BRIDGING THE GENERATIONAL KNOWLEDGE GAP

- three case studies of knowledge sharing in the generational shift

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Bridging the Generational Knowledge Gap – three case studies of knowledge sharing in the generational shift

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### Sammanfattning
In the generational shift, sharing the knowledge of the older generation to the younger coworkers is an important consideration. The aim of this study is to explore knowledge sharing from aging workers to younger workers and the potential of improving knowledge sharing within organizations.

A multiple case study was executed in three different organizational contexts: The Municipality, The School and The Manufacturer. The data collection consisted of semi-structured individual interviews, focus interviews, document analyses and statistics. The results were analyzed in within-case and cross-case analysis, triangulated and related to previous research.

The conclusion is that knowledge sharing is generally perceived as an informal activity and an issue lacking strategic relevance in organizations. There are however possibilities to make knowledge sharing in the generational shift into a legitimate strategic consideration, if activities are formally created to support strategic objectives. A process for choosing and evaluating knowledge sharing programs is presented.

### Nyckelord: Knowledge Sharing, Generational Shift, Knowledge Workers, Knowledge Management
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1. INTRODUCTION

Organizations in Sweden, like the rest of Europe, are today facing a critical challenge regarding the retirement of a large part of the workforce. The aging generation that is moving toward retirement, with all their years of accumulated knowledge, has dominated the workplace in numbers but is now retiring and giving room to the younger generations. Between 2010 and 2025, 1.6 million individuals are retiring, which is 250,000 more than the previous 15 years (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2010). For the first time in the modern age, the retirees will outnumber the newcomers on the job market. These vacant positions must somehow be filled with competent and knowledgeable personnel.

This situation does not seem to be as dire as first anticipated years ago. This is mainly due to heavy immigration that has partially mitigated the gap in the size of the generations (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2010). But as Sweden struggles with integrating its immigrants into its workforce the issue remains, especially in rural areas where urbanization is creating a lack of young workers (Lindh, 2008). And as the younger generations are supposed to bring new qualities and skill sets more typical for their generational cohort there is no doubt that this means organizations are facing a potentially huge loss in experience, knowledge and specific competencies (DeLong, 2004). The generational shift becomes a key strategic consideration because the human capital, consisting of the employees’ knowledge, is a valuable resource that creates competitive advantages for organizations (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). The response to the generational shift by organizations has mainly been to devise strategies for how to recruit and retain the talent of tomorrow (Michaels, Hanheld-Jones & Axelrod, 2001). This has created an upswing for areas like employer branding in order to showcase what the organization may offer the younger generations as an attractive employer (Terjesen & Frej, 2008). The generational shift has also made organizations reconsider what knowledge and skills they need (Bennett, Pitt & Price, 2012). As knowledgeable employees become scarcer, it is important to get the kind that fits your organization.

However, organizations who are able to win the battle for talent and attract skilled employees with the desirable competence for their context have not yet won the war for knowledge. Organizations are also increasingly shifting its focus to the knowledge presently inside their own walls. Competency development and employee training has in the modern era of work been an important strategy, and future challenges only increases its importance as ways of developing the workforce (Mankin, 2009). A less studied issue has however been the knowledge retention of older workers human capital (DeLong, 2004). If organizations are not successful in their knowledge retention their employees will retire from the workplace together with their years of un-captured knowledge. Reasons for this not being prioritized has been argued to be managers undervaluing older workers knowledge (Slagter, 2007; Taylor & Walker, 1994), limited knowledge of activities for knowledge retention (DeLong, 2004), over-
relying on knowledge sharing to occur as an informal process between employees (Davenport & Prusak, 1998), and not being aware that the knowledge leaving is crucial to the organization (DeLong & Mann, 2003). The sharing of knowledge from older workers to younger ones has the potential of aiding organizations in managing the knowledge gap created by the generational shift. However, knowledge sharing in the form of a one-time exit interview, or knowledge sharing with a short term plan may not be highly effective (Ipe, 2003). For knowledge sharing to be effective, previous research indicates that a relationship between the actors must be based on trust (von Krogh, 1998), motivation (Hinds & Pfeffer, 2003), be nurtured by a supporting organizational culture and structure (McDermott & O'Dell, 2001) and that the activity is strategically aligned with organizational objectives (Riege, 2005). The process takes time to build and it is not a quick fix solution, but a process. Since the generational shift already has commenced it is important to start creating strategies now for stimulating the knowledge sharing before the knowledge has walked out the door. To do this it seems relevant to first understand how knowledge sharing is conducted today and what factors affect it.

There have been studies carried out about how productivity is impacted by the generational shift (Malmberg, Lindh & Halvarsson, 2008; Van Dalen, Henken & Schipper, 2010), generational issues in the modern organization (Bennett, Pitt & Price, 2012), interactions between generational cohorts (McGuire, Todnem et al., 2007) intergenerational knowledge transfer models (McNichols, 2010) and factors impacting knowledge sharing (Ipe, 2003; Lee & Suliman, 2002; Riege, 2005). The previous research covers many different aspects of the knowledge sharing between generations. The research is however limited concerning in-depth case studies taking the subject’s whole complexity into account. This thesis intent is therefore to focus on knowledge sharing within the generational shift from a comprehensive viewpoint to understand the possibilities and difficulties facing organizations in this endeavor.

1.1 The Aim

The aim of this study is to study and deepen the understanding of knowledge sharing from aging workers to younger workers and the potential of improving knowledge sharing within organizations.

To accomplish this, the study seeks to answer these three research questions:

- What knowledge is shared from older to younger coworkers?
- How is knowledge shared from older to younger coworkers?
- What factors enable and constrain knowledge sharing from older to younger coworkers?
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter the theoretical framework will be presented. It starts with an introduction of the concept of knowledge sharing, what knowledge is, why it is important to modern organizations and how the sharing of knowledge can be viewed from different perspectives. The chapter then focuses on which activities knowledge sharing occurs in and what factors have an impact on knowledge sharing in the workplace. This chapter concludes with a summary of the theoretical framework, in the form of an analytical model, which will be used to analyze the empirical material.

2.1 The Concept of Knowledge Sharing

The central concept in this thesis is knowledge sharing. Ipe (2003) defines knowledge sharing as knowledge being presented in a form so it can be understood and used by someone else. Since the knowledge is shared, it also means that the provider of knowledge does not lose the knowledge to the recipient, but that the recipient cognitively forms their own knowledge from the received message (Ipe, 2003). Therefore knowledge is constantly changing and evolving in the sharing process (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Zack, 1999). In the 16th century the saying ”knowledge is power” was coined by sir Francis Bacon (Henry, 2002). Much has however changed over the last 500 years. Information and knowledge is today readily available to anyone who seeks it. Therefore, hoarding the knowledge is not power anymore. According to Bollinger and Smith (2001), knowledge shared is instead what today provides power within the organizational context, and what provides businesses with a competitive advantage. Davenport and Prusak (1998) writes that the best way for organizations to share knowledge within their organization is: ”hire smart people and let them talk to each other” (p. 88). While this short and simple message may not be untrue, getting knowledge sharing to actually work in practice may be more complex (Riege, 2005). Wang and Noe (2010) perceive knowledge sharing as know-how and task-information that is provided in social situations order to help coworkers understand, solve problems and innovate. This indicates that the social interaction between different actors is of central importance and that different kinds of knowledge may be shared. According to Lee and Suliman (2002) social face-to-face-interaction is however not a prerequisite, as the sharing may occur in text and documents. Knowledge sharing can happen in many different contexts and situations within organizations but demands some form of conscious effort by an individual to share (Ipe, 2003).

This thesis distinguishes knowledge transfer from knowledge sharing. Transfer is unidirectional movement of knowledge from one actor to another (Berggren, Bergek, Bengtsson, Hobday & Söderlund, 2011). Knowledge sharing is a broader term, where knowledge is created and shared between peers. Knowledge transfer occurs in, and is a part of, knowledge sharing, but it is not what is being researched in this thesis.
Knowledge sharing is in this thesis defined as: Knowledge being consciously presented by an actor in a social situation or document, so it can be interpreted, understood and used by other actors. This implies that knowledge sharing consists of two different elements: The actual knowledge that is being shared and how the sharing process occurs. These two elements will be separately presented in sections 2.2 and 2.3.

2.2 Knowledge

Knowledge, despite its everyday use, has no unanimous definition. Perhaps the biggest difficulty with the term is that it is highly ambiguous and can refer to a long list of different aspects (Alvesson, 2004). In fact, the main reason that it is such a difficult term to grasp is because it is used in a myriad of different everyday situations. This thesis does not strive towards defining knowledge in a philosophical manner. What is strived for is instead a pragmatic definition of how knowledge can be seen as a useful resource for organizations.

In the organizational context knowledge is often defined based on how it relates to data and information in a hierarchical manner (Mankin, 2009). Data is the building block and lowest of these three stages (Davenport & Prusak, 1998) and can for example refer to a number, figure or words in form of objective facts. The data has however no inherent meaning. Therefore value must be added by the receiver of the data to create useful information. Data is related and understood and turned into information. This means that information, unlike data, has a message that is defined by the receiver (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). This information does not however say enough in order to be knowledge. More value must be added in form of an understanding of how the information affects, compares and connects within the context to make patterns (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). Figure 2.1 explains this hierarchical relationship.

![Figure 2.1, The hierarchical relationship between data, information and knowledge Inspired by Ackoff (1989)](image-url)
There is however critique of this model and the categorization of these concepts (Zins, 2007). The main objection is the unclear distinction of what actually constitutes information and knowledge (Frické, 2009). Which kind of value given by the receiver draws the line between if it is information or knowledge that is created? There can therefore be some ambiguity when discussing the relationship between knowledge sharing and information sharing. However, this critique does not change that at least information is being shared. Because information is a prerequisite to knowledge, the sharing of information is included in the concept of knowledge sharing in this thesis. According to Zins (2007), the reason this criticism exist is due to the previously mentioned lack of a unanimous definition of knowledge.

One of the earliest and most renowned definitions of knowledge is Plato’s ”Justified true belief” (Chrisholm, 1982). This also suggests that knowledge is dependent on the value the individual or group give the information. This is, according to Davenport and Prusak (1998), the judgment that creates the knowledge, and therefore makes it useful. Evidently, the aspect of usefulness is of central importance when considering knowledge in an organizational context (Ipe, 2003). The usefulness of the knowledge is what makes it into a resource, and is hence the reason for the subject being discussed within the organizational context in the first place.

The modern working life is moving away from the scientific management philosophies that dominated during the first half of the 20th century (Jones, 2013), to a resource based view on organizations (Boxall & Purcell 2008). This means that if the company’s competitive advantage is based available resources, there is arguably no greater resource than the employee’s knowledge and skills. This can be referred to as the human capital of the organization, and is therefore implied to be an asset to the organization (Newell, Robertson, Scarborough & Swam, 2002). A knowledge intensive society has developed where the individual is dependent on a highly skilled workforce. Drucker (1959) was the first to see the emergence of a new kind of worker and coined the term “knowledge workers”. Examples of these are lawyers, consultants, architects, teachers, engineers and scientists. In a way all work is knowledge work, but these occupations deal with non-routine situations that require informed, critical and creative thinking (Reinhardt, Schmidt, Sloep & Drachsler, 2011). Drucker’s (1959) projection that this category of the workforce would increase to dominate much of the workforce in industrialized countries has also come to fruition (Davenport, 2005). Managing the knowledge within the organization has therefore become a major factor for success in modern organizations and its long term sustainability (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). Because of this one can argue that the resource based view is being overtaken by a knowledge based view in organizations (Mankin, 2009) where much of the value creation springs from the production, distribution, and use of knowledge and information.

A concept that is closely related to knowledge is competence. While knowledge is internalized information which has a meaning to an individual (Ackoff, 1989),
competence goes beyond that to include the skills and abilities that enable the individual to use this knowledge in a productive way and in a specific context (Ellström, 1992). In that sense knowledge is necessary to carry out competent actions within the organizational setting. This thesis takes the theoretical stance that it is not the skills or abilities that are shared. It is the knowledge that is shared and created between and within individuals (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

One of the ways to seek to draw advantage of and stimulate the knowledge in organizations is to manage knowledge strategically (Spender & Grant, 1996). It is a strategic consideration for organizations that view the human capital as an important resource that needs to be improved and stimulated, in order for it to remain a competitive advantage. However, to understand how knowledge can be managed and facilitated within organizations one must understand that there are different kinds of knowledge with their own characteristics.

2.2.1 Types of knowledge

Polanyi (1962) divided knowledge into two dimensions, a division that is today adopted in much of the literature on knowledge in organizations. These two dimensions are explicit and tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is what we easily can articulate, write down and explain to other people (Polanyi, 1962). This makes this knowledge easy to spread in many different ways, like in documents and audio files. This knowledge tends to be formal and theoretical knowledge, in form of facts and instruction. This knowledge can be learned by anyone who desires to, and has the cognitive and theoretical prerequisites to understand it.

Tacit knowledge on the other hand is knowledge that is intrinsic to the individual and therefore difficult to articulate (Polanyi, 1962). The best way to gain tacit knowledge is to experience it in the specific context. It is based on insights and intuitions and rooted in action. A classic example is riding a bike. One can try to explain how you ride a bike, but it is highly doubtful that this will lead to someone learning how to ride a bike. Since this knowledge also is so difficult to communicate to others it is very difficult to share it. It is what we know, but cannot explain. In most cases the individual may not even realize that they have the tacit knowledge and how it can be useful to other people, as it is ingrained into the person’s being.

The balance between explicit and tacit knowledge is of vital importance when understanding how knowledge can be used in organizations as a competitive advantage according to Zack (1999). The author argues there is no clear line between what tacit and explicit knowledge is. This is part of the "knowledge flow", which means that knowledge is not in a static state (Zack, 1999). Instead the knowledge is always judged, appraised and rewritten. Knowledge can therefore be seen as a product (a resource) that the organization can use, but also a continuous flow and process that is consciously created and recreated in the organizational context.
Knowledge can be viewed both as a thing to be stored and manipulated and as a process of simultaneously knowing and acting - that is, applying expertise. As a practical matter, organizations need to manage knowledge both as object and process (Zack, 1999, p. 47).

Knowledge as a product can be used as a competitive advantage in a similar way as material resources. It is also a process, as it is constantly reevaluated cognitively within the human mind, as well as in the shared contextual experiences of individuals (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

DeLong and Fahey (2000) focuses on where in the organization the knowledge resides. The first one of these is human knowledge that is cognitive and consists of what we know how to do. This knowledge contains both tacit and explicit knowledge as the individual can explain some of their own knowledge but not all. Collective (or social) knowledge exists in relationships between groups and develops by working together. It is largely tacit as it is created in the situation where the coworkers are working together. Structured knowledge is embedded in organizations through formalized processes, routines, tools and systems. Structured knowledge is largely explicit as the routines and tools used mostly are formalized. The relationships between DeLong and Fahey’s (2000) three types of knowledge and Polanyi’s (1962) tacit and explicit knowledge is proposed in figure 2.2.

![Figure 2.2, Types of knowledge and their relationship](image)

In this thesis Davenport and Prusak (1998) definition of knowledge is used as it encompasses the above mentioned theoretical perspectives of this section and takes a pragmatic approach to how knowledge is useful in organizations. It relates to knowledge’s importance to organizations, that there are different types of knowledge, where in the organization the knowledge resides as well as the knowledge flow:

Knowledge is a fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information. It originates and is applied in the minds of knowers. In organizations, it often becomes embedded not only in documents or repositories but also in organizational routines, processes, practices, and norms (Davenport & Prusak, 1998, pp. 5).
2.3 The Sharing of Knowledge

As knowledge can be seen as both a resource and a process (Zack, 1999), this section is presented by how organization can manage knowledge sharing according to these viewpoints.

2.3.1 Knowledge management

As there are different types of knowledge, organizations can focus on what kind they wish to stimulate and further as a resource. Knowledge sharing is however unfortunately not as easy as making people talk to each other, or writing and reading documents (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). From this need to understand how knowledge as a resource can be facilitated in organizations, scientific disciplines have evolved with the most predominant one being knowledge management (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). Noe (2002) defines knowledge management as:

The process of enhancing company performance by designing and implementing tools, processes, systems, structures, and cultures to improve the creating, sharing and use of knowledge (p. 457).

Traditionally, knowledge management had its focus on creating technological knowledge management systems where employees could share and seek for knowledge (Babcock, 2004), but these have been failures on many occasion as it does not take the organizational and interpersonal context into consideration (Voelpel, Dous & Davenport, 2005). Instead, knowledge management has evolved toward strategically facilitating and improving knowledge flow in every part of the organization (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). Knowledge management activities are practices that are set up to consciously stimulate the knowledge in the organization, even if it is accomplished together with another objective, or if the organization does not call it knowledge management. Riege (2005) argues that one of the main reasons for knowledge sharing activities failing is that it is seen as a separate process from the rest of the company strategy, and is therefore not created to support these. This emphasizes that knowledge sharing activities should not be implemented as a sideshow to the strategic goals, but should be inextricably integrated with the overall organization strategy to yield the best possible outcome (Master, 1999). If the knowledge sharing program does not link with strategic objectives, the legitimacy of the knowledge sharing in the organization will suffer and loose its value. Riege (2005) argues it is senior management’s responsibility to communicate these strategies down through the organization, but that this often is not executed effectively.

The term knowledge management is however a debated one because it implies that knowledge can be managed (Wilson, 2002). Knowledge is something that is created inside individuals cognitively and for groups in social situations, not something that a manager can directly control. What organizations however can do is facilitate and guide the creation and sharing of strategically important knowledge within the
organization (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995) which is the goal of knowledge management. It is therefore a legitimate strategic consideration for organizations to implement knowledge management practices, which interlink with the overall organizational strategy (Spender & Grant, 1996).

2.3.2 Knowledge creation

Nonaka and Takeuchi’s (1995) SECI model of knowledge creation, which evolved from their research on innovative Japanese companies and how knowledge as a process is created, recreated and flows within the organization, is one of the most used models in knowledge management. This model suggests that explicit and tacit knowledge are not absolutely separated, but are very much dependent on each other. The opinion of Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) is that the organizational knowledge is created when knowledge moves between different knowledge fields. Organizations that can control this process and stimulate knowledge sharing can use it as a strategic and competitive advantage. The model consists of four fields: Socialization (tacit to tacit) Externalization (tacit to explicit), Combination (explicit to explicit) and Internalization (explicit to implicit). Figure 2.3 shows the SECI model.

![The SECI model](image)

**Figure 2.3, The SECI model. Inspired by Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995)**

The four fields show the different dimensions of knowledge creation that organizations go through. It is important to remember that this is a process and that no end-state exists (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). It is called knowledge creation because the knowledge here is viewed as being created again inside the individuals cognitively when it moves to a new field (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Therefore this can be seen as a knowledge flow. Socialization includes sharing experiences, observing, imitating and brainstorming. It happens in situations where people
communicate and socially interact with each other. Externalization happens when models are made and metaphors are created, in attempts to turn the implicit knowledge into explicit knowledge. This is, as discussed earlier, a difficult (and sometimes impossible) process. Combination includes sorting, adding and categorizing explicit knowledge in order to use the explicit knowledge in new ways. This can be done in e-mails or databases, as well as in briefings and meetings. Internalization happens when explicit knowledge is read or heard and then contextualized by the individual into intrinsic patterns. Internalization therefore is common during formal training, competency development and on-the-job training. Noe (2002) argues that both combination and internalization relies heavily on training initiatives. This is central to Poell and van der Krogt's (2003) critique of the SECI model. The authors argue that the model as a whole relies too much on management setting up the boundaries for the knowledge sharing, and therefore is not suitable for an organization with autonomous work structures. The informal element of knowledge sharing, including social ties, values and culture of the workplace is according to this argument not fully taken into account. While Poell and van der Krogt's (2003) view can be discussed, there are other theories that are more focused on the social sphere of the workplace.

2.3.3 Communities of practice

Lave and Wenger (1991) propose a view of how continuous learning occurs with involvement in social contexts in so called Communities of Practices (CoPs). Within the workplace this social context could be seen as a profession or a craft that the members have in common. CoPs either develop naturally by themselves through cooperation among different members of the profession from a need of sharing knowledge with each other. CoPs can also be created formally with the outspoken purpose of sharing knowledge among individuals with a shared professional identity. The members of a CoP have differing degrees of legitimacy among members depending on their expertise within the area (Wenger, 2000). Newcomers are socialized into CoPs by learning from the more seasoned members and gain legitimacy. The sharing of knowledge and learning in CoPs is conducted as a continuous process with members being legitimized and marginalized. When the actors become more legitimizing they gain more knowledge and move closer to becoming fully legitimizing members of the CoP. The concept of CoP however implies that there are boundaries that the CoP exists in (Wenger, 2000). If someone outside of these boundaries attempts to communicate with them, their previous knowledge may be so far apart that no understanding can be reached. On the other hand, if two people inside the CoP interact with each other, the knowledge may be so similar that no new knowledge is created. Therefore are interactions between different CoPs at the boundaries important. For example, if two different professions have a common issue, they can meet and discuss the subject from different viewpoints, thus seeing the subject from a new perspective. They meet at the boundary and it drives both CoPs to advance. There is however some limiting factors
to viewing learning and knowledge sharing as only occurring in social contexts such as CoPs (Roberts, 2006). It diminishes the sharing individual attempts to create meaning in situations internally by herself/himself (Sawchuk, 2011). For example, when reading a document and internalizing the knowledge it is not a requirement to discuss and validate the knowledge with a coworker. While it is important to take these limitations into account, the knowledge sharing process in itself is in large an interactive process between different actors, especially when it comes to the younger generations learning from the older and therefore starting off on their journey towards membership in a CoP. The members set up their own personal networks where they create relationships and social connections with other members (Wang & Noe, 2010). When an actor enters a CoP, it does not only enter with knowledge, but also with social ties to other members of the organization as well. The network of social connections can therefore help mitigate structural social gaps in organizations. The different members of a CoP may through each other’s social connections become familiar with divisions of the company (and their knowledge) they otherwise would have never gained access to.

To summarize section 2.3, knowledge management is the term for strategic considerations concerning knowledge sharing as a resource (Davenport & Prusak, 1998), while the SECI model suggests how the knowledge sharing process manifests in organizations (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). However, as the SECI model may not account well for the informal social life of the organization, it is in this thesis complemented with a view on knowledge sharing as a situated participatory social process by means of CoPs (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 2000).

2.4 Activities for Knowledge Sharing in Organizations

In the workplace there are different activities, both formal and informal, where knowledge sharing may occur. These can either have the intended purpose of sharing knowledge, or be an activity where the sharing of knowledge is a side effect (Ipe, 2003). Sharing of knowledge does therefore not happen in a single situation in an organization. It can happen during coffee breaks, in mentorship-programs and when writing and reading documents (Lee & Suliman, 2002).

The kind of knowledge that is being shared also effects how likely it is for the recipient of the knowledge to understand what is being shared. Therefore it is important to understand if the knowledge shared is tacit or explicit (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995), and more specifically if it is human, collective or structured (Delong & Fahey, 2000). The distinction that is made between explicit and tacit knowledge is that explicit knowledge can be articulated and is therefore codifiable. When knowledge is codified it is written down in a book or a database, or recorded with audio or visual aids (Mankin, 2009). This makes it easy for employees to access the knowledge when it is needed. Conversely, tacit knowledge is not codifiable. It is experience based as the individual participates in the activity to gain the knowledge.
Organizations that only use codification strategies like documents and written down routines therefore miss out on the tacit dimension. Organizations must create possibilities for their employees to talk, socialize and collaborate with each other, in what is known as socialization strategies (Davenport & Prusak, 1998).

No matter what activities for knowledge sharing activities are used, Liu, Pucel and Bartlett (2006) argue that there is not one activity that is the solution to knowledge sharing. The activities need to complement each other depending on what knowledge types are shared. Liu et al. (2006) also argue that it is imperative that organizations evaluate the efficiency of their knowledge sharing activities in order to make the most of the sharing opportunities.

2.4.1 Informal encounters

An informal encounter is the most common knowledge sharing activity (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). This refers to the everyday encounters that happen between organizational members. Davenport and Prusak (1998) call these encounters “water cooler talk” and is described as when coworkers spontaneously meet in the workplace. This can many times be seen by management as a time-wasting activity, but it plays a vital role in knowledge sharing. Although much of the communication may be about topics not related to work, these informal meetings make individuals fraternize, form bonds and build trust with each other (von Krogh, 1998). Much of the subjects discussed at informal encounters may very well also be work related. This creates a setting where workers can discuss and share their views on issues in a more honest and relaxed manner. This creates understanding for coworkers’ situation and context, and is of special importance for knowledge sharing between different professions, divisions and teams (Ipe, 2003).

2.4.2 Formal meetings

Formal meetings occur in a “controlled” environment without the organic and spontaneous element that an informal meeting entails (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). During formal meetings members of the organization share knowledge with each other during time that is specifically designed for the interaction of employees. In this setting leaders may stimulate and encourage knowledge sharing between employees (Bartol & Srivastava, 2002). However, the knowledge shared may therefore not be seen as valuable to the receivers of the knowledge, insightful discussions may not develop, and the content of the meeting may be more information than knowledge (Davenport & Prusak, 1998).

2.4.3 Mentorship

An effective way of sharing knowledge from older to younger coworkers is mentoring (Bennett et al., 2012). A mentoring program is a developmentally oriented relationship between a junior and senior colleague (Appelbaum, Serena & Shapiro, 2004). It involves giving support, advice, role-modeling and sharing contacts. It gives
the younger employee the possibility tapping into the older workers tacit knowledge as the socialization happens, and of understanding the organizational culture. Appelbaum et al. (2004) also argue that mentorship programs should be formal and aligned with the overall strategy of the organization in order to ensure longevity. Karkoulian, Halawi and McCarthy (2008) do however argue that informal mentor relationships create a better platform for knowledge sharing than formal programs. The mentor-mentee relationship success is dependent on a good mix of personalities and that the knowledge being shared is of use to the mentee, Karkoulian et al. (2008) argues that it is better for the relationship to form organically and not by order from management.

2.4.4 Job shadowing

Job shadowing is a planned organizational knowledge sharing activity that occurs when an employee closely observes a more experienced employee perform a task in order to learn it (Leonard, Barton & Barton, 2013). Job shadowing may be done as a short term knowledge transfer, or it can be a part of succession planning where the receiver will at one point take over the position of the provider of knowledge (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). Leonard, Barton and Barton (2013) argue that if job shadowing is performed over elongated periods of time even more complex tasks that involve tacit inter-personal contacts may be shared to the receiver. This could for example be to coordinate work as a group leader and gathering the correct data you need for complex decision making. In order for job shadowing to be effective, the receiver must however reflect on what is learned and discuss with the provider, and/or other individuals, to process the gained knowledge.

2.4.5 Working in teams

Much sharing occurs when team members are collaborating on a task within organizational functions or in cross-functional teams, but there is also sharing between different teams in collaboration on broader subjects (Ipe, 2003). One trends of today is a move towards flatter organizations, which makes working in teams a common way of sharing knowledge (Lee & Suliman, 2002). Often the teams handle difficult non-routine tasks where the solutions require creative thinking and collaboration. This requires interaction and socialization between members (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). If coworkers share a practice they will share know-how and tacit knowledge (Brown & Duguid, 2001). Yeager and Nafukho (2012) argue that it is important for organizations to understand how diverse teams can perform together.

2.4.6 Training

Training or competency development is a traditional way of increasing human capital and transferring knowledge between coworkers (Mankin, 2009). It has primarily been seen as a tool for sharing explicit knowledge through lectures and seminars and can be done internally in the organization or externally away from the workplace. The subject of such training may for example be a specific piece of knowledge the
individual need for his/her particular job. Noe (2002) argues that training has more usage than this though. The author writes that training may be even more useful as a tool for understanding the organizations processes, values, systems and to stimulate interdepartmental relationships.

2.4.7 Documents

Documents include anything that is recorded or codified (Lee & Suliman, 2002). Neither time nor location when this material is produced is therefore a factor, since it can be used at another time and location by the receiver. The knowledge is in this activity mainly explicit, as it concerns itself with articulated knowledge. According to Lee and Suliman (2002), the use of pictures and video in multimedia documents enables sharing of knowledge that is of a more tacit nature. There is also critique against using information technology as the primary knowledge sharing method (Hislop, 2002). It is argued that this activity of sharing causes the richness of the knowledge to decrease. Since the knowledge many times is taken out of its specific context it has instead become information that the recipient must revaluate into knowledge.

2.4.8 Alumni-networks

Alumni-networks purpose is to maintain contact with retired employees, so they can be brought in as consultants when needed (Koc-Menard, 2009). This sustains the connection to the experienced workers expertise and know-how. Organizations therefore do not have to direct their attention to the current employees to stimulate knowledge sharing. According to Koc-Menard (2009) it is imperative that the alumni networks participants perceives it as he or she has as much to gain from the network as the organization. It is likely that the retiree has strong social connections within the organizations and creating ways for the alumni to sustain these is a productive way of keeping the retired workers as an involved part of the organization.

2.5 Enabling and Constraining Factors for Knowledge Sharing

There are many factors that may impact knowledge sharing (Ipe, 2003; Lee & Suliman, 2003; Riege, 2005). The following section divides these into three groups: The actors who are involved in knowledge sharing, the organizational environment and the overall societal and economic climate the organization operates in.

2.5.1 Actors

The actors are the individuals who are providing and receiving the knowledge (Lee & Suliman, 2002). This occurrence can be both uni-directional (knowledge being transferred one way), or bi-directional (both gain knowledge from each other at the same time). When actors share, there are several barriers that can potentially hinder the process. Lee and Suliman (2002) identify these in table 2.1 as:
Table 2.1, Actor barriers according to Lee and Suliman (2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication and people skills</th>
<th>Knowledge needs to be communicated in a way that others can understand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absorptive capacity</td>
<td>The receiver of the knowledge must be open to the knowledge being provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation</td>
<td>How different actors are perceived within the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation of importance of knowledge</td>
<td>The receiver must understand why this is important knowledge for his/her position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incompatible personalities</td>
<td>The provider and receiver must get along</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary ethnocentrism</td>
<td>Individuals judge different cohorts from the basis of their own culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status hierarchies</td>
<td>Actors from different parts of the organization communicate differently with each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technophobia</td>
<td>Reluctance to use technology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1 indicates that there are several potential barriers to sharing the knowledge that is dependent on the actors themselves. These are however not the only human factors that previous research has found to impact knowledge sharing.

**Cognitive limitations**

Hinds and Pfeffer (2003) suggest that the cognitive limitations of the actors play a big part in how well the knowledge sharing is carried out. The authors argue that the expert who provides the knowledge may be too far away from the novice cognitively for the two to “talk the same language” and understand each other. It therefore becomes difficult for the expert to articulate the knowledge and make it accessible to the novice at an understandable level. For the expert, this knowledge has become so intrinsic and a second nature that it is problematic to understand the novice’s difficulties. An expert may also remember the own learning experience in an inaccurate way, and therefore not remember the complexity and level of detail that was required to understand the concepts with less experience.

**Trust**

All collaboration between actors is dependent on trust (Tschannen-Moran, 2001). There are two kinds of trust between coworkers according to Abrams, Cross, Lesser and Levin (2003). The first is competence trust that means that the coworker believes the provider has the necessary skills and knowledge to be helpful. The second is benevolence trust, which means to have trust that the other person will not take advantage of you or knowingly cause harm. Riege (2005) describes the role of trust in knowledge sharing in the following way:
Most people are unlikely to share their knowledge without a feeling of trust: Trust that people do not misuse their knowledge, or trust that knowledge is accurate and credible due to the information source. /.../ It is mostly in informal networks that people trust each other, voluntarily share knowledge and insights with each other, and collaborate actively and willingly (p. 25).

Because of this need of informal networks, the actors who share their knowledge gain more trust of each other if they are able to meet and socialize with each other on a regular basis (von Krogh, 1998). Two workers who know each other well and work together daily have likely built more trust with each other than two members of the organization that seldom meet or know each other through reputation (Lee & Suliman, 2002).

Motivation

Another factor that affects knowledge sharing, according to Hinds and Pfeffer (2003), is the motivation for sharing. If the employees do not feel a need to share it will not happen, which is what Hinds and Pfeffer, (2003) refer to as “motivational limitations”. The individuals may have a very high silo mentality and hoard the knowledge. In this sense, knowledge is power and whoever has it is valuable to the organization. This is a fear based perspective from the employee, for whom knowledge sharing seems associated with a risk of replacement (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). Also, individuals may feel a stronger loyalty to their own team or function, than to the overall organization. Also, requesting knowledge can be viewed as acknowledgement of an inferior position, as well as admitting a lack of power. Blackler, Crump and McDonald (1998) acknowledge that since knowledge is situated in a specific context there is a power relationship inherent between the two actors. Reciprocity is also an important motivator in knowledge sharing (Ipe, 2003). The amount of knowledge provided by the actor will be reciprocated in some way, which can either be status or knowledge being shared back to the actor at a later time (Hendriks, 1999). It is therefore a mutual give-and-take of knowledge.

Generational differences

When trying to understand how knowledge sharing from older to younger coworkers is manifested in organizations, it is paramount to also look at what generational differences may exist according to previous research. These views of how individuals from different (and in their own) cohorts behave and what they value may have an impact on the knowledge sharing. Although these differences may be seen as creating stereotypes and run the risk of becoming a “blunt” tool (Kuyken, 2012), they can serve as a reminder that individuals from diverse backgrounds may behave and act differently from each other. McGuire et al. (2007) argue that organizations should strive towards optimization of the differing skills and talents of the various age groups to exploit this diversity for organizational advantage.
According to Lawrence and Pirson (2010) older employees have a closer identity to the organization they are working in, while younger coworkers are less loyal to their employer. Staying too long in an organization is in this viewpoint a failure in the quest for self-realization (Sennett, 2007). This creates a minor rift between the generations. The younger coworkers are seen as impatient by the older coworkers, who in turn seen as rigid and comfortable by the youth. Another difference between generations is, according to Loomis (2000), that the younger generations are better equipped to handle the technology of the modern workplace, because they have grown up in an IT intense environment.

Another characteristic of the younger generation, according to McGuire et al. (2007), is their preference of working in teams. Although individualistic, the generation finds purpose in social collaboration and teamwork. This may also cause a shift in how competency development is viewed according to Manuel (2002). The author argues that younger workers prefer active learning environments over traditional training and that organizations should take this into account as they set up their development programs.

2.5.2 Organizational environment

In this section factors impacting knowledge sharing that pertain to the organizational environment will be presented. Organizations are full of values, missions, practices, priorities and structures that affect the actors’ ability and willingness to share their knowledge (Ipe, 2003).

Organizational structure

An organizational structure consists of activities such as task allocation and coordination of the work with the purpose of directing the organization towards its aims (Pugh, 1990). How the organization is formally structured lays the groundwork for who you meet, and in what way, during your workday. If the work is structured into individuals working on their own specific task without much interaction with others, the knowledge sharing will of course be hampered. If the formal structure however involves teamwork it will provide a better opportunity for knowledge sharing to take place (Probst, Raub, & Rombhardt, 2000). Also, if an organization is hierarchical diversified, employees will work on different levels within the organization. This creates boundaries between the employees that staff in a more horizontal organization would not experience (Jones, 2013).

Time

The availability of time is a prerequisite of knowledge sharing in organizations (O’Dell & Grayson, 1998). Not only should there be time set aside for employees to calmly sit down and share experiences and knowledge in controlled formal activities. There should also be sufficient time for employees to spontaneously ask each other for advice, search in documents for solutions and to casually converse with
individuals from the organization. This creates an opportunity for serendipity to occur (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). This means that an actor discover something useful in the conversation, without expressly looking for that particular insight.

Office layout

The office layout can both hinder and support knowledge sharing (Martens, 2011). If the employees are confined to small cubicles where the chance of meeting colleagues is small, sharing will suffer. Instead, organizations can tailor their available space so that communication happens naturally in the everyday work. This includes creating shared open spaces for employees, and taking the employees out of the closed room to open office landscapes where collaboration is supported.

Management

Management and its support to employees in knowledge sharing is also an important factor to consider (Riege, 2005). Managers set the majority of the agenda of what must be done during the work hours and can therefore guide the work towards an open knowledge sharing environment. Is the time spent searching for knowledge in documents or the conversations with colleagues seen as valuable work or as time wasted? Also, if management does not give direction it can limit knowledge sharing activities. Knowledge sharing is a voluntary task, and an undertaking that may be a new or unusual way of working for some employees. It therefore requires continuous support and clear guidelines from management (Ives, Torrey & Gordon, 2000).

Staff turnover

How long the staff has been in service in the organization also affects knowledge sharing (Sveiby, 2001). If an organization has high turnover in the staff there will be a limited understanding of how the organization has handled present challenges in earlier years and knowing who knows what. This may force the organization to "re-invent the wheel". The context specific tacit knowledge of the long tenured staff is then not present. Trust, openness, reputations, commitment, loyalty and cooperation within the organization are all things that are nurtured in personal relationships over a longer period of time. If high staff turnover is a fact, it will be difficult to create a knowledge sharing culture.

Culture

Every organization has its own unique culture that affects the knowledge sharing (Ipe, 2003). According to McDermott and O’Dell (2001), cultures are so strong that no matter what is done to stimulate knowledge sharing, the culture will be stronger. This is because the culture shapes the perceptions and behaviors of the employees by establishing the context for social interactions within the organization (DeLong & Fahey, 2000). It dictates how individuals interact with each other and groups on other levels of the organization, as well as how mistakes are viewed. A knowledge sharing culture needs to be open to experiments and failures. Culture is also reflected in the
norms and values of the organization (DeLong & Fahey, 2000). These in turn shape how practices are carried out. Schein (1985) describes that values and norms of the organizational culture shape: "how members of a group take an action, how they determine what is relevant information, and when they had enough of it, to determine whether to act and what to do” (p.89). It is however also important to remember that there may be subcultures within organizations with their own values and norms (Pentland, 1995).

2.5.3 Societal climate

An organization does not exist in a vacuum. It is affected by the societal climate in which it resides. As the outside climate impact the business situation, it also impacts the knowledge sharing (Lee & Suliman, 2002). If the economic condition in the country or region is unstable, it leads to an unstable situation for organizations as well. This may cause employees to fear for losing their job. In this case the knowledge they possess becomes one of their biggest individual resources. An employee in this situation may become reluctant to sharing the knowledge (Bonaventura, 1997). The overall societal culture may also have an impact on knowledge sharing (Michailova & Hutchings, 2006). In a more collectively oriented context the sharing of knowledge may be second nature, since it is a way of ensuring that the collective will perform at an optimal level. In a more individualistically oriented culture this may not come as natural.

Another impact the overall societal climate can have is a change in demographics (DeLong, 2004). When one group recedes or grows this causes changes in the job market, what expertise is available and diversity factors that needs to be taken into account. A shift in age generations is one examples of this as it alters the dynamic of the workplace and much experience walk out the door into retirement. The actors remaining on the job market may then not meet the needs of the employers, or there will be a lack of qualified personnel where the desired knowledge is scarce.

2.6 Summary and Model of the Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, previous theory and research has been presented, defining types of knowledge being shared, how it is shared, as well as what factors influence the knowledge sharing process. To provide an overview of the concepts and areas that have been discussed, this thesis presents a framework of knowledge sharing (figure 2.4). Knowledge is shared between (at least) two actors within a knowledge sharing activity, and the sharing is also impacted by the organizational environment and societal climate.
Figure 2.4, Framework of knowledge sharing. Inspired by Lee and Suliman (2002)

This framework is central to this thesis, because it is used as the analytical framework for the empirical data, which means the results in chapter 4 are categorized from this framework. All of these factors are interrelated. For example, economic changes in the market may lead to staff turnover, which in turn may affect the relationships of the coworkers and how the knowledge sharing activities are carried out. It is therefore a complex relationship. So although this thesis analyzes these factors independently, they are codependent.
3. METHOD

This chapter describes the case study approach, design and methods of data collection and how data was analyzed.

3.1 A Qualitative Multiple Case Study Approach

In this thesis a multiple case study approach was taken (Yin, 2009). A case study is defined by Merriam (1994) as an intense description and analysis of a single or multiple phenomenons or units. In this thesis the studied phenomenon was knowledge sharing in the generational shift, and was researched in multiple organizational contexts. Case studies have the ability to explore situations from different perspectives to understand not only what is happening, but why and how it came to be. Because the context of the organization is of central importance when studying knowledge sharing (Ipe, 2003; Lee & Suliman, 2002; Riege, 2005), it was problematic to elect one definite case that could provide a sufficient overview of the subject. Selecting multiple cases also enabled the research to make comparisons not only within an organization, but also between different organizations (Yin, 2009).

A qualitative methodology to the multiple case study approach was chosen. In qualitative research the researcher takes an interpreting role with a focus on understanding the social realities of agents (Bryman, 2011). A qualitative methodology means that a different set of subjective realities, which instead of being measured (as a quantitative method would entail) were interpreted by the researcher. It can be argued that the researcher is not interpreting the real world, but how it is understood and socially constructed by humans, and the world is therefore not viewed as an objective entity (Moses & Knutsen, 2007). It is imperative to interpret the agents from their own social sphere and gain an in depth understanding of their situation. The qualitative, interpreting methodology was chosen because the goal was to gain in depth understanding of how the respondents viewed and felt about knowledge sharing across generations, as well as how organizations were handling those issues. It enabled the researcher to ask in depth questions to the respondents and interpret the data that went beyond the written or spoken word, in order to understand the underlying factors and processes that impact the knowledge sharing. As this thesis aimed to describe and explain the studied subject, it is a descriptive and non-experimental case study (Merriam, 1994). There was no way to isolate certain variables and/or control the environment of the cases, such as in a laboratory setting.

An abductive research strategy was selected in order to alternate between theory and data (Bryman, 2011). The theory and results have therefore been created in interplay between each other, which allowed the two chapters to complement each other’s content. First, a literature review of knowledge sharing within the generational shift was carried out, in order to understand the dynamics of the subject. This provided the groundwork for what the data collection methods are theoretically based on. As the data was collected it became clear the theoretical framework was limited in certain areas that the data emphasized. The theoretical framework was therefore continuously
amended throughout the process of this thesis. In an abductive research strategy, the researcher takes an active and participatory approach to the data collection, which means the data may be affected by the researcher (Bryman, 2011). It is therefore of the essence that the researcher understands this dynamic, reflect on how it affects the research and make decisions that make sure the reliability of the research remains (Yin, 2009). Since the studied phenomenon of knowledge sharing within the generational shift involved many factors, it was necessary to have an open view on what aspects the data collection method would emphasize. The choice of an abductive research strategy meant that neither of the most common research strategies, deduction and induction (Bryman, 2011), was used. Since no hypotheses or theory were being tested in this study, a deductive research method was not chosen. It was also not possible to approach this subject without prior knowledge of relevant theory an inductive research strategy was not fitting either (Merriam, 1994).

Several different data collection methods are used in order to triangulate the data (Yin, 2009), which in this thesis is in the form of document analysis, interviews with managers and employees, focus interviews with employees, as well as statistics. This means that the phenomenon is not explored from a single set of data collection method, but instead the different methods are analyzed together (Yin, 2009). The method of triangulation enables the researcher to view the research from varying perspectives and thus make the empirical data on the same phenomenon richer. If the result is the same using different methods of research one can be more certain of the validity of the results (Merriam, 1994).

3.2 Selection of Cases and Respondents

In the selection of the different case studies the aim was to have a wide difference of the organizational contexts and the type of work being done. Since these contextual differences will impact the knowledge sharing between generations this gives the opportunity to understand this subject on a broader scale. According to Yin (2009) the cases in this method of research should be chosen based on where you can get the best access to conduct your data collection methods. If there are several possible contexts that provide this possibility, the case that highlights the questions of the researches aim should be chosen. Therefore, three organizations were selected that allowed the thesis to do this. The three different cases were chosen because they complemented each other in the nature of the organizations and the type of occupations (with their certain knowledge-base) that could be studied. This provided an overview of the studied phenomenon as a whole.

The three selected organizations were in this thesis called The Municipality, The School and The Manufacturer. The cases provided the opportunity to examine engineers within a manufacturing company, specialized functions within a municipality administration as well as teachers in a primary school. All three cases were therefore knowledge intensive and in varying contexts. No organization formally asked to be anonymous, but in order for the reader to maintain an objective
view on the organizations the researcher elected to keep the organizational identities unspecified. Having previous knowledge of a studied organization can impact how results are interpreted by the reader (Bryman, 2011). Two of the chosen cases were however parts of local municipalities, which at a first glance provide similar contexts. The organizations are large, so one division or function was selected for the cases. These two cases then greatly varied in that one is a school and the other a municipality administration. Within the manufacturer, the research and development (R&D) department was chosen.

Seven respondents from each case were selected to participate in the study. The respondents were selected by help of different contacts within the organizations such as HR personnel and managers. The criteria of the selection of the respondents required that three were older employees (60 years or older), three were younger employees (up to 35 years old) and one respondent had a managerial position. The managers were required to have insights into how the generational shift and knowledge sharing affected the relevant case. One younger and one older respondent in each case were further selected for a pair interview, so they were required to be familiar with each other within their roles as employees.

3.3 Data Collection Methods and Procedure

In this study four different research methods were used: Semi-structured interviews with employees, open focus interviews with pairs of workers (one older and one younger), document analysis and statistics.

3.3.1 Individual semi-structured interviews

The primary data collection method was semi-structured qualitative interviews with employees. In a qualitative interview the empirical data is constructed by the interviewer and the respondent in collaboration (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The researcher seeks to interpret and understand phenomena from the reality of the respondent. The purpose is to identify and explore known and unknown occurrences, attributes and meanings. It can be argued that the empirical data is a social construction that is born in the conversation. A semi-structured interview is not a closed form, and neither is it an everyday conversation. It is instead centered around themes where the interviewer has suggested questions, but based on the answers of the respondents the direction of the questions can develop in different ways. It is a guided conversation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Three different qualitative semi-structured interview guides were used. One guide each for younger employees, older employees and managers. The interview guides were different because each of these three groups had different roles in the research. The younger employees were viewed as the receiving actor of knowledge and the older employee as the provider of knowledge, in order to explore how younger employees can learn from older to bridge knowledge gaps. The possibility of the roles being reversed and that older employees can learn from younger is also possible (Lee
& Suliman, 2002) and was therefore incorporated into the guide, but the overall focus of the interviews are on the aforementioned dynamic. The managers’ interview guide (see Appendix 1) was shorter and filled the purpose of understanding the organizations situation and challenges within the generational shift. The managerial interview was also used as empirical data. The reason for this was to compare the perception of management with the experiences and opinions of the employees. This provided different perspectives on knowledge sharing over generations and its dynamics (Yin, 2009). The guides for younger and older employees respectively consisted of 33 questions (see Appendix 2 and 3) and the guide for managers contained 17 questions. The themes in the interviews were background, work, learning and knowledge, and enablers/barriers. The interview guides consisted of questions which were open ended to create expansive answers. The interviewer was however not restricted to the guide and had the possibility of asking follow up questions if deemed necessary.

In total, 15 individual interviews were conducted. Four employees were interviewed individually in each case study, divided into two younger employees and two older employees. One manager was interviewed per case. Six of 15 respondents were female and proportionally spread out over the three cases. The average age of the younger respondents was 30 years, while the average age for the older respondents was 64 years. The interviews were conducted at the respondents’ workplace and, at the majority of the occasions, in the respondents own office. The three managerial interviews lasted on average 36 minutes. The interviews with young and old workers lasted on average 53 minutes, with the longest one being 69 minutes and the shortest 36 minutes.

### 3.3.2 Focus interviews in pairs

Focus interviews in pairs of one older and one younger worker were used. These interviews had similarities with focus groups. Traditionally, focus groups use more members than two participants (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999). As these interviews lacked the appropriate number of people to be a focus group, it was referred to as focus interviews. The interviews were open ended and the topics discussed were guided by where the respondent answers led it to (see Appendix 4). The focus interviews were carried out after the individual interviews. This had the purpose of providing the researcher with an understanding of the organizational context, and could therefore facilitate in the open ended discussions of the focus interviews. Subjects that had been of central importance in the individual interviews were however highlighted by the researcher and discussed.

Michell (1999) writes that opinions can differ when a respondent is alone with the interviewer, as opposed to there being more respondents at the same time. In a group setting where the respondents are familiar with each other the respondents tend to take on the role of the collective and display what is accepted within the organization. If the interviews and focus groups display similar results it is likely the focus group
participant feels comfortable in that setting to display their opinions. This indicates trust between the participants (Michell, 1999). Therefore, if the results from the individual interviews and focus interview vary, it could indicate a lack of trust between organizational members. The participants were provided with pen and paper at the start of the interview and on a few topics asked to first individually list their opinions on the subject. The purpose was to make sure both participants' opinions were stated and expressed. Participants can be shy or passive and defer to the other participant (Michell, 1999). This created designed opportunities for both participants to be heard. During the focus interview the researcher also highlighted themes and factors that were expressed by the respondents by listing them on a whiteboard. At the end of the focus interview the researcher and participants discussed the themes and factors that had been mentioned during the session and how they interlinked. The participants also had the possibility to look at these during the focus interview and connect the theme currently being discussed to the highlighted themes on the whiteboard.

One focus interview was supposed to be carried out in every case, but in one of the cases (the manufacturer) this was not possible to be accommodated. On average the focus interview took 65 minutes to accomplish. In both cases the two respondents worked together and knew each other beforehand. On average the younger respondents were 32 years old, and the older respondents 62 years. One of the younger respondents was however slightly older than the limit of 35 years. This respondent was however new to the occupation and had therefore a beginners perspective on the workplace.

3.3.3 Document analysis

For the document analysis, documents that were perceived as having relevance to knowledge sharing and the generational shifts were requested to be sent to the researcher from the organizations. Suggested were guidelines and policies for human resource management, staff training and competency development, communication, age management and retirement. The documents that were most relevant to the aim of the study were chosen. In two cases official material acquired from the organizations’ webpage was used. Two documents per case were selected in a total of six documents in the entire thesis. The documents were chosen in order to complement one another, in order to provide an overview of what the organization formally tries to accomplish on the subject, as well as how it is written about. The interviews could not provide a sufficient representation of the formal goals of the organization. In the interviews the researcher may ask for what the official directions are on for example competency development, but it will be distorted by the respondents own opinions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In the interviews it was of particular difficulty for the respondents to explain how they perceived the values and culture of the organization. Therefore at least one document about organizational values was chosen per case. This also provided the researcher with a better understanding of the organizations, their missions and culture. For the municipality, the analyzed documents were the staff
policy and the communication policy of the municipality. In the school the immediate organization did not have these kinds of documents of their own, but relied on the governing municipality's guidelines for these areas (the school was located in a different municipality than the case “the municipality”). Therefore the chosen documents were the staff policy and communication policy for the municipality the school resided in. In both of these cases these two kinds of documents were chosen because they provided an overview on the values of the organization, and how the staff is formally supposed to act and communicate with each other. This has been covered in section 2.5.2 as a possible enabling or constraining factor of knowledge sharing. In the case of the manufacturer, the first chosen document was preparations for and guidelines to the organization’s yearly developmental conversations between managers and employees. This is a crucial part of the organization’s competency development strategy. The second document was a brochure on the organization’s production system where the values of the company were thoroughly presented.

3.3.4 Statistics
Statistics were used in this thesis to provide insight into how the contexts of the organizations were affected by the generational shift and trends in society. The statistics consisted of official data from the Statistical central bureau of Sweden, Swedish commission on the future, Swedish governmental reports on the future job market and a report from a consultant agency. The statistics are not a data collection method in the way a quantitative data collection method would entail (Bryman, 2011). This thesis has not contributed to the creation of these statistics, but merely uses them as external sources, with the purpose of adding to the description of the cases.

3.3.5 Summary of the data collection methods
In table 3.1 the data collection methods are summarized and presented. The respondents of the two different kinds of interviews are listed. As the focus interview had two respondents in one interview, there are more respondents than interviews.

Table 3.1, Summary of the data collection methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Document analysis</th>
<th>Interview type</th>
<th>Respondent type</th>
<th>Respondents amount</th>
<th>Interviews amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Municipality</td>
<td>Staff policy</td>
<td>Semi-structured individual interview</td>
<td>younger</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication policy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>older</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>manager</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td>younger</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>older</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Municipality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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3.4 Data Analysis

When the 17 interviews had been conducted they were transcribed by the researcher. Pauses, laughs and stutters were noted when it was deemed necessary by the researcher in order to understand the situation and interaction between the researcher and the respondent.

The transcribed interviews were then read through to create an overview of the prevalent themes of the data. As the analytical process proceeded it became evident that there were aspects of certain themes that had not been taken into consideration in the theoretical framework. Therefore the theoretical framework was adjusted, in accordance with the abductive research strategy (Bryman, 2011), by the adding and removal of theories and previous research during the analytical procedure. The central themes (knowledge shared, activities for knowledge sharing, and the constraining or enabling factors of actors, organizational environment and societal climate) were created from this, and became figure 2.4, which was used as the analytical framework for the data.

The interviews were then once again read, but this time sections from the interviews were filed under the concerning theme. This filing took place in separate documents for each data collection method, and separately for each of the three cases. In order to keep track of which respondent had answered in which way, or which document contained which statement, color coding was used. This ensured the analytical
process took each separate respondent and document into consideration. Answers and
text that were not deemed relevant to the subject of study were not filed as that
particular empirical data went outside this thesis’s aim. All relevant data was
therefore filed in the respective themes. This was done for three of the different
empirical methods. The primary data collection method, the semi-structured
individual interviews, provided the most data material. The data from this method
was however derived from largely predetermined questions, which were based on
previous research and theories. The focus interviews did not have fixed questions in
the same way, as to enable new themes to be brought up by the respondents. These
two data collection methods however only took respondents experiences and opinions
into consideration. To complement this, the document analysis focused on what the
documents formally stated about the varying themes. These three data collection
methods analyzed together could therefore make up for each other’s limitations. This
also enabled the research to triangulate the data (Yin, 2009), as knowledge sharing
was analyzed collaboratively from different perspectives, in a comprehensive manner.
Yin (2009) writes that if different data collection methods are used, but each are used
to research one aspect of the case, triangulation has not occurred. Therefore the data
collection methods in this research used the same analytical model, to ensure that
knowledge sharing was analyzed from the same basis in every data collection
method.

To create categories and find patterns is a common procedure in case study research
(Yin, 2009). The analyzed data was searched for patterns, similarities and differences,
in order to summarize what the data had asserted about the themes. These patterns are
what the result chapter consists of. In the results, each case is presented separately.
This way a within-case analysis was made in each case (Yin, 2009). This enabled a
comprehensive view of how knowledge sharing across generations was carried out in
each organization, as well as what factors were affecting the organization. Quotes
were chosen and used to accentuate aspects of the research that were prevalent in the
respondent answers. The respondents’ quotes carry an identifying number, to show
which respondent gave which answer. This ensured that no individual respondent’s
opinion went unheeded. As the categories were formed the researcher critically
reflected on the themes and if these were too similar. If the patterns were deemed to
be too similar, the themes were merged. All of the themes interact and affect the
others, which was also taken into account. Statistics from external sources were also
added to the research, in order to provide a better contextual perspective for each
case.

When the within-case analyses were completed, the three cases were in this chapter
presented together under each question, in order to analyze between the cases and
compare them. Yin (2009) refers to this as a cross-case analysis and argues that this
improves the multiple case study design’s construct validity as the phenomenon is
researched in different contexts, but interpreted as one phenomenon.
The results of the thesis were then analyzed together with the theoretical framework in order to create the discussion chapter. The discussion was divided into the three questions this thesis endeavors to answer.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

In this study the researcher has taken part of the Swedish Research Councils ethical principles (Vetenskapsrådet, 2011) to consider the role of the respondents as well as the researchers role and responsibilities. There are four ethical requirements in research: The information requirement, which means to inform the partaker of the researches purpose and that they have the option to end the interview if they want to. The consent requirement that demands that the partakers in the research must give their approval to participate in the study. The confidentiality requirement, that personal records and data from the interviews are kept confidential. The usage requirement that stresses that the data created only is to be used for the research in question.

The contacts within the organizations that aided in setting up the interviews know who were interviewed. Although the researcher trusts these individuals have their own agendas, there is a risk in confidentiality of the research. The respondents’ identities are however hidden in the results. The quotes originating from the specific participants’ of the focus interviews have however been revealed in the result. It was deemed necessary to indicate from which data collection method the quotes originated from.

All interviews have been recorded and transcribed, but it is only the researcher who has had access to the material throughout the research process. At the beginning of interviews the researcher, as well as the purpose of the thesis, was presented. The respondents were informed of how the interview would be conducted, that all names would be confidential, that participation was voluntary and that the interview could be stopped whenever the respondent wanted it to. Respondents were also informed that quotes could occur in the finished study, but that they would be confidential and in English. All respondents gave their consent to participate.

3.6 Critical Reflection of the Method

The method of this research is a qualitative multiple case study (Yin, 2009) as the purpose has been to gain an in-depth perspective into knowledge sharing in the generational shift in three different cases. The purpose of the case study design was to produce a comprehensive overview over a wide array of components that affect this phenomenon. The methodological base of this study has served the thesis well in that it allowed me as a researcher to get close to the studied phenomenon and describe the multifaceted processes, factors and activities that knowledge sharing entails. This has been done instead of gathering more quantifiable data, which would have provided a shallow view of the studied phenomenon, and not allow me to dig deeper.
One of the criteria for judging the quality of case study designs is internal validity. Yin (2009) describes internal validity as: “...mainly a concern for explanatory case studies, when an investigator is trying to explain how and why event \( x \) led to event \( y \)” (p. 42). This is not what is being sought in this research as the aim is to explore knowledge sharing and not explain how variables causally relate. The bigger issue in case studies involving internal validity is then the inferences made by the researcher when the actions have not been fully observed. The conclusions made should be reached considering other possible explanations and by displaying the process of how these inferences were reached. Yin (2009) states that this is difficult to achieve in case studies as researchers own predispositions come into play. I have been aware of this dilemma and strived towards supplying an unbiased perspective. One way of mitigating this problem could have been to include observations as a data collection method. While it would have been beneficial to observe the knowledge sharing activities to add yet another dimension to the research this was not possible to do in these cases. If the possibility had presented itself to conduct observation it is also important to understand that I as a researcher would have affected the situation by my presence. What I would have observed may not have been a depiction of what usually occur in these activities (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

The abductive research strategy has also been beneficial. It has allowed me to find relevant theories on the subject throughout the process. It has provided a flexibility and dynamism to the research process that has lifted both my own understanding of knowledge sharing and the ability to go deeper into the phenomenon. However, an abductive strategy also has its downsides. There is no way of entering this kind of thesis without your own cognitive dispositions and values that will affect what is emphasized and focused on (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This is however a fact I am aware of. During the entire process I have reflected on my own role and how I affect this research. I have for example tried to choose theories that are heavily cited in the research community and during the interviews I was aware of how the data collection methods could allow me to lead the respondent away from, or into, subjects by imposing my own viewpoints. Whether or not I succeeded in this is difficult to conclude, but I have acted to mitigate these dilemmas and attempted to outline a transparent research process. If this transparency can be achieved the study gains reliability according to Yin (2009). If the study would be replicated again the same kind of results would be attained, supporting the transparency of the research.

Another challenging aspect of the thesis was to select what to include in the results. 17 interviews bring a lot of different opinions and perspective, which also necessarily concerns the studies phenomenon. I as the researcher has therefore had to discriminate and select what was deemed to be relevant and what to emphasis (Merriam, 1994). I have endeavored to base this on the empirical results and its connection to the theoretical framework, and exclude my own values and predispositions.
When selecting which organizations to do this study with, it was strived to make the best mix possible. The goal was to have three different organizational contexts to provide the study with a width. In the end the three organizations that had an interest and possibility to participate were the ones presented in this study. Two of them were however part of local government and this can be argued to limit the desired width of the thesis. The studied parts of the organizations were however distinctly different from one another. One is a central administrative function and the other a primary school. Both may be publicly run entities, but their tasks and missions are dissimilar.

The case of the municipality spans over different functions within the organization. It is clear that the conditions are not the same in every function and this made it trying to analyze the knowledge sharing of the organization. It was manifested a little differently in all functions and this should be taken into account when understanding the dynamics of knowledge sharing in the municipality. All of the cases are also either in, or part of, larger organizations. Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are therefore not represented, which means this thesis may not be generalized to this sort of organization. When discussing generalizability in case studies it can get problematic as the cases are designed to only research the concerned context. When generalizing the results from this thesis the context must be taken in consideration in order to determine the applicability. Yin (2009) refer to this as external validity and writes that studies that have a multiple case design have more of this. The cases can then complement each other and make it more likely to be transferrable to a new context.

The selection of the respondents was made by contacts within the organizations. They were given specifications of what age the respondent should have and then found candidates for participation. I then set up the time for interview with the respondents myself, or I was provided with a schedule for when to meet the respondents by the contact. This means that this thesis does not carry out full confidentiality due to the contacts knowing the identification of the respondents (Vetenskapsrådet, 2011). The respondents did however enter the interview situation knowing this and no one raised any concern of the issue.

In this thesis multiple sources of data collection was used in order to triangulate the results (Merriam, 1994). The two different interviews and the document analysis were chosen due to their ability to make up for each other’s shortcomings. The primary data source, the semi-structured interviews with guided subjects, gave a useful view of how the individuals viewed knowledge sharing between generations. The statistics provided information essential to understanding the context of the cases.

It strengthened the research to interview both older and younger respondents, as it gave a voice to both sides of this knowledge sharing relationship. It was also useful to get the managers input and information to set up the frame of the cases. I could however discern moments when the respondents were confused by the verbal concepts used in the study. When this happened I was careful to explain what I
meant. Otherwise the respondent would have answered the questions with the wrong conceptual context in mind. Every time I noticed this occurring, we were able to arrive at an understanding after a short discussion. If this would not have been done the reliability of the research would have been impacted as the research no longer would study the stated subject (Yin, 2009).

The focus interviews were therefore allowed to develop in different ways so to not be locked into the factors I myself had chosen to ask questions about. I believe this supplied a different dynamic in the research. It is however important to note that not many new angles on the studied subject was provided by this data collection method, and that the interview concerned the areas already discussed in the individual interviews. I would also have preferred to make these focus interviews into full focus groups by adding more respondents (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999). It would hopefully have created even more discussion and new viewpoints on the phenomenon. It was however not possible to gather this amount of respondent at one location at same time and the design was amended. The manufacturer did lack a focus interview due to a lack of available respondents. This is has to be considered a negative for the study that the three cases did then not have the exact same conditions. When reading the case of the manufacturer this should be taken into consideration. One of the younger respondent in the pair interviews was also slightly older than 35 years old. This is however not deemed as a large concern as the respondent had only joined the occupation recently and was going through the same struggles as younger counterparts who also just started.

The document analysis filled the purpose of analyzing what the organization formally valued and stated on areas concerning knowledge sharing in the generational shift. By analyzing these three methods together it provided an integrated triangulated view. The result was a plethora of factors, activities and types of knowledge that was being shared. Seeing the studied subject from different angles with differing data collection methods give the thesis construct validity according to Yin (2009). If only one source of data would have been used there would have been risk of missing dimensions and describing an incomplete picture of the cases. With different generations and managers interviewed and four different data collection methods used I am of the opinion that there are ample sources to argue this thesis has construct validity. A fourth data collection method was also added in statistics. When writing the case explanations I deemed it necessary to explain the context of the organizations, and therefore strived to implement statistics to supply a more nuanced view. The only place where this could be inserted was in the case descriptions, and as these case descriptions were presented as empirical data the statistics became a data collection method. Although it may be unusual to see external statistics in a result chapter, I am of the opinion that it adds an important dimension to the totality of the case. A case study strives to research the cases from different perspectives (Yin, 2009) and this is precisely what the statistics contribute with. I was careful to only add statistics from official documents that I deemed to be reliable sources.
When the interviews had been transcribed all relevant quotes were categorized. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) writes that it is problematic to just look at the written word when analyzing transcribed interviews, and that the statements must be interpreted in their context. Therefore all interviews where color-coded to distinguish with ease which respondent had made which statements. More often than not, the entire segment of the interview, including my questions, was inserted into the categorization to also provide this contextualization.

The quotes that have been chosen in the result have been done so in order to emphasize and complement certain vital features of the results. I have strived to have a balanced distribution among the respondents to make sure not just one opinion was heard most. The quotes from the focus interviews are also explicitly stated to be from that data collection method, so the reader can see which method lead to which result.
4. RESULTS & ANALYSIS

In the following chapter the results for each case will be presented as within-case analyses. Each section starts off by presenting the case in question, providing a brief overview of how these organizations work and how they are affected by the generational shift. These case presentations are based on interviews with managers within the organizations and statistics from external sources. This is followed by a presentation of the analyzed data from the documents, individual interviews and focus interviews. These are constructed from the themes presented in theoretical framework in figure 2.4. The chapter concludes with a summary of the results.

4.1 The Municipality

The organization serves as the local government for a municipality. In total the municipality had, as of 2013, about 150 000 inhabitants (SCBa, 2013). As an employer the municipality has in total around 8000 employees spread over the many duties of a local government such as elder care, social services, culture and leisure, education and child care. At the highest level of the municipality is the municipal assembly (kommunfullmäktige). It is elected by the citizens and acts as the local legislative parliament. Hierarchically beneath the municipal council is the municipal executive committee (kommunstyrelse) that is appointed by the assembly. It has the authority and responsibility of the daily administration of the municipality. It is within the administration (förvaltning) of the municipal executive committee that this study takes place.

The interviewed manager estimates that the administration has around 160 employees. The administration coordinates, develops and supports the other divisions in the municipality. The responsibilities include functions like: Labor law and negotiations, human resources, communications, economy services, city archives, statistics and inquiry, and the guardian unit. The employees of the administration are in a large part knowledge workers and specialists such as lawyers, accountants, personnel strategists and strategic security officers. Therefore, many employees are the only one with their specific work tasks in their function. However, cooperation between the different functions of the administration exists in projects and boundary crossing areas where different specialized competencies are required. The different functions are placed in varying parts of municipal buildings and the interviewed respondents are therefore not always situated at the same workplace.

The manager describes that there every month is a staff meeting where everyone in the administration is supposed to attend. The employees are given information about what all the different divisions are doing. Every division also has a more frequent workplace meeting called APT (Arbetsplatsträff). This is a discussion forum for each division and the manager indicates that information and knowledge sharing occurs at these meetings. There are few general competency developments for the entire staff, but the individuals receive specific training dependent on their needs and specialized position. The manager is hopeful that the employees share the knowledge they have
gained from competency development activities and training with their coworkers at the APTs. But the manager does not know if that actually happens at the APTs. The manager view is that knowledge transfer is something that occurs frequently between employees at the administration. Because of the specialized and qualified nature of the job the employees are happy in their roles and proud of their knowledge, which leads them to share. The manager is of the opinion that sharing occurs frequently by older employees, as they will be leaving the organization shortly and are therefore in no way threatened by making their knowledge expandable and losing their position.

A municipality of this size does not enter the shift with as bad of a prognosis as more rural municipalities (Blix, 2013) and the number of inhabitants is ascending (SCB, 2013a). This does however not mean that there are no issues ahead for the municipality. The manager mention that the average age of the administration is relatively high at above 50 years, but the last few years the administration has been able to employ a handful of individuals less than 30 years of age. The manager also indicates that when open positions are advertised they receive a good amount of interest, leaving the manager hopeful for the future supply of competence. There is no outspoken plan about how to handle the generational shift, but for key positions the goal is for the successor to be employed with about a nine month period of working side by side with the employee that is leaving. This does however not always happen due to budgetary constraints. The view of the manager is that this needs to be a standard practice. The manager argues that the budgetary problems are strictly short term, and that the gains of an effective transfer of the position carries long term gains that greatly outweighs the short term negatives.

4.1.1 Knowledge shared

In the analyzed documents it is clear that ideas and innovation is a desired outcome of the work in the municipality. It is written that the organization shall utilize the employees’ creativity by incorporation structures that bring these abilities out. It puts a focus on the non-routine work of the organization and how important it is for them to share this kind of knowledge.

The knowledge that is mostly mentioned in the individual interviews as being shared is often referred to as the older workers specialist knowledge. The young respondents all describe how they have to listen to the older more experienced employees to understand how they view complex situations that arise in everyday situations in their occupation. The younger respondents see the older employees as pools of great specialist tacit knowledge in the specific field in question.

… it is a great advantage to have the people that have worked for a long time in the organization and who know their thing. Very knowledgeable, vast experience and know how things have changed over time. (Young respondent 1)

The older respondents in the individual interviews perceive their experience as of great importance, but also that the more updated knowledge the younger coworkers
contribute is important as well. Much of the administration’s duties consist of routines that have to be carried out on a regular basis. These can be written down and transferred explicitly from one co-worker to others. However, since many older workers have resided in the organization for such a long time, they have taken care of certain routines all by themselves. This is being recognized by management. A few respondents mention that they have coworkers that are retiring soon, and therefore are formally sharing knowledge about routines of certain systems or tools to the other employees. Older respondents also mention the importance to learn the unwritten rules and norms of the workplace. It is not only about having the specific personal knowledge, but also to know which channels to go through to get your opinions heard and to know how to handle certain people and social settings. This social knowledge is reported to have taken years for the older employees to master and is a big reason they themselves get many things done in their daily work.

If there aren’t written routines, there are silent routines here that you still know. You get asked: “Where should this be sent? Who should I talk to about this?” And of course, if you just briefly entered an organization there is no way of knowing how praxis works. (Older respondent 2)

Older respondents also have the impression that the younger employees want to change formal routines because they can see a more effective way of carrying out a task. In their view, what the young employee then do not see are the unwritten underlying structures that will then also be changed. Therefore the older respondents perceive it as important for younger employees to sit back and learn from the experience and to understand the consequences before rushing ahead, and that the older employees attempt to provide these insights. The views provided in the focus interviews mirror these views to a great extent. The young respondent indicates it is a necessity to soak up as much of this expertise as possible during the workday. The older coworkers experience and specialist knowledge is seen as a very important part of the knowledge in the organization. It is indicated by both respondents that much of their work is based on routines, and on learning the proper way of following these. Therefore, years of experience can aid in carrying out the routines in a correct and fast way. The younger participant in the focus interview however indicates that the younger workers can bring something to the table as well, as they are not stuck in the old patterns, and can see new and more effective ways of doing things.

4.1.2 Activities for knowledge sharing

In the communications policy of the municipality there are several internal communication channels listed and these are as follows: Managers, the personal meeting (for example APT and other meetings), the organizations internal web functions and the staff paper. This displays an awareness of that there are several different ways to spread and communicate information and knowledge to the employees. The staff policy describe that the municipality has a structured way of supplying competency development to all levels of the organization and that the objectives and results will be followed up.
The view of the respondents on formal meetings and if they contain knowledge sharing does not have a unison perception in the individuals interviews. This is likely because they are all from different functions within the administration and every one of these seems to have its own way of conducting meetings. At the weekly or bi-weekly APT meetings the subjects that are brought up are by their character partly information, as for example how the new move of locales will be carried out. But a couple of the respondents indicate that there is plenty of discussion at these meetings as well, and that these meetings provide a useful way of sharing knowledge and understanding each other’s views. In the focus interview the two respondents underline that the corridor where they work is essential to knowledge sharing. They bump into each other there and ask questions that are generally answered quickly. This is reported to happen frequently and it is also indicated by a young respondent in the individual interviews that this is a good way of gaining knowledge fast. In the focus interview it is also reported that the formal meetings are used as good arenas for discussion. The young participant describe that there is a lot of focus on informing about what is happening at the workplace at these meetings. Another of the young respondents in the individual interview does indicate that the meetings (mainly the informal, but also the formal) are the biggest reason that the knowledge transfer works as good as it does. Coworkers constantly talk and share ideas and thoughts with each other, so this is without a doubt where most of the knowledge transfer occurs according to this respondent.

When asked if knowledge sharing occurs in the break room respondents in general remark that work is discussed to some extent but that the topics mainly are of a more social character. One older respondent viewed coffee breaks as a good way to start getting information about a subject, but that this is done more in connection with the actual task it is concerning. This respondent however explicitly mentions that this should not be viewed as knowledge sharing. One of the younger respondents describe that when informally meeting individuals from other functions, the talking rarely concerns work, since they do not have much in common in their respective work. To contrast this, an older respondent perceive that actors having different organizational backgrounds is a big plus in formal meetings about specific issues. That it is a real bonus to get another expert perspective from a new angle and that this is helpful in gaining new knowledge. A few respondents also bring up examples of interdivisonal groups they have been or are part of. It is seen as rewarding to experience. Lawyers, security coordinators and HR staff have different takes on the same subject and these groups are seen as good ways of gaining insights into others work and expertise. A couple of statements were however made indicating that the different functions could be better integrated to further enhance collaborations.

There is some indication that job shadowing is occurring at the municipality, as one of the young respondents mentioned that it will happen soon involving one of the retiring coworkers. The newly employed will at that time work for two months with the retiring employee to learn the job. The other young respondent also mention that
the introduction period contained a shorter period of job shadowing, but that they had such different work styles it didn't help much. This is a practice that many respondents would like to see more of however.

To have the ability to work next to each other and really exchange experiences and teach in form of experiences, I think that would really further the organization long term. (Older respondent 1)

There also seem to be different kinds of training where knowledge sharing occurs within the organization. One of the younger respondents mentions their function has some kind of training every week. These can be traditional lectures or more discussion based seminars. There is also an introduction program for new employees and one of the younger respondent describes it as observing different functions and divisions, learning what they are doing and understanding how the municipality is organized. The respondent indicates it was a good way of learning who to ask about which areas. The respondent however believes it would have been better to stay a little bit longer in certain functions and have a contact person, in order to understand how the work was conducted.

It would have been great to spend some more time at each function, a few days at least, to really understand what they do. I think that is important. So you don’t just see them throwing out a lot of policies and wonder what heck they are doing? There is blame thrown between functions, so to avoid this it would have been better to get to know someone you can ask directly. Build more understanding instead of just saying hello on a short visit. (Young respondent 2)

Even though much of the knowledge sharing activities seems to differ between functions in the municipality administration, there is concurrence that documents can assist in knowledge sharing. Examples of these are the organizational intranet and function-specific databases. One young respondent describe that written down routines help in the work tremendously. Especially when just entering the position those guides had been key contributors for the respondent to learn how to handle certain situations. But even after being on the job for a while it is experienced as a good resource to have. One of the older respondents mentions that documents consist of facts that can be accessed by the employees. When it comes to handling complex situations it is however not very useful with written down action plans, as the context can vary. The other old respondent also describe that there are many documents that can be useful, but that this has become a jungle of information where the inflow is simply too much. The expectations that the employees should gather information and knowledge themselves create a situation where the employee must search through documents for a long time before finding up to date and useful material. One of the younger respondents also feel that there is too much information and that it can become overwhelming. Also in the focus interview there is a discussion about documents. The older respondent underlines the importance of the documents and that it is of the essence for the function to write down even the seldom used routines so they are not forgotten.
If you learn one thing and then don’t work with it, it will be forgotten. So we make routines for it. I perform the routine very seldom, so then I have a great use of the routine description. (Older respondent in focus interview)

The younger respondent in the focus interview does however not care for the routine descriptions and prefers to ask questions to experienced coworkers over reading them. The young respondent does however agree that the routine descriptions are very helpful if there is no one around to ask.

4.1.3 Enabling and constraining factors

Actors

In the municipality’s communication policy there is an indication that it is to a large extent up to each individual actor to seek out knowledge on their own:

Every co-worker must gather necessary information and knowledge in order to fulfill his/hers tasks in the best manner possible. (Communication policy)

The staff policy describe that the staff must: “Respect each other’s opinions, roles and functions”. The term respect is highlighted as a formally important value for the employees to follow. Respect as a term is only used by one of the respondents who suggest that the respect between the two actors is paramount in order for knowledge sharing to occur as the respect can bridge a lack of chemistry between actors.

Perhaps you don’t hit it off personality wise but you have to find a way of sharing the information, and that makes respect important. (Younger respondent in focus interview)

The importance of chemistry between coworkers who are engaged in knowledge sharing is brought up as essential, especially by the older respondents in the individual interviews. The argument made is that if two people know each other on a more personal level, they will talk more freely and understand each other to a larger extent. The human chemistry is of such importance that one of the older respondents also mentions it is looked for in interviews during recruiting.

Since the administration consists of different functions, they must on occasion cooperate across these. One of the younger respondents perceives less trust between these functions than within them. The cause of this is that the different functions only see part of what the other functions do and therefore don’t understand each other. The younger respondent who gave this view believes there should be more integration between the functions and visits to their offices in order to create understanding.

The two younger respondents’ perceive as that the older employees enjoy sharing their knowledge and that this is the chief motivation for sharing. The older respondents also indicate that the sharing is an enjoyable process, but that it also is expected of them to share and a natural part of their work. It is something that needs to happen in order for the workplace to function. A couple of the older respondents indicate that it is motivating to know that the knowledge will be used by the younger coworker. If they find out their suggestions have gone unheeded they will feel more
reluctant towards sharing with that person again. One of the younger respondents indicate that the knowledge provided has to be seen within a greater context and that you must understand the agendas of the provider of the knowledge and in what situation it should be used. This viewpoint is not shared by the other younger individually interviewed respondent who puts very great value on every piece of knowledge provided by older coworkers. The older respondents also describe that it is important for all actors to be perceptive and to try to understand the need of the other actor. They believe this to be especially true for younger employees who tend to rush into new tasks. If the younger employee instead would take a step back and perceptively listen more closely to the advice given a lot of early mistakes could be avoided.

Two of the respondents list “speaking different language” as the biggest obstacle for knowledge sharing to occur. If the older more experienced worker uses a technical terminology that is not understood by the younger coworker, it can be a hindrance in the knowledge sharing. One of the younger respondents mentions there are web based forums where it is difficult to participate until you have learned the lingo.

The biggest generational difference is the use of IT and electronic systems. The younger generation is generally seen by every respondent as more adaptive and competent in this area. This is however one of few areas where the respondents believe there are actual generational differences. Behaviors and skills are instead viewed as more dependent on the individual’s characteristics, rather than on age. One of the younger respondents does however mention that the different interests’ of the age groups do not provide much other common subjects of conversation outside of the work. This is reinforced by all the younger respondents as they all feel like they are much younger than most of their coworkers and that this affects the feeling for the workplace.

It creates an entirely different dynamic when you work in a group that is closer in age. /…/ Here it is very much me and then everybody else, when it comes to age. The others are much closer in age than I am”. (Younger respondent 1)

One young respondent also reports that young coworkers experience the older employees as being stuck in old patterns in certain cases. What the younger generation can provide to other organization is then a new perspective on routines and a questioning of the old patterns. Some of the older respondents on the other hand perceive the younger workers as being a bit brusque and wishing to accomplish things fast, whereas older employees prefer to take a step back and look at the situation from a wider perspective. The general view is also that the newly recruited younger coworkers bring a more updated knowledge of the specific field of expertise to the workplace. It is also perceived by both generational cohorts that younger individuals tend to consider what the work can do for them, rather than what they can do for the work, and that once young employees have quenched their thirst of knowledge from one context, they move on to a new organization. Older employees
are seen as more content with building a career within one organization. This is both reported by older and younger respondents as a major difference in values between the generations. One older respondent expresses concerns that the knowledge that is shared now will just be wasted as the young co-worker leaves the organization.

You can see that there are some differences between generations. The ones who are coming now demand more from the corporations. \(/…/\) In the old days you couldn’t steal a pen from work, but today you come to work and grab what you want. “What are my possibilities here? If I don’t have any I’m out the door”. Everyone takes instead of being thankful. It is a different way of thinking today. (Younger respondent 2)

Generally, the municipality displays a high level of trust within the different functions of the administration. Every single respondent answers that they view their workplace as somewhere where there is trust between the different actors involved in the knowledge sharing. Several respondents however underline the importance of working together a longer time as important for developing trust. A term that is used by several respondents is “openness” and that their workplace is characterized by it. This openness and honesty is an example of there being trust between the employees and that they can share freely with each other because of this atmosphere.

I think we ask each other no matter what it is about. We have a very open atmosphere here. We aren’t afraid of asking questions to each other. (Older respondent 1)

Also in the focus interview the word “openness” was used to describe the relationship between the employees. Again, this can be related to the concept of trust. Just as in the individual interviews, it is also stated in the focus interview that it is seen as fun and interesting to share knowledge with each other. While the older respondent in the focus interview agrees with this view, it is also implied that this expectation can make the respondent feel like the older generation is in the workplace to get “drained” on their knowledge for the benefit of the younger generations. That it is time for the older generation to leave. It is described as a natural order of things, but also a bit unsettling for the individual respondent.

The young respondent from the focus interview also felt that it took some time before the verbiage and technical descriptions of the older workers could be understood and used, and that hindered the knowledge sharing.

*Organizational environment*

In the communication policy it is stated that the internal communication of the organization is supposed to: “...build on dialogue, cooperation and openness”. It underlines the importance of having a productive communication that creates effectiveness, participation and job satisfaction. Every part of the municipality should also have clear and measurable goals pertaining to the communication. This is not limited to only communication however. In the staff policy it is written that every subunit in the municipality should have objectives for the personnel work as a whole as part of a strategic plan of the organization. These are also to be followed up
continuously over the year. This creates an impression that there are certain strategic considerations in the organization concerning the competency development and the knowledge sharing.

The individual interview respondents in this case are all specialists that do not have many colleagues doing the same tasks. This becomes evident as many of them indicate that, although there is some team work involved, most of the job is carried out individually, self-planned and independent. This also means that there is not many to share your immediate specialist knowledge to, or receive knowledge from for that matter.

At this unit I am the only one doing what I do. There are a couple of others in a different part of the organization that do similar things that I meet regularly, a few times a year. We have a very close contact. If I have any questions I contact them. (Younger respondent 1)

There are exceptions to this however. The two respondents in the focus interview describe their working environment as very dependent on team work within the function. They described the environment as free, heavy on cooperation and one where employees are visiting each other’s office frequently to seek information, or ask questions about subjects the colleague is knowledgeable about. According to both respondents it is aided by the fact that the function has their own locales where only they are situated. This is different from many employees of the administration who are all working in the central municipality building. One of the younger individual respondents also mentions that the work is sometimes carried out in cooperation because there are two others with the same position, and certain projects involve all three employees.

The values of the municipality are listed in the communication policy as Courageous (to dare to be innovative), Humane (to be open, welcoming and secure) and Multifaceted (to be diverse and appreciate differences). These values are put into place to formally shape the culture of the organization. There is also some indication that these values are practiced. The atmosphere is described as open and allowing by several respondents. It is reported that talking and sharing with each other is an everyday activity and that it seems to happen naturally without any effort. One older respondent is of the perception that views can freely be shared and that it is allowed to experiment and make mistakes. This respondent mentions this allowance to commit mistakes is a requirement to gain experience and learn. One young respondent describes that although the work is believed to be demanding and straining at times, there is still a sense of positivity in the organization and that much is done for the staff to facilitate this feeling. The focus interview’s respondents also share the view that the environment is open, and at their function this is in part represented by the norm that everyone has their doors open and are available to each other. If a door is closed, however, you know that this person is not to be disturbed. The respondents describe the culture as imbued with a sense of family.
Since there hasn’t been high staff turnover you know what the others can do, what they are good at and what they like. I believe that creates a sense of family. I also think that when you are new in the municipality you are very easily let into this group. That also helps the knowledge sharing in the group. (Younger respondent from focus interview)

As this quote indicates, the organization has not suffered much staff turnover in the previous years. The different functions the respondents come from are all described as having been stable. However, all the respondents can see a large group of key employees approaching retirement. Some of the respondents believe that there are plans for addressing this in the future, but they cannot point to exactly what is being done. Others wonder if enough is being done to handle these issues today. What all the respondents however agree on is that there will be changes when these people leave and that much important knowledge will walk out the door. There are a lot of key people that will retire within the coming four, maybe five, years. I am not sure this has been handled in the way that it has a long term approach. It feels a little bit there is an “it will take care of itself” mentality. (Older respondent 2)

Opinions differ regarding whether there is enough time during the work to actually share knowledge with each other. One young and one old respondent in the individual interviews indicate that time is a scarce commodity and a constraining factor for knowledge sharing, but that efforts are always made to create more of it. Therefore the opportunities to share are not viewed as plentiful by these interviewees. The other two individual respondents however believe that time is not an issue and that there is enough time to share, even though it can get more difficult during certain hectic periods of the year. Also the participants of the focus interview believe this to be true in their work.

When it comes to leadership, the staff policy, as well as the communication policy, states that the managers in the organization are supposed to be clear in their communication, enable creativity and have a personal dedication to improving the organization. This image of the leadership in the municipality is shared by the respondents. One respondent view the managers as enabling factors in that they are generally perceptive and understand when someone is excelling in a certain area. These individuals are then recognized for this, making other people aware of whom to ask questions about that particular subject. One of the older respondents has seen a change in that nowadays the managers are more accessible. One younger respondent indicate that the staff is allowed much freedom and that their opinions are appreciated, which stimulates discussions.

Societal climate

In the staff policy an awareness of the impending dilemmas of the generational shift is apparent. In numerous places it is written that the municipality's organization, managers and employees must develop in order to better face the impending retirements and the increased competition for competence this will bring. It is seen as
imperative to embrace differences in the workforce to handle these impacts, where age discrepancies count as one of these.

The municipality has a future supply of competence challenge and must among other things keep employees and develop the organization even as we are shifting between generations. (Staff policy)

Even though climate as a factor is mentioned sparsely by the respondents, the generational shift is discussed by a few respondents. One old respondent calls for a more national approach to the entire challenge and that the established generations on the job market must learn to let the younger generations into the fold. Other respondents also see this change is demographics as a challenge. The loss of the knowledge of the retiring generation as a whole will impact the way work will be done, because there are simply less experienced people to ask for advice.

4.2 The School

This case is concerned with a primary school that teaches grades 4-9, which means the children are 10-15 years old. The school is located in a municipality of roughly over 25 000 inhabitants (SCBa, 2013) (the school is therefore not located in the same municipality as the previous case). Currently there are 65 employees at the school, most of them teachers. It is the teachers of the school that is the focus of this case.

Although the school today holds grades 4-9, it used to be for only grades 7-9. A school with grades 4-6 was integrated into the organization and the staff and principal of the former school also moved along. This means that the school has two principals that practice a shared leadership over the workplace. To integrate the two schools into a new one, the two principals took managerial responsibility over every other class. This means that one of them has grades 4, 6 and 8, while another runs grades 5, 7 and 9. One of the main reasons for this was to merge the cultures of the two schools. And while the interviewed manager mentions that this feels like a good structure, there are still some cultural differences between the teachers of the two former schools. This is also because they teach children of different ages from each other and that this requires different approaches to teaching. The manager perceives that the merger of the two schools has come a long way, but that there still is work to be done. The manager also reports that the workforce of the original school has had a very low staff turnover. There are several employees who have worked together for over 30 years, which have recently started to retire.

The teachers are divided into different teams where they work together to coordinate their classes. The teams meet once a week and consist of a mix of older and younger employees. There are also subject-teams for each subject where the teachers can discuss how to plan that particular subject’s teaching in the school. These are the primary meeting systems that the school has. An interesting practice at the school is also that the teachers are not required to be at the workplace during the normal office hours. If they do not have classes they can spend their time planning their classes
away from the workplace. The manager describes it as a system built on trust and that some of the staff chooses to take advantage of it, while others prefer to do the planning at school.

Strategically the school is governed by the local municipality it belongs to. The municipality sets the overall strategic goals that are supposed to trickle down the organization, so that the divisions and subunits set their own goals according to these. To measure how these goals are reached the school uses a system where they throughout the year look at how the work is progressing. There is also a three year cycle for this quality follow up.

When it comes to activities for knowledge sharing there appear to be several formalized examples. By Swedish law it is required for every new teacher to receive a mentor for the first year of the employment. The manager believes this is a very good way for new employees to learn how to handle their class and be a leader. Another form of knowledge sharing activity occurs when an employee retires. They are then presented with the opportunity to have a “transfer conversation” where they can reflect and relay to the manager what they felt has worked well. There are also many documents being made that describe routines at the school. The manager indicates that these have not been used very much in the past, but that there is a new added emphasis on the teachers to actually look at these documents. This is a part of changing the culture from an expectation of the employees to be handed information, towards the employees seeking out the information themselves. The manager perceives that the biggest constraining factor for knowledge sharing is the time to share. Being a teacher is also still an individual job where the teacher must handle a class by themselves, which does not lend itself to much cooperation in the daily work. What however makes the knowledge sharing work, according to the manager, is that the young employees are very hungry for knowledge and thus proactive in retrieving it. The manager also perceives that knowledge that is needed to be shared is the tacit knowledge of how to actually teach to children, and not the specific knowledge of subjects.

There is no outspoken strategy for how the school plans to handle the generational shift. But as there are many culture bearing employees that have worked there for a long time who have started retiring, it has not gone unnoticed. The manager mentions that although there is much experience leaving, it also presents the school with more flexibility and opportunities for change, especially in the culture of the school.

4.2.1 Knowledge shared

When discussing what knowledge is needed to work as a teacher two different kinds are brought up by every respondent in the individual interviews. First of all, teachers need a good knowledge and grasp of the subject that they are teaching. Not only must this knowledge be wide to comprehend the many different concepts they teach, but in many subjects it must also be updated constantly. For example, language teachers need to know how the youth communicate in different parts of the world and social
science teachers need to stay updated on world politics. The young respondents also talk about how important it is to find a good structure in planning the classes and doing things in the correct order. Also the focus interview highlights that it is important to learn how to plan your workday.

The second, and more complex, kind of knowledge is by several respondents called “social competence” and they refer to it as being able to direct and lead the work in the classroom as well as handling conflicts and inquiries from parents. This is especially underlined by the younger respondents and that it is a challenge to learn this. It is as much about finding what technique works for you as it is to become secure in the role. The older respondents describe that this can only be learned by experience and that the students can feel if a teacher masters that part of the job.

Also the respondents from the focus interview share the view that the social competence is very important. The older respondent describes that being a teacher is a bit like being a circus director who must control all the commotion around him/her. The younger respondent indicates that this has a lot to do with the tacit knowledge you pick up after working a while. The younger respondent also mentions that it is of vital importance to know how to handle people.

In this occupation, when you meet both children and adults it is important to think one step ahead. And I also think that, and this might sound a bit crass, but some kind of smartness or perhaps street smarts to sell in you thought or idea. (Younger respondent in focus interview)

4.2.2 Activities for knowledge sharing

In the communication policy it reads that “through communication an exchange of thoughts, opinions or information takes place, regardless if it happens in speech, writing or other expressions.” This displays awareness that there are many ways to communicate knowledge. It also indicates that it is the individual employee’s responsibility to find the information needed to carry out the work, as well as sharing knowledge with coworkers. This puts a focus on the individual’s proactivity in the knowledge sharing process.

During lunch and coffee breaks the staff gathers in the break room and there engage in informal conversations. Although some of the talk is of a more social nature, many of the respondents feel that the primary function of these talks is to converse about what happens in their class, problems with certain students and conflicts with parents. It is viewed as a necessary practice to ventilate these subjects to the other teachers, and many times to also get suggestions and tips on how to handle the situations.

The break room is a place where we can unload. I would say a lot of the conversations are about students. Not that it is always negative, but you get the opportunity to ventilate and ask for advice from others. Younger or older doesn’t matter. (Younger respondent 1)

In the individual interviews there was only one respondent (one of the older) who did not bring this dynamic up on their own accord. Also in the focus interview this
dynamic is mentioned and the older respondent perceives it is a good thing that these issues are brought up spontaneously. These sort of informal discussions do not only happen at this time however, as the respondents describe that there is communication throughout the day between the teachers about these matters. The focus interview also highlights that it is a very good practice to be able visit other teachers at their classes. That much can be learned from this experience and that tips and tricks are gained from each other in a way that is difficult to pick up from conversations.

There are differing opinions of the usefulness of the formal meetings of the respondents. An older respondent mentions that it is very useful to actually hear the information from someone, instead of always being expected to search it out yourself. A few other respondents perceive it as there is too much focus on the administrative part of the job. One of the respondent states there is too much talk about minor issues that already are solved instead of doing something useful with the meeting.

Many non-questions are discussed. Those are things that are dwelled upon even if decisions already have been made. A decision is there but people can’t seem to get off of it. (Younger respondent 1)

The respondents in the focus interview indicate that these meetings fill a function and that although there are many administrative discussions, these talks must take place somewhere. Both of the respondents however think that these meetings are not really used for knowledge sharing on the subject of being a teacher.

The mentorship-program, which the newly employed staff has for a year, is mentioned as a very positive thing, especially by the younger respondents. It is perceived as a very useful practice of quickly and continuously learning what the work of being a teacher is about. One of the younger respondents describes that it was especially helpful in learning how to plan the workday in general and the classes specifically. It is also viewed as a very rewarding experience to be a mentor, as it calls for a revision of what you yourself are doing in your work. It is described as a reciprocal relationship that both parties gain from.

There is also formal training initiatives offered to the employees during in-service training days (studiedagar). These are days that the students have off from school and the teachers are instead developing their own competence at the training activities. One older respondent perceives these as too general. They are seen as very interesting by the younger respondents and one of the older respondent’s mentions that it is important to have training days about one’s own subject to keep it updated.

We have our training days that we participate in. We have more general training days with external lecturer and that sort of thing. But we also have specific training days for our subjects. I assume everyone think that these are important for their specific subject. (Older respondent 1)

There is not much emphasis put on the use of documents as a knowledge sharing activity. Although recognized, there is not much report of them being used. There are however external databases on the internet that a couple of respondents state they use for inspiration for class activities, but these are not internal systems.
4.2.3 Enabling and constraining factors

Actors

In the staff policy it is mentioned that the employees are to show care, respect and contribute to others job satisfaction, as well as accept others viewpoints and learn from these. It is also stated that the employees are to have a positive attitude towards learning and be an active part of the work of developing the competence of yourself and the work unit. In the communication policy there is a similar instruction on how the employees are to conduct themselves. It is stated that the internal communication should be open and clear, the coworkers are to be open to each other’s views and initiatives as well as willing to share experiences and knowledge.

The chemistry between the sharing actors is brought up by each respondent no matter what age or in which kind of interview. It is viewed as an important factor for knowledge sharing to happen. If the two actors do not enjoy each other’s company it is seen as a problematic situation.

It is about the chemistry. I don't think just anyone can do it together. But if the right person is sitting on the other side anyone can do it. (Older respondent 2)

This also points towards that knowledge sharing can be viewed as an enjoyable experience. The largest motivating factor for the respondents is that it is a fun process. You feel good about yourself when you can help someone else, and one older respondent mentions it is a reciprocal process where both get something out of it. One of the younger respondents perceives that older coworkers believe it to be a fun and important practice. The other young respondent does however perceive that there is some resistance to share sometimes because there is a sense of pride when it comes to educational material older employees have created themselves. The young respondent believes this is not a big issue for younger employees because the internet has made this sort of material so easy to find online. When asked about the trust in the workplace it is specifically described by a few of the respondents that there is high trust between the closest colleagues, but that it varies with the rest of the teachers. The older respondent from the focus interview mentions it is vital that there is a will to provide and receive knowledge from both sides. Both the young and old respondent also agree on that it is important for the process to build up trust and an openness over time, so you feel free to ask questions without feeling censored.

When it comes to generational differences that are mentioned in the individual interviews the view differs markedly between the older and the younger respondents. The older respondents do not recognize much generational difference at all and state that teachers as a whole is a homogenous group that work well together. It is viewed as being more up to the individual personality than what generation he or she belongs to. The older respondents do however perceive that there is a difference in how different age groups work, as the younger employees bring new ideas to the fold and have a different way of teaching. One of the younger respondents agrees with this and
states that there are especially differences in how the generations approach the relationship with students. The younger teachers are by this respondent seen as having a closer relationship with their students. The other young respondent prefers to ask other young employees for advice because they are the ones that can more easily feel a personal connection to. The respondent perceives that it feels like they speak more the same language. Another difference that is mentioned is the use of IT. One older respondent mentions that it is not the work tool of choice. A young respondent describes that it is obvious that the older generation does not have the same understanding of the technology as the younger do. In the focus interview the older respondent is of the opinion that there of course will be a difference between generations in how the work is carried out. A person with many years of experience will conduct their work and approach students differently from a newly graduated teacher.

I have been working with children for 41 years. I know that if I do it this way it is going to work. And you know what things don’t work. Then it is about how you as an individual want to teach. Which style you want to have is up to you. (Older respondent from focus interview)

The younger respondent in the pair interview describes that the older employees radiate a sense of being secure in their role and a capacity to handle whatever thrown at them. Both of the respondents also feel like the education a teacher receives today is worse than it used to be. That the newly graduated teachers are less prepared for the occupation. The older respondent perceives the interns from university that visit the school as not being on the same level of schooling as interns used to be.

Organizational environment

Although there are meetings for coordinating some of the teachings in the school, much of the work is carried out individually by the teachers. Management plans who has what subject and who belongs to which team, but after that it is up to the individual to make their own plans for their classes. One respondent describes that teachers in a way are their own boss and act independently. Therefore the formal structure of the workplace and nature of the occupation makes the teachers a bit isolated from each other. The formal teams and meetings then serve the purpose of mitigating these gaps and to have mutual coordination.

One of the younger respondents mentions that the flexibility in working hours is a factor regarding knowledge sharing. In the beginning of the employment the respondent spent the planning time at the workplace for the purpose of being around the coworkers as much as possible to understand norms at the school and ask questions to more experienced employees. The respondent mentions that if this time instead would have been spent at home, much opportunity for knowledge acquisition would have been lost.

Most of the cooperation that happens in the organization is based from the teams, the teachers of the same subject as well as the partner that every teacher is assigned.
These are all in one form or another formalized relationships that may not have developed spontaneously. There is also an inclination to spend time and cooperate more with teachers that teach the same age group since they are perceived as having more in common.

A workplace practice that is viewed as very time consuming and therefore a hindrance to knowledge sharing is that the teachers are required to document so many things. It mostly concerns the material for how the students are graded, but also absence, statistics and other form of documentation is required. All of the individually interviewed teachers state that it has to change because the way it is done today just takes too much of the focus away from teaching the students. The older respondents describe that there is a lot more of this than there used to be. One of the younger respondents mentions that this makes it feel like the teachers’ competence is not trusted.

It would make it easier for us teachers if the documentation was smoother.
There is a lot we have to write and document about the students right now.
/.../ I feel like teachers competence isn't trusted enough. We have an education and it is supposed have made us able to set grades without being questioned this way. (Younger respondent 2)

A few respondents also indicate that the school is struggling because of the limited resources. There is not enough staff, money or office space to do the work in a satisfactory manner. They view the management of the school as really trying to help and support them, but that there just are not enough funds to make it work. The shared leadership with the two principals is viewed by a couple of respondents as a bit confusing. One respondent makes the analogy that it is like having a mom and dad. If dad says no, you can go ask mom and maybe get a different answer. In the staff policy there is much importance highlighted towards the leadership to be a critical factor in the organization. It is stated to be: “the key to well-being, motivation, and development at the workplace”. The respondents in the individual interviews all believe the mangers try to stimulate knowledge sharing and a good internal communication, but that it does not always happen.

I always feel like I get support from management if I need help in any way. But as soon as money is involved it is another story. (Older respondent 2)

There is also a lack of time to share knowledge among the teachers according to the respondents in the individual interviews. If you want time for it, you have to try to take the time yourself, as it is not given. There are too many activities in the daily work that take immediate priority. The older respondents perceive that time has become scarcer over the years. Also in the focus interview brought up time and resources as constraining factors. Both respondents in the focus interview describe that the limited time does not only affect the actual opportunity to share knowledge, but also the time to reflect on what has been learnt. In the focus interview the respondents relay that the overall lack of time and resources is a huge problem.
If you see the school as a company, then I have a hard time imagining another company that is as results oriented as the school is and aim to be, and who let time and money hinder that experience is passed on. (Younger respondent in focus interview)

If I get a giant hole in my roof, I don’t buy three plastic bags to cover it with. I take out a loan. When we need money we have to go to the education office and ask for it, if we don’t get it we can’t teach the kids properly. We are run as a business, and if we were a real one, we would have gone bankrupt long ago. (Older respondent in focus interview)

The staff policy has a certain set of values that the employees are supposed to follow at the workplace. They are supposed to take responsibility, act ethically, communicate, be flexible, act as team players and be interested in learning. An emphasis is also put on being respectful against each other and that every one’s opinions, knowledge, experiences and strengths are important for using the resources best as possible. In the communication policy this is further highlighted by the statement that employees should encourage each other to bring new ideas, viewpoints and initiatives to the workplace and in that way share knowledge. These cultural values do not seem to be carried out fully at the school. One of the young respondents describes that there is an attitude of locking oneself into the lecture room and not take critique or advice from other teachers. The other young respondent also hints towards this.

It is easy as a teacher to wear blinders and think that I will take care of my own things. What I do is best and I don't care about the rest. But I think it is really important not to do that. I am more than happy to have someone observe me during my classes. (Younger respondent 2)

This shows a culture of pride in being able to handle the burdens alone. The respondents do however see that this is starting to unfold and that it is becoming more accepted to ask for help. The overall morale of the staff is however described as good by all respondents, even though the work is straining. Everyone is dedicated to making the school the best place possible for the children, even though teachers have different methods and suggestions for making it so.

The school is going through a bit of a generational shift with many experienced teachers about to retire though. They leave with much experience, but also with norms and values that one of the younger respondents believes is time to leave behind to find a more formal and outspoken culture of what the school wants to work towards. This is seen as of particular importance since the merger of the two schools has created a feeling of separation between the teachers who handle different age groups. The respondents in the focus interview also acknowledge this split between these teacher groups, but are very careful to describe that all the teachers work together for the benefit of the children and care about them.
Societal climate

In the staff policy it is written that the organization exists in a world of change that it must adapt to. It reads that the supply of competence and competency development must be shaped in a way that the organization is better suited for handling the challenges of tomorrow. These statements point towards an understanding of the challenges this change in demographic will bring. It also states that:

The municipality is in a generational shift. The coming ten years many employees and managers will be recruited. The generational shift will be conducted in such a manner as that it enables a positive development of the organization. (Staff policy)

Although the total numbers of inhabitants are ascending slowly per year (SCBa, 2013), it is still a smaller and rural municipality. The urbanization trends of modern society have the potential to create a situation of an ageing population with an inherent gap of competence when the older citizens retire, without anyone to sharing that knowledge to (Lindh, 2008).

In Sweden, teaching as an occupation has become a less lucrative and lost status over the last decades (Kairos Future, 2013). A few of the individually interviewed respondents are worried about the attitude in society towards teachers as an occupation. It is perceived that being a teacher has lost status and that the competence of the occupational members does not seem to be trusted. According to the respondents this manifests in that parents are more openly involved in their child’s schooling as well as more critical of the teachers. These constant conflicts with parents take their toll as they are time-consuming and stressful. According to one older respondent the societal mentality has shifted from a struggling child’s problems being because of the child, to instead blaming the failures on the teacher. The older respondents mention that the school system as a whole needs to regain its respect, authority and status in order for this to change.

4.3 The Manufacturer

This case takes place in a privately owned organization that manufactures a complex electronic product. It is one of the largest factories in the world for creating this kind of product, as the plant has almost 2000 employees. It is located in a rural municipality and many of the employees commute from a bigger nearby city. Although originally a Swedish company, it is now part of a multinational corporate group.

One strategically important group of employees within this organization is the engineers. They are essential to provide technical expertise in the organization and it is the occupation in focus in this particular case. The engineers that have been interviewed in this thesis are part of the research and development (R&D) department, which emphasizes the need for these engineers to innovate and find solutions to problems. There are four sections to the R&D department, which all are
made up of separate subunits. In total, R&D has around 70 employees. The interviewed manager is the head of a subunit within the R&D department and describes each employee as a specialist in an area and that the manager takes a more generalist approach to oversee the work. The goal of the department is to develop new products and improve the existing ones. It is also important to find more cost effective ways to construct the product. This is accomplished many times through working together in projects according to the manager. Therefore, collaboration between the members of units, project teams, across the subunits and to other levels of the organization is a must in the daily work for these engineers.

The age of the employees in R&D is described by the manager as mostly between 30-45 years old. There are a few who are just above 20 and a handful around 65. According to the manager, there is a trend that the employees leave R&D at around 50 (although the staff turnover is considered fairly high in general) to take on new challenges and often a higher salary. The manager views this as problematic, as this is the period in life where you no longer have small children and therefore become more available at work. It is also the time where most have become more skilled at their jobs and can contribute at a higher level according to the manager. The manager mentions that better career paths must be created for the employees, as the individuals leaving are not perceived to be doing so because they dislike the workplace. Instead they leave for new challenges and/or a higher salary. If there was ways of climbing within the organization to take on new challenges, without taking managerial roles, then the employees may stay longer. If there is one kind of competence that the manager wishes was developed in the company, it is the understanding of how the processes are connected within the bigger picture of the organization. This is perceived by the manager to only be possible to develop with experience, so the employees leaving the organization at this stage in their career is viewed as problematic.

That the employees leave the company also causes cultural difference between the Swedish manufacturer and its foreign owner. In the parent company’s national culture it is common for employees to stay within one organization for an entire career. The Swedish manufacturer sometimes does not know how a task was done 15 years earlier, due to little staff remaining from the time. This limits the understanding between the parties. Partly because of this perceived lack of history, according to the manager, the manufacturer is documenting how procedures are carried out in know-how sheets. The know-how sheets list what kind of problem was encountered, what steps were taken, what did not work, as well as what did work. The manager indicates that reading a number of these is also a part of the introduction for the employee.

For the manager the largest enabling factor for knowledge sharing between generations to take place in the organization is the hunger for knowledge from the new employees. They are described as very open and willing to learn. This is also something that is searched for when recruiting. The company does not want individuals who feel like they already know all they need and are not active learners.
When it comes to other knowledge sharing activities little is being done in form of formal activities according to the manager. When a person retires there is an attempt to capture that knowledge however. The manager describes that the retiring person becomes “sort of” a mentor in order to prepare the individual who will take over the duties. This is not formalized and described as more of an ad hoc relationship. The manager believes the organization might gain from making this into more of a formalized activity, since it will then have a more outspoken and official purpose than it has today. Sometimes the retiring employee also documents his/her experiences and knowledge for the managers of the unit managers to read. This provides an insight into what the employee has learned over the year and it is described as an enjoyable practice for all involved. However, only the managers receive a copy of this material. Because the individuals who are retiring are so few there is no sense of urgency within the organization about the generational shift.

4.3.1 Knowledge shared

The first kind of knowledge that is brought up by every respondent is the need for technical knowledge of how to develop the product. For example, much of the daily activities are carried out in computer assisted design (CAD) programs and it is a must to know how to use these as tools. These are however constantly updated or eventually replaced by new improved CAD-programs so the employees must stay updated as well. One of the younger respondents mentions there is a need to ask for help on how to use these quite often as they are complex programs.

The kind of knowledge that however is talked about most by the respondents is the know-how concerning the product, as well as what actually works in practice when developing it. This is something that is said to be based on experiences by several of the respondents, which means there is a marked difference in how older and younger coworkers grasp this knowledge. For example understanding the material that is being used and what limits it has.

Often they come and ask me: Is this possible? Then I get a train of thought and also a sense of how they think about it. Many times we work with steel plating. You can crease it however you want in the computer, but it can be impossible in reality. (Older respondent 2)

One of the younger respondents also recognizes social competence as an important skill in every day work. Since it is essential to ask each other questions and communicate when solving problems it is of the essence to know how to take different personalities to create rewarding dialogue and reach good end results. It is also important to understand the situation of the coworkers. There is always a risk of being an interruption to those who are stressed when asking questions to each other.

4.3.2 Activities for knowledge sharing

Derived from the parent organizations core values, an important activity is to every morning have a meeting about encountered issues, find the root of it and solve the
problem. The organizational members are in these meetings encouraged to reflect on the process and not be machines with routinized thinking. The employees are also encouraged to supply new ways of improving the company, in order to stimulate a continuous improvement. This does not seem to be an activity that is practiced too well in this case. The respondents indicate there are different kinds of meetings concerning the different levels of the R&D department, but not a lot of focus is placed on these as an activity for knowledge sharing. Some of these meeting are viewed as mostly being told information. One of the older respondents, whose job is more independent than the others, does not attend many meetings, and mentions that the meetings visited often bring up the same issues and are a bit repetitive. One younger respondent states that these meetings are useful for hearing how the company is doing, but that no knowledge sharing happens there. The construction engineering meetings are perceived by a couple of the respondents as more rewarding, as they discuss real life problems that apply to their work.

You receive information that is good to know. But if you actually learn things… I guess you do. It depends on what meeting. In the construction engineering meetings you definitely learn new things, but at information meetings there are more things that are just good to know. (Young respondent 2)

Most of the knowledge sharing is instead reported as being done naturally in the everyday work. Because so much of the work is team based and demand collaboration, the engineers constantly interact and discuss how to approach the task at hand. All of the respondents describe that this kind of knowledge sharing in general happen spontaneously as they visit each other’s work stations. Even the older respondent who has a more independent role mention how questions to other organizational members are a natural part of the day. These questions are not always about how to improve the work. There is also need for assistance in understanding programs. All of this communication does however demand a structuring of the questions to the coworkers. In periods there is a lot to do and it is perceived as bothersome to be interrupted in the work on a continuous basis. One of the younger respondents mentions that although much of the collaboration is together with the neighbor, because they work with the same area, there is a lot of collaboration outside of the immediate unit.

There is a lot of contact with the computational engineer, who is a part of the project. He is responsible for the computation needed in the project. So I have daily contact with him. There is also a fair deal of contact with the design department that designs the exterior. You need to produce something that works in the computations and with the design. (Younger respondent 2)

To be able to meet all these different organizational members the engineers must somehow get to know where they reside. This is largely done in the introduction program of the organization as several of the respondents describe that the main activity during this period was to get to know the company and who to ask when you have inquiries about different matters. This is viewed as a big positive by the respondents and that the introduction program has helped them set up a network. One
of the older respondents also mentions that one way of meeting organizational members, which are not involved in one’s own immediate work, is during coffee breaks. There it is possible to have what the respondent refers to as interdisciplinary conversations and gain new viewpoints. Otherwise the respondents feel that coffee breaks has the role of airing some problems you are having and more times than not this it can make you get a new insight from a colleague that will help you out.

The two younger respondents state that they have experienced informal mentoring at the company. They believe this helps you integrate into the organization fast and provides you with a go-to guy that most of the time will assist them, or at least point them in the right direction. They both would however rather see the mentorship become a formal activity so it gains recognition and legitimacy.

Although there seems to be many kinds of training programs and competency developments (as most respondents indicate there are), only one respondent states having taken part in one. One of the older respondents has however recently had a course in understanding the motor of the product. This respondent has joined the organization during the last years and realized during this course that a motor was built in a completely different way than previously thought by the respondent. The lectures and discussion was viewed as helpful to understand this integral part of the product.

The limited participation in training by the respondents mean it is not mentioned much as an activity for knowledge sharing. Some courses about company values and norms are mentioned to occur during the introduction program however. According to the preparation material for the developmental interview the manager and the employee are both instructed to reflect on what competency development needs are necessary for the individual. This formalizes a process of planning these activities particularly for the employee.

The most used formalized way of sharing knowledge is through the know-how sheets. By one old and one young respondent the know-how sheets are reported as being used daily. They perceive it as a great substitute to asking the coworkers, if asking is not a possibility at the time. Several respondents do however raise questions about the search function. It requires the user to be too exact with the search words and two respondents (one older, one younger) say the search function is too difficult to use properly. It is also reported that the know-how sheets are not general enough to be used over different situation, as the sheets may not contain the correct solution for a similar situation. This respondent who provided these views uses a personal word document to keep track of lessons learned and details in the work.

We have loads of documents, know-how sheets. They are partly good I guess. The only thing is that the system they exist in is difficult to handle. You have to use the specifically correct search word and things like that. It contains a lot though. But it isn’t easy to find it. (Younger respondent 1)
4.3.3 Enabling and constraining factors

Actors

In the preparation material for the developmental interview, the organization’s values can be observed and how these are supposed to be manifested in practice. These are highly relevant to the individual’s role in the knowledge sharing. Subjects to be discussed are for example if the employee is active in proposing ideas and providing suggestions to solutions, and if the employee communicates and cooperate well with others. In another part of the evaluation this is once again seen in when topics such as: Shows respect to others, relays knowledge and experience to others and works independently.

The most important factor relating to actors is viewed as the personal contact, that the actors have formed a reciprocal relationship where they treat each other with respect and openness. One younger respondent describes it as it becomes high on the priority list to help someone who has aided you. If someone does not want to help you however it sinks very low on priorities when that person comes for help. The older respondents also share this view, and one of them mentions that it is very disappointing if someone, who you have previously aided, does not help you back. It is apparent that these reciprocal relationships are very present at the workplace as the respondents describe their different knowledge sharing experiences. This is much because of the trust between coworkers that the respondents describe. Since they cooperate so much in the daily work they have built relationship, can be frank with each other and know when to pull away if someone is too busy with work to be interrupted by questions.

I think we really do trust each other. No one goes behind others back. We try to support each other. (Older respondent 2)

When asked about the largest enabling factors of knowledge sharing the will to share is important for every respondent. The older respondents experience it as important that the younger coworkers are interested in hearing them share their experiences, and that it is obvious when this is not the case. One of the younger respondents is of the experience that the older employees enjoy sharing their knowledge to the younger coworkers. Both of the older respondents state that it most of the time is enjoyable, and that they themselves also grow from the experience.

I think it is fun if it is things that I know. I also enjoy helping and thinking about areas where I don’t know. In dialogues I think you can really learn and gain something. (Older respondent 1)

There are however situations where these discussions are not helpful. According to one old respondent there are some very knowledgeable coworkers who simply do not have the ability to share their knowledge that way. They have to do the task, they cannot explain it. One younger respondent also describes that there are certain coworkers who say that something is really simple and then show you what to do. But they do not explain why and how it is done, which is frustrating to the
respondent. The other young respondent perceives coworkers sometimes complain that the question asked is too basic and that the younger respondent already should know this, but that is uncommon.

There are also situations when the younger employees share their knowledge with older coworkers according to the respondents. Especially concerning computer programs, as the younger generations have grown up with the technology and have a better grasp on the newer CAD systems. Both of the older respondents perceive that the young coworkers have a better technical knowledge and learn the new systems faster, but that the older employees experience makes them secure in themselves and their role. One of the older respondents believe the different generations work in diverse ways because of this. The older coworkers have their routines that they are comfortable with. It might not be the fastest way all of the time, but it works. The younger employees are viewed as experimenting more to find their way. All of the other respondents do however not see any major differences between the way older and younger coworkers perform the work. They describe that it has more to do with the individual personalities. A younger respondent mention that there is a good mix of young and old in the company. That the experiences of the older and new injections from the young blend well together. There is an inherent respect towards the older employees and you try to learn as much from them as possible.

You have respect for the older coworkers, the ones who have been around for a while. You don’t question them the first thing you do. You take the opportunity to learn as much as possible from them. (Young respondent 1)

The other younger respondent does however indicate that it is easier to gravitate towards other young colleagues during knowledge sharing opportunities since they share the same interest, values and life interests. The respondent also mentions that the younger coworkers provide a faster response while older give a lengthier explanation most of the time.

Organizational environment

In the material for the developmental conversation there are three areas that are primarily discussed: Competency and goal fulfillment, ability to take initiative and action; and teamwork. These are supposed to reflect the overall organizational core values of: Meet challenges with a long term vision, Continuous improvement, Understanding the source of the problem, Respect and Teamwork.

Both young respondents spontaneously bring up the core value of “understanding the source of the problem” as being practiced at the workplace. One of them states that the engineers could be better at talking to the staff that assembles the product, in order to understand how this process affects their decisions. It is however still viewed as a core value that represents the reality of the workplace. In general, morale at the workplace seems to be high when interviewing the respondents. They all express a sense of job satisfaction. Another cultural element that several respondents bring up is that the engineers are prestige-less.
There is no prestige here. I don’t see people trying to be above anyone else. Everyone gets to be heard, and everybody listen to each other. Nobody just runs their own race and just care about their own work. (Younger respondent 2)

The formal work structure of the R&D is described by the respondents as that the manager gives them tasks within their expertise that they are to solve. These tasks require much time in front of the computer and, when the situation calls for it, consult a colleague or a know-how sheet on how to go forward. However, much of the process of finding a solution is up to the individual themselves. The employees are also part of projects of varying sizes. The bigger the project, the more people from different units are involved an older respondent conveys. One of the older respondents also perceive that there are attempts to involve the less experienced workers in these team planning sessions, so they can understand the process and learn from it. The respondent describes that faster routes can sometimes be taken, but that the more experienced coworkers understand the need to get the less experienced coworkers up to speed. One of the respondents has a more individual role as an expert within a narrow field. Therefore this respondent works in a larger project for a longer time, which is different from the other respondents.

The work being done at R&D is however not about innovating the “big new product” according to a younger respondent. The progresses are more incremental and therefore often standardized. According to the company’s core values, standardization should be strived for in every level of the organization. This also becomes a key component in the organizations work with continuous improvements as the standards create a benchmark to work off of as well as save time. In the formalized organizational values there is a clear focus on the importance of using time in a productive way. To waste time does not add any value to the organization and is therefore stated to be continuously improved in order to be as efficient as possible. Although time does not appear to be a huge constraining factor, all respondents indicate that there sometime just is not enough time to answer questions and share knowledge.

Sometimes it is very stressful here. Many work a lot of overtime to make it come together in the end. Many also have to travel a bit, so there you lose time every day. It doesn’t make it better. (Older respondent 2)

Both young respondents indicate that the location of the company is not ideal and are unsure if they would want to move to the location the company is situated in. They do however mention that they like the job, that they are given much responsibility and especially that there is much opportunity for individual development. There is some concern from one of the older respondents that the location can become a larger issue for the organization, as the younger generation is seen as more mobile and do not stay in the same organization for long. The respondent wonders if the location might be an untenable circumstance for potential young employees. According to several respondents there is a heavy staff turnover at the R&D department. There is a core of experienced workers who have stayed in the organization for a long time, but there are also many younger employees who leave the company within a couple of years of
starting the employment. Several respondents mention that there are many new employees right now and that it means there is an adjustment period where they have to get situated in the job.

I wouldn’t say it is positive for the organization. We have our systems that it is pretty difficult to get used to. It takes effort from the newly employed, so it takes a while to learn. It takes effort from the company as a whole as well. To learn these things the new employee has to ask questions to coworkers. (Young respondent 1)

This heavy turnover is not viewed as positive by any of the respondents. An older respondent mentions that the new employees ask basic question 5-10 times a day. Though the respondent wants to help them, it is frustrating to be interrupted that often. A couple of respondents also bring up that there is a form of dependence on certain key employees. These are individuals who have worked for a long time in the organization, are knowledgeable, as well as being culture bearers. One younger respondent describes that they have one coworker in their group who is essential for the overall group success. If this coworker would vanish abruptly one day, there would be severe issues. Questions are raised about what is being done by upper management to counteract these trends of heavy staff turnover.

The leadership in the organization is described as supportive by all of the respondents. Managers are viewed as supplying opportunities for development through offering training. The resources possible are really used to help the employees. Managers are also seen as supportive of the employees talking and sharing knowledge with each other.

*Societal climate*

The older respondents think the time available in organizations has become more scarce the last years. One respondent indicates that this causes a more stressed workforce than the respondent has seen in previous years.

I feel like work in general is under more time constrains than a few years ago. (Older respondent 1)

Engineers as an occupation holds a special significance is the Swedish debate on the generational shift, as there is expected to be too few engineers in the workforce in the future (SCB, 2013b). No one of the respondents mention the lack of engineers in the future workforce however. It is unclear if the respondents are unaware of this, or if it simply is viewed as a non-issue. The societal zeitgeist of heavy movement between organizations by the workforce in general, and engineers in particular, is however a cause for concern with several of the respondents. An older respondent understands why the younger generations want to move around and take on new challenges, but this does not make it less of an organizational problem.
4.4 Summary of the Within-Case Analysis

In table 4.1 the results are summarized by case. Knowledge sharing over generations concerns different dimensions of knowledge, exist in many different activities and can have many different factors that impact the process, which table 4.1 indicates. The order the aspects are listed in is not an indication of which knowledge, activity or factor has more importance. The factors are listed as enabling or constraining dependent on how they were discussed by the respondents or documents.

Table 4.1, Summary of the results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of knowledge</th>
<th>The Municipality</th>
<th>The School</th>
<th>The Manufacturer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Older workers specialist knowledge</td>
<td>Knowledge of taught subject</td>
<td>Technical knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Younger workers updated knowledge</td>
<td>Social competence</td>
<td>Social competence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Formal routines</td>
<td>Younger workers updated knowledge</td>
<td>Experience of practical applications</td>
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<tr>
<td>Silent routines</td>
<td>Silent routines and culture of older workers</td>
<td>Younger workers updated knowledge</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Some formal routines</td>
<td>Standardizations and routines</td>
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<tr>
<th>How the knowledge is shared</th>
<th>The Municipality</th>
<th>The School</th>
<th>The Manufacturer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intra-group communication</td>
<td>Sharing with closest colleagues</td>
<td>Informal encounters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Job Shadowing</td>
<td>Formal mentorship programs</td>
<td>Informal mentoring</td>
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<td>Certain formal meetings</td>
<td>Certain formal meetings</td>
<td>Certain formal meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Documents</td>
<td>Exit transfer conversation</td>
<td>Know-how sheets</td>
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<td>Retiree transfer documents</td>
<td>Break room conversations</td>
<td>Retiree transfer documents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Formal Training</td>
<td>Formal Training</td>
<td>Break room conversations</td>
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<td>Cross-divisional teams</td>
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<td>Formal Training</td>
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<td>Teamwork</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Enabling factors</strong></td>
<td>Inter-generational relationships</td>
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<td>Respect for older coworkers</td>
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<td>Reciprocal sharing</td>
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<td>Knowledge sharing as enjoyable</td>
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<td>Introduction program fosters social networks</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-group trust</td>
<td>Shared goal of caring for the children</td>
<td>Trust among the closer colleagues</td>
<td>Trust among the closer colleagues</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culture of openness</td>
<td>Managers actively changing culture</td>
<td>Awareness of impact from generational shift</td>
<td>Managers actively changing culture</td>
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<td>Awareness of impact from generational shift</td>
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<td>Low staff turnover</td>
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<td>Accessible leadership</td>
<td>Accessible leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Occasional office space for spontaneous communication</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Constraining factors</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>A jungle of documents</td>
<td>Too much documentation</td>
<td>Small rift due to merger</td>
<td>Key employee dependency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Key worker dependency</td>
<td>Small rift due to merger</td>
<td>Major lack of resources</td>
<td>Knowledge gap between generations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty learning lingo for new employees</td>
<td>Not enough time for sharing</td>
<td>Not enough time for sharing</td>
<td>Occasionally stressful</td>
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<td>Occasionally stressful</td>
<td>Not enough time for sharing</td>
<td>Not enough time for sharing</td>
<td>Occasionally stressful</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specialized roles</td>
<td>Much individual work</td>
<td>Culture of yourself taking care of your classroom</td>
<td>High staff turnover</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slight lack of resources</td>
<td>Culture of yourself taking care of your classroom</td>
<td>Culture of yourself taking care of your classroom</td>
<td>High staff turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many older workers, few young</td>
<td>Culture of yourself taking care of your classroom</td>
<td>Culture of yourself taking care of your classroom</td>
<td>High staff turnover</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of inter-divisional communication</td>
<td>Status decreasing</td>
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4.5 Cross-Case Analysis

In this section the results are analyzed in a cross-case analysis. This chapter has so far only been a within-case analysis, as the cases are presented separately from one another. In order to understand how the cases compare, relate and differ from each other, this section presents the empirical material of the cases in a cohesive manner. This provides an integrated perspective on knowledge sharing in the generational shift.

4.5.1 Types of knowledge

Every case is similar in that there are different kinds of knowledge that is being shared. And while the types of knowledge are called different names by the respondents these are often similar types of knowledge. For example is the technical knowledge of the manufacturer, the knowledge of subject from the school and specialist knowledge similar in that they are possessed by one individual and pertain to the specific work subject at hand. It is also an important to know how to use this knowledge in the work. According to the respondents, this know how is gained through experience, which means the older employees have a better grasp of this kind of knowledge. The younger workers can then instead provide a more updated knowledge from their education, and a more experimental approach in general. In the school and manufacturer, social competence is brought up as well by several respondents as an important knowledge to have in the communication between coworkers.

Knowledge in forms of routines is also on display in each of the organizations, but the cases differ in how much these routines are used. In the manufacturer and the municipality, the knowledge in the formal routines is used frequently as it is a requirement to perform the tasks. In the school the routines are described to be written down, but they are not described to be used in the same manner as the other cases.

There are also strong cultural values and silent routines in every case. In the municipality it is important to know the unofficial routines and communication routes, and in the school the long tenured older employees have created a culture that has proven difficult to alter. This is a strong group knowledge that is important for the informal life of the organization according to respondents. In the manufacturer there are strong cultural values in the documents and values of the organization, but these are not as strong as the other two cases, most likely because the high turnover of the staff.

4.5.2 How the knowledge is shared

In each case, much of the knowledge sharing is done in informal ways. It happens in break rooms to varying degrees, when bumping into someone in the hallway or when the coworkers deliberately seek out each other to ask questions. This happens in every case. The possibility for it occurring is however different because of the nature
of the work. The teachers of the school have a more individual form of work. This does not lend itself to the same kind of spontaneous communication as the other two cases, where teamwork and cross functional teams are incorporated into the everyday work. Especially in the manufacturer the informal knowledge sharing is abundant.

There are however some evidence of formal knowledge sharing activities. In the school there is a formal mentorship program that lasts for a year, and the municipality hires new employees ahead of time to work side by side with retiring coworkers. These sorts of activities also take place in the manufacturer, but they are then described as more ad hoc and to arise spontaneously and informally.

One formal way of knowledge sharing that the manufacturer does display, is the use of their know-how sheets. It is a vital knowledge sharing practice where routines and previous trial-and-errors are passed on. In the municipality there are so many documents that it is described as a jungle. Though they are many, the documents are viewed as very useful tool for retaining routines and to allocate information and knowledge in this case. In the school there are also many documents being made, but the respondents do not indicate that they are widely used. Similarly to the documents for routines, every case uses some kind of exit interview or document when employees retire. These do however not appear to be passed on directly to the employees, but stay with management.

Another activity that is similarly used in every case is formal meetings. These are often seen as not containing much knowledge sharing, except in some cases where the purpose of the meeting is formally stated to share knowledge. Examples of this is the construction engineering meetings in the manufacturer and one of the units in the municipality that had some kind of sharing activity or training every week. Training is also used in every case. How the training is applied differs however. The school has in-service training days where the teacher’s subject is in focus some of the time and of a more general nature at other times. Both the municipality and manufacturer offer many specialized kinds of training to their employees depending on their position. The respondents of these two cases also stress that the training during the introduction period is important. Especially in the manufacturer this is seen as an important tool for building the corporate values and social networks over divisional boundaries.

4.5.3 Enabling and constraining factors

The clearest resemblance between the cases in this thesis is that knowledge sharing is seen as an enjoyable and reciprocal experience. Participating in knowledge sharing is something that both old and young want to do, according to all of the respondents. Almost every young respondent also express a respect for the older coworker, as they recognize the importance of the knowledge that the older employees possess. The inter-generational relationships seem to be strong, as no rift can be seen between the generational cohorts (although the respondents in the school indicate a small rift in the organization, between the members of the two merged schools).
organizations do however have a differing distribution of age in their workforces. The municipality has had low staff turnover for a long time and therefore do not have many younger employees. The younger respondents in this case perceive it as feeling a bit separate in their age group. The school has traditionally had low staff turnover but many are now retiring, opening up for younger coworkers to be hired. The manufacturer has high staff turnover, which has caused a perceived good mix of young and old in the workplace. It has however also caused the manufacturer to lack organizational memory of how work has been carried out in previous years. Although the generational cohorts get along, the younger respondents in every case indicate that they rather socialize with coworkers in their own age group. The interviewed manager for both the school and manufacturer perceived the younger employees proactivity, in seeking out and receiving knowledge, as the most enabling factor in knowledge sharing across generations. There also seem to be a bit of a cognitive disparity between generations, as there in every case is some kind of indication that the younger workers need some time to understand the lingo of the workplace and learn the systems. Young respondents in the manufacturer, for example, perceived that older coworkers on occasion could not understand how younger coworkers had so little knowledge of certain subjects.

In every case, trust is shown for coworkers who the respondents work closely with. In the manufacturer the trust is however described to go over the divisional boundaries, as there is much cooperation between divisions. This trust is also described as being fostered in the introduction program, when the new employees get to form social networks throughout the organization. This is also done to a lesser extent in the municipality, but does not appear to have yielded the same level of success as in the manufacturer. In the municipality and the school, there is trust for the closest colleagues and within the immediate unit, but it seems to lessen when going outside the immediate work group. A reason for this may be the organizational structures of the cases. In the manufacturer, the structure is centered on working in teams and employees therefore work over divisional boundaries to a large extent. The more specialized functions of the municipality and the teachers individual work does not lend itself to the same level of collaboration and opportunity for building trust. The municipality does however indicate that there are functions that have an office space that enables knowledge sharing.

Every case also indicates some kind of limitation regarding time to share. In the manufacturer and municipality the respondents mention that it can get very stressful in periods which hinder the knowledge sharing. Time is specifically seen in the manufacturer’s company values as strategically important, which puts a focus on standardizing the work routines. In the school, the lacking time and resources is however reported to be a much larger problem. Limited resources are not seen as the same kind of issue in the other two cases. However, the manager of the municipality indicated there were not enough resources to implement the kind of succession-activities that were desired. One of the reasons for the lack of time in the school is the
administrative work and documenting teachers have to do. In all three cases there is mention of many documents, but also issues concerning them. In the municipality the documents are viewed as too many, so it is hard to locate them. The manufacturer’s know-how sheets have a problematic search function which makes it difficult to find the specific one the employees need.

The different organizations also have their own cultures that enable knowledge sharing in their own way. The manufacturer is imbued with a lack of prestige between coworkers. In the municipality, the term openness is used frequently to describe coworkers’ relationships. In the school there is a shared sense of purpose in making sure the children are as well off as possible. The traditional culture of the school has however been to not listen to other teachers. A teacher should take care of his/her own classroom. But the respondents indicate this is becoming a culture of the past. One of the reasons for this is the managers’ continuous work to change the organizational culture towards one of openness. The managers’ divided leadership in the school is seen as confusing sometimes for the respondents though. Also the two other cases indicate that the leadership of the organization as an enabler for knowledge sharing, because managers are seen as accessible and supportive.

The view on the generational shift can be discerned in the analyzed documents of the school and municipality. In both of these cases it is stated that the generational shift is an important factor for the organization to take into consideration. In the case of the manufacturer however, the manager mentions that the generational shift is not seen as a problematic scenario as there are few staff retiring in their organization. However, statistics show that the number of available engineers in the job market will drop. Another societal climate concern is the teachers decreasing status as an occupation. Both the municipality’s and the manufacturer’s respondents mention that the organization has several key-employees. They wonder how it will affect the workplace when they leave and if enough is done to mitigate this risk.
5. DISCUSSION

In this chapter the empirical results are discussed in four sections. The first three sections follow the research questions of this thesis. The fourth section presents a summarizing visualization of the discussion chapter.

5.1 What Knowledge is Shared?

There appears to be much cohesion in these three cases over what kind of knowledge that is being shared, although a few differences can be discerned. Three types of knowledge: Human, collective and structured are shared within the organizations.

5.1.1 Human knowledge

All three cases consist of employees who Drucker (1959) would refer to as knowledge workers as they are engineers, teachers and specialists. They all have to deal with non-routine situations that require extensive knowledge in that particular context. In the analyzed documents, being innovational and creative are desired abilities from the employers, further legitimizing the desire from the organization to create knowledge workers. This means that the knowledge of the employees in these organizations can be argued to be their greatest resource.

As the employees work in specific areas of expertise they have and can share, what DeLong and Fahey (2000) would refer to as human knowledge, which is individual knowledge of how to do the work. Human knowledge relies on the tacit, as well as the explicit knowledge dimension. The specialists of the municipality must know the subject of the specific field as well as be able to know how to communicate it. The teachers of the school must know their subject and how to handle pupils in a classroom. The engineers of the manufacturer must have the technical expertise and know how to apply it in practice. These routines are then explicitly codified (Mankin, 2009) in know-how sheets. But it is also stated that some very knowledgeable engineers do not have the ability to share their knowledge, because they cannot explain it. This is a sure sign of that this is tacit knowledge that is unable to be articulated in words, and can only be shared by experiencing it together (Polanyi, 1962).

The empirical results show several examples of situations where the younger respondents mention that older coworkers have experienced more scenarios and therefore have formed an understanding how scenarios are connected. The older coworkers have a more extensive knowledge in that they have formed patterns from information, and thus have created knowledge (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). These experiences seem to have been accrued in different scenarios by the coworkers. Neither of the older respondents in the case of the manufacturer had worked for the organization in question for a longer time, but felt like their past experiences lent itself well to the new context. There were also examples of this in other cases from both younger and older respondents of coworkers (or themselves) who had joined.
from other organizations and could adopt their experience to the new context. This shows that the human knowledge of the individual can be applied in different context if the knowledge is vast enough to see the connections.

The younger employees are on the contrary seen as able to bring another form of human knowledge into the organization as they have a more updated knowledge on the subject matter. This knowledge, partnered with their inexperience, make them try new and innovative ways to accomplish their tasks. What the older workers who have stayed for a longer time in the organization can contribute is then a context specific human knowledge. For examples how former actions have been taken and how it has affected the organization. These employees are therefore historical repositories who can make sure the same mistakes are not repeated. The stories of how more experienced coworkers see the overall picture of the organization are examples of this tacit knowledge. These coworkers are especially praised in the case of the municipality and the manufacturer, where a certain part of the job would become very problematic if the individual would suddenly leave. This means that there is human knowledge that is context specific from individuals who have stayed in that organization for a long time, and human knowledge that is not context specific in form of younger and/or new employees. As the context specific employees know what works in particular situations there is a force to keep the current work practices in place. But there is also a force that challenges these structures as the new employees experiment. In certain situations this will develop and improve the work routines, but this could also be disastrous. Employees with the knowledge from another context do not understand the underlying structures that also will be changed.

5.1.2 Collective knowledge

The older organizational members who have worked in the same context for a longer time also display what DeLong and Fahey (2000) refer to as collective knowledge. In the empirical results this can be seen in informal routines and norms as well as knowing which channels to go through to get the task done. In the municipality it is important to learn which informal channels to go through. If you do not it is difficult to get response on your ideas. The manufacturer however has a high turnover in staff and do not have many who know how the work was conducted 20 years ago. Not having strong enough collective knowledge is a problem to an organization as much of its identity comes from these shared mental models. When a younger employee enter an organization there is no way of having this collective knowledge, so when the younger worker is socialized into the organization, it is reasonable to argue that they are gaining collective knowledge.

The collective knowledge can be argued to go hand in hand with the creation of cultures at the workplace (DeLong & Fahey, 2000) as it is what shapes the behaviors and informal routines of the workplace. These are unwritten regulations of the work that the individual gains from socializing with the staff, and therefore become a legitimized member of the CoP (Wenger, 2000). A productive collective knowledge
and culture that is desired to be transferred to the younger generation, is the manufacturers prestige-less environment where everyone gets to speak, and everyone is heard. Another one is the municipality’s sense of openness. This knowledge is created in the communication between the employees and the young members learn this social knowledge of how to behave in interactions. In this way, the collective knowledge is also a strategically important resource for organizations.

Collective knowledge can however also be harmful. The school’s old culture of not taking suggestions on how to run your classroom is just as likely to be transferred to young employees, as the lack of prestige at the manufacturer. This is mostly visible in the case of the school as they have the highest percentage of employees who have resided in the organization for a long time. This is however recognized by management at the school, as they actively work to change the culture. The manager states that it is difficult to change the norms though. It is important to understand when the collective knowledge can be harmful for knowledge sharing, as the school has. If they are not changed the knowledge sharing will be constrained, as that collective knowledge creates an informal tacit frame that restrains interactions.

### 5.1.3 Structured knowledge

The structured knowledge (DeLong & Fahey, 2000) is imbedded in the formal routines and practices of the organization. In the municipality retiring employees are documenting their routines and therefore converting their explicit human knowledge into structured knowledge. At the school documents are being produced continuously and some are reported to serve the purpose of standardizing work practices. Also at the manufacturer structured knowledge is being created in know-how sheets that are supposed to standardize the solutions encountered by the R&D department. Another form of structured knowledge is the formalized documents that are analyzed in this thesis. All these examples point towards a trend in creating structured knowledge through explicitly codifying the knowledge of individuals and groups. This enables the organization to retain explicit knowledge in the organization, and share the codified explicit knowledge from older to younger workers. This also makes the organizations less dependent on the experience based knowledge of the employees in the knowledge sharing. Capturing this kind of knowledge appears to be a high priority. However, it is problematic to only focus on capturing the explicit knowledge of the organization. Ways of sharing the tacit knowledge of the employees must also be incorporated to not lose an entire dimension of knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). When a retiree leaves, it is therefore not enough to simply have them write down their experiences in a “transfer document”, as could be seen in every case of this thesis. This misses the intrinsic and tacit experiences that is shared by working together and socializing.
5.2 How is the Knowledge Shared?

In this section the activities that are used by the organizations will be discussed. Although every case exhibits several similar activities and practices for knowledge sharing, each organization also has their own distinct combination of knowledge sharing activities.

5.2.1 Informal meetings and encounters

It can be argued that the majority of the knowledge sharing in the cases is being carried out informally in the workplaces. In every case much focus is on everyday encounters that involve different kinds of knowledge sharing. In the school the break room has become an informal venting forum for knowledge sharing, as stories of success and frustration and the interactions they spark. This is what Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) refer to as socialization and internalization, depending on if the shared knowledge is tacit or explicit. The coworkers form their own concepts of the new knowledge and judge it (Davenport & Prusak, 1998) to become tacit knowledge within the individual knowledge. In the manufacturer, the engineers collaborate in the everyday work and informal encounters are therefore occurring all the time, stimulating knowledge sharing tremendously. Within the municipality there is also much informal communication within the functions and getting input from colleagues for advice is many times seen as a prerequisite for completing the task. The problem in this case is that the employees are specialists within their own specific field and may be the only one with their role within their function. As individuals must understand technical terms in order to communicate in professional settings (Hinds & Pfeffer, 2003) this can potentially make it difficult for them to discuss certain subjects with their coworkers spontaneously. There was also a concern of the different functions not having much in common. Although not everyone agreed with this sentiment, there were indications that employees in different functions do not have much to talk about and therefore do not communicate as much. If there is a lack of understanding between functions, there may be a need to create opportunities for them to meet at the boundaries of their CoPs (Wenger, 2000). These forms of boundary crossing interactions stimulate learning and knowledge creation.

In every case there is also an indication by younger respondents that they are drawn more towards coworkers in their own cohorts when they choose who to communicate with. This may limit the informal communication with older coworkers and then constrain knowledge sharing over generations. It therefore becomes important to implement knowledge management activities with the focus of sharing between generations to ensure that it happens.

5.2.2 Formal meetings

There is a myriad of different formal meetings to attend which have the potential of supporting knowledge sharing in the organizations. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) write that formal meetings create explicit knowledge, which supports the creation of
new explicit knowledge. There are examples in both the municipality and the manufacturer of how formal meetings provide discussion on important subjects, aiding the knowledge flow of the workplace. However, the respondents did in most cases not convey these meetings as productive forums for much knowledge sharing. The manufacturer formally places a specific importance on meetings as a way for the workers to discuss issues in non-routine thinking, but little is mentioned in ways of this actually happening. As Davenport and Prusak (1998) warn can happen, the meetings appear to have become a controlled environment where the partaker becomes passive and uninvolved. It is important to remember that all meetings do not serve the purpose of being knowledge sharing activities, as the focus can be more on administrative tasks and information about the current state of affairs. However, managers and leaders can use meetings for stimulating discussion and formulate them as a tool for creating participation among the employees (Bartol & Srivastava, 2002). This is however not the rule in the cases of this study, but the exception. If an awareness of this dynamic is created and strategic knowledge management decisions are made for implementing new ways of conducting meeting, it may be much improved as a knowledge sharing activity.

5.2.3 Mentorship and job shadowing

Good ways of sharing tacit knowledge is for the actors to spend time together on the task (Polanyi, 1962). Creating a mentorship relationship between one experienced worker and a younger employee is an example of this and has been reported as a knowledge sharing activity in two of the cases, the school and the manufacturer. In the school there is a legal obligation to supply a mentor to new employees and therefore a formal initiative. This makes the relationship strategically recognized in the organization and therefore gains legitimacy (Appelbaum et al., 2004). The teachers reported being very pleased with their mentor relationship as both a mentor and mentee. While these are without doubt good situations, formal mentoring runs a risk of forcing the actors into a bad relationship (Karkoulian et al., 2008). The manager reported that his/her duty was to follow up the mentor relationship in the school, which is a way of ensuring the actors are not stuck in undesirable situations. In the manufacturer on the other hand there is no formal mentorships reported, but both of the younger respondents had formed informal mentor relationships that they reported as rewarding. The manager also states that ad hoc mentoring happens in connection to retirement. Karkoulian et al. (2008) mean that the mix of personalities has a higher likelihood of becoming better in informal mentoring. They do however lack the organizational legitimacy formal mentoring has, which is something the interviewed manager reflects may be a desirable path to go. This thesis show that both informal and formal mentoring can work. No matter what kind is implemented, mentoring appears to be a good way of transferring tacit knowledge between generations according to the results of this thesis. However, formalizing mentorship programs enable organization to turn the activity into a legitimized activity that can be aligned with the overall company strategy (Spender & Grant, 1996).
In the municipality no mentorships are reported, but there are signs of job shadowing in the organization as a way of sharing knowledge from older to younger coworkers. The manager in this case wishes to see more job shadowing as a part of succession planning, but that the resources are not sufficient. The same argument is raised in the school. There are also signs of job shadowing when the teachers visit each other’s classes. It is however not clear if this is a formal system or if the teachers are acting on their own accord. Leonard et al. (2013) writes that job shadowing is rewarding way of sharing tacit knowledge as the younger employee learn by observing and interacting with the retiring coworker. The organizations in this thesis share this opinion as all of them in some way indicate that it is important for coworkers to perform tasks together in order to learn complex tasks. No matter if it is in mentorships or job shadowing it is important for organizations to use some kind of activity to transfer the knowledge of key employees in this way. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) would refer to this as a socialization strategy as the tacit knowledge is shared between actors. Since this knowledge is tacit it means that not only the human knowledge of the provider can be shared in this form of activity, but also the collective knowledge of values and informal routines (DeLong & Fahey, 2000). These activities also create the opportunity for younger employees to gain access into new CoPs and become more legitimate members of their profession (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

5.2.4 Working in teams

There is teamwork in every case of this research. But although the municipality and school display teamwork in subject groups or in intra-functional projects, the most work in team in these cases occur in the manufacturer. The entire R&D department is geared toward collaboration to solve problems and tasks, so teamwork is naturally incorporated into the work. Teamwork is a socialization activity (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995) that creates tacit knowledge and stimulates the knowledge flow. The teamwork oriented structures that have become a common occurrence at modern workplaces is therefore a practice that supports knowledge sharing in organizations with knowledge workers. Since the nature of the work in the two other cases is so different from the manufacturer, they cannot hope to replicate the vastness of the activity. If it is not possible to implement work structures that focus on teamwork and interaction, there should be socialization-oriented knowledge sharing activities implemented, to ensure communication and interaction. The respondents in this thesis, as well as McGuire et al. (2007) argue that a mix of generations at work make up for weaknesses and provide an enjoyable working environment. This emphasizes that teams should be diverse in age. The team can then use the members’ generational strengths to improve the teamwork and to stimulate knowledge sharing.

Working in cross-functional groups is seen by Probst et al. (2000) as a way of getting new perspectives on subject matters. In the municipality and the manufacturer this happens in joint projects. The respondents mirror this view and describe it as a rewarding experience. When choosing strategies for how to structure work, it has to
be taken into consideration that teamwork not only supplies different perspectives on the topic, but that it also is a good way of developing the knowledge of the organizational members. It can be argued that these are boundary crossing activities where members from different professional CoPs meet to discuss an issue both CoPs have in common (Wenger, 2000). This creates an opportunity to develop the CoPs with the infusion of the new perspectives. Not only will this create new knowledge in the cross-functional teamwork, but this will also build trust over functional lines. This trust is said to be limited over functional lines in the school and municipality, and this may be due to limited interaction between groups.

5.2.5 Training and competency development

An important training activity that includes knowledge sharing is, in both the manufacturer and the municipality, the introduction program. In both of these cases it is used for making the new employee familiar with the varying parts of the organization, so they understand who does and knows what. This goes a long way in setting up networks within the organization for the employees. Wang and Noe (2010) argue the importance of this for the organization as a whole. As the individual becomes a more legitimized member of a CoP he/she brings the social network with them into the CoP (Wenger, 2000). This way all the organizational members become closer to each other and bring the shared knowledge of their social network closer to every new contact made. As Wenger (2000) stress the importance of learning and development happen at boundaries of CoPs, meeting organizational members from another CoP can create new viewpoints and create knowledge. Noe (2002) argues that the real value of formal trainings is creating interrelationships between divisions and these introduction programs are examples of developmental activities with this agenda.

Formal training initiatives are also offered in each case after the introduction period. These serve the purpose of sharing more explicit knowledge about subject matters. In the school there are in-service training days, the municipality provide different kinds of unique competency developments depending on the specialized needs of each occupation, as well as a weekly training in at least one function. The respondents of the manufacturer indicate that many forms of competency developments are offered, but the short duration of employment of the respondents means they have not participated in many so far. This form of traditional training is what Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) refer to as combination and internalization in knowledge creation. In most cases these competency developments transfer explicit knowledge and depending on what the individual cognitively do with the knowledge, one of these knowledge creations occur.

5.2.6 Codification of knowledge in documents

Documents seem to be a double edged sword. There undoubtedly are a lot of them in each case and in large the respondents see the usefulness of them, but the sheer amount of documents is a cause for concern. Hislop (2002) warn that it is not
beneficial to over rely on documents as they have limitation in what knowledge they can transfer. One of the big advantages of the documents is however that they stay in the organizations long after the employee who shared the knowledge has left the organization. All three cases report producing a lot of them, but only two indicate that they are useful for knowledge sharing. The school, where the teachers do not find them useful, is therefore a paradoxical case as far as knowledge sharing goes. They are said to produce many different kind of documents, but that few of them are useful for knowledge sharing. One should however remember that all documents produced do not have the purpose of knowledge sharing, but that the potential for phrasing them and using them as such is there. The manager does state that attempts to implement more routines in the workplace are made. It may be that reading documents to gain knowledge has not become a norm and part of the culture yet. This would indicate the school may be headed in the right direction, although they are not there.

In the other public organization of this thesis, the municipality, documents are seen as helpful in the daily work. But it is described as a jungle when trying to find specific documents by a couple of respondents. In the official documents analyzed in this thesis in both of these cases there is an emphasis put on that the organizational members must find information and knowledge themselves and not expect to be supplied with it. This is reported to force the employee to spend considerable amount of time searching for policies and other documents. The focus on the employees themselves finding answers in documents, may aid in creating active knowledge seekers in a modern work environment where it is of the essence (Drucker, 1959). But there must be a balance in this so the coworkers do not become jaded, fatigued and miss out on tacit knowledge sharing.

In the manufacturer the know-how sheets are seen as very useful tools for gaining knowledge. The search system is however deemed unsatisfactory by some and must be improved for the know-how sheets to reach the potential as a rewarding tool for sharing explicit knowledge. Another way these documents can be improved could also be to incorporate multimedia in them. The technology of today does not limit documents to texts and possibly images. Video or interactive solutions could be implemented to create a “richer” externalized (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995) material where even tacit knowledge can be argued to be shared, according to Lee and Suliman, 2002. The younger generation also has a more advanced understanding of IT and technology according to the results of this thesis. This is not surprising since they have grown up in a computerized age (Loomis, 2000). It can be argued that the younger generation therefore also is more likely to use multimedia as a part of their knowledge sharing processes. Documents are knowledge repositories that could take on a new and more sophisticated role in the future knowledge sharing endeavors.
5.3 What are the Enabling and Constraining Factors?

In this section the different enabling and constraining factors in the empirical results will be discussed.

5.3.1 Trust, respect and chemistry

An important enabling factor for knowledge sharing in all three cases is the relationship between the coworkers, and especially the trust seems to be of importance. Tschanne-Moran (2001) argues that no knowledge sharing can occur if there is no trust between actors. Both older and younger respondents, in the individual as well as focus interviews, underlined that they felt trust for at least their closest coworkers or supplied stories of situations that displayed trust. The cultures of openness and the enjoyable experience of sharing knowledge are expressions of this. The aspect of an overall societal culture (Michailova & Hutchings, 2006), or national economy (Bonaventura, 1997) to possibly restrict the trust between actors was not found anywhere in this research. Further supporting the notion that the cases have a good amount of trust is that the pair interviews did not give any different kind of replies than in the individual interviews. In an organization where individuals are afraid of sharing with each other the pair interview would likely have produced a different set of answers from the individual ones, as a co-worker could hear the answers (Michell, 1999). It appears the respondents trusted each other enough to give similar and equally critical answers to the questions. This shows what Abrams et al. (2013) call a benevolence form of trust, which, according to Abrams et al. (2013), is supposed to take time to attain between actors. This is by several respondents acknowledged by stating that trust grows with the relationship. In the municipality however, respondents stated that trust between different functions and groups was not as great as between intra-group members and that caused a lack of understanding between the functions. According to von Krogh (1998) this is not uncommon, but that informal communication between the groups can remedy this. There may be a need for more inter-group communication in this case. Similarly in the school there were indications of higher trust with closer colleagues.

In every case, chemistry between the sharing actors was perceived as a prerequisite to knowledge sharing taking place. Lee and Suliman (2002) argue that incompatible personalities make knowledge sharing problematic. An example is in the municipality where the job shadowing had not worked because of a lack of chemistry. If human chemistry is not present, a mitigating aspect that was mentioned was respect. If the actors cannot get along they can at least respect each other enough to listen and hear their opinions. Since respect also is emphasized in official documents of every case it is a factor that also is formally encouraged by the organizations. Many times the younger respondents showed a reverence towards the knowledge and experience of older coworkers. This can be seen as competence based trust (Abrams et al., 2013) where the actors may not yet have formed a close relationship, but that the competence of the older coworker is respected and trusted enough that knowledge
sharing may occur. It can be argued that the process to create benevolence trust needs competence trust to get started. The reason for the actors to start a professional relationship is because they have a need for each other’s competence to carry out their own job, which allows competence trust to be built. As the individuals cooperate over time, they build the benevolence trust. In the manufacturer, there is cooperation because of this need of each other’s specialized competence. And as they continuously interact, a bond is formed. In the two other cases the employees are more isolated in their duties or units. In order to shape this form of benevolence trust it may be necessary to create situations where the employees are dependent on each other’s’ competence for an extended time.

5.3.2 A reciprocal and enjoyable process

The most encouraging result of this study is that the older coworkers, if given the opportunity, will most likely share with the younger coworkers, and that the younger coworkers likely will listen. The common view on knowledge sharing is as an enjoyable and rewarding process where the provider reciprocally gets something in return. As Hendriks (1999) states, it is a mutual win-win situation. The older coworker enjoy sharing because it is pleasurable to give someone else a bit of your own reality, share your stories and contribute to someone’s development.

Also the younger respondents stated that they learn much from the older coworkers and that it is much preferred to talk to them, rather than read a document. It is described as rewarding for both. This also make the term of reciprocity important in this relationship (Hendriks, 1999). The actors that help others are more likely to get help back. This means that the next time that the providing actor wonders something about the receiving actor’s area of expertise, a return of the favor will be expected. This can be connected to Lave and Wenger (1991) as the knowledge sharing enriches the partakers’ expertise as well as it offers opportunities for acknowledgment for the provider.

If organizations provide opportunities for individuals to talk to each other there is much empirical results in this thesis that indicate that the actors will share. The issue is therefore not how to make people talk to each other. The issue is how to provide a structure filled with activities that allow this knowledge sharing to take place.

5.3.3 Formal structure

This thesis supports the notion that knowledge sharing is much dependent on the nature of the organization and how the work in general is structured. It sets the framework for how communication can be conducted at the workplace (Probst et al., 2000). If the tasks encourage interaction, the knowledge will be shared at a higher frequency than when the actors carry out the tasks isolated from one another. Although each case has some form of individual element to the occupation, the engineers in the manufacturer are without a doubt the most interactive because of the team oriented work. An issue however arises when organizations such as the school
need a structure where the work is most suited to be carried out individually. A suggested solution to this individual task isolation may be to form a system of the teacher visiting each other in the classrooms and cooperate in this way. This may however be problematic due to the constraining lack of resources and time. In the municipality there is talk of great trust and interaction within the functions, but there are also statements that the integration is limited between the functions. This does not only cause a lack of interaction, but also creates misunderstandings, rumors and limits social networking (Wang & Noe, 2010). Implementing cross-functional team based initiatives to mitigate these boundaries may therefore bypass these predicaments. The respondents of the municipality do however cooperate much inside their own functions, and draw much knowledge from each other in these situations. So in a way the formal structure does stimulate teamwork within that particular CoP (Lave & Wenger, 1991). As Manuel (2002) suggests that the younger generation prefers team based training, the teamwork oriented formal structures may be welcomed by this generation of employees. There are however no clear indications of younger employees preferring teamwork more than older coworkers in the results. The only similar indication was that the young respondents preferred to ask coworkers questions face-to-face, and not to search for it in documents. It seems evident that the need for social connections in the everyday work is important for the respondents. If the formal structure can be shaped to create these interactions, the organization gets much knowledge sharing as a definite consequence.

5.3.4 Time, resources and office space
As time is an important necessity to share knowledge (O’Dell & Grayson, 1998) the amount of it can be a constraining or enabling factor. In these cases it is seen as very dependent on the workloads the organization is going through. In the manufacturer, work can be very stressful and then the constant interactions can be a source of frustration as the employees get interrupted in their work. This is especially the case during periods of high turnover as newer coworkers will ask more questions. In general though, the engineers feel like they have the time to share, and take time for it. One important reason for this may be the focus on standardizing the work procedures, which has the formulated purpose of not wasting time. If this work is successful the time can then instead be used for knowledge sharing activities. In one division of the municipality the most enabling resource they had was their office space, where they experienced themselves as uninterrupted due to having their own locales. Martens (2011) stress the importance of creating the kind of office spaces that enable spontaneous communication, and this is what occurs here. If individuals can spontaneously meet in the workplace there is a greater chance of spontaneous knowledge sharing.

The case showing the least time and available resources for knowledge sharing is the school. In this organization the resources to create more opportunities to visit each other and stimulate collaboration in the teaching is not a reality. These contextual factors of resources and time are necessities for knowledge sharing to work in
organizations (O’Dell & Grayson, 1998). Without them there is simply no opportunity or primacy given to knowledge sharing. As knowledge has become the most important resource for organizations in the modern organization (Newell et al., 2002) stimulating its flow is of great strategic importance (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995) and without an increase in resources, and through that, the availability of time the school may lack a way of developing its most important resource. The teachers indicate one of the biggest reasons for the lack of time is all the administrative work and documentation they have to perform every day. They feel these duties severely impact the time they can spend on actually teaching the children. Taking the time to then share knowledge is understandably not high on the priority list. Also, a practice that may constrain the knowledge sharing of the school is the teachers’ flexibility in performing their planning at the workplace. If the planning of the work is spent away from the workplace there is much decreased opportunity for bumping into colleagues and experience moments of serendipity through communication (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). The flexibility may very well be good for work-life balance, but from a knowledge sharing perspective it may be a constraint. There is already a lack of time to share in the organization, and this flexibility decrease the time at the workplace even more.

5.3.5 Cultural values and leadership

Every organization has their own unique culture. In the school this is signified by that the workplace is going through the process of finding a new cultural identity after the merger. The manager states they are trying to get away from old informal ways of working and finding a set of common values that guide that endeavor, which according to Schein (1985) is the right way of doing it. The formally stated values of the organization can go a long way towards putting a focus on the strategically important factors for an organization. This is no different in knowledge sharing, as the school now has the opportunity to emphasize knowledge goals in their formal values and routines. There are also reports of a culture of not involving others in what happen in your own classroom. This is a mindset that does not enable knowledge sharing (McDermott & O’Dell, 2001). This is however stated to be a diminishing part of the culture, according to some respondent, and the culture change may therefore solve this issue. That the school is going through high staff turnover due to retirement provides an opportunity to implement the cultural changes. If an organization is going through a generational shift, undesired cultural elements may be easier to alter as the resistance of change should diminish. Creating a knowledge sharing culture is even more important for an organization such as the school. The organization does not have the time, resources or a natural formal structure that enable knowledge sharing. Creating an enabling culture where the norm is to openly communicate and help each other in the workplace will however lessen the impact of the constraining factors. As there is a shared sense of purpose among the teachers to make the situation as good as possible for the pupils, there is a goal everyone can strive towards. This will aid in creating a more open culture.
The role of the managers in this case can be seen from different angles. On one hand is the shared leadership a conscious effort to integrate the merged schools. It shows an awareness that managers have an impact on how the culture and knowledge sharing is carried out, which also Riege (2005) argue to be the case. The managers are also seen as doing as much as they can to help. It is however confusing for the employees to have two responsible parties to turn to as it can easily create unclear guidelines, which Ives et al., (2000) call a constraining factor. The manager did not indicate any concern for this during the interview, so it may be appropriate to evaluate how the shared, integrated leadership impacts the workplace.

Also in the municipality are the managers seen as accessible and trying hard to support the staff in knowledge sharing and work in general. The managers are therefore an enabling factor contributing to an open and trusting culture within the functions (Riege, 2005). It is even stated that there is a sense of family in one of the functions. One of the reasons for this may be the low staff turnover the municipality has had (Sveiby, 2001). The coworkers have formed tight relationships while still able to let new actors into the social spheres and CoPs (Lave & Wenger, 1991). When the ageing generation does start to retire this culture may however change, so the municipality will be presented with challenge of passing on the norms and culture of the retiring employees. The understanding of informal routines and how informal communication channels work is an important example of this. If this is not learned by the new employees, it may very well cause slower work procedures in the organization. Sharing these kinds of silent routines take time because it is a tacit knowledge. The sooner this process of sharing starts, the better.

The manufacturer, which is on the other side of the spectrum, have had high staff turnover. But there seems to be a productive knowledge sharing culture in the organization. The new employees fast get socialized into the organization and the core values that Schein (1985) believe to be important are taught and practiced. Prestige-less is the expression most used to describe the culture. This lack of prestige means everyone is equal, and this can be argued to diminish the effects power based relationships can have on knowledge sharing (Blackler et al., 1998). Keeping this culture in the organization is important. Without this culture the collaborations the everyday work is dependent on may halt and have devastating consequences for knowledge sharing and the performance of the company. As there is high staff turnover and the key culture bearing employees at some point will retire, this may not be an easy task. Capturing these tacit and collective norms and practices cannot be done in know-how sheets. It can only be done in socializing new employees into understanding the underlying informal structures. Managing the culture is a viable strategic decision that organization need to consider.

5.3.6 Strategic considerations

None of the organizations in this thesis stated that a knowledge sharing program was directly interlinked with supporting the overall strategy. As Riege (2005) argues that
This is perhaps the most common reason for knowledge sharing activities not producing the desired results; it is a troublesome result. If knowledge is seen as a strategic resource the organization has the opportunity to manage it (Master, 1999), then the organizations are missing out on this opportunity. The knowledge sharing activities become a sideshow to the strategy and overall work of the organization. If the knowledge sharing activities are not consciously incorporated into the work, and created to support the improvement of the work results, why should they be taken seriously? There is a possibility that there are a strategic knowledge sharing plan from senior management that this thesis do not take into consideration, but these plans have then evidently not been communicated down through the organization, as Riege (2005) suggest it should. This could also be communicated through the formal values and documents of the organization. In every case there are mention of learning and knowledge as important factors in official policies, but the practical connection to the activities of the workplace is not common.

Some indications of strategic considerations could be argued to exist when interpreting the width of activities used. In the three cases, there are wide arrays of different activities (at least indirectly) to share knowledge within the organizations. There can be traces seen of all four of Nonaka and Takeuchi’s (1995) ways of creating knowledge as a result of this. Examples of these are mentorship as socialization, documentation as externalization, formal meetings as combination and training as internalization. The organizations also state in their formal documents that using different communication channels is important. This results are positive as it indicates not a single activity is counted on to do the job, which is what Liu et al. (2006) suggests is the right way of doing it. As there are different types of knowledge being shared in the organizations, one activity cannot hope to encompass all of these types of knowledge. Although this could imply that there is a strategic plan for how to share knowledge, an outspoken strategy is still lacking. Indicating that these activities are strategically implemented becomes speculative.

Liu et al. (2006) also argue for evaluating the knowledge sharing activities to understand if the desired outcomes are achieved. Indications of this can be discerned in for example that the school’s mentorship program involves progress updates with management, and in that training initiatives have formally stated goals. However, for most activities in this thesis no kind of evaluation was practiced. It can be argued that it becomes difficult to understand your knowledge sharing activity and what kind of affect it has without outspoken ways of evaluating it. There appears to be potential in developing these kinds of evaluations.

There is also limited formal knowledge sharing initiatives with the outspoken purpose of transferring knowledge from older to younger workers. Implementing knowledge management initiatives provide legitimacy to the activities and put the focus on the issues of the generational shift (Spender & Grant, 1996). Although both the municipality and the school state in their staff policies that there is an upcoming generational shift, there is little in ways of activities for continuously sharing the
ageing generation’s knowledge. Examples are the school’s formalized mentorship programs and the municipality’s job shadowing in connection to retirements. In the manufacturer there is however a lack of formal initiatives for knowledge sharing over generations, possibly because this sharing occurs so frequently, and informally, in the everyday work. The manufacturer does not take the generational shift as serious, as the immediate staff turnover will not be impacted by the change in demographics, which is the case for the other two organizations. This indicates that the level of impact on the immediate staff turnover may dictate which organizations enter the generational shift with strategies for how to manage it. And even though the staff turnover is not impacted right away for the manufacturer, the change of dynamics of the workforce demographic will create a seller’s market that most likely will impact them, as there will be few engineers available (SCB, 2013b). Combined with the mobility of the youth and the manufacturer’s unattractive rural location, it may have the effect that they no longer will be able to attract and retain the level of personnel they are used to.
5.4 Summary of the Discussion

In this discussion the thesis provide arguments that aim to answer the stated research questions in section 1.1. In an attempt to summarize these interlinking aspects visually, this chapter will end with a model of knowledge sharing in the generational shift based on the key findings of this thesis in figure 5.1. The middle contains the central factors that enable or constrain knowledge sharing in the generational shift according to these conclusions. The ring is Nonaka and Takeuchi’s (1995) four fields of knowledge creation with examples of knowledge sharing activities. In the two outer rings, DeLong and Fahey’s (2000) three types of knowledge has replaced tacit and explicit knowledge from the SECI-model, to give a more nuanced perspective of how knowledge is shared and created within an organization.

Figure 5.1, Visualization of the discussion. Inspired by Delong and Fahey (2000) and Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995)
6. CONCLUSIONS

According to the empirical results, knowledge sharing is a mainly informal activity, or at least an activity without strategic relevance. The sharing of knowledge almost appears to be seen as a “black box”. There is an awareness that it exists and that it is important, but also perhaps a lack of understanding of what to do to in order to facilitate and manage it in organizations. This thesis presents several different activities that can be strategically implemented with the purpose of sharing knowledge in general and between generations specifically. Activities where knowledge sharing is not strategically incorporated, but a byproduct of another purpose, do not create legitimacy in the organization (Master, 1999; Riege 2005). This can only be argued to become even more important in the generational shift. The knowledge that has started to retire and walk out the door is arguably the most important resource (DeLong, 2004), and organizations that do not attempt to share the knowledge to the youth will be left with a knowledge gap. Such an important resource as knowledge deserves the consideration of explicitly formulated strategic goals and dedicated activities that match the organizational goals.

A part of the aim of this study is to deepen the understanding of knowledge sharing across generations and to find ways of improving it. In order to aid in bridging the generational knowledge gap, this thesis concludes with a suggested process for choosing and evaluating a knowledge sharing program (figure 6.1), which is based in the findings of this research.

![Diagram](Figure 6.1, Process for choosing and evaluating a knowledge sharing program)
First of all, it is vital to understand what type of knowledge (DeLong & Fahey, 2000) supports the strategic objectives of the organization. If the desired goal is to keep, change or develop organizational values and culture of strategic importance, the collective knowledge should be shared. Is the objective to keep or create routines that support strategically important work practices, the structured knowledge should be shared. If there is a particular kind of personal knowledge or competence that the organization need to achieve strategic goals, the human knowledge should be shared. It is likely that more than one type of knowledge is needed to support the achievement of organizational strategic goals.

Secondly, it is of the essence to understand what factors that enable or constrain knowledge sharing in the particular organizational context (Ipe, 2003; Lee & Suliman, 2002). Is the culture enabling or constraining in facilitating interaction? How does the formal structure impact knowledge sharing? How is the relationship between our employees? Are there generational differences in the staff that need to be considered? Do we have enough time and resources for knowledge sharing? These are all questions that need to be asked in order to understand what possibilities there are for knowledge sharing across generations in the organization. This will identify constraining factors and contribute to a functional knowledge sharing program.

When the knowledge to be shared is identified and the factors enabling or constraining the knowledge sharing are understood, the activity/activities that will share the knowledge can be considered. If the desired activity for knowledge entail constraining factors, either the factors may be actively changed beforehand, or choosing another activity may be the wiser choice. The program is then ready to be implemented. The strategic importance of the knowledge sharing program should be communicated from upper management (Riege, 2005) to underline the significance of these activities.

As knowledge sharing is a process, the work does not stop when the program is implemented. As the activities have been created for specific strategic goals, it makes it possible to evaluate if the knowledge sharing actually provides support in achieving these (Liu et al., 2006). All the previous considerations in this process can therefore be evaluated and altered to start a new cycle in the process.

6.1 Practical Implications

Derived from the results and conclusions there are certain specific practical implications that can be applied to organizations in general. These are listed here as suggestions of how organization can improve their knowledge sharing from older coworkers to younger coworkers.

Formal meetings are in this thesis mostly used for administrative information. They do however have the potential to be knowledge sharing opportunities if there is an expressed purpose of knowledge sharing and design such that, discussion and sharing can be stimulated.
Much of the tacit knowledge sharing happens informally in organizations (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). By creating and/or encouraging job shadowing and mentorship programs the tacit knowledge sharing between generations can be facilitated and strategically manifested in the organization.

Introduction programs should encompass much social network building over functional boundaries. In organizations where there are discrepancies in age among coworkers there should be opportunities for employees to form relationships with coworkers from the same generation, because not having intra-organizational contacts in your own age group may cause the employee to leave the organization.

As younger generations are more used to IT than older counterparts, there are possibilities of incorporating multimedia and video in databases to add a dimension to the knowledge sharing through documentation (Lee & Suliman, 2002).

Building open and supportive cultures by supporting informal communication between the organizational members enables knowledge sharing. Where there is chemistry and trust between actors the results will follow due to improved collaboration (Tschannen-Moran, 2001)

Knowledge sharing should be taken into account when choosing the formal structure and how the work tasks are carried out. If teamwork and interaction can be incorporated, knowledge sharing opportunities will ensue (Probst et al., 2000).

6.2 Future Research

During the process of this study several areas and angles to the research have appeared that would be interesting to research further. A presentation of these subjects therefore follows here.

No method of observation was used in this thesis. Observing inter-generational knowledge sharing activities would enable the research to not mainly base the results on actors’ opinions and verbally shared experiences, but from perceiving the interaction taking place first hand.

Understanding how knowledge within the generational shift is perceived strategically could be aided by focusing research on upper management. Their perspective of the demographic changes and how it will impact the supply of competence is of the essence in adding another dimension to the understanding of this subject.

One of the key results of this study was that knowledge sharing was seen as an enjoyable process. While there are indications in literature of knowledge sharing happening spontaneously, the angle of enjoyment in research is not present. Taking this approach may increase the understanding of knowledge sharing.
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Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications


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APPENDIX

Appendix 1 - Informationsintervju Chef


Uppsatsen kommer skrivas på engelska. Intervjun spelas in och transkriberas men det är bara jag som har tillgång till det här materialet. Om du vill få en kopia av studien så kommer den färdiga rapporten att göras tillgänglig.

Jag vill att du svarar utifrån dina egen erfarenheter och vad du själv tycker och tänker. Har du några frågor före vi sätter igång?

Bakgrundsfrågor

Vad heter du?

Vilken befattning har du?

Hur länge har du haft den positionen?

Om organisationen

Hur ser er organisation ut? (Hur är arbetet strukturerat? Beskriv er verksamhet och vad det är ni gör.)

Vilka mål har verksamheten?

Hur många anställda finns det på arbetsplatsen?

Vilka typer av befattningar finns det på arbetsplatsen?

Pensionsavgångar

Vilken åldersspridning finns det bland personalen?

Har ni pensionsavgångar just nu? Hur stora är de?

- Hur påverkar det er verksamhet inför framtiden? (Kortsiktigt/Långsiktigt?)
- Har ni någon plan för att hantera pensionsavgångarna?

Finns det någon speciell grupp av anställda där ni riskerar att inte ha nog med kompetens och kunskap på grund av pensionsavgångar?

Vilken kunskap och kompetens vill ni bevara/utveckla?

- Är det någon typ av kunskap eller kompetens som ni vill fasa ut?

Åtgärder för kunskapsöverföring

Hur arbetar ni med och säkerställer kunskapsöverföring mellan äldre och yngre?

Har ni idag någon aktivitet eller insats för att överföra kunskaper från äldre till yngre medarbetare? Beskriv! (Kortsiktigt/Långsiktigt?)

*Har ni några typer av arbetsrutiner där syftet är att medarbetarna ska dela kunskaper och erfarenheter med varandra?*

*Finns det några konkreta insatser där medarbetarna kan dela med sig av sina erfarenheter och överföra kunskap?*

Vad för typ av formell kompetensutveckling erbjuder ni era medarbetare?

- Hur är det insatserna utformade? Lektioner? Seminarier? Workshops?

Vad hinder överföring av kunskap från äldre till yngre i er organisation?

Vad möjliggör överföring av kunskap från äldre till yngre i er organisation?

Har du något du vill tillägga som inte kommit fram under intervjuns gång?
Appendix 2 - Intervju Äldre Medarbetare

Bakgrundsfårgor
Vad heter du?
Hur gammal är du?
Vilken befattning har du?
Hur länge har du arbetat på din nuvarande arbetsplats?
(Om IP har jobbat där en längre tid. Vad har fått dig att stanna kvar på arbetsplatsen?)
Hur ser du på att möjligen arbeta efter 65? Skulle det vara stimulerande eller jobbigt?

Arbetet
Kan du beskriva vad du gör en vanlig arbetsdag?
   Vilka arbetsuppgifter har du?
   Vem bestämmer vad du ska göra? Har du möjlighet att bestämma?
   Hur fördelas arbetet mellan er? Vem gör vad?
   Vilka samarbetar du med? (Äldre eller yngre?)
   Hur är det att samarbeta med yngre medarbetare?
Når du pratar med dina kollegor mer informellt på fikapauser och dylikt, vad pratar ni om då?

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• Pratar ni om arbetet?

• Vilka pratar du med? (äldre/yngre?)

När ni har möten på arbetsplatsen, vad brukar ni prata om då?

Lär du ut och delar med dig av kunskaper till andra medarbetare då? Ge exempel.

Om du behöver hjälp i arbetet, vem kontaktar du då? (Äldre/Yngre?)

Frågar dina medarbetare dig om hjälp?

– Vilka gör det?

– Vad kan du hjälpa till med?

– Beskriv en situation.

Hur skulle du beskriva stämningen på arbetet?

Kommer du överens med de yngre medarbetarna i organisationen?

Umgås äldre och yngre medarbetare på er arbetsplats privat?

Upplever du att yngre och äldre inom organisationen arbetar på olika sätt?

Lärande och kunskaper

Vilka kunskaper och kompetenser behöver du för att utföra ditt arbete?

Hur har du lärt dig dessa kunskaper?

– Utbildning?

– Kompetensutvecklingsinsatser?

– Har du lärt dig av andra? Vilka har du lärt dig av då? (Äldre/Yngre?)

Anser du att du har de kunskaper och den kompetens som behövs för att klara arbetet?

Vilka konkreta åtgärder finns det för att stödja utbyte av erfarenheter och kunskap mellan medarbetare?

– Kompetensutvecklingsinsatser? Dokument?
– Finns det konkreta åtgärder med syftet att stödja utbyte av erfarenheter och kunskap från äldre till yngre medarbetare?

Finns det situationer i arbetet då du lär yngre medarbetare att utföra arbetet? Vad lär du yngre?

Hur tror du att yngre ser på att lära sig av äldre medarbetare?

Hur viktigt anser du att äldres kunskaper inom organisationen är?

Har du kunskaper som yngre inte har? Vilka då?

Har yngre kunskaper som du inte har? Vilka då?

**Förutsättningar/Hinder**

Vilka förutsättningar är betydelsefulla för att ta tillvara på äldres kunskaper?

Vilka hinder ser du för överföring av kunskap från äldre till yngre?

Upplever du att ni litar på varandra och ställer upp för varandra i arbetet?

Anser du att du får det stöd du behöver från dina chefer i att utveckla dina kunskaper?

– Vilket stöd anser du är viktigt för dig?

Uppmunstrar chefer att ni pratar med varandra, samt att ni delar erfarenheter och kunskaper med varandra?

Upplever du att det finns tid till utbyta kunskaper och erfarenheter med varandra på arbetet?

Finns det några elektroniska system eller databaser där det går att leta upp kunskap?

– Vad för typ av uppgifter finns där?

– Vad anser du om dessa?

– Finns det möjlighet att förbättra dem på något sätt?

Vilka värderingar skulle du säga att din organisation står för?

I och med generationsväxlingen med de stora pensionsavgångarna som sker nu, vilka utmaningar anser du att er organisation står inför?

Har du något du vill tillägga som inte kommit fram under intervjuns gång?

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Appendix 3 - Intervju Yngre Medarbetare


**Bakgrundsfrågor**

Vad heter du?

Hur gammal är du?

Vilken befattning har du?

Hur länge har du arbetat på din nuvarande arbetsplats?

Är det ett organisation där du vill stanna en längre tid i tjänsten? Varför/Varför inte?

**Arbetet**

Kan du beskriva vad du gör en vanlig arbetsdag?

Vilka arbetsuppgifter har du?

Vem bestämmer vad du ska göra? Har du möjlighet att bestämma?

Hur fördelas arbetet mellan er? Vem gör vad?

Vilka samarbetar du med? (Äldre eller yngre?)

Hur upplever du att samarbeta med äldre medarbetare?

När du pratar med dina kollegor mer informellt på fikapauser och dylikt, vad pratar ni om då?

- Pratar ni om arbetet? Annat,vad då?

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– Vilka pratar du med? (äldre/yngre?)

– Lär du dig nya saker? Ge exempel.

När ni har möten på arbetsplatsen, vad brukar ni prata om då?

– Brukas det tas upp sådant som du inte vet? Ge exempel.

Om du behöver hjälp i arbetet, vem kontaktar du? (Äldre/Yngre?)

Hur skulle du beskriva stämningen på arbetet?

Kommer du överens med de äldre medarbetarna i organisationen?

Upplever du att yngre och äldre inom organisationen arbetar på olika sätt?

Umgås äldre och yngre medarbetare på er arbetsplats privat?

**Lärande och kunskaper**

Vilka kunskaper och kompetenser behöver du för att utföra ditt arbete?

Hur har du lärt dig dessa kunskaper?

Utbildning?

Kompetensutvecklingsinsatser?

Har du lärt dig av andra? Vilka har du lärt dig av då? (Äldre/Yngre?)

Anser du att du har de kunskaper och den kompetens som behövs för att klara arbetet?

Vilka konkreta åtgärder finns det för att stödja utbyte av erfarenheter och kunskap mellan medarbetare?

– Kompetensutvecklingsinsatser? Dokument?

– Finns det konkreta åtgärder med syftet att utbyta erfarenheter mellan äldre och yngre medarbetare?

Vad lär du dig av äldre medarbetare?

Hur upplever du att det är att lära sig av äldre medarbetare?

Finns det kunskaper äldre har som du inte har? Vilka då?
Finns det kunskaper du har som äldre inte har? Vilka då?
Hur tror du att äldre ser på att dela med sig av sin kunskap?

**Förutsättningar/Hinder**

Vilka förutsättningar är betydelsefulla för att ta tillvara på äldres kunskaper?
Vilka hinder ser du för överföring av kunskap från äldre till yngre?
Upplever du att ni litar på varandra och ställer upp för varandra i arbetet?
Anser du att du får det stöd du behöver från dina chefer i att utveckla dina kunskaper?

- Vilket stöd anser du är viktigt för dig?

Uppmuntrar chefer att ni pratar med varandra, samt att ni delar erfarenheter och kunskaper med varandra?
Upplever du att det finns tid till utbyta kunskaper och erfarenheter med varandra på arbetet?
Finns det några elektroniska system eller databaser där det går att leta upp kunskap?

- Vad för typ av uppgifter finns där?
- Vad anser du om dessa?
- Finns det möjlighet att förbättra dem på något sätt?

Vilka värderingar skulle du säga att din organisation står för?
HUR skulle du beskriva kulturen inom organisationen?

I och med generationsväxlingen med de stora pensionsavgångarna som sker nu, vilka utmaningar anser du att er organisation står inför?

Har du något du vill tillägga som inte kommit fram under intervjuans gång?
Appendix 4 - Parintervju


Bakgrundsfrågor (till båda)

Vad heter du?

Hur gammal är du?

Vilken befattning har du?

Hur länge har du arbetat på din nuvarande arbetsplats?

På vilket sätt samarbetar ni två tillsammans på arbetsplatsen?

Arbetet

När lär man sig av varandra i arbetet?

Upplever du att yngre och äldre inom organisationen arbetar på olika sätt?

Lärande och kunskaper

(Båda får skriva sina egna ord på papper först)

Vilka kunskaper och kompetenser behöver ni för att utföra ert arbete?

Hur har ni lärt er dessa kunskaper?

Hur upplever du att det är att lära sig av äldre medarbetare/Hur upplevs det att lära ut?
Förutsättningar/Hinder

(Båda får skriva sina egna ord på papper först)

Vilka hinder ser du för överföring av kunskap från äldre till yngre?

(Båda får skriva sina egna ord på papper först)

Vilka förutsättningar är betydelsefulla för att ta tillvara på äldres kunskaper?

(Båda får skriva sina egna ord på papper först)

Vilka värderingar skulle ni säga att er organisation står för?

I och med generationsväxlingen med de stora pensionsavgångarna som sker nu, vilka utmaningar anser ni att er organisation står inför?

Har ni något ni vill tillägga som inte kommit fram under intervjuens gång?