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Knowledge Sharing within the New Strategic Human Resource Department

Knowledge sharing in the case of Volvo Group

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge sharing (KS) has been argued to be the key driver of competitiveness for Multinational Corporations (MNCs), and the subject is well established within International Business studies. However, this study covers a new context of the new strategic Human Resource department. Human Resources role within MNCs has increased and it now plays an important strategic role within organizations. This requires certain knowledge to be present and shared within the department. Therefore, this study looks at how knowledge is being shared within the new strategic Human Resource department, often referred to as the Service Delivery Model, as well as facilitators and barriers that exist within this context. The study is performed through a qualitative case study of the Volvo Group, and through an abductive approach, it moves between theory and empirics in order to contribute with extension of previous literature and an understanding of KS within this new context. The study shows that knowledge is being shared in many different ways within the context, however; formal committees and meeting points play the most important role for KS, followed by other facilitators such as Information Technology, the corporate culture supporting KS, top management support for KS, job rotations and harmonized processes. Barriers, on the other hand, was found to prevent KS to some extent and included geographical distance, national culture and language, lack of incentives, lack of time to share, lack of understanding the value of KS, lack of integration of KS and corporate strategy, among others. Geographical distance was shown to be the most eminent barrier, however only to informal sharing of knowledge. Formal committees acted as a facilitator for formal sharing across geographical locations, however the geographical distance still negatively affected informal sharing across sites. The study contributes and extends previous literature both with an understanding of the importance of formal committees for sharing across sites, as well as a contribution with new empirical material and strengthening of previous literature.

Key words: Knowledge sharing, Human Resources, Multinational Corporation, Facilitators, Barriers.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-----|---------------------------|
| HR | Human Resources |
| KS | Knowledge Sharing |
| MNC | Multinational Corporation |
| SDM | Service Delivery Model |

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1. INTRODUCTION

During the last years, knowledge sharing (KS) has gained increased attention as a tool to improve the performance and efficiency of an organization (e.g. Kaps, 2011; Liao et al., 2007; Riege, 2005), where in this research, KS is referred to as “mutual exchange of knowledge between individuals”. Effective management and internal KS have even been argued to be the key driver of performance of Multinational Corporations (MNCs) (Kogut & Zander, 1993). Moreover, many researchers argue for knowledge as the most important resource in order to create a competitive advantage for the organization (e.g. Grant, 1996; Murray, 2002; Schwartz, 2005). Some researchers even argue that the very existence of the MNC is dependent on the ability to share and take advantage of knowledge throughout the corporation (e.g. Gupta and Govindarajan, 2000a; Kogut and Zander, 1993). This development is a result of the rapid technology improvement, the increased globalization, increased competition, and thus need to find and share best practices. The knowledge-intensive society of today requires MNCs to develop processes for KS between individuals of different backgrounds, perspectives, motivations and from different divisions and subsidiaries in order to be able to manage knowledge resources in a valuable way within the organization (e.g. Donate & Guadamillas, 2011; DeTienne et al., 2004; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Organizations that fail to share knowledge between individuals of the organization suffer from sufficient losses, indicating the importance of KS (Babcock, 2004). Still, comprehensive KS within organizations is rather an exception than the rule; hence there is much room for improvements and research (Bock et al., 2005).

1.1. PROBLEMATIZATION

Due to the increased attention KS has gained during the last decade much have been written and researched about the subject (e.g. Kaps, 2011; Liao et al., 2007; Riege, 2005). However, not much has been written about KS within and in relation to Human Resources (HR) (Cooke, 2006; Minbaeva, 2005). Some examples include researchers that are focused on the role that the HR department plays in increasing and facilitating KS within an organization (e.g. Edvardsson, 2008; Minbaeva, 2005; Minbaeva et al., 2003). However, the HR department’s importance has increased, and often HR has gained a new, strategic role within organizations (Boglund et al., 2013; Lawler & Boudreau, 2012; Minbaeva, 2005; Minbaeva et al., 2003). Researchers have identified that the HR department now plays an important role for increased KS and innovation in the entire organization (Minbaeva, 2005), thus making the HR department an important strategic partner for the organization. This new strategic role that HR possesses may incorporate new

challenges and problems, but very little has been written about KS within this new strategic HR context (Cooke, 2006). For example, Lawler & Boudreau (2012) argue that HR practices are significantly more associated with a strategic role today, such as engaging in the overall corporate strategy. However, this new role requires certain knowledge and skills to be present within HR, and thus there is a clear need to share knowledge and collaborate within the HR department today (Lawler & Boudreau, 2012).

There are many perspectives on KS, however, the standpoint in this research is to look at it within a new way of organizing HR work: the Service Delivery Model (SDM) in an MNC. The idea behind the SDM is to restructure the HR department into becoming more effective, strategic and value creating. This way of organizing HR work is a rather new phenomenon and many large global corporations have or are about to adapt the model (Boglind et al., 2013; Ulrich, 2007). One part of the SDM is to organize the HR work into becoming a shared service organization, which includes central units such as an expertise unit and a service unit, as well as HR Business Partners (Boglind et al., 2011; Boglind et al, 2013; Ulrich, 1995). The three sub-departments HR Services, Center of Expertise and HR Business Partners are often referred to as the “three-legged stool” in the shared service organization, meaning that these three sub-departments now are specialized with clear and distinct roles and employees are encouraged to share between departments (Boglind et al., 2013; Reilly et al., 2007). The service unit performs transactional HR work, which includes standardized processes, while the Center of Expertise and the HR Business Partners create more value for customers, employees and managers. The idea is that when the transactional HR work can be performed more effective and standardized, time is being created for more strategic and value creation activities (Ulrich, 1995).

Because of the fact that many MNCs restructure their HR department as according to the SDM (e.g. Boglind et al., 2013; Cooke, 2006; Ulrich et al., 2007), and that there exists little research about the subject of KS within the HR department (Cooke, 2006), it indicates that there is a need to further investigate how knowledge is shared within the SDM. Additionally, methods and the effectiveness of KS differ between different types of organizations and processes (e.g. Argote and Ingram, 2000; Riege, 2005) and therefore established theories does not necessarily explain the reality of MNCs with that type of HR structure and how these HR departments can achieve effective KS (Riege, 2005). For example, because of the fact that the HR department becomes more strategic, there is now a need of certain knowledge to both be present, and to be shared within HR. New roles and responsibilities may change the dynamics of how knowledge is shared,

and currently there exists no understanding of KS within the context of the SDM. Further, researchers have written about facilitators for, and barriers against KS within organizations (e.g. Kaps, 2011; Khalid & Shea, 2012; Riege, 2005; Wang & Noe, 2010; Yeşil & Hırlak, 2013). However, there is still a lack of clear processes on how to achieve KS in many organizations, which might be explained by the fact that there is still room for research on how knowledge is being shared effectively, and many barriers for KS have still not been identified (Riege, 2005). KS barriers are also dependent on type of organization in which KS aims to take place (SMEs, MNCs, public organization etc.) and may also vary because of the organizational structure, organizational culture, national culture etc. (e.g. Husted & Michailova, 2002; Michailova & Husted, 2003; Riege, 2005). Therefore, it is important to study how knowledge is shared within the SDM, as well as KS facilitators and barriers in the specific of the SDM.

1.2. AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this research is to investigate how knowledge is shared within the SDM and which facilitators that exists for KS between individuals of different departments and different subsidiaries within this rather new context. The aim is also to investigate potential barriers for KS within the same context and compare both facilitators and barriers to established theories within the field of KS. Thus, this study looks at KS within one organization (intra-firm) and between individuals of the different HR sub-departments and subsidiaries. Therefore, this research will contribute with an understanding of how knowledge is being shared, and whether established theories on facilitators and barriers for intra-firm KS are applicable within this new HR context, or whether there exists other and new facilitator and barriers for KS in this context. Today, there exists no understanding of how knowledge is shared within the SDM, and whether established theories on KS facilitators and barriers are applicable to this context.

The main research question to be answered is thus;

“How is knowledge shared within the Service Delivery Model of an MNC?”

The first sub-research question to be answered states;

“Which main facilitators for knowledge sharing between individuals of different sub-departments and between subsidiaries within the HR Service Delivery Model of an MNC exist?”

The second sub-research question regards barriers for KS, and states;

“Which main barriers for knowledge sharing between individuals of different sub-departments and between subsidiaries within the HR Service Delivery Model of an MNC exist?”

1.3. DELIMITATIONS

This research looks at KS between individuals of the different sub-departments (HR Services, Center of Expertise and HR Business Partners) and also between different subsidiaries within the SDM for HR at the Volvo Group (from here on referred to as Volvo). Therefore, this study looks at KS within one organization (intra-firm), and in a specific context of the SDM.

The research also separates between the terms KS and knowledge transfer and is delimited to only look at KS, i.e. this means that the process of transferring knowledge in only one direction is not a part of this project. Having read many different definitions of KS (e.g. Foss et al, 2009; McDermott, 1999; Szulanski et al., 2004; Wang & Noe, 2010), an own definition for KS was created which is in line with many of the above stated. The definition for KS that will be used throughout this research is: “mutual exchange of knowledge between individuals”.

1.4. DISPOSITION

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the subject of KS, as well as a presentation of the aim of the study and the research questions that are to be answered through this research, as well as delimitations of the study. Chapter 2 presents and describes the literature review, and the theoretical framework relevant for this study. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used for the entire study and provides the reader with knowledge about the data used, as well as limitations of the chosen method. Chapter 4 describes and presents the results from the conducted research and chapter 5 provides a profound discussion and analysis of the results. The thesis is brought to an end with chapter 6, where the results of the study are summarized and concluded, as well as distinct and clear answers to the research questions. As part of the conclusion, propositions for future research on the topic are also formulated as well as contribution to existing literature.

2. LITERATURE

This section explores and outlines previous literature within the broad field of knowledge sharing (KS) followed by specific theory on facilitators and barriers for KS. The section starts off with a literature review, which outlines what has been written about KS generally previously. Second, the literature section includes a theoretical framework that outlines different perspectives and literature on KS, facilitators, barriers etc. The chapter is then brought to an end with a theoretical summary, pinpointing for the reader the most important theories to remember forward. The theoretical framework will then serve as a foundation for interview questions and data collection, as well as the analysis of empirical findings.

2.1. LITERATURE REVIEW

There is an extensive mass of research within the field of KS, with authors focusing on many different aspects of this important phenomenon. Many authors have focused on technological issues involved in KS, or KS across different organizations and within inter-organizational networks, and reviews of such work include e.g. Alavi & Leidner (2001) and Argote et al. (2003). Ruddy (2000) and Sharma & Singh (2012) argue that improving KS requires both technology, but also sense of cultural or behavioral awareness. However, even though many authors agree that technology facilitates KS, there are also debates about whether KS should be driven by people or technology. Some researchers argue that KS is mainly about the people rather than technology (e.g. Cross & Baird, 2000; Hickins, 1999). Within the literature of intra-firm KS, there are five main broad areas on which previous research has focused on: organizational context, interpersonal and team characteristics, individual characteristics, motivational factors, and KS within MNCs (e.g. Wang & Noe, 2010).

Within the organizational context, much research on KS has focused on the organizational culture, explaining and examining the effect that the organizational culture has on KS within the corporation. De Long & Fahey (2000) found that the organizational culture is the most important factor for effective KS. Further, a number of dimensions within organizational culture have been identified as crucial in order to achieve KS. Trust between employees has by far gained most attention as a dimension of organizational culture that promotes KS (e.g. Kankanhalli et al., 2005; Riege, 2005). Others have emphasized the importance of a team feeling within the organization (e.g. Schepers & Van den Berg, 2007; Willem & Scarbrough, 2006). Lin & Lee (2006) focused on the importance of the management team's perception that KS has advantages for the organization. Many other authors also emphasize the weight of top management support for KS (e.g. Connelly & Kelloway, 2003; Lin, 2007; Lee et al., 2006). As part of the organizational

context, authors have also focused on the lack of incentives as a barrier for effective KS within organizations (e.g. Yao et al., 2007). Many authors focus on incentives such as rewards and recognitions as good measures to create a supportive culture for KS (e.g. Hansen et al., 1999; Liebowitz, 2003; Nelson et al., 2006). Other authors have found a negative relationship between rewards and KS (e.g. Bock & Kim, 2002; Bock et al., 2005). Within the organizational context, many authors have also focused on the organizational structure, where some have argued that a decentralized approach rather than a centralized better promotes KS (e.g. Kim & Lee, 2006). Others have also argued that an open workspace (Jones, 2005), job rotation (Kubo et al., 2001) and communication and informal meetings across departments (e.g. Liebowitz, 2003; Liebowitz & Megbolugbe, 2003; Yang & Chen, 2007) promote KS.

There is also existing research on interpersonal and team characteristics and how these factors affect KS within organizations (Wang & Noe, 2010). Some researchers argue that the amount of time that the team has worked together affect the likelihood of team members to share knowledge (e.g. Bakker et al., 2006; Sawng et al., 2006). Srivastava et al. (2006) found that empowered leadership led to higher probability of team members to share knowledge. Some researchers have focused on diversity within teams as a facilitator for KS (e.g. Sawng et al., 2006). Ojha (2005), on the other hand, found that employees that are in minority based on age, gender, nationality etc. are less likely to share knowledge. Further, some researchers have focused on, and found that social networks and strong personal ties among employees are positively related to increased KS (e.g. Cross & Cummings, 2004; Hansen et al., 1999; Reagans & McEvily, 2003). Other researchers have focused on the difficulty that different national cultures and languages pose on communication and KS (e.g. Ford & Chan, 2003; Minbaeva, 2007).

Research that focus on individual characteristics and KS has concentrated on individuals' openness and willingness to seek new ideas and knowledge from others (e.g. Cabrera et al., 2006). Jarvenpaa & Staples (2000) also found that employees' ability to use computers for sharing knowledge is positively related to the amount of knowledge being shared. Research on individual characteristics has also concentrated on individuals' confidence to share knowledge with others (e.g. Cabrera et al., 2006; Lin, 2007). Individuals' fear of being evaluated negatively on their knowledge has also been found to prevent KS (Bordia et al., 2006).

Research on motivational factors for KS include perceived benefits and costs of KS, which has been heavily studied, where higher perceived costs lead to less KS, and high benefits lead to

more KS (e.g. Wang & Noe, 2010). Others have also focused on lack of time and unfamiliarity with KS as a concept as two important motivational reasons for not sharing knowledge (e.g. Hew & Hara, 2007). Many researchers have also dedicated their research to focus on how trust affects KS (e.g. Chowdhury, 2005; Mooradian et al., 2006; Wu et al., 2007).

Authors have also looked at KS between different subsidiaries and between subsidiaries and headquarter within MNCs. Many aspects are the same as for domestic KS, with trust and shared visions being positively related to increased KS (e.g. Dhanaraj et al., 2004; Li, 2005), and that interpersonal similarity promotes KS within MNCs (e.g. Makela et al., 2007). Minbaeva (2007) argues that the characteristics of knowledge, characteristics of both knowledge senders and receivers, and the relationship between them determine the degree of KS between headquarters and subsidiaries. Others have focused on the impact of the headquarters degree of control for KS within the MNC (e.g. Björkman et al., 2004). Gupta and Govindarajan (2000a) found that knowledge outflows from subsidiaries are positively associated with the value of the subsidiary's knowledge and the number of transmission channels. Knowledge inflows to a subsidiary are positively associated with the number of transmission channels, the motivation to acquire knowledge and the capacity to actually absorb that knowledge. All topics and sub-topics that have been covered within the literature review are summarized in table 1, together with authors within the fields.

Table 1. Literature Review

| Topic | Sub-topic | Authors |
|---|-------------------------------|--|
| Organizational context | | |
| | Organizational Culture | e.g. Connelly & Kelloway (2003); De Long & Fahey (2000); Kankanhalli et al. (2005); Kim & Lee (2006); Lee et al. (2006); Lin (2007); Lin & Lee (2006); Riege (2005); Schepers & Van den Berg (2007); Willem & Scarbrough (2006). |
| | Incentives | e.g. Bock & Kim (2002); Bock et al. (2005); Hansen et al. (1999); Liebowitz (2003); Nelson et al. (2006); Yao et al. (2007). |
| | Workplace Environment | e.g. Jones (2005); Liebowitz (2003); Liebowitz & Megbolugbe, (2003); Yang & Chen (2007). |
| Interpersonal and Team Characteristics | | e.g. Bakker et al. (2006); Cross & Cummings (2004); Ford & Chan (2003); Hansen et al. (1999); Minbaeva (2007); Ojha (2005); Reagans & McEvily (2003); Sawng et al. (2006); Srivastava et al. (2006). |
| Individual Characteristics | | e.g. Cabrera et al. (2006); Bordia et al. (2006); Jarvenpaa & Staples (2000); Lin (2007) |
| Motivational Factors | | e.g. Chowdhury (2005); Hew & Hara (2007); Mooradian et al. (2006); Wu et al. (2007). |
| Knowledge Sharing within the MNC | | e.g. Björkman et al. (2004); Dhanaraj et al. (2004); Gupta and Govindarajan (2000a); Li (2005); Makela et al. (2007); Minbaeva (2007). |

Source: Compiled by authors

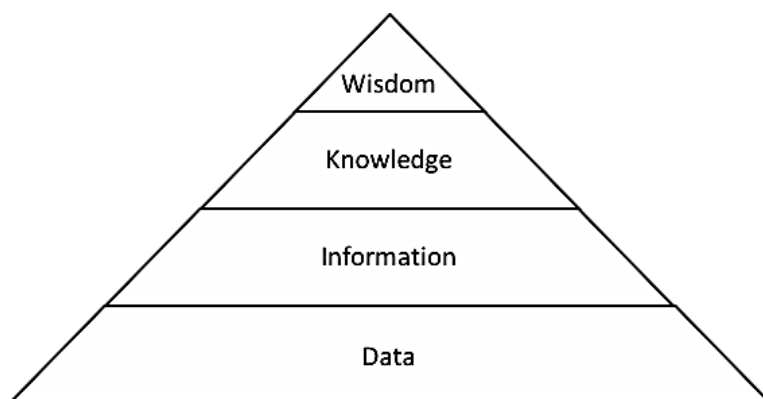
2.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.2.1. KNOWLEDGE

No clear consensus regarding how to define knowledge seems to exist (e.g. O'Grady, 2012; Grant, 1996). However, King (2009, p.3) argues that one common definition of knowledge is a “justified personal belief” and another suggestion has been made by Grant (1996, p.110) who states that knowledge is “that which is known”, which is the definition that guides this research.

One clear mistake that is often made is to equate the terms information and knowledge where the first is the flow of messages while the latter is created by its users together through these flows and is also context specific (O'Grady, 2012). Furthermore, the data-information-knowledge-wisdom (DIKW) hierarchy (shown in Figure 1 below) is a well-known and used model in the knowledge and information literature (e.g. Aven, 2013; Rowley, 2007). This model is displayed as a pyramid starting with data at the bottom, followed by information, knowledge and then wisdom at the top. Each step is built on the one(s) before indicating that data is used to develop information, and information is used to develop knowledge etc. This model has evolved as a result of trying to distinguish between the different levels and also to show how the lower levels in the hierarchy such as data can evolve to higher levels such as knowledge (Rowley, 2007).

Figure 1. DIKW Hierarchy



Source: Rowley, 2007.

2.2.2. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Knowledge management has to do with the process of making knowledge available and obtainable both within an organization but also between different organizations (Paulin & Suneson, 2012). Moreover, knowledge management regards the process of motivating employees

and controlling practices within the organization in order to manage knowledge in an efficient way and to make sure that mechanisms to facilitate such process are employed. There are several different mechanisms for increasing and facilitating knowledge management, and the main aim of knowledge management is to improve the performance and decision making of an organization (King, 2009). Knowledge management consists of many sub-categories such as knowledge transfer, KS, (Paulin & Suneson, 2012) knowledge replication (Winter & Szulanski, 2001), storage, identification, imitation, acquisition and creation of knowledge (Järvelin and Ingwersen, 2004; King, 2009).

2.2.3. KNOWLEDGE SHARING

In some cases the terms knowledge transfer and KS are used interchangeable with the argument that no clear distinction exists, while in other cases they are treated separately (e.g. Jonsson, 2008; Paulin & Suneson, 2012). Some differences can be outlined regarding the concepts. Knowledge transfer only takes place in one direction with a sender giving away knowledge and a receiver who always acquire the knowledge, and is never the other way around (an example is the headquarter always transferring knowledge to subsidiaries) (Schwartz, 2005; Wang & Noe, 2010). On the other hand, KS regards mutual exchanges of knowledge and can happen simultaneously in many different directions involving several parties (Foss, 2009; Szulanski et al., 2004; Wang & Noe, 2010). When studying KS within an MNC it is important to treat the concept of sharing as knowledge flows between headquarter and subsidiaries in both directions and also between different subsidiaries, and not only in one direction (Jonsson, 2008). KS is also often referred to as taking place between individuals (Szulanski et al., 2004; Wang & Noe, 2010). McDermott (1999, p.107) defines KS as “guiding someone through our thinking or using our insights to help them see their own situation better.” In short, the definition of KS used in this research states “mutual exchange of knowledge between individuals”

KS between individuals can regard helping co-workers to perform a task in order to achieve a better and more effective result on a shorter time base, and KS within an organization is about making sure that all departments have access to valuable knowledge and that knowledge is obtained and reused (Lin, 2007). Furthermore, except sharing face-to-face and by phone etc., KS may also include databases, documents, procedures, and previously un-captured expertise and experience in individual workers (Koenig, 2012).

2.2.4. FACILITATORS FOR INTRA-FIRM KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Jonsson & Foss (2011) outline five organizational mechanisms that are vital for KS within a company (intra-firm). These are dedicated organizational units; standard operating procedures for gathering, codifying and disseminating experiential knowledge; documents (manuals, internal journals); values; and the use of expatriates. Another facilitator for KS by Grant (1996) and Jonsson & Foss (2011) regards having standard procedures within a firm.

Other authors also make it clear that technology can act as an effective facilitator to encourage KS by making the process of sharing easier (e.g. Riege, 2005; Hendriks, 1999). To manage KS effectively within an organization, technology has emerged as a vital tool to handle and process information with the use of means such as the Internet, intranet and different data- and information systems. Through Information and Communication Technology, tremendous amount of data such as manuals, definitions and thesaurus can be stored in different data and information systems and be accessed easily. These manuals are gathered at the intranet to facilitate the sharing of such practices (Jonsson & Foss, 2011; Song, 2002). KS can also take place through electronic meetings where the different participants can engage in a discussion on a topic when they prefer or have time. Establishing virtual teams or communities are also suggestions to facilitate KS between different departments of the organization (Hendriks, 1999; Koh & Kim, 2004). As a result of the Information and Communication Technology development national borders have become less distinct and social networks stretches over large geographical areas. Moreover, today, employees have a higher ability to share and obtain knowledge within an organization more easily and rapidly (Pan & Leidner, 2003).

Another mechanism for facilitating KS is that the process of sharing within a firm should be highly embedded in the culture. Values such as helping others and contribute to togetherness should be stressed, and training should be offered to the employees to facilitate the process of sharing and also show the importance of it (Jonsson & Foss, 2011). Achieving a culture of sharing throughout an organization is not created overnight but by promoting a helpful behavior will in the long run generate a corporate culture that supports sharing. As argued by Jonsson & Foss (2011) and Amabile et al., (2014), an organization needs KS to be embedded in the organizational culture in order for knowledge to flow effectively. In top performing companies, it is a norm that colleagues support each other in order to perform the job with the best result possible (Amabile et al., 2014; Hickins, 1999). Collaborative help in this sense means lending perspectives, experiences, and expertise that help improve quality of work (Amabile et al., 2014;

Riege, 2005). Moreover, collective problem solving and brainstorming are the most commonly used KS mechanisms within companies (Wickramasinghe & Widyaratne, 2012). However, a culture where it is a norm to share knowledge is not very easy to achieve. People might avoid sharing knowledge because they are afraid that lost knowledge means that they now compete. Seeking help might also mean losing pride of doing it on your own (Amabile et al., 2014; Riege, 2005). It is therefore a challenge to achieve a helping culture that is inspired, not forced. Amabile et al. (2014) describes four key measures an organization can take in order to achieve a culture of helping which is inspired rather than forced.

First of all, a culture of helping starts from the very top. Top leaders must realize the importance of collaboration and to achieve an organizational culture where KS is embedded (e.g. Amabile et al., 2014; Lin, 2007; Riege, 2005; Sharma & Singh, 2012). Leaders must themselves engage in KS in order for low-level people to dare to ask for help, and for higher-level employees to dare to make themselves vulnerable by asking for help. Many organizational cultures have norms that make employees weak or incompetent if they ask for help, which makes it important that top leaders start to share knowledge themselves in order to change that organizational culture. The study by Amabile et al. (2014) also showed that popular helpers (those people that were frequently asked for help) had three characteristics: competence, trust and accessibility. However, trust and accessibility was found to be most important in order to ask for help (Amabile et al., 2014; Riege, 2005; Tschannen-Moran, 2001).

Furthermore, KS within a team does not happen automatically (Srivastava et al., 2006) and it is therefore important to have a team leader who makes sure that communication take place, to set guidelines, provide advice and feedback, and coordinate the group and the assigned activities (Eppler & Sukowski, 2000). Moreover, another measure is to create slack in the organization, meaning that a certain amount of time is given in each employees schedule to give help. This is important because the accessibility of potential helpers is important in the organization (O'Dell and Grayson, 1998; Riege, 2005). High performing organizations are often notable for their slack (Amabile et al, 2014; O'Dell & Grayson, 1998). Another measure is incentives. However, according to Amabile et al. (2014) financial incentives are not facilitating a helping behavior, but rather create a competitive environment within the firm. Simple gratitude and recognition of the value of the help is seen as more effective incentives for creating a helping culture (Amabile et al., 2014). On the other hand, other authors argue that both financial incentives such as bonuses

and higher salaries can contribute to increased KS but also other non-financial incentives such as job security could also affect the process of sharing in a positive way (Hall, 2001; Wickramasinghe & Widyaratne, 2012).

2.2.5. MOTIVATIONAL FORCES FOR KNOWLEDGE SHARING BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS

MNCs with employees that have superior skills and also the willingness to both absorb and share knowledge achieve greater KS results (Minbaeva, 2007), showing the importance of motivational factors as a facilitator for KS. Motivational factors can be divided into personal belief structures and institutional factors (Szulanski, 1996). The first category refers to the willingness of employees to share knowledge to other parties within the organization, referred to as disseminative capacity (Minbaeva & Michailova, 2004; Szulanski, 1996). The benefits of sharing has to outweigh the cost, hence having a culture where people are rewarded or recognized for KS will also facilitate the process of doing it (Constant et al., 1996; Bock et al., 2005; Szulanski, 1996). On the other hand, cultures which instead have a more clear focus on individual achievements and reputations instead of helping each other (Leonard & Sensiper, 1998) will lose the aspect of willingness to share due to the high cost associated with it such as loss of unique advantage of the employee (Constant et al., 1996, Bock et al., 2005; Szulanski, 1996). A separation is usually made between benefits for the individual, the group or the organization and what benefits are regarded as most important depends on what culture and values the organization has implemented (Bock et al., 2005). One benefit for the individual can be, as mentioned before, to be recognized by the organization for good performance (Leonard & Sensiper, 1998).

The second category of motivational factors is institutional factors. KS is said to take place when there is trust between the employees and trust to the organization, and it exists an open and friendly atmosphere that promotes KS (Hinds & Pfeffer, 2003; Leonard & Sensiper, 1998) and tolerates failure of the employees (Leonard & Sensiper, 1998; Nonaka, 1990). Interpersonal trust has been outlined as one of the most important motivational factors for establishing and increasing KS within an organization (Costa et al., 2001; Holste & Fields, 2010; Riege, 2005). With increased trust comes higher willingness of sharing knowledge with other employees (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2005).

2.2.6. BARRIERS FOR INTRA-FIRM KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Some corporations argue that it is a risk with sharing knowledge, information and secrets, and does therefore not encourage the individuals of the organization to participate in such actions. On the other hand, others believe that sharing should take place both within and between organizations to take advantage of all potential benefits (e.g. Schwartz, 2005). KS barriers prevent individuals from sharing their knowledge and can therefore also hinder the organization to develop a competitive advantage and/or increase performance. It is therefore important to identify such barriers in order to be able to eliminate them (Yeşil & Hırlak, 2013). There are many barriers to why potential senders may show reluctance to share knowledge. First, potential senders may feel a strong personal ownership of knowledge, thus being scared to lose value and bargaining power, and protection of the individual competitive advantage. Second, individuals may not be interested in spending their time on KS (Husted & Michailova, 2002). Third, the sender may not want to share knowledge with another individual who does not appreciate his/her own knowledge development. Fourth, by not sharing knowledge, the sender protects himself/herself of assessment and critique of their knowledge. Fifth, senders may be insecure about the receiver's perception of shared knowledge, and therefore senders may protect the knowledge (Husted & Michailova, 2002; Minbaeva, 2007; Szulanski, 1996). Further, individuals may have respect for formal power and senders may be scared of losing superiority (Husted & Michailova, 2002). Characteristics of the recipient also involve lack of motivation and ability to accept knowledge (Minbaeva, 2007; Szulanski, 1996).

The most frequently identified barriers to KS include lack of top management commitment, and that the concept of KS is not well understood among managers and employees. Other commonly identified barriers include lack of integration of KS strategy, lack of supporting infrastructure, lack of transparent rewards (not necessarily financial), lack of organizational culture promoting KS, lack of documentation, lack of trust, lack of time to share knowledge, difference in age and national culture, lack of integration of IT systems etc. (e.g. Kant & Singh, 2008; Singh et al., 2006; Yew Wong & Aspinwall, 2005).

Three categories of KS barriers have been identified in the mainstream KS literature and these are the ones related to individuals, the organization or to technology (Khalil & Shea, 2012; Kaps, 2011; Riege, 2005). Barriers at an individual level often includes factors such as lacking communication skills and social networks, differences in national culture, and a lack of time and trust (Hendriks, 1999; Meyer, 2002; Riege, 2005). Time is an important factor and many authors

agree that employees often lack the time to share knowledge and to identify colleagues in need of specific knowledge (e.g. Amabile et al., 2014; Riege, 2005). Moreover, on an individual level, it is also common that people do not appreciate or recognize the value of sharing knowledge (Riege, 2005). Another individual barrier for KS is the fact that individuals within the organization do not share what they know to other co-workers because they have a lack of understanding of what potential benefits that can arise from such a process. Another barrier relates to the fact that the process of sharing is not a routine or regular activity of their daily work; hence it does not motivate the workers to share their knowledge (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2002).

At an organizational level, barriers tend to be linked to economic viability, lack of infrastructure and resources, accessibility to formal and informal meeting spaces, and the physical environment within the organization (e.g. Hansen et al., 1999; Minbaeva, 2007; Riege, 2005), as well as the size of the organization (Connelly & Kelloway, 2003). Often, KS initiatives within an organization may not be integrated into the overall strategy and goal, which creates a barrier for KS (Hansen et al., 1999; Riege, 2005). Another major organizational factor that creates a barrier is if leaders do not clearly communicate the value and benefits of KS to employees (Amabile et al., 2014; Riege, 2005). Finally, at the technological level, barriers often include unrealistic expectations of IT systems, and difficulties in building and integrating technology-based systems (Riege, 2005).

Gupta and Govindarajan (2000a) discuss barriers for KS between the subsidiaries and headquarter. The authors mention several barriers for KS within an MNC, more specifically between the headquarter and the subsidiaries. The authors state that KS between the headquarter and the subsidiaries depend on certain factors; value of the source unit's knowledge stock, existence of transmission channels, the target unit's motivational disposition, and the target unit's absorptive capacity. The first two categories i.e. value of the source unit's knowledge stock and the existence of transmission channels have an affect on the outflow of knowledge from the subsidiary, while the last three categories i.e. existence of transmission channels, the target unit's motivational disposition, and the target unit's absorptive capacity influence the knowledge inflow into subsidiaries. It is therefore evident that the category richness of transmission channels is of great importance since it affects both inflow and outflow (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000a).

With the first category the authors state that when the subsidiaries have knowledge that is of value for the rest of the organization in combination with the fact that this knowledge is non-duplicative, the higher is the incentive for sharing this knowledge hence the outflow of knowledge from the subsidiaries is high. With the second category the authors mean that KS cannot exist without evident transmission channels between the different units of the organization (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000a). Efficient transmission channels are regarded as face-to-face communication (Di Gangi et al., 2012; Gupta & Govindarajan 2000b) and movement of people between different departments (Gupta & Govindarajan 2000b). Transmission channels can be divided into formal and informal mechanisms. The first regards training sessions, development programs, tours within the organization (Holtham & Courtney, 1998) and also other formal integrative mechanisms (Nadler & Tushman, 1988). Informal channels regard interactions between employees during breaks and unplanned meetings and seminars to increase socialization and communication (Holtham & Courtney, 1998), and also other corporate socialization mechanisms such as job transfers to another subsidiary (Ghoshal & Bartlett, 1988). Regarding the formal channels the authors state that the larger focus on such mechanisms to integrate subsidiaries with the rest of the company the larger will both outflows and inflows be between subsidiary respectively to/from the headquarter. Moreover, regarding the informal category, the more such mechanisms that are used the more knowledge inflow to subsidiaries from the headquarter existed, but no proof of the other way around (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000a).

The third category by Gupta & Govindarajan (2000a), which is the target unit's motivational disposition, involves the Not-Invented-Here syndrome, which can act as a barrier for KS. With this syndrome managers and other employees view knowledge created in other units as something bad since this indicates that other units are more prominent than them and therefore try to block this flow (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000a; Katz & Allen, 1982; Lichtenthaler & Ernst, 2006). The fourth category is about absorptive capacity (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000a; Minbaeva, 2007; Szulanski, 1996) and regards how much knowledge the target unit wants to receive but also how much it actually can assimilate and put into value. I.e. the greater the absorptive capacity, the more KS will take place (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000a; Lane et al., 2001; Szulanski 1996). This depends to some degree of homophily of the units i.e. how the people share similar values and beliefs that will facilitate the process of obtaining knowledge from another unit. Interpersonal homophily creates an aggregate effect of clustering within the

MNC, and increased homophily-driven interaction within clusters results in increased KS within clusters than between them (Makela et al., 2007; Rogers, 1995).

2.3. THEORETICAL SUMMARY

Ruddy (2000) and Sharma & Singh (2012) have argued that in order to improve and increase KS, an organization needs technology but also great awareness of how the organizational culture and individual behavioral factors affect the degree of KS. Except sharing face-to-face, phone calls etc. KS may also include databases, documents, policies, procedures, and previously un-captured expertise and experience in individual workers (Koenig, 2012).

The literature review and theoretical framework has provided a broad range of different facilitators to increase KS and barriers that prevent KS. Important facilitators for KS involve having dedicated organizational units; standard operating procedures for gathering, codifying and disseminating experiential knowledge; documents (manuals, internal journals); values; and the use of expatriates (Jonsson & Foss, 2011), as well as having an effective IT system for KS, including internet, intranet and different data and information systems. Through IT, it has become easier to share knowledge through electronic meetings, databases, intranet, and as a result, it has also become easier to share knowledge across national borders (e.g. Hendriks, 1999).

Another important facilitator includes the corporate culture, and KS needs to be highly embedded in the corporate culture (e.g. Amabile et al., 2014; De Long & Fahey, 2000), meaning that for example the corporate culture needs to promote trust, a helping behavior, team feeling and also prevent competitive behavior among employees (e.g. Schepers & Van den Berg, 2007). The amount of time that the team has worked together is also important for KS (e.g. Bakker et al., 2006) as well as social networks and strong personal ties (e.g. Cross & Cummings, 2004), as well as top management support. Other facilitators include having trust in the organization among employees (Cabrera, & Cabrera, 2005), as well as making people accessible in order to help. One measure to increase accessibility is to create slack in employee schedules to give them the time that is needed to share knowledge (e.g. Amabile et al., 2014). Another important facilitator in order to increase KS includes incentives (e.g. Yao et al., 2007).

When it comes to barriers for KS, one of the most commonly mentioned barrier has been identified as lack of top management commitment followed by other often detected barriers such as lack of trust, lack of an organizational culture which promotes KS, lack of documentation

within the organization, lack of time to share knowledge, lack of integration of IT systems, and unfamiliarity with KS as a concept etc. (e.g. Kant & Singh, 2008; Singh et al., 2006; Yew Wong & Aspinwall, 2005). Another common barrier is that people may chose not to share knowledge, because “knowledge is power”, and they want that competitive edge themselves (e.g. Riege, 2005), and also by not sharing they will prevent themselves from reviving potential critique of their knowledge (e.g. Husted & Michailova, 2002). Other barriers relates to the fact that people do not know the value of sharing or what potential benefits that can arise from sharing (Riege, 2005), and that the process of sharing is not a part of the employees daily routines (e.g. Cabrera & Cabrera, 2002). If the leaders do not communicate the value of KS (e.g. Amabile et al., 2014) and if it is not a part of the overall strategy and culture of the company, this will also serve as barriers for KS (e.g. Riege, 2005).

Moreover, some researchers have also focused on how differences in national cultures and languages can act as a barrier for KS (e.g. Minbaeva, 2007). Gupta and Govindarajan (2000a) discuss barriers for KS between subsidiaries and the headquarter and that the most efficient transmission channels are face-to-face communication and movement of people between departments. Another international barrier regards the Not- Invented-Here syndrome (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000a).

3. METHODOLOGY

In this section, a description of the methodologies used in the research will be presented, together with descriptions of how data was collected and how research questions were answered through empirics and previous literature. The section also argues for the specific methods used, together with limitations of those methods.

3.1. PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Research is usually divided into epistemological- and ontological considerations. Epistemology is concerned with the question of what is classified as acceptable knowledge within the given subject. Epistemology in turn can be divided into two sub-categories; positivism and interpretivism, where interpretivism is about how the social world is interpreted by individuals and focus is on understanding people's actions (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Farquhar, 2012). The interpretive perspective is of focus in this research, because of the in-depth analysis of understanding people's action and how individuals share knowledge. Ontology, on the other hand, regards the nature of social reality and what we know and how. It regards whether the social world is predictable or whether it is built up through human interactions (Farquhar, 2012). The ontological position of this research is constructionism, because the basic assumption behind the research is that the social world is being constructed through human interaction, and thus is not pre-given.

3.2. QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

The purpose of this research has been to investigate how knowledge is being shared within the Service Delivery Model (SDM), as well as facilitators and barriers that exist for intra-firm knowledge sharing (KS) within the HR department of Volvo. One single organization was chosen in order to be able to analyze findings in depth, and the organization Volvo was chosen because they are great exemplars of the concept of the SDM, since they adapted the model more than ten years ago. These types of research questions and aim require a thorough and deep analysis of a complex problem/phenomenon, indicating that a qualitative research is most suitable. A case study design entails a detailed analysis of a single case, and is concerned with the specific nature of one single case and the very complexity of the that case (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008; Yin, 1994). Thus, with the type of research question and setting in this research (one single organization) and a research question that requires a deep analysis, a qualitative case study is most suitable. However, the case study design together with qualitative methods is often criticized, because one single case is argued to not be enough of a foundation in

order to generalize findings (Bryman & Bell, 2015). On the other hand, Yin (1994), argues that the main question for a case study researcher is not whether the results can be generalized, but rather how well the researcher is able to generate a solid theory out of data and findings. The issue with generalizability (external validity) is being discussed further in chapter 3.5.

The research elaborates on the phenomenon of KS, where the empirical data gathered from Volvo was expected to add new insight into the phenomenon and add to existing literature within the specific case of SDM. Due to the fact that there is a lack of research of KS within the context of SDM (Cooke, 2006), this research proceeds from existing KS theories developed in other contexts and then uses the empirical findings to add new insights into the context of the SDM. With this reasoning both deductive and inductive elements are found. A deductive approach starts with existing theories within the subject and then this framework is tested in the specific context of the study. Inductive, on the other hand, is about creating theory out of data and is the most common approach for case studies. A combination of inductive and deductive elements results in an abductive approach, which is the reasoning used in this study. This means a constant movement between theory and data is being made (Farquhar, 2012; Merriam, 1994).

3.3. SAMPLING AND INFORMATION GATHERING

3.3.1. PRIMARY AND SECONDARY DATA

This research relies on two methods to collect empirical data because it strengthens the comprehensive overview of the case, and the contextualization and interpretations of the research phenomena becomes strengthened. First, as secondary sources, corporate documents were analyzed and later semi-structured interviews were conducted as primary sources of empirical material.

3.3.2. DOCUMENTS

Documents were gained from Volvo such as annual reports including the corporate strategy and culture which are public documents and also other internal documents from the intranet which are non-public including PowerPoint presentations and other text documents. These documents are valuable to use with the method case study to gain insight regarding decision-making processes and historical developments within the company. The documents were used in order to triangulate findings and to analyze current strategies and processes of KS within Volvo. It has been stated through previous research that one barrier for KS within an organization is if KS initiatives is not well integrated into the overall strategy and goals of the organization (Hansen et

al., 1999; Riege, 2005). Analyzing strategic documents and documents about KS processes allowed for conclusions of whether KS is integrated into the overall company strategy.

3.3.3. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWING

Within a qualitative case study, theoretical sampling is often the most appropriate rather than random sampling. Theoretical sampling enables generalization of findings because cases are chosen since they are representative for the phenomenon that is being studied (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). All people that were chosen for interviews were a conscious choice made by the researcher in collaboration with Volvo in order to fit the aim of the research. Theoretical sampling is straightforward and interviews were chosen because they are great exemplars or opportunities to prove an idea or unusual research.

The study is based on interviews from Volvo in Sweden, Volvo North America (USA) and Volvo France. There are three types of interviews; unstructured, semi-structured and structured (Yin, 2007; Merriam, 1994) and the method used in this research is semi-structured interviews. With this approach, the researchers had questions prepared beforehand to make sure to cover the subject of interest, but at the same time the method is very flexible and the interviewee was allowed to affect the proceedings of the interview. The researchers (interviewers) had prepared an interview guide with a large number of questions, but during the process some questions were added and some were never asked depending on who the respondent was and how he/she responded to the questions. The interview questions were also changed or adapted after some interviews had been conducted in order to confirm answers from the remaining interviewees or to find patterns or differences in responses. Further, all interviews were recorded to be able to transcribe them.

Seven in-depth interviews were conducted with one interview of a manager in the French subsidiary, one interview of a manager of the North American subsidiary, three interviews at the Headquarter in Sweden, one interview at Volvo Trucks in Gothenburg, and one interview at Volvo Construction Equipment in Arvika. Five interviews were held face-to-face, and two interviews were performed through videoconferences. Videoconferences were conducted through a large screen at the Volvo office in Gothenburg. Good technology made it almost as good as a real face-to-face interview. Three interviews were held with people from the Center of Expertise, three with HR Business Partners at the different Volvo businesses (Trucks, Global HR Business Partner and Construction Equipment), and one interview with HR services manager in

Gothenburg. This made us have inputs from all the three sub-departments of the SDM. Sweden, France and the United States were chosen because these countries were first to adapt the SDM within Volvo, and therefore have the largest experience of the model. Interviews were held between March 17 and April 7 (exact dates for interviews are found in appendix 2), and the length of the interviews ranged from 40 minutes up to 90 minutes, almost exclusively depending on the length of the respondents' answers. Two interviews were conducted in English, and five interviews in Swedish. The Swedish interviews were transcribed in Swedish, and quotes that were used in empirics was translated by the authors and approved by the managers.

3.4. DATA ANALYSIS

Due to the detailed nature of this case study of Volvo and the in-depth interviews that had been conducted, the researchers chose to transcribe the entire interviews. This was also done to more easily be able to compare the findings. After transcribing all interviews, answers were categorized according to the three research questions, meaning that answers was categorized under "how knowledge is being shared" "what facilitators exist" and "what barriers exist". Thereafter, answers from all interviews were merged and an empirical text was produced around these topics, as well as the corporate strategy and culture. The empirical text starts with the corporate culture and corporate strategy, and then focuses on how knowledge is shared within the SDM, as well as facilitator and barriers for KS. Therefore, the empirics are structured in the way that it covers broad aspects first, and move towards covering more in-depth aspects. Moreover, for the analysis, this research used pattern matching when analyzing the different documents and interviews in order to identify similarities and differences (Eisenhardt, 1989), and also theories and literature were triangulated to support that the outcome of the research is accurate. As an example, what was stated about Volvo's strategy and culture in the documents were compared to the findings gained from the interviews to get an understanding of how KS really is perceived and promoted by the managers within the company. Furthermore, a constant comparison between theory and data took place in order to add to existing theories in this new context of SDM. Therefore, the analysis of the findings could start at an early stage and further data collection could be adapted to the desired outcome. One action was to adjust some interview questions depending of what previous respondents had stated, and this was done to be able to have a more-in depth focus of certain recurring subjects.

When analyzing empirics, the results were compared to existing literature within the analysis chapter. Most of the findings were confirming theories in the literature chapter. However,

findings about economic geography, and that the geographical distance played such a large role for KS within this context was not expected. Therefore, researchers chose to include new theories within the analysis to show that some of the findings from the study can actually be found within the field of for example economic geography, but was not heavily focused on in the literature chapter. The literature chapter concentrates on barriers and facilitator for KS both in domestic firms but also within MNCs, and specifically concentrates on international business literature and different management journals for example. Hence, the literature chapter does not cover in-depth about the role of geographical distance. During the analysis phase, this phenomenon was however found to play a large role in this context, and the researchers chose to add new theory within the analysis because of the fact that these theories act as an explanatory factor for the findings.

Collection of data and analysis was stopped when saturation was reached, meaning that when it was clear that all interviewees covered the same concepts, and no new aspects or themes were brought up by interviewees, the collection of data was stopped because this means saturation was reached.

3.5. LIMITATIONS OF CHOSEN METHOD

One limitation with the method qualitative case study is that it has been stated to be subjective (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Gibbert et al., 2008; Yin, 1994). Moreover, having an interpretive perspective of this research the values of the researchers have affected the interpretations made and a subjective standpoint might have been taken. However, authors (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Farquhar, 2012) argue that this is a part of the interpretive aspect and a necessary element in order to outline and address the research properly. Another limitation may be due to the criticism that results from a single case study cannot be generalized. However, the researchers argue that analytical generalization can be achieved which is the process of generalizing findings from the empirical observations into becoming a theory or adding to existing theory. Analytical generalization is when an existing theory is used as a template when analyzing and comparing the findings from the collected data (Yin, 1994); hence the empirical findings from the managers within Volvo can be generalized and used to add to existing theories. Moreover, Tsang (2014) argue that when having the approach of one case, the importance is not of generalization per se, but instead if the research is transferable and comparable. To connect with Tsang's (2014) standpoint, researchers made sure to achieve reliability and transparency, by include all interview questions in appendix 1, and by in depth explaining the context and method of the research.

To increase the internal validity for this research pattern matching were used to analyze the patterns found compared to either the predicted ones or compared to other studies. Theories and literature were also triangulated to verify the outcome of the study. Further, to minimize the problem of subjectivity within this research a chain of evidence has been provided outlining what is stated in the documents and also presenting the different answers given by the managers. In this way the reader can easily follow the process from question to data.

Another limitation may evolve when using public documents, and therefore a critical standpoint has to be taken to evaluate if the information presented is valid or if the company is trying to be perceived as something better than they are, i.e. the researchers have to make sure that these documents are reliable sources. Moreover, this reasoning also has to be applied in the case of interviews since the interviewees might give biased answers make something look better than it actually is. Therefore, when looking at public documents, such as the explanation of the corporate culture, researchers were aware of the fact that those documents potentially do not describe the true reality. Therefore, findings were triangulated with both documents and interviews, in order to minimize the risk of biased answers.

3.6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The access to corporate document material for the research has been enabled through the Volvo webpage, through official documents such as the corporate culture and the corporate strategy, accessed through for example annual reports. Thus, these documents are public and available to all who are interested in finding it. Internal corporate documents have been provided to the researchers by employees within the organization. Before using these documents for empirics, a formal inquiry was sent to a manager to secure that researchers were allowed to use these internal documents. The authors have accessed empirics in an ethical manner to avoid causing any harm to the organization or individuals. By sending empirics and quotes to interviewees before publishing the research, individuals that were interviewed were able to accept or reject quotes and/or other empirics.

The authors have followed the Ethical Codex of Vetenskapsrådet in our research. It consists of four requirements: information, consent, confidentiality and utilization (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002). These requirements are important in social research, and especially in qualitative research, where interviews and personal information is used. Regarding information, people that are being interviewed need to be informed why he or she is interviewed and what the study is covering.

This information was given before each interview was conducted. Consent regards interviewees to approve their participation and their quotes to be used in empirics. Confidentiality regards that people must have the option to be anonymous. In this research, all managers are anonymous. Utilization means that information in this research has not been handed out to any third party.

4. EMPIRICS

This chapter presents empirical findings from both corporate documents found on the group webpage, on the internal intranet, and from interviews from Sweden, France and the United States. Documents are looked at in order to find out whether knowledge sharing (KS) is embedded in the corporate culture, corporate strategy and to find out about KS initiatives, facilitators and barriers. Then, findings are backed and further investigated through the interviews. Both of the methods are used to strengthen and triangulate findings, with interviews being the main source for empirical findings.

4.1. VOLVO

In order to research and understand KS between the three HR departments, a study of the MNC Volvo was performed in this research. Volvo is a global group manufacturer of buses, trucks, construction equipment and marine and industrial engines, with subsidiaries in many countries around the globe, as well as regional headquarters. Therefore, Volvo is a large group of many different businesses and brands at many different locations across the globe (Volvo Group, 2016a).

Volvo started to restructure their HR Department in Sweden according to the Service Delivery Model (SDM) in 2006 where one unified HR department were split into three sub-departments: HR Services, Center of Expertise and HR Business Partners. Work titles and jobs were split in order to establish a shared service organization and create a more strategic HR department. Employees got new responsibilities and are now instead encouraged to share knowledge and experiences between the three sub-departments (Volvo Group, 2016b).

4.2. VOLVO'S ADAPTATION OF THE SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL

The Volvo HR strategy, according to internal documents, requires one strong and integrated global HR community with a common way of working, and with global and local collaboration, common priorities and highly professional people. The HR SDM has been very successful in Sweden, France and the United States in order to support this way of working and since 2006, the SDM has been implemented in 19 countries in total (Volvo Group, 2016b). The implementation of the SDM meant that HR generalists became HR specialists, and that several HR policies and processes became harmonized into common HR policies and processes across businesses, divisions and countries (Volvo Group, 2016c). The SDM thus increase value and quality of the HR work by harmonizing policies and processes, establishing common development and enhancement, and creates transparency and consistency of HR work. The SDM in Volvo makes

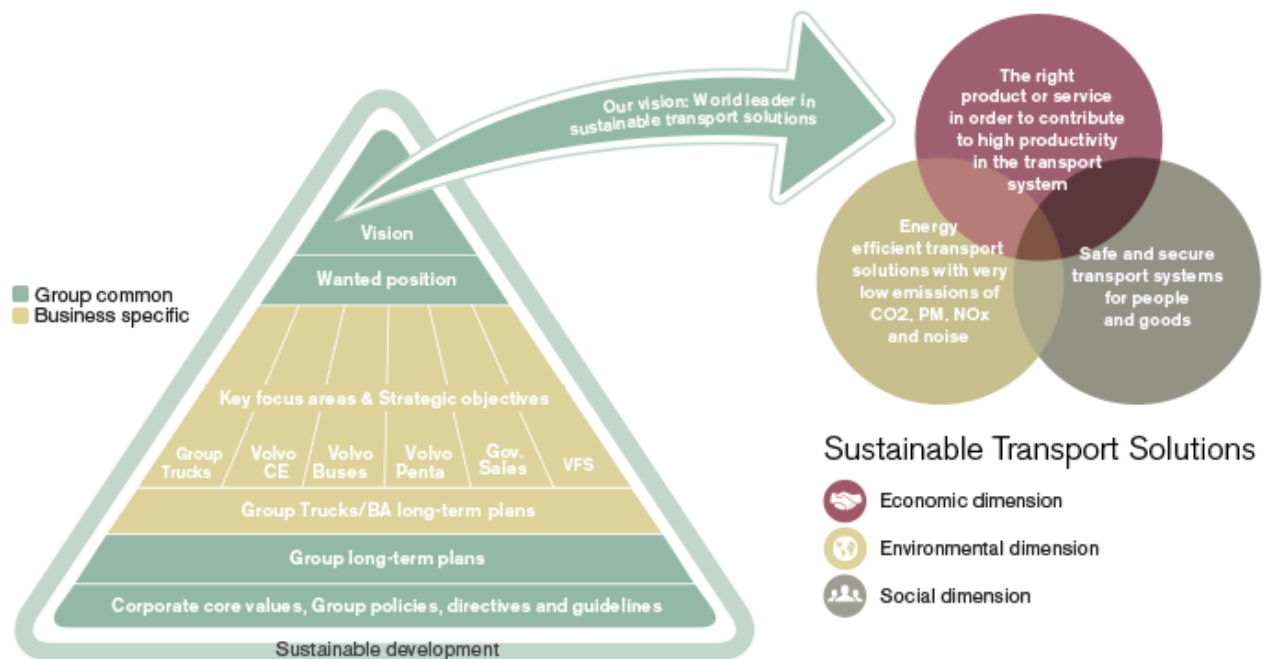
HR work become more structured and specialized, and the HR work is divided into three roles or sub-departments, which are the HR Services, HR Business Partners, and the Center of Expertise. There is also the Corporate HR, the HR council and the HR Country Committee, which are the deciding entities of the SDM. The HR Services deliver HR administrative tasks and is the main point of contact for employees, managers and HR Business Partners. The Center of Expertise designs and develops leading-edge HR solutions, focusing on country strategic issues and non-administrative processes. The Center of Expertise is small teams of HR experts in different areas and they design and develop common harmonized policies and guidelines. HR Business Partners on the other hand, work closely to support line management in the different businesses and discover issues. Corporate HR develops and decides strategy and objectives for HR within the Group, and the HR Country Committee's aim is to ensure and manage the realization of Corporate HR initiatives and strategies in each country, but also to decide on harmonization of different policies and processes. The HR community also consists of the HR Council Global Forum and HR Global Information Committee, which will be presented in a later chapter (Volvo Group, 2016b).

Manager 2 referred the SDM to as the three legged stool, with one leg being the HR Service organization for administration and the second leg of the stool being the HR Business Partners who support the line and operations management in meeting the business objectives from an HR perspective. The third leg of the stool is the Center of Expertise for policy and strategy development and implementation within the country. It is the role of the Center of Expertise and the HR service organization to reach out and support the HR Business Partners. All managers agreed that the HR SDM works well within Volvo, with clear and distinct roles and a lot of coordination and collaboration between the Center of Expertise, HR Services and HR Business Partners. But even though the model works well, a few of the managers expressed that the model “is not quite yet optimized” (Manager 3) and that “we have to accept that it takes time to implement such a big change as the SDM and to know how roles and responsibilities are divided” (Manager 6). The SDM has according to manager 4 and 5 made the HR department have common goals, strategy, processes and needs, and by having a common way of working, manager 4 and 5 expressed that it becomes easier to collaborate and share. How the three departments are sharing and collaborating is further explored in empirics and the analysis.

4.3. CORPORATE STRATEGY

The corporate strategy of Volvo is, in broad terms, mentioned in annual reports and on the official webpage. Figure 2 below shows that the vision and wanted position for 2020 is a group common goal, meaning that the whole group has the same vision and wanted position. Thereafter, the specific businesses have some strategic objectives that are business specific. However, there are also Group long-term plans that are common for the whole group. This is the strategy that is covered in empirics, and strategies are explained as follows “Strategies can be viewed as maps that guide everyday work and decision-making in order to achieve the Volvo Wanted Position 2020 and the Vision. The strategies are part of the overall Volvo strategic framework. Corporate core values, Group policies, directives and guidelines lay the foundation for how Volvo operates and conducts business” (Volvo Group, 2015).

Figure 2. Corporate Strategy



Source: Volvo Group, 2015.

First, Volvo’s vision “is to become the world leader in sustainable transport solutions by:

- creating value for customers in selected segments
- pioneering products and services for the transport and infrastructure industries
- driving quality, safety and environmental care
- working with energy, passion and respect for the individual.” (Volvo Group, 2015).

The Group has clear objectives and a wanted position of year 2020, where the company aims “to be:

- among the most profitable in our industry.
- our customers’ closest business partners.
- captured profitable growth opportunities.
- proven innovators of energy-efficient transport solutions.
- a global team of high performing people”.

Volvo’s strategy has changed during the past decades, and there has been efforts to adapt the Volvo “to the conditions and expectations of the business world and the future - and to achieve our wanted position by 2020”. This effort has resulted in greater centralization with a globally coordinated approach and toward governance as one group within clarified roles and responsibilities. The strategy has also moved towards “rapid and efficient decisions and early adjustment”. The strategy and company also “aims to involve all employees, by clarifying how each individual is important to achieving the targets”. Volvo’s strategy is today much focused on cost savings and increasing profitability and efficiency, which has been a shift away from the previous strategy of growth through acquisitions (Volvo Group, 2015).

KS is therefore officially not part of the group strategy, and on strategy and KS, all managers agreed that there is a lack of integration, where Manager 2 stated: “I am not sure that the corporate strategy really does promote KS. I think we talk about it, but I am not sure that we provide the tools to managers to make that happen. So often we talk about documentation and sharing and learning, but unfortunately I think that the reality of the day-to-day gets in the way”. Manager 1 had a similar opinion and stated that the overall strategy does not promote KS enough, and that their team therefore has started to develop their own tools for KS. Further, Manager 4 stated that the strategy probably promotes KS in words but not enough in the actual processes, and Manager 5 agreed that KS is not at the top of the agenda in the corporate strategy.

4.4. CORPORATE CULTURE

The Volvo Way is a corporate document that expresses the official culture and the behavior and values that are common for Volvo. The document incorporates the core values of Volvo, which are quality, safety and environmental care, and is also a guideline of how employees should work and behave through working with “energy, passion, and respect for the individual” which are cornerstones of the corporate culture. The Volvo Way expresses that throughout the corporation

best practices and tools to improve effectiveness and productivity should be shared in the organization. Furthermore, it recognizes that “To build a high-performing Volvo we need effective teamwork across functions, businesses and national cultures”. It also states that “Active listening and a lively exchange of experiences, ideas and perspectives promote understanding and collaboration between different teams and functions” and this is achieved by face-to-face meetings “to encourage an open dialogue” and “By giving positive feedback and encouraging each other, we strengthen the willingness to act and learn” (Volvo Group, 2009).

The Volvo Way also expresses the aim to leverage effective teamwork and create cross-functional teams to resolve problems. This is to be achieved by “mutual trust and cooperation in our teams” and by appreciate one another and treat each individual with respect. The document also states “We trust each other to take initiatives and to execute. We recognize each individual’s contribution, and celebrate the achievements of our colleagues. We listen actively and always try to learn from and support each other”. The common projects and processes give the different businesses and divisions an opportunity to share experiences, knowledge and best practices. Volvo recognizes that integration and cooperation leads to higher profitability. It also recognizes that “Great teamwork at every level is based on mutual trust, solid relations and cooperation in working together to meet common business objectives. Inside the team we strive for a harmonious team spirit, openness and continuous improvements. We share the joy of working and winning together. By coming together as a team, we combine and leverage different strengths and skills more effectively” (Volvo Group, 2009).

All managers believed that the overall culture of Volvo supports KS, but to somewhat different degrees. The majority of them state that values such as openness, collaboration and a willingness to share and to learn are a part of the culture. Manager 3 added that they work effectively with KS because the most dangerous scenario is when one person becomes too important and non replaceable. Manager 2 agreed that the culture to some extent supports and promotes KS, but also stated that “there is an expression that states ‘knowledge is power’” meaning that some employees might want to keep their knowledge to gain an advantage within the organization. Manager 5 stated that it is embedded within the culture to share between HR Services and Center of Expertise because they are very dependent on each other, but that this kind of collaboration has not been established as much with the HR Business Partners. Further, Manager 5 was not sure that all employees feel comfortable and trust to the other employees to share knowledge due to the complexity of the organization and regarding the issue of what is actually allowed to be

shared. On the other hand, Manager 7 stated that there is a great willingness to share and Manager 1 and 2 added that there is passion and trust between employees within the SDM; “They are proud of sharing, it is a way to be recognized for your experience and skills” (Manager 1). All managers expressed that employees that feel that “knowledge is power” and is lacking trust is in a very minority of the employees. Most employees realize the value of sharing and the culture promotes that. The majority of the managers argued that the employees within HR are aware of the value of sharing knowledge, “we recognize, and we talk about the importance of sharing knowledge” (Manager 2). Manager 7 believed that the value of sharing is evident for the employees at each site but that it might be different across boundaries.

4.5. KNOWLEDGE SHARING INITIATIVES

According to corporate documents there are several different formal committees that enables different HR divisions to work together and promotes discussion and sharing. There is the HR Council Global Forum with members from different departments and countries where the aim is to develop a HR strategy and to manage strategic activities. The global forum also discusses different initiatives and develops common policies and procedures. Further, there is an HR Country Committee in each country with the purpose of implementing HR initiatives and to make sure that these are in line with the existing local laws, regulations and agreements. Within this committee, there are representatives from all three different sub-departments (Center of Expertise, HR Services, HR Business Partners). Moreover, the HR Country Committee should provide support to the local businesses and while implementing global policies also strive for harmonization and realization of synergies. They also work together with the Center of Expertise and HR Services on initiatives that are being brought up. Furthermore, there is the HR Global Information Committee which has the aim to increase and enable global networking and best practice sharing among HR departments. This committee works as a meeting forum for chairpersons in order to promote integration and communication. There are also functional working groups that actively seek to contribute to HR process, policies, procedures etc within different topics. For example there is one functional working group concentrating on compensation and benefits. The working groups are used as committees to get advice, input and share best practices. The working group thus collaborates and gives advice to the HR Country Committee (which is the deciding forum) on what to decide (Volvo Group, 2016c).

To secure constant learning and development of the employees, the Volvo Group University has been established where employees, regardless of location, are offered high quality formal training

sessions through methods such as standardized processes and expert trainers. To secure optimal learning within Volvo the company has adopted a model for learning. This model suggest that 70% of all learning necessary to perform a job is linked to different practices and experience, 20% of the learning comes from engaging in collaborations, teamwork and conversations with other co-workers and the remaining 10% is connected to formal training sessions. The two first categories are more informal and demand that managers take an active standpoint and make sure that help, consultation, training and mentorship is offered to the employees. Moreover, participation in different networks among the employees should be promoted. These activities have been put in place in order to support KS between the individuals within Volvo (Volvo Group, 2016d).

Furthermore, through its intranet, Volvo encourages its employees to have the right mindset, which means to be open for new possibilities to acquire and share knowledge among co-workers, and this is seen as a key factor for success. Some given advices are to communicate with colleagues on a regular basis, participate at internal seminars and to use different digital forums to share knowledge within the organization. Moreover, when an employee is about to retire, seminars should be held for other employees in order for them to obtain his existing knowledge and continue to spread it through the organization. Further, KS also takes place within Volvo when employees participate at training sessions and chooses to share the obtained knowledge with other co-workers, and when junior employees collaborate with senior colleagues (Volvo Group, 2016d). According to Manager 1, “it’s always nice to share your knowledge before you leave your position. I think this is really key and is also a question of, if we come back to values, respect for the individual and for the work they do”.

Moreover, all managers also provided a summary of other tools that can be used for sharing knowledge. There are team places online for all different teams, where they can post and share documents etc. There is also a global site called Violin, with information globally, and the Employee Center that is more HR information within each country. Further, except the very formal, group common initiatives for KS, such as different IT platforms, intranet and different formal committees such as the HR Country Committee; managers have also described how there are more local initiatives in order to increase KS. Manager 1 stated that, “ the Center of Expertise have regular meetings every two weeks with HR Business Partners to share around HR topics, but we have also implemented an HR day, a full day seminar with the whole HR community. And this is a good place where we can share knowledge”.

Furthermore, during 2014, efficiency programs were implemented in country Y and one initiative to capture the knowledge of people leaving the company was to implement peer groups. According to manager 1, “During the efficiency programs in 2014 we implemented peer groups with an external coach and they met I think once a month to openly discuss the issues that they had with this coach, and get advices from each other and share best practices and so on.”

Manager 2 stated that one thing that HR does in country X is that they organize seminars each quarter with different discussion topics meaning that they organize a general KS session to “get all of the HR community on the same page with regards to various HR aspects”. What is being made in country X is also that they try to formalize back-ups so that when someone is sick, or when someone leave the company, there is one formal, outspoken backup person that can handle these work tasks. Moreover, to share knowledge between the team members in the Center of Expertise in country X “we have a formalized five-minute round table updates, so each member of the Center of Expertise get five minutes to update on current issues and ask questions” (Manager 2). Another initiative in country X has been a full-day HR conference which brings together all the HR Business Partners, HR Service Managers and Center of Expertise Team Members in the country “so that they can network and get to know each other, as what we are really trying to do with our KS is to get people really comfortable to pick up the phone and talk to each other between businesses. We are trying to improve the networking and improve the relationships.”

Manager 5 stated that one initiative that has been implemented in Country Z as a part of a development program is the action of employees from HR Services following HR Business Partners for a half day with the aim to better understand each other's roles and assignments. To also make the HR Business Partners come to HR Services, suggestions of compulsory introduction education has been established where new HR Business Partners should participate in training sessions at the HR Services to gain information about their processes and time plans “because knowing each other, and each other’s processes is vital for exchanging knowledge and information” (Manager 5). Manager 5 added that HR Services are also trying to establish a forum for KS with the different businesses to gain more insight into each other’s businesses. Moreover, in country Z, one initiative has also been to draw lots of people that should go and eat lunch together, which usually is five people from different departments, and this is done in order to increase socialization across departments and boundaries within HR (Manager 5).

Further, Manager 7 mentioned that another formal initiative to strengthen KS within Volvo is the establishment of the Business Academy for HR within the Volvo Group University, which will serve as a competence development concept for HR with trainings and KS. Another initiative mentioned by Manager 3 regarded the fact that, within HR, they are currently trying to harmonize processes, rules and directives to gain harmonized information throughout the company and the different businesses. Moreover, Manager 6 stated that to increase KS they are working a lot in cross functional groups between different sections. Also, regarding the Center of Expertise, Manager 3 stated that they have network meetings every month, for example within Compensation and Benefits, with all HR Business Partners from the different businesses, where educations are held and discussions take place.

4.6. HOW AND WHAT KIND OF KNOWLEDGE IS SHARED WITHIN THE SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL

KS within the SDM takes place in many different ways, both very formally but also informally. Formal KS takes place through the formal initiatives that have been presented, such as the HR Country Committee, the Volvo Group University etc. Further, Managers described that because of the very complexity of Volvo, with so many different entities, businesses and locations, formal committees for KS become crucial when knowledge has to be shared across different locations. The geographical distance plays an important role in KS within Volvo, because managers described how knowledge that is being shared across locations is almost only shared in formal committees, while day to day knowledge is being shared on the site where an employee is sitting, thus sharing on a daily basis almost only on site. Manager 7, for example, described that through the formal committees such as the HR Country Committee, large processes and initiatives are being discussed and shared. However, on a day-to-day basis, “you are more dependent on your personal network within the organization” to ask for help (Manager 7). Manager 3 also described how the formal committees such as the HR Country Committee and the functional working groups, is about developing directives, processes and tools and collaboration between the three sub-departments. All managers agreed that the different formal committees are important for sharing knowledge across different locations and to collaborate between sites and sub-departments. Manager 5 expressed that the HR Country Committee and other formal committees are important, but that informal ways to communicate and share are also important. Moreover, Manager 3 stated that geographical distance plays an important role for communication and sharing and mentioned that they have an aim to have face-to-face meeting but otherwise uses Skype. Manager 7 continued to describe that most of the knowledge an employee shares takes

place at the site where he or she is sitting, and that team meetings are where a lot of knowledge is being shared, and also more formally knowledge is being shared through the functional working groups and the HR Country Committee for example. Manager 6 also stated that formal meetings are important for taking decision and sharing around decisions, while informal discussion and sharing is mostly made at site around the day-to-day operations.

All managers described how very little day-to-day knowledge is being shared across different countries (i.e. between subsidiaries and headquarter etc.) and that most such knowledge is very formalized shared in formal committees. All managers described that day-to-day knowledge is difficult to share within HR because of the fact that some HR processes are still very local and country specific due to e.g. different labor laws etc. However, all managers agreed that KS across countries is still important. Manager 3 stated that; “KS between countries is extremely important if we should be able to work as one united company, one group, and take advantage of our size”. Further, Manager 1 stated that: “we do not share a lot between countries or between businesses. I mean we share on site, because it’s easier to share when you are on the same site”. When sharing between different subsidiaries and the headquarter the identified channels by all managers were face-to-face meetings, the formal committees, e-mail, team places, intranet and Skype. Manager 1 outlined that the transmission channels used are mostly e-mail and team places. Manager 2, however stated that most of what is shared between countries is made through meetings in a Skype environment, and that it is extremely important to share, especially in order to “understand each other when we are working in this global context and environment”. Moreover, it is also important to share global decisions so that “countries can have an opportunity to clearly review certain initiatives to make sure that they fit within the culture and the legislation within that country” (Manager 2). Further, the majority of the managers believed that Skype and videoconferences is the best option due to its similarities to meeting face-to-face, and misunderstandings are usually avoided. On the importance of sharing internationally, Manager 3 stated that it is natural to share between countries when implementing similar processes, in order to take advantage of each other and not to invent the wheel again. Manager 5, on the other hand, stated that it depends on time-to-time and stated that KS between different countries does not happen on a daily basis, and when it takes place it is through more formal initiatives and processes.

About more informal ways to share knowledge, Manager 3 stated that more informal ways of sharing take place through phone calls with questions on an ad hoc basis, and other managers

stated that informal sharing could also take place through informal socialization and the site, and through the intranet and e-mail. Most managers for example believed that there are endless opportunities for an employee that is willing to learn, share and search for information to also find it on the intranet.

Regarding what type of knowledge that is usually shared, managers stated several types of knowledge, where Manager 3 argued that it could be through workshops where the different businesses give suggestions but also pure information about decisions that the different areas should implement. Manager 6 stated that they usually share education and different competences, and Manager 5 said that the knowledge shared is usually regarding the large formal initiatives in order to be updated, and not so much on a daily basis. Further, Manager 1 and 2 both mentioned best practices as what is mostly shared. On a daily basis, Manager 2 expressed that employees are good at asking and sharing about questions that come up, and stated that a lot of KS takes place on site “on an informal basis by simply asking questions when an issue comes up, how we want to resolve the issue etc.” However, between the three different HR sub-departments, KS is usually more formal where decisions and knowledge is being shared within the HR Country Committee for example.

On KS between the three HR departments, Manager 1 stated; “I think the three departments work a lot together, we really share decisions. There’s the HR Country Committee, which is the decision committee for HR, and so we take all our decisions in the HR Country Committee and this is also a way to share knowledge” Manager 2 also expressed how the department works together and how the managers of the different departments have close relationships and meet frequently. Manager 3 believed that KS between the different departments works okay, but not optimal. It is about prioritizations and HR Business Partners do not always have time to provided resources for discussions (Manager 3). However, generally all managers agree that the three sub-departments work well together in the formal committees.

4.7. KNOWLEDGE SHARING FACILITATORS WITHIN THE SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL

All managers stated that the value of sharing knowledge is clear among most managers and employees. Manager 2 stated, “KS is extremely important especially for an organization like Volvo which has so many different entities within the organization and so many different locations, and the fact that we are so extremely international, and the fact that we have different

businesses like construction equipment, trucks, buses, Penta and so on. To really be able to get the value from the group that we are, we need to have very much focus on KS". According to Manager 2, "KS has to start from the top and cannot be driven bottom-up" and further expresses that there is a need to "find ways to make it easy for people to share their knowledge and to really make it a focus within the organization. Because eventually, knowledge is what really makes a difference in the organization. It's not the buildings, it's not the technology, but the difference is the people and the knowledge they bring and the experience they have". Manager 6 expressed that KS is crucial "to survive as an organization in today's global competition" and manager 5 believed that KS is even more important when having a centralized shared service function as in the SDM model. All managers also agreed that international KS is extremely important. Manager 4, for example, stated that in order to understand each other and have common processes as the group that Volvo is, there is a need to share knowledge internationally, however all managers also stated that some HR processes are still very local due to national laws etc.

All managers expressed that employees within the HR department are willing to share their knowledge. Manager 3, for example, stated that "there is a good atmosphere within HR which promotes KS, and people are very willing to share". Manager 5, however, stated that HR Business Partners might be less willing, or able, to share because they are more spread out in different businesses, while the Center of Expertise and HR Services are geographically closer. Further, most managers also stated that employees feel comfortable and feel trust within HR to share knowledge and that it is "encouraged to share between each other" (Manager 7). Sharing knowledge is also to some extent part of the daily work, when asking questions and sharing information and knowledge with colleagues, however this is mostly done within the different sites. Moreover, another facilitator that managers have expressed is that, through the SDM model and shared services organization, all businesses and to some extent the different countries have the same processes and work routines, and that everyone is working with the common demands and needs from the business. Therefore, e.g. manager 4 expressed that the SDM in itself is creating a facilitator for KS, because it becomes easier to share when there is a common way of working.

Furthermore, all managers talked about the formal committees, such as the HR Country Committee for networking as good facilitators for KS. It has been expressed that through these formal meeting points, it becomes easier to interact between divisions, and across national borders. Manager 7 expressed that the HR Country Committee helps to gather representatives

from the different sub-departments within the SDM, and that this is the place where most of the knowledge between the three sub-departments is being shared. Manager 5 stated that large initiatives and major information are being shared through these formal committees and that those promote sharing. Manager 4 stated that “the formal committees are where we can share across boundaries, and therefore they are extremely important”, and that the “functional working groups make us collaborate in specific areas”. Manager 5 stated that the formal committees is where the large initiatives are being discussed and implemented, and therefore formal committees are extremely important for sharing across departments around decisions. Manager 2 expressed that the formal committees are important when it comes to full blown discussions, however, the HR Country Committee only meets eight times per year, and therefore more informal decisions also have to take place. Manager 7 had a similar opinion stating that the formal committees are important for the large processes and initiatives, but in the daily work the personal network and informal sharing becomes more important.

All managers expressed that the best way to facilitate KS is by meeting face-to-face and “to involve a lot of people within the organization all the time and to respect each other” (Manager 3). Manager 1 also believed that KS could best be facilitated through face-to-face meetings such as the HR day. “Having a day like that, a face-to-face day, I think is the best”. However, it was expressed that meeting face-to-face is not always possible to due geographical distance, and then IT may serve as facilitator. Through IT, sharing knowledge is also encouraged through different IT platforms, such as the intranet, emails, Skype calls, team places etc. IT enables KS because within such a large organization, it is difficult to share face-to-face at all times, and therefore IT promotes KS in the sense that employees are able to e-mail, share presentations, have videoconferences and look up information at the intranet or at team places and use case management tools. Manager 3 described how “video conference is extremely helpful as it creates a total different dynamic than just calling by phone”. Further, Manager 2 (and other managers) stated that more KS can be facilitated through better documentation of processes and work tasks, and Manager 4 described how IT facilitates the sharing of information because it becomes easy to access information through for example the intranet or team places. Manager 6 also confirmed that because of the geographical distance of sites within the organization looks, IT becomes crucial and as long as people do not meet face-to-face, IT is the way to go about to share. However, the managers still argue that IT do not act as a complete substitute to meeting face-to-face, because in order to use IT, employees first need to feel comfortable enough to pick up the

phone and call colleagues for help. Many other managers talked about a facilitator for KS is having a personal network, which may be difficult to achieve only through the means of IT.

Most managers also stated that job transfers facilitate KS, and Manager 1 mentioned that there are for example a lot of job transfers within HR in country Y that promotes KS; “We have a lot of internal mobility between the Center of Expertise, HR Business Partners and HR Services. But globally, there are only some expats to Corporate HR, but not really to the countries”. All other managers agreed that there is a lot of job rotation between different departments that facilitates KS, but not so much on the international arena.

4.8. KNOWLEDGE SHARING BARRIERS WITHIN THE SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL

One barrier that has been detected by some managers is the lack of clear processes for how KS should be handled and carried out, where Manager 1 stated, “we do not do a lot for KS. We do that as we can but we don’t have any processes or tools to support us in that”. Further, another barrier that has been expressed by managers is that certain individuals feel that “knowledge is power” and that these people feel that they need to keep their knowledge themselves because in that way they are more valuable to the organization (Manager 2). Most other managers identified this barrier as well, where manager 1 stated that “some people do not realize the value of sharing, because they are afraid that they will no longer be recognized as the experts and we might have people that are afraid to lose their jobs”. Manager 6 also stated that another barrier could regard how open the employees are, and how willing they are to actually share. However, all managers mentioned that this barrier is only related to a minority of the employees. Manager 4 believed that if people are not willing to share their knowledge it can be due to the fact that they do not know the subject good enough, or do not trust their own competence. If they do not have faith in potential receivers, it can be because they have noticed that the receiving parties lack a willingness to learn and receive the knowledge (Manager 4). Further, none of the managers were aware of any existing incentives for KS.

Moreover, another barrier that has been detected by the majority of managers is the time issue; that the employees do not have time or take time to share knowledge due to the heavy workload. According to Manager 1; “What the employees don’t maybe realize is that sharing is a way to gain time also because if you see a best practice in another division, maybe you can just copy and paste in your area”. Furthermore, Manager 5 stated that time could be a barrier in some situations but the opportunity cost of not sharing is much higher, and that it is rather a question of

prioritization. Manager 3 agreed and stated that there is no time to share knowledge and in order to do it one has to prioritize it over certain meetings. Manager 2 stated that it is difficult to plan and schedule formal meetings for KS because of heavy workloads, and that one barrier is that there is not enough documentation, and this is related to the lack of time to create such documentation. Regarding informal meetings and socialization, Manager 1 believed that they have too many formal meetings so they do not have any time left for that. All the managers said that no slack in the schedules had been made for the employees to actually share knowledge. Further, Manager 1 and 2 stated that KS is not a part of employees' daily routines, and Manager 5 agreed that this is the case at HR in general, however, specifically at HR Services, KS is more part of their daily routine at site.

Another barrier that managers have expressed is the size and complexity of the organization. All managers stated that the large size of the organization and the large amount of employees sometimes makes it difficult to know where to look for and how to find the desired information. The employees therefore have to establish their own personal networks to contact those people when help is needed. But for having such a network and to really take action to contact somebody a relationship has to exist between the parties. Most managers stated that personal networks could be difficult to establish due to the complexity of the organization. Moreover, due to time issues and geographical distance several managers mentioned that they do not meet face-to-face very often, which has been identified as a barrier for KS. Manager 4 and 6 stated that in order to establish a network and relationships they have to meet face-to-face, because it is much easier to contact somebody to ask or share if you have met the person before. "It is no advantage with very spread units geographically" (Manager 6) and added that one should not underestimate the value of meeting face-to-face. All managers also expressed that informal meetings and socialization within the organization is negatively affected by geographic distance.

Related to the complexity and size of the organization, Manager 5 stated that ignorance in combination with respect is also a barrier; that it is difficult to know what information is relevant for whom, which sometimes leads to the fact that information is not shared at all. Further, another barrier that was identified by Manager 1 and 3 is the aspect of confidentiality; that one is not allowed to share everything with everybody. Due to the size, there is also a lot of information on the intranet, Violin and team places etc., and Manager 1, for example stated that "too much information kills information", and Manager 2 stated that it can sometimes be confusing to find information. Some managers also describes how the size of the organization makes it difficult to

have organizational understandings, meaning that there is a lack of understandings for the different environments and businesses within the company, and this also serves as a barrier.

When looking at the international context some barriers were also identified for sharing knowledge between different subsidiaries and the headquarter. All of the managers said that the geographic distance including the lack of face-to-face meetings due to high costs of traveling results in less sharing. As described by the majority of managers, it becomes more difficult to have the spontaneous more informal discussions when you have not met the person you have to contact, and it harms KS by not having established relationships. Manager 3 and 4 mentioned that communication internationally could be a problem, but Manager 4 and 5 also added that it has become much easier to communicate between different countries through means like videoconferences, Lync and Skype. But they still have to meet face-to-face some times to get better collaborations (Manager 3, 4). Manager 4 stated that communication is built upon relationships, which in turn is related to cultural understandings. Manager 5, 6 and 7 also identified culture as a barrier, and the fact that different rules and regulations exists in the different countries which increases the complexity. “If we have to handle differences between the locations in Sweden, it is 100 times more complex internationally” (Manager 5). Most managers agreed with the fact that due to juridical reasons with local differences within some countries, all knowledge and information cannot be shared. Related to national culture, it has also been expressed that some countries are more willing to share and accept knowledge than others. Further, all managers mentioned the lack of time as a barrier for KS internationally. Moreover, Manager 2 mentioned that one barrier could be that they sometimes get too focused on what is right in front of them and “not recognizing that we have so much to learn by sharing knowledge and information between countries”. Manager 7 agreed and stated that it might be difficult to see the advantage of KS between countries because some HR processes are usually country specific. Lastly, Manager 4 gave an advice by saying that everyone has to be open to share and accept information and knowledge that is being shared to you. Otherwise, not being open can serve as a barrier.

5. ANALYSIS

The following chapter consists of an analysis of empirics from interviews and corporate documents in combination with a discussion founded in previous research presented in the literature chapter. The analysis brings up how knowledge is being shared within the Service Delivery Model (SDM), as well as facilitators and barriers that have been found to exist within the specific context of the SDM within Volvo. Then, findings are compared to previous literature, and ultimately the analysis helps answer the research questions in the conclusions chapter.

5.1. HOW IS KNOWLEDGE SHARED WITHIN THE SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL

KS within the SDM is managed in many different ways, both through very formal processes but also by more informal initiatives. According to the corporate documents of Volvo, several formal KS initiatives have been put in place in order to increase and facilitate KS within the SDM. There are several formal committees such as the HR Council Global Forum, HR Country Committees, the HR Global Information Committee, Volvo Group University and functional working groups which aims to promote different HR divisions to discuss and work together in order to increase KS within HR. Moreover, KS is also managed within the SDM through other initiatives such as guidelines placed on the intranet and an HR day for example. However, none of the academic references that the authors of this research have come across have mentioned the importance of formal, structured committees for KS. This might be due to the fact that Volvo is one of the largest organizations in the world, with an extremely large number of different businesses, entities and locations of operations. Therefore, as this research indicates, it might be difficult to achieve KS across so many different entities, without formal meeting points. Therefore, we suspect that other researchers have not focused on such large and complex organizations, and therefore not found the importance of formal committees in such contexts.

Another way of sharing within the SDM is on a more local level, where the different countries had come up with their own KS initiatives. For example in country Z, HR Services representatives are following HR Business Partners in their work for a day in order to facilitate sharing, and in country X they have different seminars and formalized backups etc. These initiatives have been implemented in order for the employees to network and create relationships, which in turn will result in increased KS within the SDM. Also, more informal ways of sharing knowledge, which were mentioned by the managers, are for example by using e-mails, phone calls and through socialization at the different sites. However, due to the complexity of Volvo and the geographical distance between the different sub-departments of the SDM, the managers

outlined that most of the KS between sites takes place through the formal committees, and not so much on an informal basis between sites. This is due to the fact that employees are dependent on their personal networks to achieve effective informal KS, and personal networks are difficult to achieve when not being able to meet the colleagues, which is in line with previous research (Hendriks, 1999; Meyer, 2002). Further, sharing day-to-day knowledge between different countries is also difficult because of differences in national laws and regulations, which is further brought up in the analysis of barriers in chapter 5.3.

According to the literature several authors have stated that knowledge sharing (KS) is managed through different transmission channels, which are divided into formal and informal channels (e.g. Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000a, Holtham & Courtney, 1998). Formal channels regards training sessions, development programs, tours within the organization etc. (e.g. Holtham & Courtney, 1998) and informal channels include interactions between employees during breaks (Holtham & Courtney, 1998) and job transfers to another subsidiary etc. (Ghoshal and Bartlett, 1988). This research is therefore partly in line with previous research, where it was found that both formal and informal transmission channels are used. Formal channels are used when there is a geographical distance between the parties, and informal channels are used more on site and on an ad hoc basis. Therefore, the only transmission channel not found in literature was the importance of formal committees, which was explained by the size and geographical location of the organization. This can be connected to the fact that the managers stated that face-to-face communication is the most efficient transmission channel. However, due to the cost of travelling, this is not always possible, and therefore the committees were expressed as the best way to go about to share. This is in line with previous research, where stated that face-to-face communication is the most efficient transmission channel (e.g. Di Gangi et al., 2012; Gupta & Govindarajan 2000b).

5.2. FACILITATORS FOR KNOWLEDGE SHARING

5.2.1. CULTURE AND THE SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL

In the corporate document “The Volvo Way” about the corporate culture it is stated that the company values teamwork across different functions, businesses and countries. Moreover, face-to-face meetings and communication are preferred in order to increase the exchange of experiences and ideas and to have open dialogues. Further, the Volvo Way states that in order to have such effective teamwork there has to be trust between the employees and a belief that one

can learn from others. Hence, the culture can be seen as a facilitator for KS within Volvo and the SDM according to the official corporate culture document. The fact that the culture promotes KS, with corporate documents as the source, was further demonstrated during the interviews where all managers believed that the culture of Volvo supports KS within the SDM and is therefore seen as a facilitator. This is in line with literature, where the culture of a company that promotes knowledge sharing (KS) was stated to be a facilitator for KS (Amabile et al., 2014; Jonsson & Foss, 2011) and the culture should involve elements such as support towards each other (Amabile et al., 2014; Hickins, 1999), collective problem solving (Wickramasinghe & Widyaratne, 2012) and a clear focus of helping each other rather than individual achievements (Leonard & Sensiper, 1998). The managers further expressed that there is a strong willingness among the employees within HR to share and learn as a part of the culture and values such as teamwork, collaboration and openness are promoted. This is also in line with the literature which states that the willingness to share serves as a facilitator (e.g. Cabrera, & Cabrera, 2005; Minbaeva & Michailova, 2004) and also that the atmosphere of a company serves as an institutional factor and it has to be open in order to motivate the employees to share knowledge (Hinds & Pfeffer, 2003; Leonard & Sensiper, 1998). Moreover, trust was also outlined to be key in order to have effective KS within a company, (Amabile et al., 2014; Riege, 2005; Tschannen-Moran, 2001) and to be able to motivate the employees and make them willing to share knowledge, and trust was found to be a part of the culture of Volvo both in corporate documents and from the interviews with the majority of the managers. The importance of the culture and atmosphere as supporting factors for KS was therefore also found within this context, and is most likely due to the fact that these theories are well developed and many authors have investigated the importance of the culture for KS, and therefore it is unlikely to find something that contradicts these theories.

It was also outlined during interviews that all managers believe that KS is extremely important both domestically and internationally, and they are aware of the value of sharing knowledge and most of the employees are as well. The managers are also trying to actively communicate the value of sharing to the employees and encourage them to share, however some mentioned that this could be improved even further. As stated in previous literature, KS has to start from the top, i.e. top management has to act as role model for KS (Amabile et al., 2014; Lin, 2007; Riege, 2005; Sharma & Singh, 2012). Further, leaders within a team also has to take an active standpoint in order to promote communication and KS (Eppler & Sukowski, 2000), indicating that since all managers promote and understand the value of KS, it serves as a facilitator.

Some managers also expressed that the SDM could work as a facilitator in itself since it contributes to harmonization of processes and routines, and by having a common way of working in all countries KS is facilitated. This could be connected to what Grant (1996) and Jonsson & Foss (2011) referred to as standard procedures, which could be used in order to increase KS. Therefore, the SDM in itself works as a facilitator because the different departments and all countries now have harmonized standardized processes. This is important findings for companies that have or are able to adapt the SDM, to understand the importance of a harmonized department with standard procedures, which the SDM in itself contributes with. Even though it is in line with previous research that states the importance of standard procedures, no one has investigated the SDM and that the model in itself contributes with exactly that.

5.2.2. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

As mentioned before, in the corporate documents it was stated that face-to-face communication is preferred in order to increase communication and therefore indirect also KS within the SDM. Face-to-face communication was also identified in the literature as the most efficient transmission channel for KS i.e. it could serve as a facilitator (Di Gangi et al., 2012; Gupta & Govindarajan 2000b). However, even though all managers expressed that they believe face-to-face communication is vital for KS there is a problem with the complexity and the geographical distance of departments of Volvo, which makes it difficult for the employees to actually meet in person. Instead, the managers identified technology and IT tools such as the intranet, team places, emails and Skype as important means for sharing. These channels can be used to store knowledge, create standard processes etc. and to find and share certain information. This is also in line with the literature where it is stated that IT could serve as a facilitator for KS (e.g. Jonsson & Foss, 2011; Song, 2002). Moreover, according to the literature, IT tools also facilitate communication across borders and today employees can gain information internationally both more easily and more quickly (Pan & Leidner, 2003). This was confirmed by the managers, who stated that in such a large organization it is difficult to meet face-to-face very often and they therefore have to use IT tools instead, and such tools were seen as facilitators for KS (but not a 100 per cent substitute) especially between different countries. Especially videoconferences seemed to be a popular choice because it is most similar to face-to-face meetings. Further, in the literature it was stated that documentation such as manuals could serve as a facilitator (Jonsson & Foss, 2011) and documentation was also outlined as a facilitator by the managers, and that it has been used to some extent. Therefore, findings about IT within the context of the SDM is in line

with previous research, which might be explained by the fact that IT is widely accepted today as an important means of communication and daily work life.

5.2.3. FORMAL COMMITTEES

In the corporate documents a lot of KS initiatives were mentioned, and from the interviews it was also confirmed that these more formal meetings and committees play the most important role for KS within HR. In the corporate documents it is stated that there are global committees which promotes sharing across countries and then also country specific committees such as the HR Country Committee in order to apply the information on a country specific level. Moreover, the Volvo Group University plays a central role in educating the employees and values such as teamwork and collaboration are stressed. All managers believed that the formal committees, especially the HR Country Committee and the functional working groups, are extremely important at such a large company as Volvo in order to share knowledge between the different divisions and countries, while personal networking becomes more important when sharing informally. Further, in these committees most of the larger initiatives are shared and most of the KS take place here, indicating that formal KS in formal committees may be easier in this context than sharing informally across countries and units. None of the academic references that the authors of this research have come across have mentioned the importance of formal committees for KS across countries and divisions. Thus, this may be a unique facilitator for this context, and could be explained that previous researchers potentially have not focused on the same sized organizations with the group structure, and with many different entities and locations that the SDM has. However, it is difficult to distinguish whether this is due to the context or the SDM or whether it is due to the context of a large and complex organization. This issue is also brought up in the conclusion and suggestion for further research.

5.2.4. PERSONAL NETWORKS AND LOCAL KNOWLEDGE SHARING INITIATIVES

Further, due to the fact that such formal meetings within the committees do not take place very often several managers also stated that it is important to have a personal network as well which can serve as a facilitator for KS on a more informal daily basis. However, due to the size and complexity of the organization, this more acts as a barrier for creating a personal network, and is discussed further in the analysis of barriers for KS in chapter 5.3. Regarding more local initiatives that can serve as facilitators, the managers mentioned several initiatives such as drawing lots for lunch dates, peer groups, HR services following HR Business Partners, the Business Academy etc. which contributes to increased KS. This is in line with authors that mention that strong

personal ties and personal networks are important for KS (e.g. Riege, 2005); however, this is achieved in many different ways in different organizations. The researchers have not come across any theories stating that personal ties and networks can be achieved by structured lunch dates etc. Lunch dates worked well where it was established, but personal networks and ties may be achieved and facilitated through many different measures, indicating that the measures on how to achieve it is less important, as long as it is being achieved.

Furthermore, in country X they formalized back-ups in order to facilitate the process of having someone new entering the company, which means they have a list of employees who act as back-ups. These employees are then responsible for handling the work task of the other employee if he or she gets sick etc. This was also evident from the corporate documents and the intranet where it is stated that a seminar is held when someone is about to retire in order for this person to be able to share his or her knowledge, and this was also confirmed by one of the managers. The finding of formalized back-ups was not found in previous research, and might help understand an easy way of sharing knowledge and ensure knowledge is not lost when someone leave the company or gets sick.

A more informal transmission channel identified by Ghoshal and Bartlett (1988) was job transfers, which is similar to expatriation mentioned by Jonsson & Foss (2011), and could serve as a facilitator for KS. From the interviews it was evident that all managers believed that there were a lot of job transfers or rotations between the different departments within HR in the different countries that could increase KS. However, they stated that this was lacking on an international scale, which was also explained by the fact that many HR processes are still local, and therefore it becomes difficult to expatriate to another country.

5.3. BARRIERS FOR KNOWLEDGE SHARING

5.3.1. SIZE OF THE ORGANIZATION AND GEOGRAPHICAL DISTANCE

The HR department of Volvo is, and has also been expressed by all managers, as a very large and complex organization, with a large number of different businesses within the Group, as well as a large number of different locations for HR within each country and also internationally. This has, by all managers been described as a major barrier for sharing knowledge within the SDM. It has been described that on a daily basis, employees' personal network is crucial for KS. However, due to how the geographical distance within the organization (that the organization is spread out

to a large number of locations and sites) it has also been expressed that it becomes difficult to build a personal network within the organization and also difficult to know who to contact. Managers have described how socialization and sharing knowledge is part of the daily work at the specific site where an employee is sitting. However, sharing with other sites is not done on a daily basis and has been expressed to almost only take place in the formal committees. Therefore, for informal KS, the geographical distance of the organization has been described as a barrier, because the geographical distance negatively affects informal meetings and socialization within the organization. However, the formal committees have been described as a facilitator for KS between sites, and therefore the geographical distance less affects the formal sharing of knowledge, because there is a well working forum for that kind of sharing. Connelly & Kelloway (2003) described how a large size of an organization can act as a barrier for sharing knowledge. Riege (2005) collected articles on barriers and Connelly & Kelloway (2003) was one of only two references within the field that have brought up the size and complexity of an organization as a potential barrier for sharing knowledge. Moreover, some authors have talked about the lack of personal network as a barrier for sharing knowledge (Hendriks, 1999; Meyer, 2002), however no references that the authors of this research came across for the theoretical framework talk about the size of an organization and complexity of a large organization as one explanation of why it may be difficult to create a personal network. However, as the phenomena of geographical distance as a barrier was assumed to not be specific for only this context, the researchers had to go back to literature to find explanations. There, it was found that this aspect has been researched much in for example the field of economic geography. However, since the importance of geographical distance was not expected to be found to that large extent, the researchers decided not to include such literature in the literature chapter. The literature review and theoretical framework contains previous research on different barriers and facilitators for KS both in domestic firms but also within MNCs, and concentrates on international business literature and management journals for example. Authors found articles in the field, which are presented as an explanatory factor in the analysis. Many authors within the field of economic geography explain that the larger the geographical distance is, the harder KS becomes to manage (e.g. Ambos & Ambos, 2009; Javernick-Will, 2011). In sum, being a large HR organization with large geographical distance between sites itself act as a barrier for sharing knowledge informally. However, as argued by all the managers, the large initiatives are still easy to share around within the formal committees, and therefore large formal sharing is not as much affected by the geographical distance as is the day-to-day sharing, which is more negatively affected by the geographical distance between sites.

Related to geographical distance, another barrier has been detected which is the lack of face-to-face communication. Due to the fact that businesses and sites are spread out across the countries and across the globe, there is a lack of face-to-face communication, which has been described as a barrier for sharing knowledge. Some managers have described how video conferences are good to use, but that there is a need to at least meet a few times in order to establish a relationship. Most managers described how it becomes easier to contact someone that you have met, than someone that you have never met. Therefore, the lack of meeting face-to-face becomes a barrier for more spontaneous, informal sharing of knowledge. Gupta & Govindarajan (2000a) describe how one of the most efficient transmission channels for KS is face-to-face communication. For this context, face-to-face communication is not always possible due to the geographical distance within the organization, and the lack of this transmission channel may explain why it has been stated by managers that more knowledge is being shared at site, than between different sites.

Also related to the geographical distance of the organization, most managers described how the lack of relationships may serve as a barrier for sharing knowledge. This is also related to the lack of face-to-face communication, where if there is no face-to-face communication, it becomes difficult to build relationships with colleagues across countries but also in different businesses and at different sites within the same country. Amabile et al., (2014) described how to achieve a culture where sharing knowledge is a norm, and the article brings forward how important personal relationships are for sharing knowledge. However, within the context of this research, creating such relationships becomes difficult due to the geographical distance, and therefore it serves as a barrier for sharing knowledge. This may also serve as an explanation of why most managers described how it is easier to informally share knowledge at the site where he or she is sitting, than between sites and locations; simply because it becomes easier to create relationships face-to-face (i.e. at the site). Therefore, the lack of relationships due to geographical distance serves as a barrier for sharing knowledge informally within this research context.

5.3.2. COUNTRY SPECIFIC PROCESSES AND NATIONAL CULTURE

Another barrier that has been discovered is that even though the HR department has become more strategic and processes has been harmonized in order to work harmonized throughout the organizations and all countries, HR processes is still very local. This means that HR services for example is working very country specific in administrative processes due to labor laws. Therefore, administrative processes still look quite different in different countries, which has

been described as a barrier to share knowledge between countries in the SDM. Managers described how it becomes difficult to share knowledge within the SDM when the recipient might not be able to use it due to different laws and regulations. Therefore, different processes due to laws and regulations have been detected as a barrier for KS. No literature that the authors have come across is discussing around different laws connected to HR as a barrier for sharing knowledge, and due to the fact that most managers have talked about labor laws in different countries, this barrier seems to be specific to the context of HR. This might be explained by the fact that HR is heavily controlled by different labor laws, and research about KS in the SDM/HR context has not been performed before.

Another barrier that has been detected is due to national culture and language. Most managers described how differences in national culture becomes a barrier at some points, because there are differences in cultures that affect the willingness to share and also accept new knowledge that has been created somewhere else in the organization. Gupta & Govindarajan (2000a) discussed the “not-invented-here syndrome” which indicates that other units may be reluctant to accept knowledge that is being created somewhere else in the organization. Managers talked about this phenomena occurring more or less within the organization, where it may be more obvious in some countries due to, as some managers expressed it, national culture. Hendriks (1999) and Meyer (2002) also talked about national culture as a barrier for sharing knowledge as it may affect the easiness of communication etc.

5.3.3. INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS AS BARRIERS

A small minority of employees have been described to have the view that “knowledge is power”, meaning that they are less willing to share their knowledge to colleagues because they are afraid that sharing will make themselves less valuable to the organization, and a few people are afraid that it may mean that they could potentially lose their job. However, this is described to be a very minority of employees within HR, because the culture generally promotes KS and a majority of employees are willing and gladly share their knowledge. However, it becomes a barrier anyways if some people are less willing to share. Husted & Michailova (2002) discussed this barrier that potential senders of knowledge may feel that sharing may mean that the sender loses individual competitive edge. Connected to this barrier, there are no known incentives for sharing knowledge within HR, which might serve as a barrier. There are neither any financial incentives, nor any other incentives such as diplomas or any other awards. One of the most commonly identified barrier in literature as authors expressed in the literature section is the lack of transparent rewards

for sharing knowledge (Kant & Singh, 2008; Singh et al., 2006; Yew Wong & Aspinwall, 2005). Therefore, this may serve as a barrier within the context of HR since there are no outspoken rewards/incentives (not necessarily financial) that the employees can earn by being open and willing to share.

5.3.4. ORGANIZATIONAL BARRIERS

Another barrier that has been detected when analyzing empirics is that there is a lack of time in order to share knowledge. Most managers described how there is such as heavy workload for most employees within the SDM that there is almost no time left for socialization and sharing on an informal basis. Some managers described how formal meetings and heavy workloads takes up all time and therefore that the lack of time becomes a barrier for sharing knowledge. One manager described how documentation is and can become even more of a facilitator for sharing knowledge, but simply that there is a lack of time to create such documentation of knowledge and processes. However, most managers have stated that even though there is a lack of time, there is sharing within teams and at sites, but that the time perspective is more of a barrier for sharing across boundaries and sites. Therefore, lack of time to share becomes a barrier within this context as expressed by managers. Literature frequently brings up the lack of time to share knowledge as a barrier, and also the lack of documentation as a barrier for sharing (Hendriks, 1999; Kant & Singh, 2008; Meyer, 2002; Singh et al., 2006; Yew Wong & Aspinwall, 2005). Since it has been expressed by managers that there is a lack of time to share in any possible way (including lack of time to create documentation), time serves as a barrier for KS within this context and confirms already existing literature on this barrier.

By analyzing interviews, not recognizing the value of sharing knowledge has also come up as something that managers have described as a barrier. Most of employees have been expressed to recognizing the value of sharing, however when talking about sharing internationally, most managers describe that a barrier is that employees fail to see the value of sharing internationally, and that employees are focused on what is right in front of him or her that it becomes difficult to recognize that there is a lot to learn by sharing internationally. Therefore, this barrier is also connected to time, that there is no time to stop and think that employees internationally might be able to help, but also related to geographical distance and the lack of personal network: that is becomes more difficult to contact someone you have never met. Therefore, the lack of understanding the value of sharing has been described to increase on the international playfield, as at site, most employees tend to share and understand the value of sharing. Previous researchers

have identified this barrier as well, stating that a barrier for sharing is when people do not appreciate or recognize the value of sharing knowledge, as well as having a lack of understanding of what potential benefits that can arise from sharing knowledge (Riege, 2005). Therefore, this context confirms previous literature. However, within this context it has been brought up and become obvious that the geographical distance also plays a big role for this barrier. It has been described how employees are aware of the value of sharing with colleagues at site, but not so much aware of the value of also sharing between different sites and internationally. Therefore, this analysis argues that the lack of understanding the value of KS increases for sharing internationally and also between sites within the same country, but that the value of sharing at site can still be clear. Moreover, it was brought up in empirics that sharing knowledge on site is more of a daily routine than sharing across sites, and literature has brought up that a barrier for sharing is that it is not part of the daily routine (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2002). However, it has not brought up that this barrier may increase for sharing between sites.

Most managers have talked about IT as a facilitator for sharing knowledge, however some managers have expressed that there is so much information out there that it becomes difficult to know where to look for specific information. As one manager described it “too much information kills information” which means that too much information may serve as a barrier if it becomes too complex to know where and how to look for specific information and knowledge. However, a few managers have describe that it is clear on where to look, and therefore this barrier is not as clear as the other stated barriers. Previous literature has also expressed how the lack of integration of IT tools may serve as a barrier and that it is important to have clear integration of different tools and platforms (Riege, 2005).

5.3.5. CORPORATE STRATEGY

When reading and analyzing the official corporate strategy, it becomes clear that sharing knowledge is not part of the official strategy of the organization, and by triangulating this, all managers were asked whether the corporate strategy does or does not promote KS. Most managers expressed that the corporate strategy does not promote KS enough, and one manager expressed that KS is not on top of the agenda of the corporate strategy. Some of the managers therefore described how they have developed their own tools for sharing knowledge in the different countries. Therefore, the corporate strategy has been described to not promote KS enough, and may therefore serve as a barrier because of the importance that the strategy actually does promote KS according to previous literature (Hansen et al., 1999; Riege, 2005). This

therefore serves as evidence that the lack of integration for KS strategy with the corporate strategy may serve as a barrier within this context, thus confirming previous literature on this point.

5.3.6. SUMMARY OF FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS

Table 2 below summarizes the main facilitators and barriers that have been detected in the SDM context.

Table 2. Summary of facilitators and barriers

| KS facilitators | KS barriers |
|--|---|
| Culture (including trust, willingness to share) | Geographical distance and size of the HR organization (which also negatively affect face-to-face communication and ability to create personal networks). Barrier specific only to informal sharing of knowledge |
| Top-management support | National laws, regulations, national culture and language |
| Information Technology (including intranets, team places, documentation, tools for communication etc.) | ”Not-invented-here syndrome” |
| Formal meeting forums/committees | ”Knowledge is power” |
| Local initiatives (such as lunch dates, peer groups, Business Academy etc.) | Lack of incentives, lack of time to share, lack of documentation |
| Job transfers | Lack of understanding value of sharing internationally |
| SDM as a facilitator (harmonized and standardized processes) | Difficulties to find information |
| | Lack of integration of corporate strategy and knowledge sharing |

Source: Compiled by authors

6. CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this research has been to investigate how knowledge is shared within the Service Delivery Model (SDM), as well as which main facilitators that exists for knowledge sharing (KS) between individuals of different departments and also between different subsidiaries within the new strategic HR department, which is often referred to as the SDM (Boglund et al., 2013). The aim was also to investigate potential main barriers for KS within the same context and compare it to established theories within the field of KS. This has been done through an abductive research with a constant comparison to existing literature, and within this new context of the SDM.

The head research question to be answered was;

“How is knowledge shared within the Service Delivery Model of an MNC?”

Knowledge was found to be shared in many different ways within this context. Most obvious was the difference between sharing on site and sharing between different sites. Within each site, it was more common to share informally through informal transmission channels such as spontaneous face-to-face meetings, emails, phone calls and socialization at site. However, when sharing between sites (both within the same country but also internationally), the geographical distance was found to be the largest single factor explaining why informal sharing decreased as compared to within different sites. Therefore, when sharing across the three departments and between sites, the formal committees played the largest role in achieving affective KS. Therefore, in sum, KS was shared in this context more informally within sites, while the formal committees played the largest role when sharing across boundaries. The transmission channels used in the context of the SDM was in line with previous research that distinguishes between informal and formal transmission channels (e.g. Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000a, Holtham & Courtney, 1998). However, new contributions include that formal committees such in the case of the SDM can prevent geographical distance to serve as a barrier. Therefore, through these committees, knowledge can be shared even through there is a large geographical distance. This connection has not been found in previous research, and is further elaborated in chapter 6.1.

The first sub-research question to be answered states;

“Which main facilitators for knowledge sharing between individuals of different sub-departments and between subsidiaries within the HR Service Delivery Model of an MNC exist?”

Facilitators that have been found within the context of the SDM include organizational culture, top management support, IT, formal meeting forums/committees, local initiatives, job transfers, and the SDM in itself. The most evident facilitator for KS that was found in the context of SDM was the usage of formal committees and meetings. From the corporate documents it was clear that both global and country specific committees had a central role for KS and this was then also confirmed by all the managers who stated that most KS takes place through these large formal committees such as HR Country Committee and functional working groups. Since such formal committees and initiatives for KS could not be found to play such a large role in previous literature this facilitator could be specific for the context of SDM, however, it could also be due to the size of the organization hence further research is necessary as explained later in this chapter. Due to the fact that these formal initiatives do not take place very often in combination with the difficulties of meeting face-to-face, other informal initiatives such as the action of drawing lots for lunch dates and HR services following HR Business Partners have been brought up to facilitate KS, however these only take place at site and not cross units. Due to difficulties of meeting face-to-face, IT tools such as the intranet, team places, emails and Skype were also brought up as facilitators for KS both within and between countries.

Moreover, the SDM in itself was also stated to be a facilitator since it contributes to harmonization of processes and standard procedures, and some managers also stated that documentation was a facilitator to some extent. Further, formalized backups in combination with seminars being held when someone leaves the HR department increases KS and facilitates the process of a new employee entering the department. Job transfers also served as a facilitator for KS within the SDM within countries, however, this was not evident on an international scale.

Another facilitator which was found was that the culture of the company supports KS by focusing on values such as teamwork, trust and willingness to share and also that there is an open atmosphere. Further, the importance of top management was labeled as a facilitator where all managers were aware of the value of sharing knowledge and worked with communicating this to the employees.

The second sub-research question regards barriers for KS, and states;

“Which main barriers for knowledge sharing between individuals of different sub-departments and between subsidiaries within the HR Service Delivery Model of an MNC exist?”

Barriers that have been found within the context of the SDM includes lack of time to share knowledge, lack of documentation, difficulties to find information, lack of integration of KS strategy with the overall corporate strategy, lack of employees understanding the value of sharing knowledge, lack of incentives/rewards, lack of face-to-face communication, difficulties in creating personal networks, the Not-invented-here syndrome, lack of willingness to share and mentality that “knowledge is power” of some employees and that it may be difficult to find desired information. Moreover, national culture, language, different national laws, and the size, complexity and geographical distance of the organization act as barriers for sharing knowledge between individuals of this context. However, some of the barriers have been found to not play such a large role as other barriers. For example, the lack of employees understanding the value of sharing knowledge, the lack of incentives, “knowledge is power”, lack of documentation, difficulties to find information and the Not-invented-here syndrome was found to play a minor role, as was only subject to a very minority of employees. However, lack of time, difficulties in creating personal networks, and the lack of face-to-face communication, and the geographical distance was found to play a larger role. However, there was also found to be a distinction between informal channels and formal channels, and by having formal committees, the geographical distance as a barrier for sharing knowledge was eliminated. But for informal sharing such as by e-mails and phone calls, geographical distance acted as a major barrier.

Most barriers are connected to the fact that the SDM within Volvo is a large and complex organization with many different entities at different locations. For example, it has been concluded that formal KS works well within the formal committees and thus these committees act as a facilitator for KS. However, informal KS is negatively affected in many ways because of the size, complexity and geographical distance between sites of the organization. For example, the lack of face-to-face communication, the difficulty in creating relationships and personal networks are related to the fact that locations are spread. Thus, the geographical distance of the organization has been concluded as the explanation of why informal meetings, socialization and creating relationships are difficult to achieve across sites. It has been concluded, by statement from all managers, that sharing knowledge informally takes place much more at the specific sites, than between sites and internationally. Therefore, the geographical distance of the organization negatively affects informal sharing of knowledge, and this is also the explanation of why most managers have described that it is easier to share knowledge at site, than between locations, simply because informal sharing of knowledge is dependent on relationships, personal network

and face-to-face communication, and such is easier to achieve at site. Therefore, sharing knowledge is also more of a daily routine at site than between sites, because sharing between sites takes place formally in the different formal committees.

6.1. CONTRIBUTION TO PREVIOUS LITERATURE

This research has provided insight into the importance of having formal committees for sharing knowledge within the context of SDM, because formal sharing becomes important as informal sharing of knowledge on a daily basis is mostly taking place within sites, and difficult to achieve across units and locations. This connection between geographical distance and having formal committees has not been explored and discovered very much in previous literature. Moreover, this research has provided insight that the lack of face-to-face communication, personal networks and relationships are negatively affected by the geographical distance, thus negatively impacting the degree of informal sharing. The geographical distance also showed that the employees lack an understanding of the importance of KS on the international scale and between sites, which extends theories that argue for the importance of employees understanding the value of KS, where these theories does not distinguish between domestic and international KS. Therefore, by studying Volvo and the SDM, it became obvious that formal committees helped overcome the barrier of geographical distance. Further, the barrier of different national laws has been concluded to be specific within this SDM context, where differences in e.g. labor laws act as a barrier for sharing knowledge, which has not been brought up by previous literature on KS, probably because of the fact that there is no research on KS within HR. Moreover, the finding of formalized back-ups was concluded to be a contribution and provides understanding of an easy way of ensuring KS when an employee gets sick or leave the company.

This research further contributes with a strengthening of previous literature, by showing that facilitator and barriers that have been detected by previous literature applies for this context as well. Moreover, as argued for in the problematization, the strategic HR and the SDM are quite new phenomenon, and there was a lack of research of KS within this context. Thus, this research also contributes with new empirical material and empirics from a new context. In sum, this research both provides new empirical material, some extension to previous literature, as well as help strengthening previous literature by concluding that literature is partly applicable to this new context.

6.2. PROPOSITIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The fact that many barriers and some facilitators are connected to the size and geographical distance of the organization makes the researchers suspect that these barriers are not only specific to the context of the SDM, but rather that these barriers may be common to large organizations for sharing knowledge. Therefore, the researchers suggest further research to concentrate on distinguishing between informal and formal sharing of knowledge when studying large MNCs, and further study how the size and geographical distance of large MNCs affect the informal sharing of knowledge and how KS can best be facilitated within these organizations. As part of the conclusions of this research, the researchers' suspect that formal committees are most effective in sharing knowledge in large global organizations, since sharing informally is negatively affected by the size and geographical distance of MNCs. However, formal committees as a facilitator for cross-functional and cross-border KS have to be studied further.

6.3. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Results of this study show that in order to achieve effective KS, it is clear that the formal committees within this context is most appropriate/effective when aiming for sharing across departments, and sites/subsidiaries. All managers confirmed how important these committees are for sharing across boundaries, and therefore it is important to appreciate the value of these committees. However, many of the managers also stated that the aim is to increase the sharing informally between sites, i.e. to pick up the phone, email, or contact someone in any other way at a different site. However, when aiming for such informal sharing across sites, it is vital for managers to understand the importance of face-to-face communication, personal networks and relationships in order to achieve such sharing. The lack of face-to-face meetings, and relationships as a consequence of geographical distance must be taken into account and it might be a good idea to develop a plan on how to achieve such sharing despite the challenges described. Another suggestion might be to accept that informal sharing across sites is difficult to achieve, and thus focus on how to develop and continue working with the formal committees.

Informal sharing at site has been concluded to take place more than between sites. However, most managers mentioned that the time aspect is important, where there is such heavy workloads for most managers and employees that there is simply no time to share and socialize, even at site. Therefore, this aspect is important to consider if aiming to achieve more spontaneous sharing. Previous literature (e.g. Amabile et al., 2014) have mentioned that most high performing companies, when it comes to effective KS, are notable for their slack in the organization. Therefore, managers might want to consider whether a time slack in employees schedule can be

valuable. It should also be valuable to managers to be aware of which facilitators and barriers that exist, in order to create a strategy on how to handle barriers and how to further strengthen the facilitators. Further, there are no outspoken incentives for employees to share their knowledge as of today, and this barrier can easily be turned to a facilitator by having some kind of award or diploma to employees who act as role models for sharing knowledge.

7. REFERENCES

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APPENDIX 1. INTERVIEW GUIDE

OVERALL BUSINESS KS

1. What kind of expertise/specialization do you have? What do you work with?
2. How do you perceive knowledge sharing? How important/not important is it to an organization?
3. Does Volvo's overall business strategy promote KS between individuals? (Does the organization generally encourage employees to share knowledge?) How?
4. Does the company culture promote KS? Individual achievements or team orientation?
5. What environment is important for individuals to share knowledge in the company? Why is it important?
6. Should people, working in the company, share their knowledge with others according to you? Why?

THE HR CONTEXT

7. Can you describe the SDM and how the work is divided between the departments?
8. Generally, how willing are the employees in HR to share knowledge and take their time to do so?
9. What kind of knowledge do employees usually share?
10. Do you collaborate between the HR departments when making decisions? How?

FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS FOR KS IN HR

11. How can knowledge sharing best be facilitated between individuals within the HR department, do you think?
12. Tell us about the HR department's efforts to increase knowledge sharing between individuals within the department.
13. How easy/difficult is it to share knowledge for the employees within HR? Why?
14. How useful are the different committees for knowledge sharing on a regular basis? (text How often do they meet?)
15. When employees share their knowledge, how do they do it? In what situations? (e.g. in collective problem solving)
16. How does top management work with KS in HR?
17. Do the employees feel comfortable and feel trust to each other to share knowledge?
18. When an employee realize they need to seek information/help, how do they know where and from whom to get the information?
19. Are all employees aware of the value of sharing knowledge? How is that communicated to employees?
20. How is IT technology used for knowledge sharing?
21. Does IT facilitate knowledge sharing between different subsidiaries and between the headquarter and subsidiary?
22. How much informal meetings/socialization take place at your workplace?
23. Does incentives for knowledge sharing exist within the organization? What kind of incentives? (not necessarily financial) How do you recognize each individual's contribution?
24. Has certain time been set aside in schedules for employees to engage in KS sharing activities such as helping others?
25. Is KS part of the employees' routines and daily work?
26. Do you see any risks with sharing knowledge?
27. Have you identified any barriers for KS between individuals within the HR department?
28. If employees do not to share knowledge on a regular basis, why do you think that is?

INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

29. How much knowledge sharing do you believe is necessary between different subsidiaries and between subsidiaries and the HQ? What kind of HR knowledge?
30. How does knowledge sharing between subsidiaries and between subsidiaries and HQ take place?
31. What do you use for transmission channels to share knowledge between subsidiaries and HQ?
32. What is the strongest barrier for KS between different subsidiaries and subsidiaries and HQ?
33. How does national culture, language, the lack of face-to-face interaction affect international KS?
34. How do you perceive knowledge which is created somewhere else in the organization?
35. Is there enough job transfers to other subsidiaries in order to facilitate KS between individuals?

APPENDIX 2. SPECIFICATION OF INTERVIEWS

March 17, 2016, 10.30-12.00

Interview with manager of the French subsidiary. Representative of the Center of Expertise. Conducted face-to-face at the headquarter in Sweden.

March 18, 2016, 15.00-16.30

Interview with manager of the North American subsidiary. Representative of the Center of Expertise. Conducted through video conference at the Volvo facility.

March 23, 2016, 14.30-16.00

Interview with representative of the Center of Expertise in Sweden. Conducted face-to-face.

April 1, 2016, 09.00-10.00

Interview with an HR Business Partner at Volvo Trucks in Gothenburg. Conducted face-to-face.

April 4, 2016, 10.00-11.30

Interview with manager of HR services in Gothenburg. Conducted face-to-face.

April 5, 2016, 15.00-16.15

Interview with an HR manager at Volvo Construction Equipment. Conducted through Skype.

April 7, 2016, 13.00-14.00

Interview with a global HR Business Partner in Gothenburg. Conducted face-to-face.