Knowledge Sharing Process in Organisations: An Integrative Framework

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Dedication

We dedicate this research to;
Our families and friends for their love and strong support.
ABSTRACT

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Level: Final assignment for Master Degree in Business Administration
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Aim: Knowledge sharing in an organisation is a vital element of knowledge management that organisations deal with. A major challenge that organisations face today is to find skilled labour and to keep them within the organisation. The aim of this study is to find out how the knowledge sharing process takes place among employees and managers in organisations.

Method: This study was conducted by using a qualitative method. Eleven semi-structured interviews were held with managers and employees in Swedish companies. A thematic analysis approach was used for analysing the results.

Result & Conclusions: Despite organisations having the need and necessity to share knowledge between employees, they don’t have a systematic approach on how to do so. This study provides a developed framework on how the knowledge sharing process can take place to ensure that knowledge isn’t lost due to retirement or unexpected leave.

Suggestions for future research: Since this study is limited to Swedish companies, it would be of interest if future research would be conducted in the field of knowledge sharing to find out whether the sharing process varies from organisation to organisation, industry to industry or country to country. Moreover, this study suggests that future research should be conducted on knowledge sharing in combination with succession planning.

Contribution of the thesis: As there was no systematic knowledge sharing process found in previous research, this study contributes to the existing theory with a developed integrated framework on the knowledge sharing process. Moreover, this study has contributed with providing a well-formulated understanding about the importance of knowledge sharing for organisational success.

Key words: Knowledge, knowledge sharing, knowledge sharing process
## Table of Content

Chapter 1. Introduction ................................................................. 1
   1.1 Background ........................................................................ 1
   1.2 Problematisation ............................................................. 1
   1.3 Aim .................................................................................. 3
       1.3.1 Research question .................................................. 3
       1.3.2 Delimitations .......................................................... 3
   1.4 Disposition ....................................................................... 3

Chapter 2. Theoretical background .............................................. 5
   2.1 Knowledge Management .................................................. 5
   2.2 Knowledge ...................................................................... 6
       2.2.1 Intangible resources ................................................. 7
       2.2.2 Explicit knowledge ............................................... 7
       2.2.3 Implicit knowledge ............................................... 8
   2.3 Knowledge Sharing .......................................................... 9
       2.3.1 The process of knowledge sharing ......................... 10
   2.4 Summary of theoretical background ................................ 13

Chapter 3. Method ..................................................................... 16
   3.1 Research approach/design .............................................. 16
       3.1.1 Epistemological view ............................................. 16
       3.1.2 Qualitative Method .............................................. 17
   3.2 Conducting the study ....................................................... 17
       3.2.1 Data Collection Methods ....................................... 17
       3.2.2 Selection of respondents ....................................... 20
       3.2.3 Criteria ............................................................... 21
       3.2.4 Presentation of respondents ................................. 21
       3.2.5 Ethics, dependability and credibility ...................... 22
       3.2.6 Primary analysis .................................................. 23

Chapter 4. Empirical Results ..................................................... 25
   4.1 Knowledge mapping ....................................................... 25
       4.1.1 Explicit and implicit knowledge ............................. 25
   4.2 Integrating with required programs ................................ 25
       4.2.1 Introduction ........................................................ 25
       4.2.2 Mentorship, meetings, job coaching and job shadowing 26
       4.2.3 Information exchange and networking ................. 27
   4.3 Applying new learning ..................................................... 27
       4.3.1 Learning by doing and practice ............................. 27
   4.4 Following up ................................................................. 28
       4.4.1 Development talks, follow-up meeting and performance dialogue 28
   4.5 Establishing knowledge storing medium ....................... 28
       4.5.1 Documents, systems, manuals ........................... 28
   4.6 Implementing further ....................................................... 29
       4.6.1 Developing new approaches and succession planning 29
   4.7 Summary of empirical results ......................................... 29

Chapter 5. Discussion ................................................................. 35
   5.1 Knowledge ................................................................. 35
   5.2 The process of knowledge sharing ................................ 35
5.2.1 Knowledge mapping ................................................................. 36
5.2.2 Integrating with required programs ........................................ 37
5.2.3 Applying new learning .......................................................... 38
5.2.4 Following up ........................................................................ 38
5.2.5 Establishing knowledge storing medium ................................... 38
5.2.6 Implementing further ............................................................... 39
5.3 Summary of the discussion ....................................................... 39

Chapter 6. Conclusion ..................................................................... 40
6.1 Research question and answer .................................................. 40
6.2 Contribution to theory: .............................................................. 41
6.3 Managerial implications: ........................................................... 41
6.4 Limitations of the study ............................................................ 42
6.5 Implications for further research: ............................................. 42

References ....................................................................................... i

Appendices ...................................................................................... v
Appendix 1 ....................................................................................... v
   Interview guide ........................................................................... v
Appendix 2 ....................................................................................... ix
   Information to respondents regarding interviews ........................ ix

List of Tables
Table 2.1. The characteristics of explicit and implicit knowledge .......... 9
Table 3.1. Operationalisation of themes used for interview questions .... 19
Table 3.2. Presentation of respondents ............................................ 22
Table 3.3. Unified themes ............................................................... 24
Table 4.1. Identified themes from transcriptions ............................... 34

List of Figures
Figure 2.1 Developed conceptual theoretical framework ................. 15
Figure 4.1. Knowledge sharing process ......................................... 34
Figure 6.1. Final model of the knowledge sharing process ............... 41
Chapter 1. Introduction

This chapter describes the chosen topic of the study and why the chosen topic is interesting in today's society. Moreover, this chapter presents a problem discussion of the selected field of research which forms the basis of the aim and research question. The chapter ends with a description of the study’s delimitations and disposition.

1.1 Background

“In an economy where the only certainty is uncertainty, the one sure source of lasting competitive advantage is knowledge.” (Nonaka, 1991, p.96)

Knowledge sharing in an organisation is a vital element of knowledge management that organisations deal with. There are several aspects such as employee departure, struggle to learn, outsourcing, information technology breakdowns or any unexpected events that may lead to crucial knowledge loss for organisations (Daghfous, Belkhodja & Angell, 2013).

In a society where both individuals and organisations strive to be successful and competitive, knowledge and the use thereof has become one of the most important factors for organisations. Reports from the European Commission (2017; 2018) have shown that the biggest challenge for organisations is to find skilled labour and to keep them within the organisation. For this reason, the way organisations make use of the knowledge derived within the organisation is vital for competitiveness. In support of this view, Burmeister and Deller (2016) identified knowledge sharing as a major challenge and highlighted the importance of retaining the appropriate organisational knowledge in existing, retired or retiring skilled employees. The knowledge sharing therefore needs to be integrated in organisations operations and actions before a key employee leaves the organisation since it is vital for long term organisational success (Liebowitz, 2009). However, there is a scarcity of studies in this specific field of knowledge sharing where a systematic approach or process is not presented in a specific form (Burmeister & Deller 2016).

1.2 Problematisation

Sharing or transferring knowledge has been observed as a key aspect in knowledge management area to develop new and unique competencies and to increase organisational knowledge base (Hendriks, 1999; Al-Salti & Hackney, 2011). According to Renzl (2008), ability to transfer knowledge facilitates organisations to develop skills and increase value for the organisation. Although knowledge sharing has been identified as a key pillar in knowledge management, one
of the key obstacles in knowledge sharing is inadequate organisational structure (Davenport & Prusak, 1998).

Being considered one of the most important strategic resources of organisations, knowledge is critical when it comes to organisational success. As there is considerable few studies done on how the knowledge sharing process occurs within the organisation, taking advantage of the knowledge organisations possesses is required to understand how knowledge is created, shared and used within the organisation (Ipe, 2003). Furthermore, knowledge has been considered a primary source for long term sustainability and success of organisations (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

In order to gain organisational effectiveness individuals must share knowledge with other individuals or groups within the organisation (Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995). Ipe (2003) argued that, obtaining benefits from knowledge is possible when employees share the knowledge they possess. Moreover sharing knowledge builds on other people’s knowledge as knowledge sharing is the role of making existing knowledge to others in the organisation available.

As internal resources such as knowledge have been accepted as being a source of intangible resources organisations have realized that importance of knowledge for the firm’s success (Wright, Dunford & Snell, 2001). Despite being hard to define, knowledge sharing involves both transmission and receipt (Grant, 1996) and is the process of which the experience of one person or organisational unit affects other units or persons (Argote & Ingram, 2000). Knowledge sharing also refers to being an outcome in combined ownership of certain knowledge between receiver and sender (Ipe, 2003).

Knowledge within a firm can be embedded in both individuals and technology and can be shared both implicitly and explicitly (Argote & Ingram, 2000). A central component of the science of knowledge is to share the knowledge so it doesn’t disappear when employees leave the organisation (Jonsson, 2012). Even though organisations have realised the importance of sharing knowledge, there is little understanding and lack of studies on how the process should take place (Nonaka, Toyama, & Konno, 2000; Jonsson, 2012). Several organisations in different industries are facing challenges in terms of workforce diversity, aging of potential workforce, and difference in generation and retaining the existing knowledge in the era of skills shortage. Because of resignations, layoffs, retirement or relocation organisations lose their
inherent knowledge. It indicates that knowledge sharing is a key factor for organisations if they want to continue to be successful (Makhubela & Ngoepe, 2018).

The ultimate purpose of any knowledge sharing process refers to maintaining the required and valued knowledge in a certain way that might be beneficial and considered to be future assets. There is no doubt that knowledge that is shared today will be considered as added value and useful for future implication (Adobor, Kudonoo & Daneshfar; 2019).

Since there are different characteristics of knowledge there is no general strategy for the process of sharing knowledge (Shen, Li & Yang, 2015). Thus, the research gap that this study is based on is regarding how the process of sharing knowledge between individuals in organisations take place.

1.3 Aim
The aim of this study is to examine how the process of knowledge sharing takes place in organisations.

1.3.1 Research question
1. How does the process of knowledge sharing take place among employees and managers in organisations?

1.3.2 Delimitations
The study has been limited to Swedish companies in general and companies in the region of Stockholm and Gävleborg especially.

1.4 Disposition
This paper will begin with an introductory chapter where the chosen field of study is motivated and the aim and research question is presented. After the first chapter a theoretical background (chapter 2) is presented that will provide a pre-understanding of the different theories of the phenomenon of knowledge. The theories found to be relevant for the framework has been divided into different subsections to clarify each concept further. The concepts are; knowledge management, knowledge, intangible resources, implicit and explicit knowledge, knowledge sharing and the process of knowledge sharing. To summarise the theoretical framework, a theoretical model that has been developed from the literature is presented. Chapter 3 consists
of the methodology of the study where it is been described how the research was conducted. The method will as descriptive as possible present the chosen research design, tradition and method for our study. Moreover, basic information about the respondents is presented in a table so that the reader can get a clear overview of the interviewees, their industry and other additional information. In chapter 4 the results of the empirical findings is presented. Chapter 5 consists of a discussion of the empirical findings. In this chapter the theoretical background will be compared with the results a theoretical model is used to conclude the findings. In the final chapter (chapter 6) a conclusion about the study is presented along with the research question and aim being answered. Moreover, the chapter ends with a suggestion for future research, as well as practical and theoretical contributions.
Chapter 2. Theoretical background

In this section, we will present previous research in areas of importance to our study. This chapter describes the concepts of knowledge management, knowledge and knowledge sharing. The chapter ends with a summary and a framework developed from the theory.

2.1 Knowledge Management

“What good is knowledge if it cannot be shared?” (Elias & Hasan, 2004, p.53).

If we consider knowledge as power then knowledge sharing will increase the power over the business. However, sharing knowledge is not usual due to certain knowledge of an individual being a value-added source to his own career path. Knowledge management is thus the most adaptive design approach to solve this certain dilemma (Elias & Hasan, 2004).

Knowledge management can be defined as the process or approach of collecting knowledge gained by individuals and sharing it with others in the organisation (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Due to increased competition, continuous changes in business market and operational functions, organisations are trying to find a new path to remain in the business or compete effectively and efficiently. The key to achieve this success lies in that organisations must find a way to redefine the strategy by finding and recognising the key assets within the enterprise that has not been utilized in full potential. A knowledge management approach is a common way of dealing with this challenge (Ndlela & Du Toit, 2001).

Davenport and Prusak (1998) argued that most knowledge management systems have basic objectives based on one of three key areas. First, visibility of knowledge and its role in the organisation; second, developing a knowledge intensive culture by knowledge sharing within organisation through actively seeking and offering knowledge; and third, building a knowledge infrastructure both online and offline for employee interaction and collaboration within an organisation.

Knowledge management is categorized into two key aspects, implicit and explicit knowledge. Explicit knowledge can be easily classified and shared, while implicit knowledge can be obtained through experiments and face to face encounters. The actual value of implicit knowledge signifies a new way of knowledge management but to gain that value organisations
must consider few strategic steps. The first step is to identify the source and nature of the implicit knowledge and the second step is to analyse whether that particular knowledge can be codified and translated (Frappaolo, 2008).

The perception of knowledge management can be different based on context such as objectivity, process or capability. For instance, if knowledge is perceived as an object or as an information access, then knowledge management should consider prioritising in managing knowledge stocks. In addition, if perceived as process or method it implies that knowledge management should focus on creating, sharing, and distributing knowledge. When it comes to the perception of knowledge as capability, knowledge management should be concerned with building core competence, in depth knowledge of strategic advantage of know-how and creating intellectual capital for the organisation (Davenport & Prusak, 1998).

### 2.2 Knowledge

Knowledge is a principal role of any organisation and is inherent in the individual (Grant, 1996). Organisations gain success through effectively integrating specialised knowledge of their employees and that effectiveness relies on the level of adequate efficiency, scope and flexibility of knowledge integration. It is also considered that knowledge is an immense input in production and a primary source where most human productivity is knowledge dependent (Grant, 1996). Knowledge that refers to the internalisation of an individual including cognitive learning, mental models and technical skills refers to be tacit knowledge (Nonaka, 1994). The easiest explanation to what knowledge is would be that it creates value for the organisation.

There are several types of knowledge related to organisations and there are many types of knowledge relevant to the firm that have significant implications. According to management theory the difference of knowledge is the common distinction between knowing-how and knowing-about which can be described in many forms. It is argued that most organisational knowledge management projects emphasise on exploiting explicit knowledge where the majority of knowledge is considered to be implicit. The reason behind this is that organisations tend to not consider exploiting implicit knowledge due to a belief that knowing-how cannot be recognised. The purpose of exploiting implicit knowledge is to gain and enhance intelligence and creating value through transferring (Frappaolo, 2008) and exploiting implicit knowledge would create value for the firm only when it is transferable and applicable to production activity (Grant, 1996).
2.2.1 Intangible resources

A concept related to knowledge within management theory is intangible resources. Intangible resources consist of assets and competencies. Assets are something a person owns (Hall, 1992) while competencies include the knowledge that resides in the mind of the employees (Hall, 1993). Intangible resources are classified into two dimensions; having and doing. The having refers to the parts of a company that any potential buyer acquires when the company is taken over, such as patents, copyrights, trademarks and legally protectable assets. The doing, on the other hand, refers to the parts of a company that cannot be acquired at a takeover, such as skills and competencies, the knowing and knowledge of things, reputation and organisational and personal networks (Hall, 1993). Hence, if the intangible resource is something that the firm has – it is an asset - and if the intangible resource is something that the firm does – it is a competence (Galbreath, 2005).

Intangible resources can be developed through experience and formal training but the attributes alone doesn’t create success for an organisation. In order for intangible resources to create successfulness, organisations must develop strategies and systems so that the attributes within the individuals can be utilized (DeNisi, Hitt & Jackson, 2003).

Previous research on management literature has shown that there is a clear distinction between knowing how and knowing about and this is the basis of the concepts of implicit and explicit knowledge (Grant, 1996). The following subsections will thus provide a clarification of the theory on how implicit knowledge refers to knowing and explicit knowledge refers to knowledge.

2.2.2 Explicit knowledge

The objective knowledge, in ways of knowing about facts and theories and using communication to share it, are considered to be explicit knowledge (Grant, 1996; Hislop, 2013). Explicit knowledge exists in forms such as written documentation, electronic databases, formal organisational documentation and planned procedures and processes. This type of knowledge is easy to transfer in ways of formal exchanges through mentoring programmes and database reviews (Shen et al., 2015).
The definition of explicit knowledge was derived by Ikujiro Nonaka in 1991 when he stated that “Explicit knowledge is formal and systematic. For this reason, it can be easily communicated and shared, in product specifications or a scientific formula or a computer program” (Nonaka, 1991, p.98).

Explicit knowledge is considered to be impersonal and context independent and is separated from social values and beliefs and can thus be codified into a tangible form (Hislop, 2013). Similarly, Jonsson (2012) argues that explicit knowledge is the type of knowledge that easily can be written down in a document. Furthermore, explicit knowledge is often embedded in routines, processes, practices and norms (Jennex & Zyngier, 2007) and can by the use of technology be made accessible (Frappao, 2008).

2.2.3 Implicit knowledge
On the other side of the knowledge research we find implicit, or tacit knowledge. Implicit knowledge, the know-how, is subjective and resides in the mind of the individual. Implicit knowledge is observed by its application and since it cannot be organised in written documents it can only be acquired through practice (Grant, 1996). Implicit knowledge is deeply rooted in actions and experience, and in order to understand implicit knowledge there has to be training or practice connected to it (Jonsson, 2012; Nonaka, 1994).

“Tacit knowledge is highly personal. It is hard to formalize and therefore difficult to communicate to others.” (Nonaka, 1991, p.98).

According to Hislop (2013) is implicit knowledge the knowledge that people possess that shapes the way they behave and act such as social value systems or the way they perform a task. Implicit knowledge refers to the physical and cognitive skills people have and is thus difficult to disembody and codify (Hislop, 2013).

Implicit knowledge is difficult to describe and have in some scientific discussions been equated with knowing. The researchers who equate implicit knowledge with knowing also sees knowledge as a process and not an object. One of the most famous descriptions on implicit knowledge was stated by Polanyi (1966, p.4) “We can know more than we can tell”. He argued that human knowledge can be equated with an iceberg – the knowledge that we can put down in numbers and words are only the tip of the iceberg while the knowledge we have gained from experience, and that is embedded in our minds, is the rest of the iceberg (Polanyi, 1966).
The above characteristics on explicit and implicit knowledge are compiled in table 2.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explicit knowledge</th>
<th>Implicit knowledge</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Codifiable</td>
<td>Inexpressible in a codifiable form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Subjective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impersonal</td>
<td>Personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context independent</td>
<td>Context-specific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to share</td>
<td>Difficult to share</td>
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<tr>
<td>Know-about</td>
<td>Know-how</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Knowing</td>
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Table 2.1. The characteristics of explicit and implicit knowledge, developed from Hislop, 2013 and Jonsson, 2012.

2.3 Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge transfer and knowledge sharing are two concepts that are somewhat synonymous. Jonsson (2012) argues that knowledge sharing is the sharing of knowledge between people whilst knowledge transfer is the transfer of knowledge from one person to another. Hence, we have decided to use knowledge sharing as a concept since it is in line with our study on how the process takes place.

The knowledge sharing mechanism is the channel through which adequate and potential knowledge can be shared with in the organisation for retrieval and reuse where the basic purpose is sharing of individual organisational knowledge (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). One of the key aspects of knowledge management in an organisation is the sharing process of knowledge to certain locations where it’s required and useful. However, it is not always an easy process for organisations to explore what they know and how to locate and retrieve the existing knowledge that exist within the organisation (Huber, 1991). According to Gupta and Govindarajan, (2000) knowledge sharing occurs based on perceived value of the actual knowledge, the willingness to share knowledge, the existence and authenticity of sharing or transmission path, the willingness of receiving or accruing knowledge and the absorption capacity of receiving unit in terms of accruing and using knowledge.

Hayward-Wright (2009) claims that there are two types of approaches to share knowledge in an organisation; system-based knowledge sharing (managing documents, contact database, expert database, analysis of social networks and online training program) and people-based
knowledge sharing (mentoring, coaching, storytelling, networking, joint decision making, interviews, forum / community-based practice).

In most cases the sharing and integration of knowledge varies based on types of knowledge, so it is necessary to establish an adequate organisational structure. However, knowledge sharing is not always an adequate method to integrate knowledge. If in case of production, where the process requires integration of mass amount of specialised knowledge, then it is appropriate to execute cross-learning by organisational members and reduce sharing within employees to get effective integration. As a result, this aspect creates a ground of necessity of common knowledge. Common knowledge refers to the node of individual knowledge sets that are noticeable and available to all organisation employees and can be shared and integrated between employees. The specialty of such knowledge is that it allows individuals to share and integrate what is not common or usual between them (Grant, 1996).

On the contrary, critiques say that knowledge sharing is possible if there is a structured approach available and if basic elements of human thought processes that is considered to be implicit are produced and collected so that they can be used as a specific module for the firm's value creations. Such a process is considered to be an advanced structured methodology that aids to capture the human thought process (Frappaolo, 2008). In addition, a knowledge audit should be considered to decide what particular knowledge is important and critical to retain and share within an organisation. In order to do that there are some specific questions that can be asked to the respective employees whom is going to leave or retire. Such questions are related to certain specific tasks, questions about facts or information and lessons learned and insights (Hayward-Wright, 2009).

It is sensible and legitimate to argue that there will always be an existence of know-how or implicit knowledge that cannot be shared or measured accurately. But the organisational goal and objective should be to exploit as much as implicit knowledge as possible to create value for the organisation. Storytelling and mentorship can be an effective form to accomplish that (Frappaolo, 2008).

2.3.1 The process of knowledge sharing
Some researchers disagree on whether implicit and explicit knowledge can be separated and considers the concepts to be different dimensions of knowledge instead of consolidated
concepts (Jonsson, 2012; Brown & Duguid, 2001; Nonaka, Takeuchi & Umemoto, 1996). Nonaka et al. (1996) argues that implicit and explicit knowledge are mutually complementary and that one cannot exist without the other. The distinction between explicit and implicit knowledge lies in the transferability of the knowledge between individuals and across space and time (Grant, 1996).

Derived from the assumption that human knowledge is created through social interaction and that implicit and explicit knowledge is intertwined, Nonaka et al. (1996) created a dynamic model called the SECI-model. The SECI-model consist of the dimensions of implicit and explicit knowledge. These dimensions are made up of four processes that create knowledge in any firm; socialisation, externalisation, combination and internalisation (Nonaka, 1991; Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka et al., 1996; Jonsson, 2012). The model is considered to be a useful model for sharing knowledge between individuals, in groups and within organisations (Becerra-Fernandez, Gonzalez & Sabherwal, 2004; Hislop, 2013).

Socialisation - From implicit to implicit knowledge. This process refers to sharing knowledge between individuals. Mentor-apprenticeship (Jonsson, 2012) or observation, imitation and practice (Nonaka, 1991) are commonly used methods. This process happens when people work together on a daily basis and over an extended period of time and thus makes people create shared values (Hislop, 2013).

Externalisation - From implicit to explicit knowledge. This process refers to articulating implicit knowledge to explicit concepts; documentation for example (Jonsson, 2012). Transforming information that has been collected from different sources are a common procedure (Nonaka, 1991). A proper dialogue is important to this process as the articulation of knowledge might lead to development of new knowledge and ideas (Hislop, 2013).

Combination - From explicit to explicit knowledge. This process refers to combining different aspects of explicit knowledge; databases and it-systems are commonly used tools (Jonsson, 2012). This process consists of the development of new approaches, standardising knowledge and making manuals (Nonaka, 1991) and formalising organisational knowledge such as rules or working practices (Hislop, 2013).
Internalisation - From explicit to implicit knowledge. This process refers to embodying explicit knowledge, making it a part of the organisational culture and way of working. This process is strongly linked to learning by doing (Jonsson, 2012). In this process people broaden, extend, practice and reframe new knowledge (Nonaka, 1991) and the use of manuals and rules are being absorbed into work practices (Hislop, 2013).

When all four processes have taken place, it starts over with socialization again. Externalising and internalising the knowledge are the most important parts of the processes since they have a high level of self-commitment (Nonaka, 1991). Socialisation is set to be the starting point of the model since most knowledge exchange starts through socialisation (Hislop, 2013).

On a similar basis, Szulanski (2000) argues that the process of knowledge sharing has four stages, initiation, implementation, ramp-up and integration. Initiation refers to how organisations recognise opportunities about sharing knowledge as gaps of knowledge is identified within the organisation. Implementation refers to how knowledge is being exchanged between sender and receiver. The ramp-up stage refers to how the receiver starts to use the acquired knowledge and the integration stage refers to how the acquired knowledge is utilised and gradually becomes a routine. The central component of the first two stages explains how employees learn before doing and the final two stages explains how the knowledge sharing process transforms into learning by doing. In addition to the four stages, Szulanski (2000) also state the importance of follow-up conversations to maintain successfulness in the knowledge sharing process.

Many researchers have aided to the knowledge sharing theory by proposing several strategies. According to Rothwell (2004) job shadowing, practice, questionnaires, documenting process, job-coaching, storyboards, electronic performance system, mentoring programs, storytelling, information exchange and best practice studies or meetings are significant approaches to share knowledge when employees might leave the organisation. In addition, another study focusing on sharing implicit knowledge suggested that storytelling, mentoring and coaching, after-action reviews and community of practice were the best strategies (DeLong & Storey 2004).

Departure of employees, outsourcing, resistance to learn, breakdowns in information technology or any uncertain events can be responsible for certain knowledge loss in organisation (Daghfous, Belkhodja & Angell, 2013). Effective sharing of knowledge based on
priority, plan, implementation and monitoring may increase knowledge sharing (Levy, 2011). Retaining knowledge have occurred when required knowledge has been shared successfully from sender (knowledge owner) to the receiver (knowledge seeker) for reuse purpose within the organisation (Grant, 1996; Argote, Ingram, Levine & Moreland, 2000). The advantage of knowledge sharing can be stated when the knowledge owner leaves the organisation. The knowledge that has been shared have been kept within the organisation in forms of documents, in repositories, in the minds of individuals or in other places where other knowledge seekers can access and gain that knowledge (Levallet & Chan, 2019; Jasimuddin, Connell & Klein, 2012).

2.4 Summary of theoretical background

Knowledge and the sharing thereof has become a very important part for organisations. Keeping knowledge within the organisation and sharing it between employees is vital for the organisation if they intend to be successful in the long term. The theoretical backgrounds shows that there is awareness of the importance of sharing knowledge but at the same time there is an ignorance of how knowledge should be shared most effectively. The theoretical background demonstrates different aspects of how to share knowledge, but previous research also shows that there is no structured approach or process of how the process of sharing knowledge ought to take place in organisations.

Since there is no structured approach for how the knowledge sharing process ought to take place in organisations we have developed a systematic framework based on the theory. This framework is described in six sequential steps to illustrate the process; (1) knowledge mapping, (2) integrating with required programs, (3) applying new learning, (4) following-up, (5) establishing knowledge storing medium, (6) implementing further. Each step has been identified within the theoretical background and compiled together in table 2.2. Each step is further explained below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section of the process of knowledge sharing</th>
<th>Theoretical references to the developed model</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge mapping</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Integrating with required programs</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mentorship</td>
<td>Rothwell, 2004; DeLong &amp; Storey 2004; Hayward-Wright, 2009</td>
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<td>Job coaching</td>
<td>Rothwell, 2004; DeLong &amp; Storey 2004; Hayward-Wright, 2009</td>
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<td>Job shadowing</td>
<td>Rothwell, 2004</td>
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<tr>
<td>Storytelling</td>
<td>Rothwell, 2004; DeLong &amp; Storey 2004; Hayward-Wright, 2009</td>
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<td>Networking</td>
<td>Hayward-Wright, 2009</td>
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<td>Meetings</td>
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<td>Joint decision making</td>
<td>Hayward-Wright, 2009</td>
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<td><strong>Applying new learning</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>Rothwell, 2004</td>
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<tr>
<td>Observation and imitation</td>
<td>Levy, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Following-up</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After action reviews</td>
<td>DeLong &amp; Storey 2004; Rothwell 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Establishing knowledge storing medium</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documents</td>
<td>Hayward-Wright, 2009; DeLong &amp; Storey 2004; Rothwell, 2004; Levallet &amp; Chan, 2019; Jasimuddin, et al., 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems</td>
<td>Rothwell, 2004; Levallet &amp; Chan, 2019; Hayward-Wright, 2009; Jasimuddin et al., 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuals</td>
<td>Levallet &amp; Chan, 2019; Hayward-Wright, 2009; Jasimuddin et al., 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implementing further</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing new approaches</td>
<td>Levy, 2011;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2. Identifying different stages of the knowledge sharing process, own.
Step 1: **Knowledge mapping**: In this step organisations identify what particular knowledge needs to be shared with or between individuals within the organisation. Both implicit and explicit knowledge are considered to be critical to share.

Step 2: **Integrating with required programs**: After ensuring what knowledge to be shared by the knowledge mapping, organisations sets up key tools or programs to share knowledge. Such as mentorship, job coaching, networking etc.

Step 3: **Applying new learning**: In this step individuals or employees within the organisation apply their learning into practical work through different knowledge sharing channels.

Step 4: **Following up**: In this step following up occurs to check whether application of new learning has been successful or not.

Step 5: **Establishing knowledge storing medium**: Once the required knowledge has been shared and applied in the organisation, it is being stored into certain storing mediums like documents, organisation manuals and system.

Step 6: **Implementing further**: in the final step the stored knowledge has been categorised to implement further in the future to develop new approaches for the organisation.

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*Figure 2.1 Developed conceptual theoretical framework, own.*
Chapter 3. Method

This chapter describes how information was collected and which method was used for the study's implementation. This chapter also describes the research ethical approach, the study's quality criteria and method criticism.

3.1 Research approach/design

There is no best approach to research, nevertheless it can be carried out in a variety of situations. The main objectives and needs for the certain research play a prime role in the selection of research approach (Amaratunga, Baldry, Sarshar & Newton, 2002). We have chosen to conduct our study in an abductive approach along with prior understanding and theoretical knowledge to gain new experience from the real world contrasting with the theory (Bryman, 2003).

Abductive approach starts with a dilemma that researchers may encounter an empirical phenomenon where existing theory are not enough to rationalise and explain something (Mantere & Ketokivi, 2013; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). An abductive approach is considered to be an approach of continuous engagement with the social world, with the literature as a source of theoretical ideas and process of dialectical shuttling (Atkinson, Coffey & Delamont, 2003; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2013).

In recent years abductive approaches has gained popularity in business research as well as in another social scientific research (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2018). This approach allows the researcher to select the best reasoning from competing data interpretation (Mantere & Ketokivi, 2013). Thus, this approach is most suitable as our study field requires the best understanding and in-depth interpretation of data with best reasoning.

3.1.1 Epistemological view

Epistemology refers to the method of understanding and describing about how we know what we know (Crotty, 2003). Epistemology refers to providing a philosophical grounding to decide what particular knowledge are possible and how it can ensure the adequacy and legitimacy (Maynard, 1994). A rational view is vital in business research which enables to answer certain questions on how research is supposed to be conducted (Crotty, 2003). Considering an epistemological view ensures that the knowledge that is developed is sound and significant (Bell et al., 2018).
This study intended to increase our understanding and interpretation instead of explaining, and this means that our study is based on the hermeneutic tradition (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007). Hermeneutics refers to a theory and practice of interpretation of certain given text, speech or symbolic expression. There are three major criteria that most researchers use in their practice reflexivity, dialogue and interpretation (McCaffrey, Raffin-Bouchal & Moules, 2012).

3.1.2 Qualitative Method

There is a common ground between qualitative studies and hermeneutic research that is textual and interpretive in nature to unite (Kinsella, 2006). Therefore, with the basis of hermeneutic this study has been conducted with a qualitative research method to collect empirical data. According to Bryman (1984) qualitative research aids to explore unexpected findings through interactions. Furthermore, it can increase the understanding and knowledge from different perspectives such as institutional, cultural as well as organisational (Birkinshaw, Brannen & Tung, 2011).

According to Guba, Lincoln & Denzin (1994), what we believe about reality refers to what we interpret as legitimate knowledge and how we obtain that, which in return, distinguishes our principles of scientific study, which also chronologically define the research method we apply. There is no such thing as correct or interpretable objectively if we consider the meaning within context. So, the purpose of qualitative research is to acquire in depth and sound understanding of the research subject from study participants point of view (Bryman, 1984). In addition, Guba and Lincoln (1994) states that the emphasis of qualitative method is to make abundant explanations of the research subject through meanings, interpretations, processes and contexts. That best represents our study to understand the certain situation of individuals as well as their perception and experiences in contrast with social reality.

3.2 Conducting the study

*In this section we will present how we proceeded when conducting the study.*

3.2.1 Data Collection Methods

With regard to our aim and our research question this study focused on how the process of knowledge sharing takes place in organisations. In order for us to be able to answer our research question we needed to collect primary data and compare this to what previous research had
stated about the knowledge sharing process. For this reason, we chose to write on the theoretical background while searching for people who would be relevant to interview for our study.

3.2.1.1 Theoretical background
In order for us to conduct a study with depth and nuance we realised that we first needed to know what was said about our research field, phenomenon and concepts. We started looking for relevant scientific articles by using electronic scientific databases. We used the University of Gävle’s own information search system, Discovery, as a primary source for articles. In addition to Discovery, we also used databases like Google Scholar, Science Direct, Springer-Link and Emerald Insight. To make sure that our theoretical framework was of high quality we only used articles classified as peer reviewed. As we read the peer-reviewed articles we found sources of other articles and books that was relevant for our study. By using the database of the National Library in Sweden, Libris, we found libraries that contained the books we needed for our theoretical framework, and so we went there to read the books and gather more information.

With regard to our aim and our research questions we used specific keywords when searching for relevant articles. We also combined keywords with our concepts to find literature that combined different concepts. The keywords we used for finding articles were knowledge management, knowledge transfer, knowledge sharing, knowledge, implicit and explicit knowledge and intangible resources.

3.2.1.2 Primary data
Based on our research approach, epistemological view and theoretical framework on previous research, we decided that standardized semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions and the possibility to ask follow-up questions, would be the best way to collect empirical data (Gephart, 2013). By choosing semi-structured interviews with open-ended answers as a method, we gave the respondents the opportunity and freedom to be completely open and honest. Moreover, conducting semi-structured interviews to collect empirical data gave us the opportunity to thematise the answers from the respondents and interpret the results (Bryman & Bell, 2015).
3.2.1.3 Operationalisation

Before it was time for us to conduct the interviews, we wrote down what concepts our interviews would be based on. Based on these topics we then formulated the questions that became our interview guide. By using an interview guide as a script, we were able to conduct the interviews by using both our predetermined questions as well as we were able to ask follow-up questions. As we made our interview guide we also created an operationalisation table (see table 3.1) to clarify the connection between the theoretical concepts, theoretical links, the motivation of the questions and the themes/codes that we would use for our analysis of the empirical results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical concept</th>
<th>Theoretical link</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Themes/codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intangible resources</td>
<td></td>
<td>Assets, skills, knowledge</td>
<td>Value-adding factors for competitiveness</td>
<td>Assets, skills, competence, knowing-about, knowing-how</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3.1 Operationalisation of themes used for interview questions, own.*
3.2.1.4 Collection of empirical material

A total of eleven interviews with managers or employees of different levels in Swedish companies were conducted for this study. Our intention was for both of us to participate in the interviews, but due to language barriers, different locations and time management we conducted the interviews alone. The interviews were conducted in a safe setting for both the interviewer and the respondents. Most interviews were conducted in a conference room of the companies we visited, but four interviews were done over the telephone or through Skype. The interviews lasted between 20 and 70 minutes with an average of 47 minutes. Keeping the interviews to a relatively short amount of time is called focused interviews and enables the possibility of a dialogue (Yin, 2011). None of the respondents were given the questions beforehand, but they were given the opportunity to read the questions minutes before the interview started. Some of the respondents wanted to read the questions to get a pre-understanding of the study and research question, but the majority of the respondents chose not to read the interview guide.

Before we started the interview, we informed the respondents of the ethical guidelines (see section 3.2.6) by handing over an information sheet for the respondents of informed consent. After the document had been signed, we asked the respondents on whether or not they wanted to be anonymous and if they approved of recording the interview. All respondents agreed to recording the interview and the recording device used for the interviews were our mobile phones and computers. We wanted to record the interviews so that we could focus on listening actively to what the respondents said and what they didn’t say without being preoccupied with taking notes. By listening actively, we could focus on asking follow-up questions, observe body language and guide the respondents (Yin, 2011). By recording and transcribing the interviews we facilitated our analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

3.2.2 Selection of respondents

When we initially thought about what participants we wanted for our study we focused on small and medium enterprises (SME’s). We attended an event held by The University of Gävle in collaboration with Business Sweden where we were given the opportunity to network. With help from Business Sweden we got in contact with one company that was willing to be interviewed. As our study progressed, we decided to change our focus from SME’s to enterprises of all sizes and this enabled us to reach out to existing contacts in various different Swedish companies by e-mail. By explaining to these people what our study was about, they
put us in contact with other employees within their organisation that could help us with our study. This way to find participants is called convenience- and chain sampling (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In total we contacted managers and employees in more than 40 companies, and out of these, 11 people agreed to be interviewed.

3.2.3 Criteria
With the focus of our study being knowledge sharing and how the process takes place it was important for us to interview people with a pre-understanding of knowledge sharing. For this reason, we assumed that employees with some kind of human resource responsibility, such as managers or strategists, would provide us with interesting answers. We also wanted to interview senior employees to gain an insight into whether their knowledge was utilized within the organisation or not. We started with a geographic selection area, the region of Gävleborg, but because of the chain sampling effect we extended our geographic selection area to include the region of Stockholm as well.

3.2.4 Presentation of respondents
For this study we chose to interview eleven respondents in various Swedish organisations, in both the private and the public sector. We have presented the respondents in a table (see table 3.2). The table represents a diversity between the respondents regarding years of experience, number of employees, role in the company and size of enterprise.
Table 3.2. Presentation of respondents, own.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Number of years of experience in the field</th>
<th>Number of employees</th>
<th>Size and type of enterprise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Staff Specialist</td>
<td>Banking &amp; Finance</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>13500</td>
<td>Large, MNC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Company owner</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Small, National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Global Competence Development Manager</td>
<td>Steel</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>6500</td>
<td>Large, MNC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Technical Manager</td>
<td>Facility</td>
<td>40 years</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>Medium, National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Chief Operating Officer</td>
<td>IT</td>
<td>3,5 years</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Small, National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Head of Unit</td>
<td>Property</td>
<td>35 years</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Large, National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Head of Function</td>
<td>Property</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Large, National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Education Coordinator</td>
<td>Property</td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Large, National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Head of Learning</td>
<td>Auditing</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>1250</td>
<td>Large, National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>HR-strategist</td>
<td>Local Government</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>Large, National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Sustainable Business Manager</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>47000</td>
<td>Large, MNC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2.5 Ethics, dependability and credibility

To ensure that the interviews were conducted in an ethically correct manner, each interview was initiated with handing over an information sheet regarding the ethical guidelines of the study for the respondents to read through and sign. The document informed the respondents about us researchers, our names and what university we study at. The document also informed the respondents about the field of the study, consent, usefulness and confidentiality, and was signed by all respondents. The majority of the respondents informed us that they wanted to be anonymous and due to some signatures revealing the identity of the respondents, we have chosen to only provide the original document in the appendix (see appendix 2). Because of the majority of respondents wanting to be anonymous we decided to make all respondents anonymous. Due to the anonymization we decided to use the number of each interview to
separate the respondents in the result section. Interview 1 is respondent 1, interview 2 is respondent 2 and so on.

In the interview situation we tried not to expose the respondents to our opinions or to make intrusive questions. We were also prepared to change direction if we felt that the respondents changed subject or was perceived as stressed over the situation. The respondents were also sent the transcriptions of the interviews to confirm that the information in the interviews were correct. This is in line with the ethical requirements and respondent validation from Bryman and Bell (2015) who argue that this is an appropriate way to ensure that the collected empirical data has compliance. Moreover, this is also known as a quality criterion for dependability and credibility (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

3.2.6 Primary analysis
For the primary analysis of the empirical results we chose to do a thematic analysis based on our operationalized themes (see table 3.1). A thematic analysis is used to understand the underlying meaning and explanations given in qualitative studies, and is often used to make sense of answers given in interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2012). By doing a thematic analysis based on our operationalized table we could look for answers and patterns in the answers we had received from our respondents, and by doing so we were one step closer to answering our research question. As we conducted the thematic analysis we followed the six phases stated by Braun and Clarke (2006); (1) familiarising yourself with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, (6) producing the report.

Already during the interviews, we realized that the respondents talked about similar things, so when we started transcribing the interviews word by word, we kept that in mind. The majority of our interviews were conducted in Swedish and was translated into English after the transcription was finished. In order to make sure that the content didn’t change due to translation, we also conducted a proofreading of the transcriptions.

By following the six phases of thematic analysis we first started with reading the transcriptions by ourselves multiple times. The first time was to get familiar with the answers and the additional times was to look for patterns and underlying meanings. As we read the transcriptions we took notes and highlighted specific recurring words or sentences which according to Braun
and Clarke (2006) is an effective way to identify different segments of data. When we had familiarised ourselves with the transcriptions we compared our results we found that there were some of our operationalised themes that weren’t mentioned in the interviews, neither in metaphors nor spoken words. We then developed a table of unified themes that we used to codify and explain the collected empirical data (see table 3.3). After we had created our table of unified themes we went back to the transcriptions and read them again to make sure that we hadn’t missed anything in the first reading. We then started to summarise our interpretation of the empirical findings into a report. As our transcriptions of the interviews are vast we have compiled the identified themes from the interview in table 4.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical concept</th>
<th>Operationalised Themes</th>
<th>Keywords from interviews</th>
<th>Unified themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Management</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Internal instructions, knowledge within the company</td>
<td>Utilization of expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Competence, documented and what sits in people’s mind</td>
<td>Knowing and knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intangible Resources</td>
<td>Assets, skills, competence, knowing-of, knowing-how</td>
<td>The ones you can’t touch, to translate the learning into competence</td>
<td>Intangible resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge sharing</td>
<td>Job-coaching</td>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job-shadowing</td>
<td>Following manager</td>
<td>Job-shadowing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentorship</td>
<td>Sit down with each other, mentorship</td>
<td>Mentorship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction &amp; training</td>
<td>Training card</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>You do it sometime</td>
<td>Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>Observe</td>
<td>Observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-interest</td>
<td>Self-preservation</td>
<td>Self-interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>Competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Documentation</td>
<td>Documentation</td>
<td>Documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manuals</td>
<td>Manuals</td>
<td>Manuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Systems</td>
<td>Systems</td>
<td>Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Successors, succession planning</td>
<td>Succession planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education or learning</td>
<td>Education programs</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skill or competence development</td>
<td>Development talks</td>
<td>Skill development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicit &amp; Explicit knowledge</td>
<td>Learning by doing</td>
<td>Learning by doing</td>
<td>Learning by doing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Know-how, knowing</td>
<td>Knowing how</td>
<td>Implicit knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Know-about, knowledge</td>
<td>Knowing about</td>
<td>Explicit knowledge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3.3. Unified themes, own.*
Chapter 4. Empirical Results

This chapter presents the empirical results collected from the interviews. The respondents' answers have been divided into six main themes, and then further divided into subsections according to our theoretical model.

4.1 Knowledge mapping

The first thing we noticed when conducting the interviews was that all respondents considered knowledge sharing as a key factor of their business. The respondents had different views on the definition of knowledge management but nevertheless the common denominator was knowledge sharing and how well companies utilise the expertise their employees possess. The respondents argued that the utilisation could be done through knowledge mapping systems, a structured methodology and development talks.

4.1.1 Explicit and implicit knowledge

Regarding the discussion on what knowledge is or what it is not there was yet again a difference in the respondent’s answers. Two of the eleven respondents knew about the difference between implicit and explicit knowledge and only one referred to implicit and knowing and explicit as knowledge. Some of the respondents considered knowledge to be documentation and formal learning while other respondents considered it to be experience or skills that reside in the mind of people.

“What we have documented and written down and you go in and watch and read. But also, what sits in people’s minds, in my mind and the minds of all employees.” [Respondent 2]

4.2 Integrating with required programs

4.2.1 Introduction

It was clear to us that all companies the respondents worked for had realised the importance of sharing knowledge between their employees. Most of the respondents talked about how important it was to have a proper introduction when new employees would enter the job, but not all companies lived up to their own statements. While some companies had very solid introduction programs with multiple follow-up conversations and structured systems and checklists, some companies had set up guidelines for introduction that they didn’t follow due to poor time management. Regardless of time management skills, all companies made sure that
the newly employed people received an introduction about the company and the code of conduct.

“Everyone who starts here is offered a common introduction, i.e. what everyone has in common no matter what area you work with.” [Respondent 10]

4.2.2 Mentorship, meetings, job coaching and job shadowing

In addition to the introduction about the company culture and code of conduct, most companies appointed the employees with a mentor or a supervisor from the start. The majority of the respondents argued that having a mentor was a way of helping the employee to get a better understanding of the assignments and tasks at work. The task of the mentor was according to the respondents to coach the employees and support different issues, discuss cases, teach and explain procedures and systems and also help them with everyday questions. The most efficient way for the employees to learn their new assignments and tasks was according to the respondents to shadow their mentors. The employees followed their mentor during the working hours, joined the mentors for meetings, were shown how technical systems and machinery function and were introduced to colleagues and customers. Time spent on mentoring differed between the different companies; some only had a mentor for the first week, some had it for several months, and some had an assigned mentor that they could ask questions whenever necessary.

“...mentoring can occur at any time, no matter how long you have worked, it is based on the needs and not time.” [Respondent 6]

The respondents were clear on separating mentors and supervisors for they perceived supervisors as someone who was there to teach the employee instead of coaching and supporting. However, all respondents agreed that in order for the mentorship and the process of knowledge sharing to be successful there had to be an interest from both the employee and the company. If the employee had self-preservation and was interested in learning, the process of learning would go faster and then the execution of the assignments would work much better. As a result, the respondents argued that this would lead to an increased confidence from both customers and colleagues as well as it would be good for both the employee and the company. Furthermore, the respondents argued that any self-interest in learning doesn’t necessarily have to be confined to the walls of the workplace.
“Everything should not have to be done during working hours in order to broaden the competence. You can do that, but if you want to increase your own brand, you need to do something outside of work.” [Respondent 5]

4.2.3 Information exchange and networking

When discussing whether or not the companies had specific strategies for sharing knowledge the common denominator was skills or competence development. There was no systematic process for sharing the knowledge, but all respondents agreed on the importance of knowledge being retained in the company and spread amongst employees. The respondents all thought that the exchange of information and experience was a good way of sharing knowledge. By having dialogues and networking with colleagues they could share their knowledge in an informal way.

All respondents were of the opinion that there were advantages to sharing knowledge. They all agreed that sharing knowledge would result in self-development, a better team-feeling and making the entire company superior. However, the respondents also argued that there could be a downside of sharing knowledge as some people wouldn’t know what information to share and what information to keep a secret. Furthermore, the respondents stated that in some positions or companies, knowledge and information was considered to be a source of power, and the more knowledge you possess, the more indispensable you become. One respondent argued that knowledge sharing could be time consuming and take valuable time from the employees. But not sharing the knowledge would have an even greater negative impact of the company since a lack of knowledge means that the company would fall behind in the constantly evolving development.

“It is the duty of the employees to share their knowledge as much as possible… I think that as a worker you have to show that you really want to learn and understand...” [Respondent 4]

4.3 Applying new learning
4.3.1 Learning by doing and practice

As a part of the knowledge sharing process, we found out from the respondents that the majority thought that the combination of learning by doing and learning by saying was the most effective way of learning. One respondent argued that the combination would be the best approach since
it is impossible to tell what learning style someone has. By constantly being challenged to use both their implicit and explicit knowledge to solve cases and then reflect on it, the employees could build on their own competence. Moreover, the respondents argued that knowledge is better placed in the consciousness of people if you combine theory with practice.

“But I believe in having a review theoretically one way or another, and then really getting to test it in practice. We have seen that it really consolidates the knowledge.” [Respondent 3]

The interviews showed that the willingness to learn new things in the different companies varied. A few respondents said that there was a general reluctance amongst employees to learn new things because the employees felt satisfied with the value they added to the company. However, the majority of the respondents disagreed and stated that their employees were happy to both learn new things and to educate colleagues.

4.4 Following up

4.4.1 Development talks, follow-up meeting and performance dialogue

The respondents pointed out the importance of development talks and performance dialogues as a way of getting a better understanding of the level of knowledge in each employee. The development talks where then documented in different systems and goals were set up for the employee to strive for. Furthermore, the development talks had follow-up meetings to make sure that inherent knowledge was shared with others and that new knowledge was acquired.

“The development call is for setting goals. We have development talks once a year and we have follow-up at least once every six months, preferably two.” [Respondent 9]

4.5 Establishing knowledge storing medium

4.5.1 Documents, systems, manuals

When discussing if there was any documentation process of the knowledge that the companies needed to share, there was a diversity in answers from our respondents. Most of the respondents used operational human resource systems to document and manage knowledge, certifications, education, skills and competence. However, one respondent said that they didn’t document anything due to knowledge about technology being extremely difficult to write down, and that their business had more to do with relationships than explicit knowledge.
4.6 Implementing further

4.6.1 Developing new approaches and succession planning

Although the majority of organisations not having a systematic plan for how to share knowledge within the companies, some of the companies had a thought about how they would go about it; succession planning. By finding out the risks with certain employees quitting, how to handle the risk with what knowledge would get lost and how to handle the situation if it occurred, the companies had developed a new approach. The respondents all agreed that it would be best to have employees stay in the company, but because of the mobility in the job market and the challenges with retaining employees or/and their knowledge within the companies they needed to plan for successors.

“You want people to develop and gain new experiences and challenges, but certainly it is important that you have a planning and a long-term idea of the people who have worked for a long time and have a great knowledge, that we take care of it too.” [Respondent 8]

4.7 Summary of empirical results

Our empirical findings show that it is important for companies to share knowledge within the organisations. The respondents considered experienced and knowledgeable employees to be the key factor of success and claimed that they should focus on planning for successors. Nevertheless, there were no systematic approaches for how the process of knowledge sharing took place, it was more of local initiatives within the companies and from managers. Some of the respondents shared knowledge by ensuring that everything that the employees needed to know could be found easily through different systems and manuals, while other respondents found information exchange, mentoring and networking to be the most efficient ways of sharing knowledge. Our empirical results reveal the importance of sharing knowledge between employees but nevertheless there seemed to be an uncertainty on what knowledge that needed to be shared in order to ensure continuous organisational success.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified themes</th>
<th>Citations from transcriptions [number of respondent]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge mapping</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicit knowledge</td>
<td>“But also what sits in people's minds, in my mind and the minds of all employees. What we know.” [2]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“That is all the experience and the training that I have…” [4]

“...is a combination of experience and ways of measuring how valuable employees are... it can be based on experience and what you have learned historically, how you look at improving things.” [5]

“...competence is built on all the time based on the experiences one gets in life.” [7]

“...having the experience, attitudes, senses and information in yourself that you constantly develop and transform...” [8]

“Knowledge is inherent in people, the one you have with you and that you use in some way for a purpose.” [9]

“I would say knowing, to have knowledge, to know in the formal sense...And the implicit is the one that you may have learned informally, which experiences have given you over time.” [10]

“I think it’s embedded in everything we do...a lot of it sits in the head of our employees” [11]

### Explicit knowledge

“...the experience comes through practice...” [4]

“...practical knowledge, to translate theories and what you learn into practical work.” [8]

“Explicit is stated in some way, that you may have a certificate or a doctoral dissertation.” [10]

“...you can be taught and trained to some degree...” [11]

### Integrating with required programs

**Introductions**

“On the site here, you do an introduction, but you do not do it specifically for job profile...” [3]

“...with an introduction that may be different based on past experience and knowledge...” [5]

“There is an overall introductory training...” [8]

“We have an on-boarding program that starts before you start with us...we have a very solid introduction program.” [9]

“Everyone who starts here is offered a common introduction.” [10]

“I think every employee has an introductory program to the company.” [11]

**Mentorship**

“They get a mentor.” [1]

“We have mentorship, when a new one comes, you get a so-called mentor who teaches, who explains how everything works, which you can always go and ask.” [2]

“And then you usually have a superior who is a mentor.” [3]
“...they have a closest manager...” [5]
“...when there are newly employed, you have a supervisor... however, mentoring can occur at any time, no matter how long you have worked, it is based on the needs and not time.” [6]

“All of our employees have a designated supervisor...” [9]

“Then you have the traditional mouth-to-mouth or procedures on how to do production process or something like that, which is handed over from individuals or, you know, mentorship training locally.” [11]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job coaching</th>
<th>“Either you are like a supervisor or you are like the boss who coaches.” [1]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Usually, it is a colleague so you can ask questions...” [3]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“...to join and sit with, you are there as support but the person is allowed to do the tasks himself.” [6]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“…helping each other and coaching...” [8]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Job shadowing | “We have meetings where we talk about walking next to someone, especially new employees, but also experienced workers.” [2] |
|              | “…that people get to go side by side with our experts and really try to learn and refuel as much as possible.” [3]|
|              | “I had to follow another operations manager to find out how certain systems and other things worked.” [4] |
|              | “…you follow them during the preparation stage...” [6]                 |
|              | “It will be both shadowing and doing yourself with the support of supervisors or colleagues.” [7] |
|              | “That you job shadow others...” [10]                                   |

| Meetings      | “...a lot is about sitting in on customer meetings...” [1]             |
|              | “…and weekly meetings” [5]                                           |
|              | “This can be through course activities or at an APT meeting...” [7] |
|              | “…at an information meeting or in their working group, knowledge is disseminated to each other” [8] |
|              | “…we have a get-together meeting where we gather all employees...” [9] |
|              | “And we meet and meetings generate creativity and new ideas and new questions.” [11] |

<p>| Networking    | “And I think we are well on our way and have really done it through networks...” [7] |
|              | “…when we meet and network...The networking between business areas is very important to us.” [9] |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information exchange</th>
<th>“And there is, I think, great value because it builds a network of people…” [11]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“…have exchanges…” [10]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Then we are very open with the information, everyone asks everyone in some way.” [2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“We sit and talk and then you get asked if you want to learn more and then it does not matter that you belong to another department” [3]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It was quite common to exchange experiences.” [4]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“…disseminating information on various things.” [7]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“…you have the traditional mouth-to-mouth or procedures on how to do…” [11]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applying new learning</th>
<th>Learning by doing</th>
<th>“If you sit with a person and you do it sometime, it sticks better than a person just gives you a manual.” [1]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Would say learning by doing. I really think that applies for all of life. It is possible to read a book, but it is clear that when you practice and learn by doing.” [2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Learning by doing, we have also seen evidence of this…” [3]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“…learning by doing, in my world. It sticks much better.” [4]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“A combination, but with an overweight towards learning by doing. Practical work usually tends to get stuck more than verbally expressed.” [5]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Those who are undergoing learning…” [6]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I think it's more learning by doing.” [7]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Learning by doing… you should put your theory into practice”[8]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Learning by doing. Obviously it should be both and, but I dare say that it is generally accepted that what you do sticks better” [10]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I think learning by doing is usually a better way to gain understanding and knowledge.” [11]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>“I think it's good because it's a lot of practice.” [1]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“…obviously you have a base when you read something, but then you have to practice it.” [2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“…and then really getting to test it in practice.” [3]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“…that you get to practice…” [8]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Then they are back at work and get to work on their checklist and will put everything into practice.” [9]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“…try out…” [10]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- "...you have certain packages of training that you go through that you have to go through." [11]

**Following up**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Follow-up meetings</th>
<th>&quot;Then you have follow-up about every other week with how things have gone and it has been experienced.&quot; [5]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;,...and we have follow-up at least once every six months, preferably two.&quot; [9]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance dialogue</th>
<th>&quot;By doing this, one can discuss and ask follow-up questions and discuss.&quot; [1]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;...you get into the performance dialogue process...&quot; [3]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;We use our LMS for development calls..... it is a system support to identify what development our employees need.&quot; [9]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Development talks</th>
<th>&quot;...you have to have your development talk...&quot; [3]</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;...we have had everything from development talks to follow-up meetings.&quot; [5]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;There is a lot of talk about needs and that we need to strategically plan for the future and be long-term.&quot; [8]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;We have development talks once a year...&quot; [9]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Establishing knowledge storing medium**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>&quot;It is also written in the control documents...&quot; [10]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;...what we have documented and written down...&quot; [2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Then we try to document as much as we can, processes, routines and monthly reports and the like.&quot;[2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;The entire knowledge management package with us is based on the fact that we have mapped every man and woman positions...&quot; [3]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Above all, clearer documentation, maybe setting aside time for documentation.&quot; [5]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;...it is very important that the documentation works and that we have it in place...&quot; [8]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;So I think that is something that we would do us as a company, that we write down the things we do and write reports and so on. So we have a good written documentation on many things. Basically... I think the good thing with documentation is that it stays&quot; [11]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Systems</th>
<th>&quot;The knowledge is very open, we try to pass it on through information boards and similar. “ [2]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Then we come back to this mapping and that we have things in our HR systems...&quot; [3]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;We have an LMS (Learning Management System)...&quot; [9]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Just make sure that robust systems can handle it.” [11]

Manuals
“We have worked very much with processes and routines in recent years.” [2]
“I always tried to make some kind of action plan out of it and also do instruction manuals.” [4]
“...and write procedures on how certain things are done and so on...” [11]

Implementing further
Developing new approaches
“...new approaches...” [4]
“...it is important that you have a planning and a long-term idea...” [8]

Succession planning
“...we really have to work a lot with succession planning.” [3]
“There is a need to have long-term planning or to work in parallel in some way.” [8]
“Already now, it is done, succession planning...” [10]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementing Further</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developing new approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“...new approaches...” [4]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“…it is important that you have a planning and a long-term idea...” [8]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Succession planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“…we really have to work a lot with succession planning.” [3]</td>
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<tr>
<td>“There is a need to have long-term planning or to work in parallel in some way.” [8]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Already now, it is done, succession planning...” [10]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1. Identified themes from transcriptions, own.

After analysing the empirical results, which you can find in table 4.1, we found that there were some concept mentioned in our theoretical background that cannot be found in the way organisations share their knowledge. Storytelling, joint decision making and community of practices were never mentioned in the interviews and for that reason we have revised our structured framework (see model 4.1).

Figure 4.1. Knowledge sharing process, revised from empirical data, own.
Chapter 5. Discussion

This chapter discusses collected empirical data in relation to previous research. With an interpretative approach similarities and differences between theory and perceived reality are clarified.

5.1 Knowledge

Previous research stated that knowledge management is the process of collecting knowledge that is gained by individuals and sharing it with others in the organisation (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Ndlela & Du Toit, 2001). While our empirical results reveal different views on knowledge management it came down to how well an organisation utilises the expertise inherited in the mind of the employee. It is also argued that the utilisation could be done through several ways; knowledge mapping systems, documentation or a structured methodology and development discussion. In contrast previous research state that knowledge management may occur as a process or method that focuses on creation, sharing, and distribution of knowledge (Davenport & Prusak, 1998).

The findings suggest that there are advantages in sharing knowledge, it increases employee’s self-development, encourages to work in a team (team-feeling), and creates value for the organisation. Our study shows that since knowledge is considered to be the ultimate source of power then the more knowledge employees possess, the more valuable they become to the organisation.

5.2 The process of knowledge sharing

The sharing process of knowledge within the organisation is considered to be one of the key aspects in any organisation. However, it may be difficult to find out what knowledge the organisation possesses and how to identify and relocate the existing knowledge to be able to reuse it (Huber, 1991). Our empirical findings reveal some insights when it comes to knowledge sharing. The first insight is that sharing knowledge should be disregarded if the employee or organisation are not aware of or in agreement of what knowledge that should be shared and what should not. For some organisations or individuals, the knowledge of the employees’ is the core competence and what makes the organisation unique in the competitive market. Another insight is that knowledge sharing can be time consuming which may affect the daily operation of the organisation and employees would lose valuable time.
Another aspect of our empirical findings reveal that in order for the knowledge sharing process to be successful there must be an interest from both the employee and the company. If the employee has self-preservation and is interested in learning, the process of learning would go faster and then the execution of the assignments would work much better. Furthermore, our findings suggest that self-interest in learning should not be limited to the workplace. To support that view previous research suggested self-commitment to be an important part of the knowledge sharing process (Nonaka, 1991) and that the two major key aspects to knowledge sharing process are the willingness to share knowledge and the willingness of receiving knowledge (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000). In addition, the basic objective of knowledge sharing is developing a knowledge intensive culture by knowledge sharing within organisations through actively seeking and offering knowledge (Davenport & Prusak, 1998).

Previous research state that knowledge sharing is possible if there is a structured approach available so that it can be used as a specific module for the firm's value creation (Frappaolo, 2008). In most cases the sharing and integration of knowledge varies based on types of knowledge, thus it is necessary to establish an adequate organisational structure (Grant, 1996). On the contrary, our findings suggest that organisations practice different approaches to share knowledge, but they do not have a clear and systematic approach of how to share knowledge in the most efficient and successful way. However, the knowledge sharing approach should be a mixed strategy that addresses both implicit and explicit knowledge (Daghfous et al., 2013; Levallet & Chan, 2019). Moreover, effective sharing of knowledge based on priority, plan, implementation and monitoring may increase knowledge retention (Levy, 2011).

5.2.1 Knowledge mapping
Implicit knowledge is deeply rooted in actions and experience, and in order to understand implicit knowledge there has to be training or practice connected to it (Jonsson, 2012; Nonaka, 1994). Our empirical findings suggest that implicit knowledge refers to knowing while explicit refers to knowledge. Implicit knowledge can be gained through theoretical learning and observation while explicit knowledge is the outcome of the combination of theory and practice. Furthermore, implicit and explicit knowledge are mutually complementary (Nonaka et al. 1996; Jonsson, 2012) and in addition, implicit knowledge is captured by its application. Our findings state that implicit knowledge is very difficult, or almost impossible, to organize and download to written documents it can only be observed via explicit knowledge that has been acquired through practice.
The distinction between explicit and implicit knowledge lies in the transferability of the knowledge between individuals and across space and time. Internalisation of knowledge turns out as a part of organisational culture and way of working that is strongly linked with learning by doing (Nonaka, 1991). As a result, when educating themselves, people broaden, extend, practice and reframe new knowledge and the use of manuals and rules are being absorbed into work practices (Hislop, 2013). While our empirical results show that the combination of learning by doing and learning by saying is the most effective way of learning employees are able to build their own competence by implementing both implicit and explicit knowledge on their work life. That also enables them to get effective feedback about the outcome. The findings also reveal that the combination of theory and practice lead to an effective knowledge gaining that stays inherent in people.

5.2.2 Integrating with required programs
The findings suggest how important it is to have a proper introduction when new employees would enter the job. While some companies had very solid introduction programs with multiple follow-up conversations and structured systems and checklists, some companies had only set guidelines for how the introduction should take place, but not ensuring that it was properly executed. In addition, our empirical findings also reveal that information and experience exchange are considered to be an effective way to share knowledge. In support of this view previous research state that exchanging information and networking might be results of successful knowledge sharing. Moreover, the most efficient way for the employees to learn their new assignments and tasks was to shadow their mentors (Hayward-Wright, 2009; Frappaolo, 2008; Rothwell 2004; DeLong & Storey 2004; Jonsson, 2012; Shen et al., 2015). In accordance with previous research our study reveals that mentorship is one of the key approaches to share knowledge in an organisation.

Previous research has shown that storytelling, networking, joint decision making, information exchange, meetings and community of practice are essential mediums to integrate in sharing knowledge in organisations (Frappaolo, 2008; Hayward-Wright, 2009; Rothwell, 2004; DeLong & Storey, 2004). Despite this, our empirical findings suggest that only meetings, networking and information exchange are implemented as integrated programs.
5.2.3 Applying new learning

The study reveals that learning by doing and learning by saying are the most effective ways to apply new learning in the knowledge sharing process. These findings are in line with previous research (Nonaka, 1991; Jonsson, 2012; Hislop, 2013; Szulanski, 2000) which state that learning by doing and learning before doing are two key components in how to apply new knowledge.

5.2.4 Following up

In order for organisations to ensure effective application of new knowledge, following up on newly acquired knowledge is considered to be a necessary step in the knowledge sharing process. Our empirical findings also showed that follow-up meetings, performance dialogue and development talks might be necessary to consider in the sharing of knowledge. Similarly, previous studies show that after-action reviews is a key tool to follow up applications of new knowledge (DeLong & Storey 2004).

Previous research state that follow-up meetings or after-action reviews can be significant for sharing approaches as well to retain knowledge when employees may leave the organisation (DeLong & Storey 2004; Rothwell 2004). This is in line with our results that reveal that development talks and follow-up meetings are used by organisations to develop and plan for new approaches and goals.

5.2.5 Establishing knowledge storing medium

Formalized structured systems of documentation through managing documents or document processes are also useful in the knowledge sharing process (Rothwell 2004; Hayward-Wright, 2009). Previous research argue that the advantage of knowledge sharing can be stated as when knowledge that has been shared between individuals have retained within the organisation in forms of documents, in individual’s minds or elsewhere where other knowledge seekers have access to gain that knowledge (Levallet & Chan, 2019). Sharing knowledge ensures that the organisation will not sacrifice the adequate knowledge held by employees who may leave the organisations as a result of retirement or generational shift (Levy, 2011). Nevertheless, our findings reveal that it is considered to be a challenge for organisations on how to transfer the inherent knowledge of the employees into written documentation.
5.2.6 Implementing further

The findings reveal that there is a distinct sense of stress that the organisations feel when they might lose valuable knowledge within a few years due to retirement. Our findings reveal that it has been stated that organisations need to consider succession planning in order to retain valuable knowledge within an organisation. However, few organisations in our study have actually taken this into consideration. These findings are in accordance with previous research that state that an adequate process to share organisational knowledge for retrieval and reuse is necessary. If not properly utilised it might lead to knowledge loss (Levallet & Chan, 2019; Jasimuddin et al., 2012).

5.3 Summary of the discussion

Adequate knowledge management within organisations can be done through a systematic structure, mapping system and structured method. Knowledge such as implicit and explicit are the outcome of proper execution of experience and theory in practice. The discussion also reveals that even though there is no structured systems of knowledge sharing, employees must have the self-interest and willingness to share and receive knowledge. The combination of learning by doing and learning by saying is the most effective way of learning to obtain and develop a core competence. Combined with theory and empirical findings sharing knowledge is one of the key aspects for organisational success and in order for the organisations to have success there needs to be a systematic approach of sharing knowledge. Organisations have realised that knowledge sharing would have a great impact on positive growth and development of both the employees as well as the business.

On the other hand, our study also reveals that employees should know what knowledge to share and what knowledge to keep to themselves. Employees may lose their own competitiveness if they share their unique knowledge that is considered to be their core competence. Knowledge sharing may be considered time consuming for organisations but nevertheless it is considered necessary to share within the organisation. Moreover, organisations should consider evaluating the importance of keeping valuable knowledge within the organisation through implementing succession planning.
Chapter 6. Conclusion

In this chapter a conclusion about the study is presented, along with answered research question, contribution to theory, managerial implications and suggestions for future research.

6.1 Research question and answer

In this study we sought to examine how the process of knowledge sharing takes place in organisations. We found that the process of knowledge sharing is one of the key aspects in any organisation, and despite organisations not having a structured approach on how the process should take place, they have several methods of sharing knowledge between employees. As we analysed our empirical findings in relation to the theoretical background we found that there were parts in the theory that were synonymous to the empirical findings and that needed to be added to the framework. For the final model of the knowledge sharing process we have composed previous research and empirical findings. By weighing previous research against collected empirical data we identified several significant approaches of how the process of knowledge sharing takes place within the organisations. These approaches were then compiled into six coherent steps; knowledge mapping, integrating with required programs, applying new learning, following up, establishing knowledge storing medium and implementing further (see model 6.1).

The process of knowledge sharing starts with knowledge mapping. This initial step of the process reveals the identification of what kind of key knowledge, implicit or explicit, that needs to be shared within the organisations. The second step of the process, integrating with required programs, refers to the execution of several required programs where the identified key knowledge is being shared within the organisation. These programs can be used either in combination of each other or separately; introduction, mentorship, job coaching, job shadowing, networking, meetings and information exchange. In the third step of the process the receiver of new knowledge applies this new learning either through learning by doing, practice or observation and imitation. In the fourth step of the process organisations need to follow up the newly applied learning by discussions and dialogues with the receiver of knowledge. Follow-up talks, development talks and performance dialogues ensures that the shared knowledge has been effectively obtained by the receiver and implemented in the daily work. The fifth step of the process, establishing knowledge storing medium, refers to how organisations stores and saves the required knowledge in documents, systems or manuals, so that other people within the organisation gets an easy access to the new knowledge. In the sixth
and final step of the process, implementing further, organisations develop new approaches and plan for successors to ensure that the organisational success continues. As the process of knowledge sharing is repetitive it starts over at step one when all six steps have been carried out.

Figure 6.1. Final model of the knowledge sharing process, modified and composed of theory and empirical results, own.

6.2 Contribution to theory
Effective knowledge sharing is expected to occur naturally as it is considered to be key aspect in organisations. A growing number of literature has recommended organisations to create a systematic process of knowledge sharing since this would have a great impact on growth and development of entire organisations. This study is an effort in terms of contributing to the field of knowledge management in organisations. Previous research in the field of knowledge sharing was unstructured and lacked interlinkage between the concepts. Our contribution to existing theory is that our developed integrated framework on the knowledge sharing process has sorted previous research and interlinked all concepts with each other, making it a structured approach.

6.3 Managerial implications
We believe that the study has contributed to provide a well-formulated understanding and creating awareness in organisations about how adequate knowledge sharing is necessary and how essential experienced employees are. Our developed framework shows which parts are central to the process of knowledge sharing and in what order they should be implemented.

When organisations feel the need and necessity to share knowledge to ensure that knowledge isn’t lost due to retirement or unexpected leave, this study suggests that our developed framework could counteract potential knowledge loss. By using our framework in daily
managerial work, managers can have a continuous process on sharing knowledge between employees and within the organisation.

6.4 Limitations of the study
Throughout this study we have been prudent about the literature review, the operationalisation of the questions and how we collected the information. A possible limitation to our study could be that we conducted the interviews alone and that it might have had a negative impact on the collected empiricism. Another possible limitation for the chosen study is that we conducted a telephone interview with one respondent. Due to unforeseen events the respondent might not have been able to focus entirely on the interview and this might have affected the interview in a negative way. However, because of adequate answers, we made the assessment that the interview responses should be included in the results.

We conducted interviews with eleven people in eight different organisations and industries. As this study entails a time constraint we believe that an extended period of research time could have provided further opportunities of data collection by an additional selection of respondents from different sectors that deals with knowledge sharing in the knowledge management field.

Another possible limitation for this study is the cultural perspective. As mentioned in the method it was important for us to interview people with a pre-understanding of our field of research and due to the chain sampling we were given the opportunity to interview Swedish employees only. Due to the limitation of Swedish employees in Swedish companies, only the Swedish perspective on the process of knowledge sharing is examined.

6.5 Implications for further research:
There are few aspects that can be identified as promising fields for future research. First of all we suggest an application of this developed integrated framework of the knowledge sharing process to evaluate how essential and effective a structured process of knowledge sharing is in an organisation can be. Furthermore, as our study reveals that succession planning has become important for organisations to consider, it would be interesting to do research on knowledge sharing in combination with succession planning. Moreover we suggest that studies could be conducted in the field of knowledge sharing to find out whether the sharing process vary from organisation to organisation, industry to industry or country to country.
References


Appendices

Appendix 1

Interview guide

Name of interviewee:
Age:
Gender:
Name of company:
Function/role/title within company:
Number of years within company:
In what industry does your organisation operate?
Number of employees:
Does the interviewee wish to be anonymous?
Is it okay for the interviewee to record the interview?

Research questions:

1. How does the process of knowledge transfer take place in companies?

Knowledge Management

1. If we say “knowledge management”, what is the first thing that comes to your mind?

2. Knowledge might be hard to define, but what is knowledge to you?

3. How do you identify knowledge/competence within your organisation?

4. Would you say that working in your company requires a specific set of skills, or a specific education?

5. How does the company work with skills development? What approaches do you use?

6. How do you enable employees to use their "new" knowledge?

Knowledge Transfer/ Knowledge Sharing

1. Do you know the difference between implicit and explicit knowledge?
Implicit is the knowledge of how to do things, such as experience. Explicit knowledge is about things, such as the process of doing something.

2. When someone new starts working in the company, are the employees given a mentor or a coach?

3. Are the employees provided with any kind of training/introduction to learn the work?

   If yes, what are your thoughts regarding the training/introduction? Any shortcomings or benefits with it?

4. Would you say that learning by doing or learning by saying is the most effective way?

5. Is it important that knowledge procured within the company stays within the company?

6. For knowledge transfer to be possible there needs to be a transmitter and a receiver, would you say that the employees within the organisation are open to learn?

7. Does your organisation reproduce or share (implicit) knowledge between employees? Why/why not?

8. How do you encourage your employees to share their knowledge?

9. Can you give any examples of when you received knowledge from other people in the company?

10. Do you have any examples of when you shared your knowledge with others in the company?

11. Do people share their knowledge? Are there any obstacles? Different departments/projects, prestige and fear, greed, culture, systems, attitudes, distance?

12. What do you consider to be the advantages and disadvantages of sharing knowledge?
Knowledge retaining
1. Would you say that there are employees within your organisations that has a specific set of skills that you need to keep in the company?

2. What happens when someone stops working within the organisation? How are the endings/layoffs designed?

3. How do you work and prepare yourself for a termination of employment? Do you think it is positive or negative for the company?

4. How do you do to retain the knowledge/competence within your company?

5. Are there set up strategies for it? How would you describe the strategies? Shortcomings or benefits?

6. Is current knowledge going to be lost due to retirement, transfer, or departure to other firms?

7. To your knowledge, have you ever lost valuable knowledge due to retirement or change or workplace? If yes, what strategies was implemented to prevent it from happening in the future?

Competitive Advantage / Sustainable Competitive Advantage
1. What is competitive advantage to you?

2. Competitive advantage is most often considered to be resources such as assets like a brand name or a logo. Intangible resources are the skills of the company, such as the knowledge. With that in mind, what part would you consider to be the competitive advantage of your firm?

3. What makes your company different from your competitors?

4. How does your organisation create competitive advantage?
5. Would you say that experienced employees are more valuable for the company than newly hired ones?

6. Do you think that retained knowledge within an organisation increases the company’s competitiveness?

7. Would you consider to hire older people with seniority as mentors or coaches on a consultant basis, instead of training new and younger people?

**Miscellaneous**

1. Do you have anything that you would like to add?
Appendix 2

Information to respondents regarding interviews

Hello,

Our names are Alexandra and Mehadi and we come from the University of Gävle where we study the last semester of the Master of Business Administration-programme. We are grateful that you would like to help us with our thesis by setting up this interview.

The subject of our study is knowledge transfer and if the process of knowledge transfer generates competitive advantage vis-à-vis other companies.
In order for you to feel comfortable with the interview situation, we want to inform you about the ethical guidelines, developed by the Swedish Research Council, which we will follow.

1. Information (this document).

2. Consent; you have the right to decide whether you want to participate or not. You may cancel the interview whenever you want, without it having any negative consequences for you.

3. Usefulness; the information provided will be used solely for the purpose of the study. Your answers will not be disclosed or used in other contexts.

4. Confidentiality; we will not disclose any information that can be associated with specific individuals. We care about personal integrity. In the report, personal names will not be used, all answers will be anonymised to the extent possible.
Once the study has been completed and approved, it will be available at the University of Gävle.

If you wish, we can notify you when the work is done and also e-mail a copy to you.

Thank you for participating!
Alexandra Gehrke & Mehadi Hasan

____________________  ____________________
Interviewer  Respondent
2019  2019