attributions or causal beliefs from participant data about not just how but why particular outcome came about	Appropriate for discerning motives, belief systems, worldviews, processes, recent histories, interrelationships, and the complexity of influences and effects on human actions and phenomena	
Attribute Coding	This method is a notation of basic descriptive information such as the fieldwork setting, participant characteristics or demographics, data format, and other variables of interest for qualitative and some applications of quantitative analysis	Appropriate for all qualitative studies, but particularly for those with multiple participants and sites, cross-cases studies, and studies with a wide variety of data forms	Grammatical methods
Magnitude Coding	Magnitudes consist of supplemental alphanumeric or symbolic codes or subcodes applied to exist coded data or a category to indicate their intensity, frequency, direction, presence, or evaluative content	Most appropriate for mixed methods and qualitative studies in education, social science, and health care disciplines that also support quantitative measures as evidence of outcomes	
Subcoding	A subcode is a second-order tag assigned after a primary code to detail or enrich the entry. It can be employed after an initial, yet general coding scheme has been applied and the researcher realizes that the classification scheme may have been too broad	Appropriate for all qualitative studies, but particularly for ethnographies and content analyses, studies with multiple participants and sites, and studies with a wide variety of data forms	
Simultaneous Coding	Application of two or more different codes to a single qualitative datum, or the overlapped occurrence of two or more codes applied to sequential units of qualitative data	Appropriate when the data's content suggests multiple meanings (e.g. descriptively and inferentially) that necessitate and justify more than one code	

Source: adapted from (Miles et al., 2014).

The main intermediate step between data collection and summarizing research findings is memo-writing, which is a crucial method in grounded theory because it prompts a researcher to analyze the data and codes early in the research process (Charmaz, 2014). Saldaña (2013) argues that analytic memos are somewhat comparable to researchers' journal entries or blogs, while coding and analytic memo writing are concurrent with qualitative data analytic activities with the goal not only to summarize the data but to reflect and expound on them.

An analytic memo is a brief or extended narrative that documents the researcher's reflections and thinking processes about the data, and it acts as a rapid way of capturing thoughts that occur throughout data collection, data condensation, data display, conclusion drawing, conclusion testing, and final reporting (Miles et al., 2014). Memos vary, but Charmaz (2014) suggests that a researcher may do any of the following in a memo:

- define each code or category by its analytic properties;
- spell out and detail processes subsumed by the codes or categories;
- make comparisons between data and data, data and codes, codes and codes, codes and categories, categories and categories;
- bring raw data into the memo;
- provide sufficient empirical evidence to support your definitions of the category and analytic claims about it
- offer conjectures to check in the field settings;
- sort and order codes and categories;
- identify gaps in the analysis;
- interrogate a code or category by asking questions of it.

Analytical memos are primarily conceptual in intent. They are one of the most useful and powerful sense-making tools at hand (Miles et al., 2014). Whatever tactics for generating meaning are applied, analytic memos can effectively facilitate the process of reflection and sense-making of data. Table 3 presents an overview of various tactics for generating meaning from a particular configuration of data. These tactics are arranged from the descriptive and explanatory to the concrete, conceptual, and abstract.

Table 3. Tactics for Generating Meaning

Research task	Tactics	Summary
Understanding "What goes with what"	Noting Patterns, Themes	Recurring patterns, themes, or "gestalts" pull together many separate pieces of data. We can expect patterns of variables (involving similarities and differences among categories), and patterns of processes (involving connections in time and space within a bounded context)
	Seeing Plausibility	Plausibility works as a sort of pointer, especially in the early stages of analysis. It draws the analyst's attention to the conclusion that looked reasonable and sensible on the face of it and stimulates to search further – for the real basis involved. E.g. it is an initial impression that needed further checking through other tactics
	Clustering	Understanding a phenomenon better by grouping and then conceptualizing objects, that have similar patterns or characteristics. It can be applied at many levels to qualitative data: at the level of events or acts, of individual participants, of processes, of settings/locales, of sites or cases as wholes, of time periods, and so on. Clustering also can be seen as a process of moving to higher levels of abstraction.
	Making Metaphors	Metaphors involve comparing two things via their similarities and ignoring their differences. They provide richness and complexity, which are useful. They are data-condensing, patternmaking, decentering devices. They are ways of connecting findings to theory.
Understanding "What goes with what" and "what is there"	Counting	A lot of counting may go in int the background of the qualitative research when judgments of qualities are being made. When a researcher identifies a theme or pattern, he is isolating something that (a) happens a number of times and (b) consistently happens in a specific way. When qualitative judgments are made (e.g., saying that something is "important", "significant" or "recurrent"), they are often based on estimates, in part, by making counts, comparisons and weights.
Sharpening understanding	Making contrasts/Comparisons	It is a classic way to test a conclusion – to draw a contrast or make a comparison between two sets of things (persons, roles, activities, variables, cases as a whole, etc.) that are known to differ in some other important respect.
	Partitioning Variables	Subdivision variables can occur at many points during the analysis. In the early stages (conceptualizing, coding) it allows for the avoidance of monolithism and data blurring. It is also useful when a variable is not relating well to another variable as a researcher's conceptual framework has led him to expect
Seeing things more abstractly	Subsuming Particulars into the General	It is a conceptual and theoretical activity in which a researcher shuttles back and forth between first-level data and more general categories that evolve and develop through successive iterations until the category is "saturated" (new data do not add to the meaning of the general category)
	Factoring	"Factoring" comes from a statistical technique of factor analysis allowing to represent a large number of measured variables in terms of a smaller number of hypothetical variables. In qualitative research, this tactic allows to condense the bulk of data and find patterns in them.
	Noting the Relations between Variables	This tactic involves trying to discover what sort of relationship (if any) exists between two (or more) variables.
	Finding Intervening Variables	Finding two variables having an inconclusive interrelationship, that "ought" to go together according to the researcher's conceptual expectations, or his early understanding of events in the case. Efforts to clarify plausible but puzzling relationships may lead to a much clearer and more complex formulation.
Systemically assemble a coherent understanding of data	Building a Logical Chain of Evidence	Several participants with different roles have to emphasize the factors independently and indicate the causal links, directly or indirectly. The researcher has to verify the logical predictions and claims, and countervailing evidence has to be accounted for
	Making Conceptual/Theoretical Coherence	Moving from metaphors and interrelationships to constructs, and from there to theories. Tieing the findings to overarching and wider propositions that can account for the "how" and "why" of the phenomena under study.

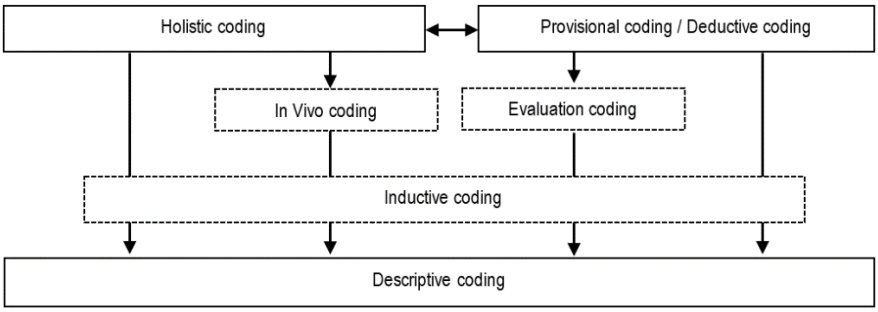
Source: adapted from (Miles et al., 2014).

4. Constructivist Grounded Theory Approach: An Application in the Study of the Development of Management Accounting in Russia

4.1. An Overview of the Coding Process

The principal approach to coding that the author has taken is presented in Figure 2 and explained below.

Figure 2. The Coding Approaches Applied in The Study



Note: The figure is the author's original depiction of the conceptual framework for the present study.

Over the course of the project, the author applied the following coding techniques. At an initial phase of coding a deductive approach was taken, based on a preliminary developed provisional start list of codes. The list was based on the prior work, knowledge, and experience, on the conceptual framework for the research, list of research questions and the preunderstanding brought into the study from the previous phases of the project. The start list consisted of fifty preliminary codes. Two exploratory methods, holistic and provisional coding, supported this process by serving as its foundation, and it was enriched by In Vivo and evaluation coding techniques where appropriate. As noted by Miles et al. (2014), for all approaches to coding, several codes will change and develop as field experience continues. At the same time, other codes flourish and too many segments get the same code, thus creating the problem of bulk. These issues lead to inductive coding when other codes emerge progressively and some of the existing codes are being changed, amended, updated, and rearranged, which was exactly how the project developed. Table 4 summarizes the coding methods applied during the project.

Table 4. Summary of the Coding Methods Applied During the Project

Type of coding	Summary of the process
Holistic coding	Initially, a holistic coding process was applied at a first cycle coding stage. Large units of data were assigned a single code to provide some structure to the data. It was supported by provisional coding based on a preliminary generated list of 50 codes developed during a preparatory phase (as a result of obtained preunderstanding)
Provisional coding	
In Vivo coding	In Vivo coding was applied at a first cycle coding stage at some intermediate phases of the project, namely, at the stages which assumed interactions with different participants (industry specialists, academics, consultants, etc. and participants at case sites). It helped to revise and modify the initial list of codes to address the specifics of the actual situations studied and the improved understanding of the researched subject
Evaluation coding	Evaluation coding was applied at a first cycle coding stage during the meta-analysis of survey study findings and at some points as a supplement to In Vivo coding (where judgments needed to be "measured"). It helped to revise and modify the initial list of codes to address the intermediate findings and the improved understanding of the researched subject
Descriptive coding	Based on the previous steps a revised list of 29 unique codes was applied to refine the results of a first cycle coding and in a course of a second cycle coding, they were grouped in 8 categories (see Table 5). At a final stage, 2 additional categories were added to the list. They emerged from the codes, which were simultaneously related to 4 different categories at the preceding stage of analysis (see Figure 3 in Section 4.2.).

Source: own work.

Table 5 presents the results of the coding process for the conducted research project.

Table 5. Coding Results of the Project

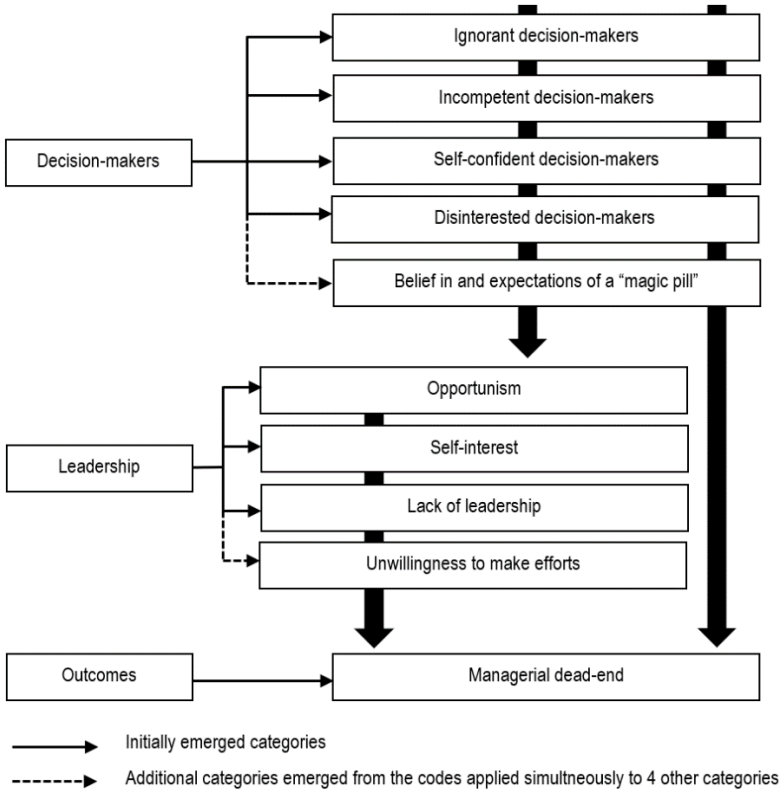
Categories	Codes	Number of categories sharing the code
Ignorant decision-makers	Soviet traditions in academia	1
	Poor infrastructure for education	1
	Nihilism	2
	Skepticism	2
	Firm belief in own obsolete knowledge	2
	Lack of desire to learn	1
	Belief in and expectations of a "magic pill"	4
	Lack of education	2
	Basic knowledge of finance only	1
Incompetent decision-makers	Nihilism	2
	Bravado	1
	Firm belief in own obsolete knowledge	2
	Belief in and expectations of a "magic pill"	4
	Lack of education	2
	Lack of financial literacy	1
	Lack of skills to unlearn	1
	Lack of skills to learn	1
	Biased	2
Self-confident decision-makers	Conservatism of decision-makers	2
	Skepticism	2
	Short-term orientation	2
	Autocratic style of management and leadership	2
	Biased	2
Disinterested decision-makers	Non-involvement of non-financial managers	2
	Transactional approach to change management	2
	Autocratic style of management and leadership	2
	Narrow-focused management	1
	Unwillingness to make efforts	4
Opportunism	Gap between needs and outcomes of management accounting	2
	Unwillingness to make efforts	4
	Conservatism of decision-makers	2
	Fashion for foreign solutions	1
	Belief in and expectations of a "magic pill"	4
Self-interest	Lack of professional community	1
	Short-term orientation	2
	Unsustainable consulting practices	1
	Promises never to be fulfilled	1
	Commercial focus	1
	Cynicism	1
Lack of leadership	Unwillingness to take responsibility	2
	Unwillingness to make efforts	4
	Non-involvement of non-financial managers	2
	Belief in and expectations of a "magic pill"	4
	Transactional approach to change management	2
Managerial dead-end	Gap between needs and outcomes of management accounting	2
	Unwillingness to take responsibility	2
	Unwillingness to make efforts	4

Source: own work.

4.2. Categories Emerging from the Coding Process

Over the course of the analysis, a list of 29 unique codes was applied and during a second cycle coding, they were grouped into eight categories, which are shown in Table 5. During the final stage, two additional categories were added to the list. They emerged from the codes, which were simultaneously related to four different categories at the preceding stage of analysis. Figure 3 presents the summary of categories that emerged from the analysis.

Figure 3. Categories Emerged from the Analysis (the Final List)



Note: The figure is the author's original depiction of the conceptual framework for the present study.

5. Evolution and Current State of Management Accounting in Russia: Emerging Theory

The constructivist grounded theory arose as an alternative to objectivism. Objectivist grounded theorists aim to conceptualize the data without taking an interpretive stance. For example, Glaser (2002) treats data as something separate from the researcher, which implies that data are untouched by the competent researcher's interpretations. However, constructivists study how and why participants construct meanings and actions in specific situations (Charmaz, 2014). Theories try to answer questions by offering accounts for what and how a phenomenon happens and may aim to account for why it happened, and theorizing consists of the actions involved in constructing these accounts (Charmaz, 2014). Saldaña (2015) with reference to Tavory and Timmermans (2014) and Gibson and Brown (2009) suggests that a social science theory has four main characteristics, as it is traditionally conceived:

- it predicts and controls action (through an if-then/when-then/since that's why logic);
- it accounts for variation in the empirical observations;
- it explains how and/or why something happens by stating its causes and outcomes;
- it provides insights and guidance for improving social life.

He also notes, that "[a]t its most practical, a theory is an elegant statement that proposes a way of living or working productively" (Saldaña, 2015, p. 278), suggesting that a "theory is a condensed lesson of wisdom we formulate from the experiences that we pass along to other generations" (Saldaña, 2015, p. 278). Grounded theory has had a long history of raising and answering analytic "why" questions in addition to the "what" and "how" questions; our answers to "why" questions range from explanatory generalizations that theorize causation to abstract understandings that theorize relationships between concepts (Charmaz, 2014).

At the finalizing stage of the study (Lebedev, 2014, 2018, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d, 2019e), the author developed two theoretical propositions. The first concerns the development of management accounting at a macro level and the second one considers the development of management accounting at the level of mid-sized companies. First, the influences of external factors on the development of management accounting in Russia has been spontaneous (lack of leadership) and unsustainable (driven by ignorance, opportunism, and self-interest of main actors).

Second, management accounting competences of the decision-makers of mid-sized companies are not sufficient (incompetent, ignorant, self-confident, and disinterested decision-makers) to arrange a proper management accounting function (inferior management accounting practices). As a consequence, a company gets the level of management accounting at best corresponding to the level of decision-makers' incompetence or lower (managerial dead-end), which creates a "vicious circle" not allowing to give rise to financial leadership.

These theoretical propositions explain the findings regarding the development of management accounting in Russia that the author explored throughout the project, and they serve as the basis for further research, including the possibility of reframing and operationalizing them for future theory testing studies.

Conclusion

Scapens (2004) points out that case study research is remarkably hard because it is not just a matter of going to visit companies and writing up the results, as some critics seem to believe, but it is a process that requires clear research questions, a thorough understanding of the existing literature, and a well-formulated research design with sound theoretical underpinnings. The author's experience fully confirms this position. Not only the case-based part of the project, but the whole journey of sense-making under the paradigm of interpretive inductive theorizing turned out a somewhat unusual, given the applied large scale of the study. However, it was an intellectually stimulating and exciting experience that has yielded fruitful results. Still, there is much to be explored and explained further.

Building on the project discussed in this paper, future studies may focus on (of course not being limited to) the three following areas. Firstly, it is a study of cases that contradict the generalizations made. An attempt to do so, already made by the author of this paper, revealed that in extremely rare cases unique companies exist that have all the attributes of best-practices in management accounting (Lebedev, 2019c). More such examples should be discovered and investigated. Secondly, reconfiguration of social, political, economic, and technological factors (which had a new impulse especially since 2014 inside of Russia, and also including its' outside configurations) possibly change the dynamics of factors determining the development of management accounting. The research in this direction could supplement and enrich the existing knowledge. Last, but not least, a deeper investigation of various management accounting practices employed (or not) by companies could provide important insights and details to enrich the big-picture already available and to further stimulate its practical applicability.

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