

**The influences of national culture on the Knowledge Management Process:
A case study of Lawyers from Australia, Germany and the Arab-speaking World**

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Declaration

I declare that all the work in this dissertation is entirely my own work (with the exception of specific sources that are referenced in the text and bibliography), no portion of the work referred to in this dissertation has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification to any University or learning institution.

Signed:

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Susann Wisnewski

Date:

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16. August 2013

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Dedication

This research paper is dedicated to my sister Sabine whose spirit and soulfulness has encouraged me not only during the undertaking of this MBA program but always and she is constantly providing me with the inspiration, guidance and love to develop in my personal as well as in my professional life. She is a role model to me.

Abstract

It is well known that Knowledge Management (“KM”) is a source, if not the primary source of competitive advantage in today’s business world. It is significant that knowledge is as important for the business and its legal departments within a company as it is for law firms. However, it appears that the law firms as well as legal company departments need to pay more attention to their primary source and develop a Knowledge Management Systems (“KMS”) that appreciates this. The aim of this research is to provide an understanding of how lawyers from different national cultures handle knowledge on a day-to-day basis. With this, it shall assist law firms as well as the management of legal departments to choose an appropriate KMS in order to gain a competitive advantage.

This purpose of this research is to illustrate how national culture influences the Knowledge Management Process (“KMP”) of a lawyer. The researcher uses the four dimensions of national culture developed by Hofstede to highlight the differences and show how this impacts the knowledge acquiring and accessing; knowledge creation; knowledge sharing and dissemination as well as the reuse of knowledge. In order to answer these questions, primary data was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews of three lawyers from three different national cultures.

In short, the findings of this research conclude that national culture has an influence on how lawyers acquire and access knowledge, share and reuse it.

The researcher concludes that the differences in national culture influences the KMP and provides recommendations to endeavour to align the positive aspects of KM from the three different national cultures and reduce the negatives.

In addition, the researcher outlines recommendations for future research proposals, which arose during the course of this study and while conducting the interviews.

Frequently used abbreviations

KM	Knowledge Management
KMS	Knowledge Management System
KMP	Knowledge Management Process
KW	Knowledge Worker

Chapter 1: Introduction

1) Background to research

For over 20 years it has been argued that KM is a source, if not the most important source of competitive advantage. According to Drucker (1992) knowledge is the primary resource for individuals and for the economy overall. This is especially the case for Knowledge Workers (“KW”), which is a growing sector of the workforce (Frick, 2011). According to Mládková (2011) they represent more than half of all employees in advanced countries. What had been the blue-collar workers of the 1950s are the knowledge workers of the 21st century. The term KW was introduced by Drucker (1992) and according to Frick (2011), they are individuals valued for their ability to gather, analyse, interpret, and synthesize information within specific subject areas to advance the overall understanding of those areas and allow organisations to make better decisions. KWs are generally professionals such as teachers, lawyers, architects, physicians, nurses, engineers, and scientists.

Today’s business world is further driven by globalization and its impact has led to a rapidly changing environment. Diminishing boundaries have encouraged the free movement of people and resulted in the amalgamation of different national cultures among people and within the business world. The impact of globalization cannot only be felt within multinational companies but also in law firms. In the last 20 years many service industries have become concentrated, international and capital-intensive due to increased international competition, more demanding client expectations and globalisation of products and markets (Segal-Horn and Dean, 2007). If a client is a global player itself then it requires services to be provided seamlessly in all countries in which it has a presence, and most clients prefer one-stop shopping for professional services. This change in the service industry has also effected international law firms and made them shift towards a more global approach (Segal-Horn and Dean, 2007). Becker (2001) quoted by Gottschalk (2004) explains the three main reasons why the legal industry may change in the future. Firstly, global companies are increasingly seeking out law firms that can provide universal support at all relevant business locations as well as integrated cross-border assistance for significant mergers and acquisitions and capital market transactions. Secondly, client loyalty is decreasing as companies increase base purchase of legal services on a more objective assessment of their value, defined as the benefits net of price. Finally, new competitors have entered the market, such as accounting firms and internet-based legal firms. Today in 2013 these three reasons became a reality even though the last point of increased competition from internet-based legal firms is questionable to the researcher. The change to the legal industry influenced the way law firms are managed (Segal-Horn and Dean, 2007) which also includes the KMP.

In addition, the growing power of the European Union has reduced the necessity for jurisdiction-specialised lawyers. The same applies to in-house legal departments of multinational companies. Observation undertaken by the researcher has shown that multinational companies are adopting a single law department approach by locating lawyers from different jurisdictions in one office in order for them to be trained together; to share knowledge; and to interconnect. The single law department approach has also had the effect such that the need for cross-qualified lawyers is reduced as the knowledge about legal system in other jurisdictions can be accessed “next door”, provided that knowledge sharing and communication is working within the department.

However, the question is not whether KM provides a competitive advantage or whether globalization leads to a mixture of different national cultures within one department, it is whether we are capable of understanding what this means and whether we can take advantage of it. The impact of globalization on today’s business world as well as the increased focus on KM led the researcher to this research topic. Furthermore the researcher works in an international law department within a multinational company and has therefore seen and experienced the benefits as well as the difficulties arising from this model. It was also observed that people deal differently with knowledge, especially concerning the retrieval and storage of knowledge. Hence, the researcher poses the question and seeks to ascertain the answer of why those differences arise. Further, the researcher experiences during her day to day work that the business is relying on the legal department to have all the information available, to always know what to do and if not, to know where and how to obtain the answers to what is required by the business to successfully conclude the commercial transaction. According to Lalla (2010) KM often falls within the responsibility of the legal department. The business likes to shift the responsibility of “knowing” to the lawyer. Following this observation the researcher experienced the importance of working KM within a legal department and the difference it makes regarding time saving and goal achievement.

The purpose of this research is to demonstrate that national culture impacts the way a lawyer acquires information and data and to illustrate whether or not she or he uses the KMS provided or whether he or she acquires data from different sources. Furthermore, this research shall demonstrate how the national culture of the lawyer influences his or her behaviour towards sharing the knowledge. In essence, the objective of this research is to provide a better understanding of how the lawyer’s national culture influences knowledge creation, knowledge assessment and valuation, knowledge storing and retaining as well as knowledge sharing.

2) Research objectives

The researcher is a German qualified lawyer working in an international in-house legal department of a multinational company with lawyers from different countries and different national cultures. Consequently a general interest of the advantages and disadvantages of an

international law department has arisen with the researcher. While undertaking the MBA as well as working full time as a lawyer the researcher discovered the advantages and disadvantages of KM and the difficulties of handling it properly. Furthermore the researcher could observe different ways of creating and sharing knowledge among her team members and developed an interest where the differences are coming from. The researcher also observed that KM often does not get the significance it deserves and believes that this impacts the way a company does business. In the opinion of the researcher a good working KM is one of the most important sources for competitive advantage, especially in the legal industry as this industry has become more competitive and fast changing and the lawyers needs knowledge in order to perform the day-to-day tasks. Consequently a law firm and a legal department need to adapt to this change in order to stay competitive. Effective knowledge creation, valuation and sharing are in the opinion of the researcher one method to do so.

Various pieces of research have been undertaken around this area. In 2009 Forstenlechner, Lettice and Bourne undertook an empirical study to analyse the impact of the introduction of KM practices on the financial performance of a multinational law firm, which resulted in evidence that there is a positive effect on income within professional service firms. According to Gottschalk (1999) law firms and in-house legal departments are very suited for KM investigation as both are highly knowledge dependent. Ten years later, he analysed together with Karlsen KM in a Norwegian law firm while focusing on the use of information technology (IT) in connection with KM (Gottschalk and Karlsen, 2009). They discovered that “unique, non-imitable, combinable, and exploitable knowledge is providing competitive advantage [...] [and] must be expertly managed to achieve profitable growth.” However, Robbins (2003) investigated the usage of KMS and discovered that “there are those corporations that have invested significant amounts of time and effort in creating knowledge management systems that no one uses.” Already in 1999 Gottschalk discovered that “... law firms should move from their current one-dimensional document - based information management approach to knowledge management in a broader sense, in which individuals exchange knowledge, using appraisal and compensation systems to change individual behaviour and firm culture.” Corral and O’Brien (2010) on the other hand focus their research on “the professional support lawyer” and its impact on KM. They concluded that lawyers favour a varied combination of formal and informal learning and the lawyers participating in the research want a specialised professional education for the sector.

Even though all research and studies have pointed out the importance of KM such that knowledge resides predominantly in the heads of individuals, the existing literature is lacking an in-depth examination of the individuals who are acquiring information and data, creating and sharing knowledge and retrieving it, in other words: working with knowledge on a day to day basis. Davenport (2011) undertook research of the productivity of knowledge workers over years and came to the conclusion that “high-end knowledge workers have largely remained free to use

only the technology they personally find useful.” Hooff, Schouten and Simonovski (2011) conducted a survey to examine the influence of pride and empathy on knowledge sharing attitudes. However, the research does not explore the subject of knowledge usage and retrieval, even though it could be argued that pride and empathy have their origins in national culture and therefore KM behaviour could be traced back to national culture of the individual.

The importance of KM in law firms and in in-house legal departments or even professional service companies has been researched and the positive impact of implementing KM practices has been analysed. According to Schweighofer (2004) “Legal knowledge management is probably, taking aside legal reasoning, the most important activity in legal systems.”

The aim of this research exceeds the previous research on this topic by analyzing the national culture of the participating lawyers and examines its impact on KM. The researcher therefore hopes to discover the different approaches the three lawyers interviewed use regarding the KMP and how this is linked to the differences in their national culture.

The researcher further hopes that these linkages will illuminate and prove the hypothesis that national culture plays a major role in the KMP.

3) Proposed Research Methodology

This research adopted the qualitative research methodology, which meant taking in-depth interviews (semi-structured interviews) of three lawyers from three different national cultures. All interviews are recorded and interview notes have been taken while conducting the interviews. The researcher conducted all interviews face to face, which enabled her to note the body language of the interviewees in order to analyse the answers given by the body language.

In order to answer the research question as well as the research objectives it is necessary to use both, primary and secondary research. The latter includes the review and analysis of relevant literature regarding national culture. The researcher has adopted Hofstede’s four dimensions of national culture in order to emphasise the differences in national culture of Australia, Germany and the Arab-speaking countries. The combination and analysis of both, primary and secondary research enables the researcher to answer the research question and objectives.

This research adopts an interpretivism philosophy and an inductive approach. It uses a case study in order to underline the research and used the non-probability and purposeful sampling. The non-probability sampling was necessary due to the time restrictions and accessibility of the information. The purposeful sampling was chosen as this enables the researcher to conduct an in-depth study of the research question.

This dissertation is done for academic purposes and therefore the research is under time pressure, which restricted the cross-sectional approach.

4) Limitations

Certain limitations of the underlying research need to be considered. The time given for the underlying research was limited and careful evaluation was therefore necessary. The researcher conducted the interviews face to face, which contributed to a financial burden, as it was necessary to travel to different jurisdictions where the interview subject was located.

It further needs to be considered that the interviewee might have chosen not to answer certain questions, which could limit the value of the data retrieved and therefore distort the findings of the research. In addition to this the interviews were conducted in English, which is not the first language of two of the three participants as well as for the researcher. Misunderstandings might have occurred during all three of the interviews and while analysing the data received.

Lastly, the research is limited to one research subject of each chosen national culture. The findings may therefore have limited potential for generalisation, as the personalities of each research subject can not only be traced back to their national culture but could have also influenced the KMP of the individual. Further the research subjects have different professional experience and the KMP might also be influenced by what has been experienced to date by the research subject.

5) Organisation of the Dissertation

The dissertation is divided into 6 chapters followed by the bibliography and the appendices.

Chapter 1 is the introduction to this dissertation and provides the background to the underlying research as well as an overview of the used methodology and outlines the limitations of this research.

Chapter 2 contains the literature review necessary for this research. Several authors on the field of knowledge management and national culture are identified and the research about the connection of national culture and KM to date is provided.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology for this research and outlines the research approach, research philosophy, and research strategy. It further explains the data analysis method used by the researcher.

Chapter 4 presents the findings from the primary research and the analysis of those findings by the researcher.

Chapter 5 outlines the researcher's conclusion from the findings and the analysis of those findings. It further presents recommendations for further research on this subject matter.

Chapter 6 consists of the researcher's self-reflection on her own learning and performance. It presents an overview of the researcher's academic and professional background and describes the impacts this dissertation and the undertaking of the MBA program had on the researcher and what skills could be developed and enhanced.

6) Major contributions of the study

The findings of this research will provide an important contribution to Business Management students in the field of national culture as well as in the area of KMP and in particular its linkages. Furthermore this research may provide an important contribution to professionals in the KM area. The outcome of this research may provide international law firms and managers of legal departments of multinational company with an understanding of how to capture knowledge; how it can be used; how information and data are acquired; and how knowledge sharing is practiced. All of these findings could assist in choosing a suitable KMS or in amending the existing system. The findings could also assist managers or law firms to choose an appropriate Knowledge Management Strategy, especially for international teams. In addition, the research could assist information technology firms in developing the right KMS for law firms and legal departments as it gives insights on how a lawyer works the KMP.

The study will also provide a contribution to the research about KW and its connection to the KMP. The knowledge about the usage of internal databases and the influences of national culture may also provide important information for the management where improvement is necessary and what should be encouraged and acknowledged within the team.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

1) Introduction

The following will outline an overview of recent literature of KMP and the current discussion about the definition of Knowledge, KM and KMP. It further provides a summary of the main research undertaken regarding national culture and will focus on two main representatives of national culture, Geert Hofstede and Fons Trompenaars. The remaining part of this chapter will give an overview of the research undertaken so far to underline the linkage between national culture and KM.

2) Knowledge Management Process

For century's knowledge has been passed on from generation to generation, but only since the 1990s chief executives of companies started talking about KM (Hansen, Nohria and Tierney, 1999). Since then KM has been defined in various ways. Kelly (2009) defines KM as "the strategic use of information and knowledge resources to an organisation's best advantage and includes system or framework for managing the organisational infrastructure that obtains, creates, stores, distributes and promotes the use of knowledge within and between organisations". Housong et al. (2003) on the other hand described KM as management activities, which develop and utilize an organisation's knowledge resources efficiently and improves a firm's creative ability. Porter (2001) outlined that Knowledge Management is important for managing and increasing a company's competitive advantage. According to Tong (2009) many firms have embraced "Knowledge Management as a key organisational policy" and they "often act as leaders in their business area. Their success shows the importance and necessity of effective Knowledge Management for an organisation."

The researcher however believes that in order to understand what KMP means it firstly needs to be understood what is meant when using the term "Knowledge". This enables one to understand what should be managed and how.

a) Knowledge

"In an economy where the only certainty is uncertainty, the one source of lasting competitive advantage is knowledge." (Nonaka 1991)

Already in 1991 Nonaka expressed the importance of knowledge for a company. But in order to make knowledge a competitive advantage it needs to be understood what exactly knowledge is. Knowledge is hard to define, as there are different perspectives on how to define knowledge. Although it is beyond the scope of this research to define knowledge, a concept, which has been

attempted to be explained and analysed by philosophers (e.g. Plato, Aristotle, Kant and Nietzsche) over the past centuries, the following shall provide a brief overview of the different definitions and typologies of knowledge, which have been used for this research.

Firstly it needs to be understood that there is no “true” definition of what knowledge is and that there is a contemporary discussion on this topic.

The first distinction needs to be addressed by looking at the epistemology of the definition of knowledge, namely the objectivist perspective and the practice-based perspective. The representatives of the objectivist perspective see knowledge as an entity/commodity that people possess, but which can exist independently of people in a codifiable form (Hislop, 2009). The practice-based perspective view on knowledge on the other hand does not concern something that people have, it is suggested that knowing is better regarded as something that people do (Hislop, 2009). As the latter developed on a critique of the objectivist perspective the following will focus on the objectivist perspective.

Generally knowledge is divided into tacit and explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is difficult to articulate and also difficult to put into words, text or drawings and it tends to reside “within the heads of knowers” (Dalkir, 2005). Explicit knowledge on the other hand represents content that has been captured in some tangible form such as words, audio recordings, or images and is therefore contained within tangible or concrete media (Dalkir, 2005). Due to the nature of tacit knowledge it makes it difficult to share and transfer, whereas explicit knowledge can be shared using information communication technology. The characteristics of tacit and explicit knowledge are shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Characteristics of tacit and explicit knowledge

Tacit Knowledge	Explicit Knowledge
Inexpressible in a codifiable form	Codifiable
Subjective	Objective
Personal	Impersonal
Context Specific	Context independent
Difficult to share	Easy to share

(Adopted from Hislop, 2009)

The objectivist perspective discovered another way of dividing knowledge by looking at the holder of knowledge, whether it is an individual (individual level knowledge) or a social group (group/social level knowledge) (Hislop, 2009). The latter defines knowledge, which can reside in social groups in the form of shared work practices and routines and shared assumptions and perspectives.

b) Knowledge Management

The term “Knowledge Management” is even more controversial and complex than the term knowledge. Nearly every article reviewed for the purpose of this research comprised a different definition of KM. The researcher therefore concluded that it always depends on the perspective of KM. One way is to examine the possible Knowledge Management Strategies organisations can pursue (Knowledge Management Strategies). Another perspective is to look at the activities of processing Knowledge (Knowledge Management Process or “KMP”).

Hansen, Nohria and Tierney (1999) for example discovered two different Knowledge Management strategies while looking at consultancy firms; the codification strategy and the personalization strategy. The latter ties knowledge closely to the person who developed it and therefore knowledge is shared mainly through direct person-to-person contacts. Whereas the codification strategy carefully codifies knowledge and stores it in databases, where it can be accessed and used easily by anyone in the company.

The underlying research however is based on the Knowledge Management Process which according to Ichijo and Nonaka (2007) consists of four main activities: creating, sharing, protecting and disregarding.

Creation: Companies should be knowledge-creating, trying to generate new knowledge well ahead of competitors.

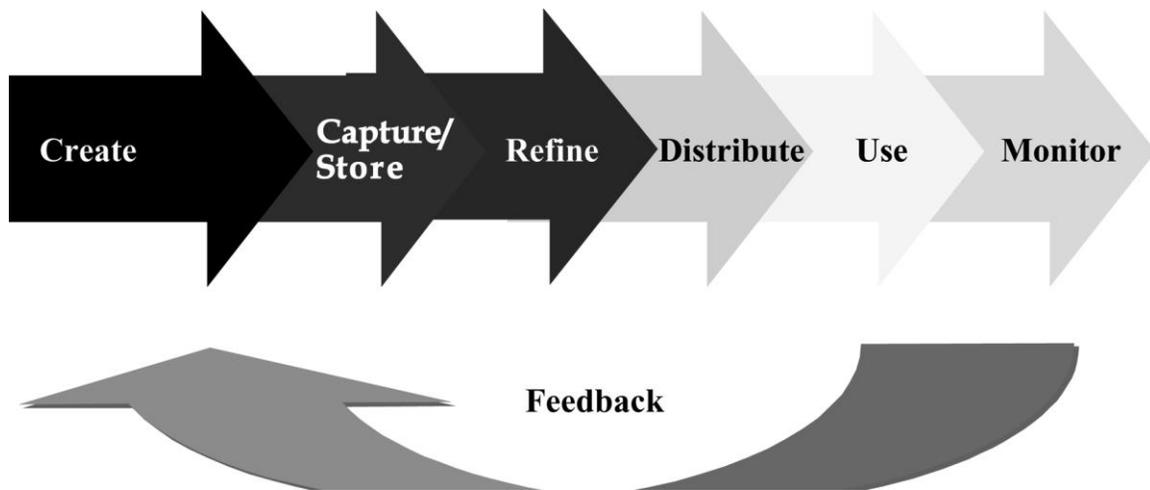
Sharing: After successfully creating new knowledge within a company, it has to be shared among the firm’s members across regions, businesses, and functions.

Protecting: The firm’s knowledge assets must be kept out of the hands of competitors.

Discarded: Companies need to reflect on whether their knowledge is outdated. Discarding might be necessary in order to promote new knowledge.

Another, more complex model of knowledge management process was developed by Davenport and Völpe (2001). Figure 1 shows this model in more detail.

Figure 1: Knowledge Management Process



Adopted from Davenport and Völpel (2001)

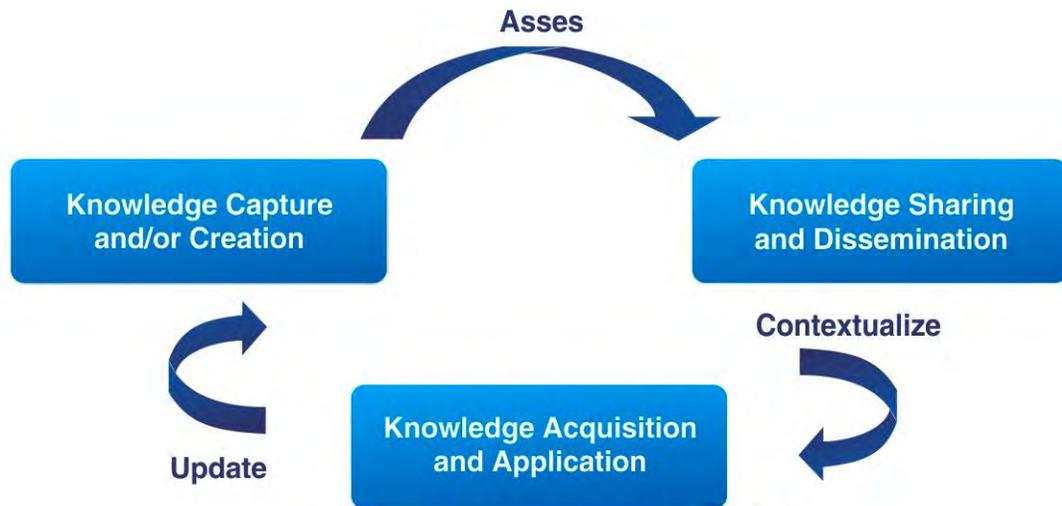
Following Völpels and Davenports approach KMP begins with knowledge creation and progresses to knowledge capture and storage, knowledge refinement, knowledge distribution, knowledge use and monitoring of the entire process, which should then impact the beginning of the process.

Dalkir (2005) provides an overview of the existing KM cycles, which encompass the phases: capture, creation, codification, sharing, accessing, application and reuse of knowledge. The KM cycles presented from Meyer and Zack, Bukowitz and Williams, McElroy and from Wiig are demonstrated. Dalkir then introduces the integrated KM cycle, which consists of three major stages:

- Knowledge capture and / or creation
- Knowledge sharing and dissemination
- Knowledge acquisition and application

The integrated KM cycle is explained in Figure 2 and its stages are explained below.

Figure 2: Integrated Knowledge Management Cycle



Adopted from Dalkir (2005)

Knowledge capture: refers to the identification and subsequent codification of existing internal knowledge and know-how.

Knowledge creation: the development of new knowledge and know-how – innovations that did not have a previous existence

Assessment: is the newly or new identified knowledge of sufficient value, which leads to sharing and dissemination.

Contextualize: This involves maintaining a link between the knowledge and those knowledgeable about the content and identifying the key attributes of the content in order to better match to a variety of users.

Further definitions of KM have shown similarities with the KMP explained above and examples found by the researcher in the course of this research are outlined in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Definitions for Knowledge Management

Author	Definition
Housong (2003)	KM consists of management activities which develop and utilize an organization's knowledge resources efficiently and improve a firm's creative ability.
Zhang and Zhao (2006)	KM is the study of strategy, process and technology to acquire, select, organize, share, and leverage business-critical information.
Davenport and Prusak (2000)	KM is the process of capturing, distributing, and effectively using knowledge.
Alavi and Leidner (2001)	KM is the systematic process of acquiring, organising, and communicating the knowledge (both tacit and explicit) of organisational members so that others might make use of it to be more effective and productive.

All theories on KMP as well as the definitions outlined in table 2 above have shown similarities. The underlying research therefore focuses on the KMP regarding acquiring and accessing knowledge, creating knowledge as well as sharing and disseminating knowledge. It will also analyse the reuse of knowledge.

c) Knowledge Management for Lawyers

Lawyers are KW. Even though the definition for KW is disputed amongst KM researchers (cf. Hislop, 2009) the classification of lawyers as KW is widely accepted (Frick, 2011, Gottschalk, 2004 and 2009). The mainstream perspective on the definition of KW conceptualises them as constituting elite and quiet distinctive elements of the workforce in contemporary economies, who are required to be highly creative and make extensive use of knowledge in their day-to-day work (Hislop, 2009). KW main resource is knowledge, and it is therefore imperative that they are provided with a working Knowledge Management Strategy and KMS in order to use their whole capability. KM is not only about analysing the company's culture and business strategy but also about people, management of cultural differences and developing a mentality to be able to adapt and change.

Normally, lawyers would share experience and expertise in the hallway, while getting a cup of coffee with a colleague or over lunch. However, nowadays as globalisation is encroaching upon in-house legal departments and law firms it may not be as easy anymore to reach the knowledge required as the colleague with the required experience might not work in the same office and

most likely not even in the same country. However, it may be possible to telephone the appropriate person, if one knows whom to call. Consequently, it is important to have the opportunity to acquire the information, and to ascertain which person within the company has that required knowledge. This is considered a type of KM. To take this even further, the person with the required knowledge will likely be located in a different office, in a different country and most likely in a different time zone. This limits the possibility to telephone the person. Also, there may be language barriers to overcome. While it can be assumed that each global company/business requires its employees to speak the relevant company language it cannot be assumed that each employee in each country is fluent in that language. Not being fluent in a language makes it difficult to share the knowledge with another colleague, even though that person is considered to be an expert in a certain field. Hence, KM becomes important to an internationally operating law firm or in-house legal department. According to Robbins (2003) in-house legal departments “need to build a culture of communication and trust so that non-headquarters based professionals can find basic information, be comfortable asking questions, and know where to go and get answers. And, they need to capture and store this information in an easy-to-use manner so it can be quickly found.” Law firms as well as in-house legal departments of international companies are benefiting from working KMS, as they will be faster in acquiring the information needed and therefore be able to get back to their own clients in an acceptable timely manner. Davenport (2011) discovered two approaches given to knowledge workers nowadays. The most common approach, giving KW free access to a wide variety of tools and information resources, whereas the other, the structured provision of information and knowledge, involves delivering information and knowledge to employees with a well-defined context of task and deliverables (Davenport, 2011). However, he concluded that KW have largely remained free to use only the technology they personally find useful and suggests that it is time to think about how to make them more productive by imposing a bit more structure.

The importance of KM in law departments and in law firms had been researched several times and the overall conclusion is summarised by Forstenlecher, Lettice and Bourne (2009) with the term “Knowledge pays”. The research provides evidence for the positive impact of KM on fee income within a law firm. Fombad, Boon and Bothma (2009) undertook a survey research of KM in law firms in Botswana and concluded that law firms in Botswana should invest time and money on KM, as it will improve their overall performance. According to “The Knowledge Imperative” (research report by OMC Partners and the practical Law Company, March 2011), quoted in Zeide and Liebowitz (2012) the use of KM within a law firm can cut costs by up to 25%, consistently across all practice areas. Gottschalk and Khandelwal (2004) however have tested a Knowledge Management Technology four-stage model for the evolution of information technology support for KM for KW, tested in law firms in Norway. The first stage addresses the end-user tools made available to KW (people to technology), the second is about information who knows what (people

to people). The third stage concerns the information held by KW (people to document) whereas the fourth and final stage concerns KMS (people to system). The majority of the research participants indicated that the “people to people” approach is the most commonly used. Rath (2012) highlighted the importance of chief knowledge officers and pointed out that the number of lawyers with such title is increasing as the importance of KM in law firms is more and more understood and appreciated.

3) National Culture

a) What is culture?

The noun “culture” derived from the Latin word “cultura” has the meaning “growing cultivation”. The verb culture derives from the Latin verb “colere” and means “tend, cultivate” (Oxford English Dictionary). “Cultivate” means trying to acquire or develop a skill or a quality (Oxford English Dictionary) and “culture” is defined as “a refined understanding or appreciation of the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively” (Oxford English Dictionary). The phenomenon culture however does not have a single definition or meaning. It may be defined as the ideas, customs and social behaviours as well as the attitude of particular people or a social group. A group is a number of people or things that are located, gathered, or classed together and can be identified by many criteria, e.g. nationality, origin, religion, language (Oxford English Dictionary).

However, culture has a significant influence on how we do business. Trompenaar (2012) points out “In every culture in the world such phenomena as authority, bureaucracy, creativity, good fellowship, verification and accountability are experienced in different ways. That we use the same words to describe them tends to make us unaware that our cultural biases and our accustomed conduct may not be appropriate.” Every country has its differences when compared with others, e.g. history, government and laws. Culture defined by Briscoe and Schuler (2009) is the characteristic way of behaving and believing that a group of people in a country or region have devolved over time. Schell and Solomon, quoted by Briscoe and Schuler (2009) believe that culture is learned and absorbed during the earliest stages of childhood and is reinforced by literature, history, and religion. According to them culture is a powerful force that shapes our thoughts and perceptions and affects the way events and other people are perceived, judged and how they are interpreted. Schein (2010) defines national culture “as the pattern of basic assumptions – invented, discovered or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration – that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as a correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.”

Harrison et al (2000) outline that the basis of any business activity whether domestic or international, is to satisfy human wants and needs. According to them people around the world

share the same basic wants and needs, but the way in which they try to fulfil these wants and needs and the order in which they rank them varies significantly.

Following the definitions and explanations of national culture it can be summarised that the way a human being thinks, believes, acts and behaves derives from its origin and is influenced by its national culture.

b) National Culture according to Hofstede

National culture has been defined by many authors but the most well known is Hofstede's model (Hoecklin, 1995). This model has been widely accepted and credited (Skerlavaj, Su and Huang, 2013; Michailova and Hutchings, 2006) but has also been criticised (McSweeney, 2002). Hofstede has defined culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another... Culture, in this sense, includes systems of values: and values are among the building blocks of culture" (Hofstede, 1984). Based on a study performed by Geert Hofstede on over 116,000 people in 53 countries exercised within one of the major multinational companies, he developed a national culture model with four key dimensions: Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism versus Collectivism, and Masculinity versus Femininity. A fifth dimension named by Hofstede as "long- term versus short-term orientation" and discovered by Bond (Hofstede, 2005) has been added to the initial discovery of the first four dimensions.

One of the criticisms of Hofstede's model and its applicability has arisen because the study had been undertaken amongst employees from one multinational company and therefore the corporate culture could have influenced the results of the study. Despite the criticism it cannot be underestimated that Hofstede's study and its results is to date the most complete and detailed study in the field of national culture. The researcher therefore believes this to be a good basis to conduct research on the impact of the national cultures of Australia, Germany and the Arab-speaking countries on KM.

i) Power distance

Power distance is defined as "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (Hofstede, 2010). Hofstede further explains: "In small-power-distance countries, there is limited dependence of subordinates on bosses, and there is a preference for consultation (that is interdependence between boss and subordinate). [...] In large-power-distance countries, there is considerable dependence of subordinates on bosses. Subordinates respond by either preferring such dependence [...] or rejecting it entirely, which in psychology is known as counterdependence – that is dependence, but with negative sign."

The differences between small- and large-power distance countries can be felt within a family, at school and at the workplace. According to Hofstede it can be observed that within the three role pairs in life (child – parent, student – teacher, subordinate – boss) attitudes towards father and towards teacher are transferred toward bosses (Hofstede, 2010).

In large-power distance countries, children are expected to be obedient towards their parent whereas in small-power distance countries, children are more or less treated as equals as soon as they are able to act (Hofstede, 2010). To reflect this on the workplace it means that in large-power distance countries, superiors and subordinates consider each other as existentially unequal; whereas in small-power distance countries superiors and subordinates consider each other as existentially equal.

ii) Individualism/collectivism

Individualism is defined as something which “pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated in strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people’s lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.” (Hofstede, 2010). Hoecklin (1995) describes Individualism as “a concern for yourself as an individual as opposed to concern for the priorities and rules of the group to which you belong. [...] the group to which you belong is the major source of your identity and the unit to which you owe lifelong loyalty.” Hofstede outlines further that “the vast majority of people in our world live in societies in which the interest of the group prevails over the interest of the individual. We will call these societies collectivist, [...] It does not refer to the power of the state over the individual but to the power of the group.”

The differences can also be felt within day-to-day life and impinge the behaviour of the individual at the workplace. Employed persons in an individualistic culture are expected to act according to their own interests, and work should be organised in such a way that this self-interest and the employer’s interest coincide. In collectivist countries on the other hand, an employer never hires just an individual, but rather a person who belongs to an in-group, which may not always coincide with his or her individual interest. In summary, in a collectivist society, the personal relationship prevails over the task, whereas in the individualistic society, the task is supposed to prevail over any personal relationships.

iii) Masculinity/Femininity

According to Hofstede Masculinity “pertains to societies in which social gender roles are clearly distinct (i.e., men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success, whereas women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life).”

Femininity on the other hand “pertains to societies in which social gender roles overlap (i.e., both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender and concerned with the quality of life).”

This is explained by Hoecklin (1995) as “the extent of emphasis on work goals [...] and assertiveness, as opposed to personal goals [...] and nurturance. The first set of values is thought to be associated with males and the second more with females.”

This dimension shall not be misunderstood in such a way that it means in countries where the concept of masculinity is dominant, the women are expected to stay at home and look after the children whereas in countries where the concept of femininity is dominant, women are expected to work. It is rather to acknowledge the differences in behaviour, e.g. it affects the way of handling industrial conflicts. In masculine cultures there is a feeling that conflicts should be resolved by a good fight (“Let the best man win”), whereas in feminine cultures there is a preference for resolving conflicts by compromise and negotiation.

iv) Uncertainty Avoidance

Uncertainty Avoidance is “the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations.” (Hofstede, 2010). He explains further “The essence of uncertainty is that it is a subjective experience, a feeling.” It is defined by Hoecklin (1995) as “the lack of tolerance for ambiguity and the need for formal rules. This dimension measures the extent to which people in a society feel threatened by and try to avoid ambiguous situations.”

This should not be confused with risk avoidance. Uncertainty is to risk, as anxiety is to fear, whereby anxiety and uncertainty are both diffuse feelings, but risk can be expressed as a percentage or probability (Hofstede, 2010). The level of uncertainty avoidance can be felt within the family, at school and at the workplace. A student from a strong uncertainty-avoidance country expects their teacher to be the experts to have all the answers, whereas students from weak uncertainty-avoidance countries accept a teacher who says “I don’t know”. Countries with a high level of uncertainty avoidance tend to have strict laws and procedures, which results in formal rules and procedures designed to provide security. People from countries with a lower level of uncertainty avoidance have the attitude that rules should be established only in cases of absolute necessity. It is believed that many problems can be solved without formal rules. This leads to less structured and less formal company activities.

v) Long- term Orientation

The fifth dimension is defined as follows: “long-term orientations stand for the fostering of virtues oriented toward future rewards – in particular, perseverance and thrift. [...], short-term orientation stands for the fostering of virtues related to the past and present – in particular, respect for tradition, preservation of ‘face,’ and fulfilling social obligations.” (Hofstede, 2010). Long-term orientation stands for a society in which wide differences in economic and social conditions are

considered undesirable, whereas short-term orientation stands for meritocracy, differentiation according to abilities (Hofstede, 2010).

The initial study undertaken by Hofstede does not contain this fifth dimension. He added this dimension later and researched only a few of the countries involved in the original study. The Arab-speaking countries according to Hofstede are not part of this research. The following research will therefore focus on the first four dimensions.

c) National Culture in Australia, Germany and the Arab-speaking countries according to Hofstede

History and tradition are dimensions for national culture. In order to understand the cultural background of the lawyers interviewed it is therefore important to view the current situation and the historical background of the countries involved.

The Commonwealth of Australia is a highly developed country and as such is the world's 12th largest economy. It is considered to have a very high quality of life as well as a very good health and education system. Australia used to be a British colony and its cultural origin is therefore influenced by it.

The Federal Republic of Germany is also a highly developed country and has the world's fourth largest economy. It is known for having a very high standard of living with a comprehensive system of social security. From 1930 the country went through the Second World War and also endured the period afterwards, referred to as "the cold war". The country had been divided into East and West Germany for over 40 years but was reunited in 1990.

Hofstede pooled the Arab-speaking countries in his study, namely Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Saudi Arabia and Emirates. The third interviewee is from a country in the East Mediterranean. This country underwent civil wars in recent times and has been involved in conflicts between the bordering countries. The lawyer interviewed has asked not to name the country itself.

The three countries have completely different histories engendering different national cultures and culminating in different KM. Table 3 shows the differences according to Hofstede's four dimensions.

Table 3: Hofstede's Dimensions for Australia, Germany and the Arab-speaking countries

(All figures in %)	Australia	Germany	Arab-speaking countries
Power Distance	36	35	80
Individualism	90	67	38
Masculinity	61	66	53
Uncertainty Avoidance	51	65	68

(Source: Hofstede, 2010)

d) National culture according to Trompenaar

Fon Trompenaar (2012) also undertook a research of national culture and created the Trompenaars database comprising 30,000 cases drawn from 55 countries. He discovered 7 dimensions of national culture. However, when questioned how many dimensions are necessary to evaluate national culture he described "culture as a construct that is derived from these individual dimensions, but (...) one would only need two (...) or three dimensions." The dimensions discovered by Trompenaar are: Relationships and Rules, the group and the individual, feelings and relations, how far we get involved, how we accord status, how we manage time, how we relate to nature. As the dimension overlap with Hofstede's dimension, the following will therefore only outline three dimensions of Trompenaar, which are described in a more specific way than in Hofstede's model.

i) How we get involved or Specific versus diffuse relationships

This dimension deals with the degree to which we engage others in specific areas of life and single levels of personality, or diffusely in multiple areas of our lives and at several levels of personality at the same time. It is the question of how much do we need to know about the other and how much do we need to release before we can engage in business with each other. Specific and diffuse cultures are sometimes called low and high context. Cultures with high context believe that strangers must be "filled in" before business can be properly discussed. Cultures with low context on the other hand believe that each stranger should share in rule-making, and the fewer initial structures there are the better. They also tend to be more adaptable and flexible

whereas high context cultures are rich and subtle, but carry a lot of “baggage” and may never really be comfortable for foreigners who are not fully assimilated.

While considering Hofstede’s model this dimension by Trompenaar could be compared to individualism versus collectivism, even though Trompenaar’s dimension is described in more detail.

ii) How we manage time

This dimension is about the relative importance cultures give to the past, present and future. Especially important is whether our view of time is sequential; a series of passing events, or whether it is synchronic, with past, present and future all interrelated so that ideas about future and memories of the past both shape present action. People from sequential cultures tend to do only one activity at a time and have a strong preference for following initial plans whereas people from synchronic cultures do more than one activity at a time and have a strong preference for following where relationship leads. Employees from sequential cultures usually feel rewarded and fulfilled by achieving planned future goals whereas employees from synchronic cultures feel rewarded and fulfilled by achieving improved relationships.

This dimension by Trompenaar can be assimilated with the Long-term orientation discovered by Bond and adapted by Hofstede.

iii) How we relate to nature

This dimension concerns the role people assign to their natural environment. It questions if people are controlling nature or letting it take its course. Trompenaar identifies two orientations: inner-directed and outer-directed. People from the first orientation believe that they can and should control nature by imposing their will upon it. Hence, people from this culture tend to identify with mechanism; that is, the organisation is conceived of as a machine that obeys the will of its operators. People from the latter orientation believe that man is part of nature and must go along with its laws, directions and forces. Hence, they tend to see an organisation as itself as a product of nature, owing its development to the nutrients in its environment and to a favourable ecological balance.

By comparing this dimension with the dimensions discovered by Hofstede, one can see similarities to Hofstede’s dimension “Uncertainty Avoidance”. However, in the researchers opinion Hofstede’s dimension in this context is more detailed and to the point.

4) National Culture and Knowledge Management Process

When analysing culture it needs to be differentiated between national culture and organisational culture (Jacks, Wallace and Nemat, 2012). Whilst examining the available literature on cultural influences on KM it appeared that most research focused on the influence of organisational

culture on KM (Sanz-Valle et al., 2011; Rai, 2011; Suppiah and Singh Sandu, 2010; Wang, Su and Yang, 2010, Al-Adaileh and Al-Atawi, 2010; Tseng, 2009). For example, it appeared to Suppiah and Singh Sandu (2010) that “organisational culture types influence tacit knowledge sharing behaviour”. Wang, Su and Yang (2010) also pointed out that “organisational culture plays a critical role in knowledge creation capability.”

However, little research has been undertaken on the impact of national culture on KM. Chen, Sun and McQueen (2009) conducted research on how national culture influences knowledge transfer from a US-based technical support centre to an offshore support centre and discovered that “knowledge tacitness, knowledge gaps, cultural and communication difficulties and weak relationships were the critical barriers to successful knowledge transfer in cross-cultural knowledge transfer context.” However, the focus of the research was on the national culture of the centre not on the individuals working in each centre. Magnier-Watanabe and Senoo (2009) undertook similar research but went a step further and performed a quantitative analysis on “whether the national culture of knowledge workers equally affects the management of knowledge”. They discovered that national culture has an influence on KM, but organizational culture has a stronger influence when comparing both. Their research was also limited to the pharmaceutical industry and centred on one Japanese company with 14 foreign subsidiaries.

Taking previous studies on the research subject into account the researcher believes that it is imperative to look at the national culture of the human creating and using the knowledge in order to let knowledge and knowledge management become a competitive advantage. King, Kruger and Pretorius determined “how different cultural backgrounds impact upon knowledge sharing” and concluded that knowledge sharing becomes a power play when individuals have been exposed to past political turmoil leading to present empowerment policies. Beekun and Westerman (2012) researched the ethical decision- making in Norway and the US and what influences it and discovered that ethical decision-making is partially influenced by national culture. Skerlavaj, Su and Huang (2012) went a little further than that and discovered that the four national culture dimensions (power distance, individualism, masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance) for the countries Slovenia, Croatia and Macedonia had no significant effects on the relationship between information acquisition and information interpretation. However, the relationship between information interpretation and behavioural and cognitive changes was positively moderated by power distance and negatively moderated by individualism, masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance. Ajmal, Kekäle and Takala (2009) discovered that organisational culture has a most significant influence on the Knowledge Management capability. Michailova and Hutchings (2006) researched the differences in national culture between China and Russia and its influence on the individual knowledge-sharing behaviour. The knowledge-sharing attitude and the influence of national culture to it has also been researched by Li (2008) who discovered that the Chinese participants of her research contributed knowledge less frequently than their US

peers and she traced this back to the influence of national culture. Chen, Sun and McQueen (2010) analysed the knowledge transfer behaviour from a US based (onshore) technical support centre to an offshore technical support centre in China and discovered that the organisational culture has a bigger influence on knowledge transfer behaviour than the national culture. Nonetheless the research also points out that differences of individualism/collectivism, power distance and uncertainty avoidance of two technical support centres will reduce the likelihood of knowledge transfer in a structured knowledge transfer process.

However, limited research has been undertaken to examine the national culture of lawyers and its influence on KMP, in particular knowledge creation, valuation, retention and sharing of knowledge.

The researcher hopes to have provided an overview of the current literature in regards to knowledge, KMP and national culture. Furthermore, the current research concerning the linkage between national culture and KM has been provided and analysed. However, the researcher hopes that this research can contribute to the existing research in this area.

Chapter 3: Methodology

1) Introduction

Much research has been undertaken to discover the influence of organisational culture and the importance of organisational culture on KMP. This research has the aim of analysing the national culture of the lawyer and its impact on KMP. In order to determine this, a combination of secondary and primary research has been carried out.

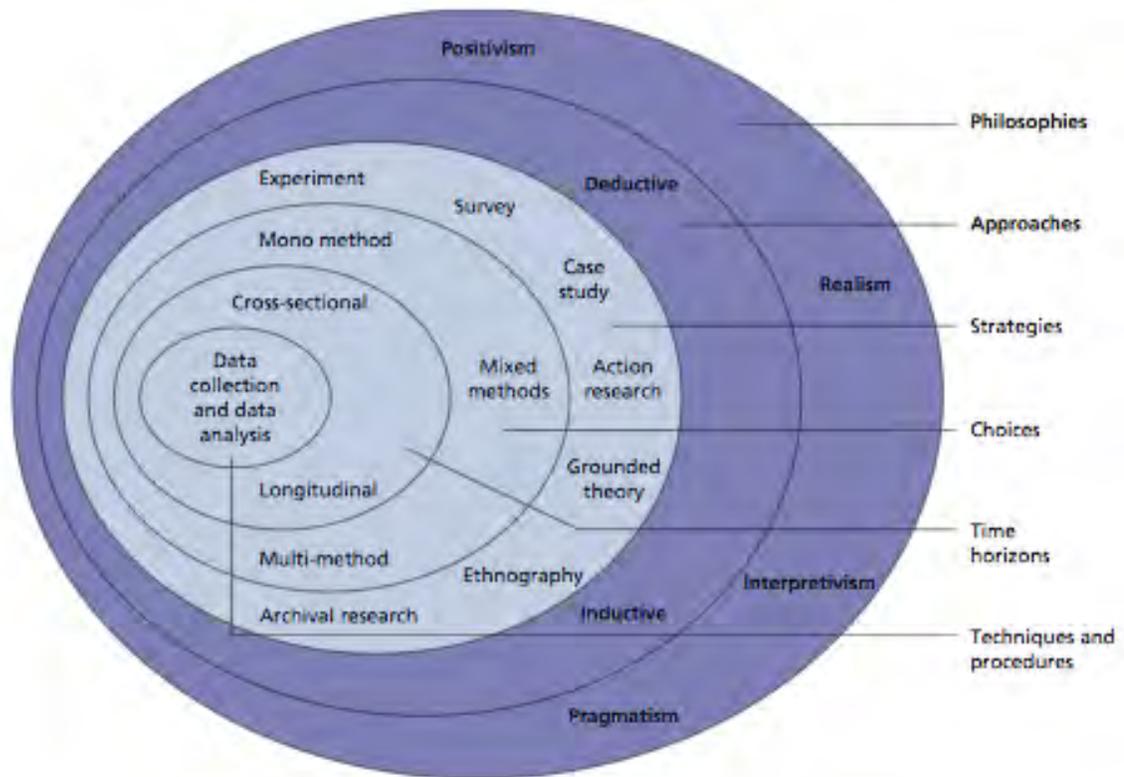
Since the primary aim of this research is to examine the influence of national culture on KMP using Hofstede's cultural model as a frame of reference, interviews were carried out with one lawyer each from Australia, Germany and the Arab-speaking countries. Appendix 1 shows the scores for the different dimensions of national culture according to Hofstede. The scores for Australia, Germany and the Arab-speaking countries are highlighted. There are many cultural differences as well as similarities between these three national cultures, but how do these differences as well as similarities impacting the KMP of lawyers?

The secondary research therefore included the analysis of the differences of the three national cultures involved according to Hofstede's model. It outlines the different attitudes and beliefs according to Hofstede's study. The primary research analysis then combines the findings from the secondary research with the findings from the interviews and hopes to demonstrate a linkage between the national culture of the interviewee and the KMP.

The aim of the research methodology is to assist the researcher in getting an answer to their research question through the gathering of relevant information pertaining to their research topic (Fisher, 2004). It is an approach to the process of the research, encompassing a body of methods while methods is a technique for collecting and/or analysing data (Collis & Hussey, 2009).

The chosen research methodology will be explained using the approach proposed by Saunders et al (2012) who compares the research process to an onion by high-lightening the layered approach to research. The following describes the different tools used and explains the rationale behind the choice of each tool.

Figure 3: Research onion according to Saunders



Source: Saunder, Lewin and Thornhill, 2009: 108.

2) Research Design

The Research Design is the general plan of how the research will go about answering the research question that has been set (Saunders et al., 2012).

a) Research Problem Area

The research area selected by the researcher is national culture and KM of lawyers and its linkage. The researcher believes that this research can contribute to general knowledge by outlining the linkages and underlining the theory found in the literature dealing with this area. Managing knowledge is becoming increasingly important for business nowadays as today's business world is highly competitive and globalisation is essential. It is widely understood that sufficient KM can provide the business with a competitive advantage. As many companies are operating globally and with multicultural teams it is becoming more and more apparent that the national culture of each employee influences the knowledge and the KMP. This research may therefore help to understand and underline the impact national culture might have and provide advice on how to improve the KMP and the KM.

b) Research Question

In order for research to be successful the key criteria is whether a set of clear conclusions could be drawn from the data collected. Therefore the research question needs to be clearly formulated. The research question for this dissertation is defined as:

How does national culture influence the knowledge management process?

The aim of the research is to evaluate if the national culture of a lawyer impacts the way he or she identifies data and information, creates and shares knowledge, reuses or deletes knowledge. In order to answer this research question a general understanding of how a lawyer acquires the information to create the knowledge needs to be understood. Furthermore the research will need to determine the motives of the lawyer to create and share knowledge and examine if those motives are linked to the national culture of the lawyer. In addition, it needs to be understood if and why a lawyer reuses knowledge previously stored and under what circumstances knowledge is deleted.

c) Research Objectives

Research objectives are clear and specific statements that identify what the researcher wishes to accomplish as a result of doing the research (Saunders et al, 2012). They further provide specific guidance for the researcher and give a focus on the aim of the research. The following outlines the research objectives of this research and divides it into primary research objectives and secondary research objectives.

Primary Research Objectives

- *To discover the different approaches of the three individuals interviewed regarding the knowledge management process*
- *To link these different approaches with the differences in national culture*
- *To illuminate and prove the hypothesis that national culture plays a major role in the knowledge management process*

Secondary Research Objectives

- *To review the relevant literature regarding knowledge management process and national culture*
- *To utilize Hofstede's four dimensions while analyzing and comparing the national culture factors within Australia, Germany and the Arab-speaking countries and comparing it to the research findings of the primary research*

3) Research Philosophy

The research philosophy “relates to the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge” (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012).

This research is adopting the interpretivism philosophy as, according to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012), it is important “for the researcher to understand the differences between humans in our role as social actors“. Every person interprets the social role they have in the world through their own eyes and understandings (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012). The researcher believes that the way an individual handles information and creates knowledge and how his or her national culture influences this process can only be understood if the researcher enters the social world of the research subjects and understands their world from their point of view (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012).

In this particular research, a research question has been developed. In order to answer the research question data was collected from both, secondary and primary sources. However, the focus had been on the primary sources.

The interpretivism philosophy has been chosen over the positivism philosophy as the latter assumes that the social world can be observed by collecting objective facts and consists of simple elements to which it can be reduced (Blumberg et al., 2011). This research is concerned with the inner thoughts of a person and tries to provide reasoning to certain behaviour or acting. It is therefore necessary to research with an interpretivism philosophy, as the positivism philosophy would not extract the appropriate data in order to answer the research question.

4) Research approach

According to Saunders (2012) there are two broad methods of reasoning: the deductive and the inductive approach. With the deductive approach the researcher develops a theory and hypothesis and designs a research strategy to test the hypothesis (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012). The inductive approach works the other way around by collecting data and developing a theory as a result of the data (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012). It further considers a small sample of objects as being more appropriate. The inductive approach leaves a degree of uncertainty however on the other hand it permits an alternative explanation on things as the inductive approach is more flexible and leaves more room for subjective interpretation of collected data. Therefore it is being used for this research. Furthermore, it fits the aim of the research better than the deductive approach as the researcher intends to understand why the lawyer acts the way he or she does, rather than being able to describe what is happening. The inductive approach provides options for this (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012) as it is more flexible. It also uses observations to collect data. The body language of each interviewee has been observed while conducting the interviews in order to understand the emotional condition of

the interviewee as this allows separating the fact from fiction and reality from fantasy. The inductive approach also allows changes to the research emphasis as the research progresses. As the research outcome relies heavily on the answers provided by the three interviewees this approach fits the research better. Furthermore it provides the opportunity for the researcher to take part in the research process, which was realised through observation.

5) Research Strategy

With the research strategy the researcher chooses the direction of the research as well as the process by which it is conducted. Case study, experiment, survey, action research, grounded theory and ethnography are examples for such research strategies and according to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012) some of these belong to the deductive and some belong to the inductive approach. However none of these research strategies is inherently superior or inferior to another. Therefore what is most important when choosing a particular strategy is that it should enable the researcher to answer the research question and objectives. The researcher has conducted the case study strategy for this research, as this strategy is the preferred approach to answering questions as “How” and “Why?” (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2005) and therefore matches the aim of this research. According to Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005) “the case study research is particularly useful when the phenomenon under investigation is difficult to study outside its natural setting and also when the concepts and variables under study are difficult to quantify. As this research is concerned with a process from inside of a human being (knowledge creating and reasoning for sharing knowledge) and the national culture of the research subjects, the case study will provide appropriate data for this research and assist in answering the research question.

6) Research Choice

With the research choice the researcher outlines the way he or she intends to combine quantitative and qualitative techniques and procedures (Saunders, Lewin and Thornhill, 2012). Quantitative data is in the form of numbers and units whereas qualitative data is in the form of descriptions and opinions (Cameron and Price, 2009). For the underlying research the multi-method has been chosen as more than one data collection technique and analysis procedure had been used in order to answer the research question (Saunders, Lewin and Thornhill, 2012). However, the multi – method is – in contrast to the mixed-method – restricted to either a quantitative or qualitative data collection (Saunders, Lewin and Thornhill, 2012). The researcher has conducted in-depth interviews with three research subjects each from a different national cultural background but with the equivalent legal education in their respective countries. Furthermore, the researcher has undertaken observations by observing the body language of each interviewee while conducting the interviews. Both data collection methods are qualitative.

The experience and opinions of the interviewees provided important data for the research and enabled the researcher to get in-depth information about the interviewees. The data from the observation comprises mainly of observations about the researcher's feelings and thoughts while conducting the interview as well as any observations of the body language of the interviewees as this also provides primary data for this research. Due to the qualitative nature of both data collection methods the multi-method had been chosen for this research.

7) Time horizon

As the underlying research had been necessarily under time constraint the time horizon for the research is cross-sectional which according to Saunders, Lewin and Thornhill (2012) is "the study of a particular phenomenon (or phenomena) at a particular time." The cross-sectional time horizon is mostly used for quantitative data collection as the researcher tries to describe rather than understand the phenomena. However, it can also be used for a case study based on interviews conducted over a short period of time (Saunders, Lewin and Thornhill, 2012). The aim of the research is to understand the impact of national culture on knowledge creation and the usage of provided data and information. Longitudinal studies are repeated over an extended period (Cooper and Schindler, 2008). As national culture lies deep in the interviewee's insights the longitudinal study may provide detailed data if collected through observation of particular nations. However, the underlying research intends to collect data through in depth-interviews. Hence, the cross-sectional time horizon or "snapshot" (Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler, 2011) has been chosen for this research.

8) Choice of Data Collection

The choice of method is the qualitative method, which according to Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005) is the preferred method if the researcher intends to uncover the research subjects' behaviour. Primary data will be collected through in-depth interviews of three research subjects with different national backgrounds as well as from observations of the interviewees' body language. Therefore new data was collected through this. The researcher used semi-structured interviews, which according to Cameron and Price "lie somewhere between unstructured and fully structured, and are a widely used practical business research method". Semi-structured interviews provided the possibility to have a certain set of questions for the researcher to remain focused on what needs to be asked but also allowed free talking for the researcher as well as for the interviewee. This allowed space for the research to discover areas of the field discussed which the researcher had not thought of or which could reveal new perspectives on the research field, which had not previously been considered. Secondary data in the form of articles and research papers but also already published books on the topic had been reviewed and analysed. This provided the researcher with an overview on the current literature available and enabled the researcher to

understand the national cultures of the interviewees, which provided guidance on how to conduct the interview.

9) Sampling

Due to time restrictions, financials and accessibility it is necessary for the underlying research to use sampling (Saunders, Lewin and Thornhill, 2012). Therefore the non-probability sampling has been chosen for this research. According to Saunders, Lewin and Thornhill (2012) the “Non-probability sampling provides a range of alternative techniques to select samples based on your subjective judgement”. Three individuals from three different national backgrounds have been chosen by the researcher in order to gain in-depth data and information about the national culture and on their KMP. The choices have been made based on the researchers subjective judgement as the research subjects have the appropriate experience to provide the insights for the aim of the research. This provided the researcher with an information rich case study in order to explore the research questions and gain theoretical insights (Saunders, Lewin and Thronhill, 2012).

Furthermore, purposeful sampling is used for this research. According to Patton (2002) “The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for in depth study. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term purposeful sampling. [...] Purposeful sampling focuses on selecting information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the question under study.”

Within the purposeful sampling are different strategies for selecting information-rich cases (Patton, 2002). The researcher has chosen the intensity sampling, which according to Patton “consists of information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon of interest intensely (but not extremely).” The researcher has therefore picked three rich examples out of a pool of about 30 potential research subjects. The age, country of origin, country of residence and educational background of each potential research subject had been considered and based on this the researcher has narrowed the choice down to three research subjects, one from Australia, one from Germany and one from the Arab-speaking countries.

10) The Research subjects

The research subject from Australia is an Australian qualified lawyer with several years of professional experience gained within a law firm as well as in-house within a multinational company.

The German research subject is a German qualified lawyer also with several years of professional experience gained primarily within an international corporate law firm.

The research subject from the Arab-speaking countries is a lawyer qualified in one of the countries considered the Arab-speaking countries according to Hofstede. Professional experience

was gained while working in different multinational and international companies as an in-house lawyer.

11) Credibility of Research Findings

The credibility of the research findings is concerned with the “How do I know?” test or the question “Will the evidence of my conclusions stand up to the closest scrutiny?” (Saunders et al., 2012). The answer to this is of course, you cannot know. However, a good research design can reduce the possibility of getting the answer wrong. According to Collis and Hussey (2009) there are two aspects of the credibility of findings: reliability and validity.

a) Reliability

Reliability is concerned with the findings of the research. For a research result to be reliable a repeat study should produce the same result (Collis and Hussey, 2009). This tends to be high in positivist studies, however under an interpretive paradigm, reliability is often of little importance, as the interpretive believes that the researcher influences the research. More importance is placed on whether the observations and interpretations made by different observers or on different occasions can be explained and understood.

This research follows the interpretivism philosophy; hence the question if a repeat study would produce the same result cannot be answered with certainty. However, the researcher has audio recorded the three interviews and has detailed notes of each interview. Further, each interviewee was given sufficient time and has not been put under pressure to participate. All interviewees took place in a private room with only the interviewee and the researcher present. In addition the interviewee was free not to answer any question or had the opportunity to ask for deletion of the audio recording. Furthermore, the researcher has provided the opportunity to turn off the recording at any time during the interview if indicated by the research subject.

However, it cannot be ruled out that the researchers bias interfered while undertaking the interview as well as while analysing the data obtained from the interview. As the interviewer has the equivalent educational background as the interviewees and in one case even shares the national cultural background the interviewer might have prompted the interviewee in a certain direction through using a certain tone or use of a specific body language in order to obtain the information desired and not the information the interviewee intended to give. However, the researcher has marked any prompts given during the interview and has paid attention to a change in voice while listening to the recording. Therefore it was taken into account while analysing the data. Finally, it cannot be underestimated that there may be misinterpretation of the responses due to cultural differences between the interviewer and the interviewee. Also, it cannot be ruled out that the interviewee might be willing to participate in an interview but might have answered certain questions evasively in order to avoid a certain follow up question which might

touch sensitive data which the interviewee is not willing to share with the researcher. This might cast a partial picture of the interviewee of a 'socially desirable' role (Saunders, Lewin and Thornhill, 2012) but does not provide the researcher with the real information and data required for the underlying research.

However, after conducting the three interviews and after analysing the data collected the researcher has no doubt that the data provided was accurate and honest and the research subject did not avoid certain questions or hesitated with answering questions. The researcher therefore considers the data collected as reliable.

b) Validity

Validity is the extent to which the research findings accurately reflect the phenomena under study. Research errors, such as faulty research procedures, poor samples and inaccurate or misleading measurements, can undermine validity (Collis and Hussey, 2009). The interpretivist's aim is to gain full access to the knowledge and meaning of those involved in the phenomenon and consequently validity is high under such a paradigm. Various forms of validity have been identified. Face validity involves ensuring that the tests or measures used by the researcher do actually measure or represent what they are supposed to represent or measure (Collis and Hussey, 2009). Construct validity is the degree to which a research instrument is able to measure or infer the presence of an abstract property (Blumberg et al., 2011).

While conducting the interviews the researcher has asked certain questions in order to prove Hofstede's four dimensions of national culture in order to outline that the research subjects selected are representative of the underlying research.

The researcher therefore has no doubt that the validity of the data collected is accurate.

12) Ethics

According to Cooper and Schindler (2008:34) "Ethics are norms and standards of behaviour that guide moral choices about our behaviour and our relationships with others." By outlining the ethical concerns in business research it is aimed to ensure that no one is harmed or suffers adverse consequences from research activities (Cooper and Schindler, 2008). Brymann and Bell (2011:122) point out "Ethical issues arise at a variety of stages in business and management research".

The researcher was provided with personal data of the research subjects as well as insightful information about their cultural backgrounds. The research subjects have been informed that the information is used for dissertation purposes only. However, the research subjects have also been informed that the dissertation might be published if a certain mark is achieved for the dissertation. Furthermore, the researcher has not and does not intent to publish the names or gender of the research subjects and has anonymised the data. However, entire elimination

cannot be guaranteed as a third party might identify the research subject according to the data provided in connection with the name of the researcher. In accordance with this the researcher has addressed the matter prior to conducting the interview. However, Bryman and Bell (2011:131) point out that the “The issue of confidentiality and anonymity involve legal as well as ethical considerations. [...] [and] also raise particular problems with regard to the secondary data analysis of qualitative data (see Chapter 22), since it is very difficult though by no means impossible, to present field notes and interview transcripts in a way that will prevent people and places from being identified.”

The research subjects have been informed in detail about the purpose of the research and they have been given the information necessary to evaluate if they would like to participate as a research subject or not. In addition, each research subject has been informed that the researcher tended to observe the body language of each in order to analyse and interpret certain reactions of the research subject. Bryman and Bell (2011:133) conclude thereto that a “prospective research participant should be given as much information as might be needed to make an informed decision about whether or not they wish to participate in a study.”

As outlined already and which is interlocked with the above two concerns is the right of privacy of the research subjects. The researcher has given each research subject the opportunity to refuse to answer certain questions if the question is considered inappropriate (Bryman and Bell, 2011:136).

The researcher has ensured that the participation is voluntary and confidentiality will be abided.

13) Data Analysis

According to Hennink et al (2011) qualitative data analysis can be described as a “science and an art”. With “Science” is meant the rigour and structure that comes from following established procedures, and using well-accepted methods and techniques for analysing textual data. The “art” part of the qualitative data analysis on the other hand refers to the interpretative nature of analysis, which involves managing and making sense of people’s multiple and contrasting perspectives.

There are different approaches to analysing qualitative data (e.g. discourse analysis, content analysis, thematic analysis, biographical or narrative analysis), however, this research applies the principles of the grounded theory in order to analyse the qualitative data retrieved through semi-structured in-depth interviews. Grounded theory is an approach to qualitative research that may embrace the rigour of “science” and procedure and the “creative” elements of emergent discovery. It is therefore an appealing approach as it provides a rigorous and “scientific” approach, yet it also remains faithful to the interpretative nature of qualitative analysis (Hennink et al., 2011).

a) Data preparation

The researcher has conducted three semi-structured in-depth interviews. The interviews have been audio recorded and notes have been taken throughout the interview, noting the body language while answering certain questions as well as certain answers the researcher intended to reconsider at a later point during the interview. All three interviews have been conducted in English as the researcher wanted to avoid unnecessary translations as a translation can easily lead to misunderstandings. The researcher then chose to partially transcribe the interviews, which means that the interview questions and answers important to the researcher and this research have been recorded in writing. During this process some aspects of speech (e.g. a short break before answering the question, a laughter, a sarcastic laughter) have been included in the transcript. Furthermore the researcher noted the probes given, so it can be included in the data analysis process. Following this the transcribed data was anonymised as the interviewee sometimes referred to their current work placement by name or mentioned other identifying data. It was possible to replace the data with synonyms such as “current/previous workplace”, “the city I studied”.

b) Coding

Following the data preparation the researcher coded the data. Codes are essential topics discussed by participants and identified through reading data. The researcher prepared interview questions (Appendix 2) before conducting the interview and had therefore already a set of deductive codes available, which have been used for the data analysis. Careful readings of the transcript as well as listening to the audio recording yielded inductive codes such as in vivo codes, as interviewees kept referring to “online databases” when talking about “online research option for lawyers”.

The researcher summarised the codes found in a coding notebook as it helped the researcher to structure the findings.

c) Comparison

The researcher then used the cross-case comparison approach in order to analyse the codes identified, by comparing a single code across interviews in the data set (Hennink et al, 2011). This was chosen as this approach best assisted the researcher in answering the research question, as it was the aim of the researcher to identify the differences in KM.

Finally the researcher grouped the codes identified into categories and conceptualised them while exploring the links for the underlying research.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

Australia, Germany and the Arab-speaking countries are three cultures with many differences. The following will outline the differences discovered while analysing the secondary data and comparing it with the primary data conducted during the research process. To point out the differences the researcher will use Hofstede's four dimensions. Lastly, it will be shown how the different national cultures influence the KMP of the three participants to this research.

- 1) National culture differences
 - a) Power distance

The Arab-speaking countries scored high on the power distance, whereas Australia and Germany scored low. Following this it indicates that in large-power-distance countries there is a considerable dependence of subordinates on bosses; hence those countries are showing a pattern of polarization between dependence and counterdependence: subordinates are unlikely to approach and contradict their bosses (Hofstede, 2010). In small-power-distance countries there is limited dependence of subordinates and bosses; hence the emotional distance is small: subordinates will rather easily approach and contradict their bosses.

The researcher included several questions about the subordinates – boss relationship in the interview and discovered that the participant from the Arab-speaking country would be unlikely to contradict the boss but rather follow instructions given, even when in disagreement. The Australian and the German participant however indicated that contradicting arguments with bosses took place and were not avoided, in particular the Australian participant was more open than the German participant, who indicated that in the end (s)he would follow the instructions of the boss. This aspect was also discovered when the researcher asked questions about their relationship to the parents and the level of obedience. The participant from the Arab-speaking country indicated that (s)he had a really good relationship with the parents but that a certain way of living was expected and partially enforced through words. The researcher discovered that the parental behaviour impressed the participant by following the parent's suggestions for life. The participants from Australia and Germany on the other hand indicated that they have not been influenced in their life decisions, certainly there have been suggestions but both participants have been quiet free in deciding their life direction.

When asked if the obedient nature to either the parents or the boss influences its behaviour towards knowledge the participant from the Arab-speaking country needed to be prompted in

order to answer. The researcher therefore rephrased the question and asked would the participant create knowledge and share it knowing that it was in contradiction with the bosses' or parents opinion. The participant reacted surprised and replied that there would be no disagreements when reaching the stage of sharing the knowledge with a third person because by then agreement would be found. The participants from Australia and Germany however would create and share knowledge in contradiction with the boss or parent; however, both would point out the contradiction to the third party and demonstrated the main issues around the argument.

b) Individualism/Collectivism

According to Hofstede Australia scored low on collectivism, meaning Australian people are more individualistic. People from the Arab-speaking countries on the other hand scored very high and are therefore collectivistic. Germans however are residing in the middle with a score of 67 and therefore a tendency for individualistic behaviour but with an influence of collectivism.

This dimension correlates with the power distance dimension as it indicates the harmonious behaviour of people as in high collectivism cultures harmony among people should always be maintained whereas in high individualistic cultures speaking one's mind is considered a characteristic of an honest person. The researcher therefore inter-related the questions regarding power distance with the questions regarding collectivism versus individualism. The questions asked referred to the importance of family life as well as the importance of having sufficient time for a family or personal life. The participant from Australia considered the family as important but not as the main part of life. This indicates the high score on individualist culture as shown by Hofstede. The participant from the Arab-speaking country on the other hand considered the family as the centre of life. The German participate struggled with this question as it was obvious to the researcher that the family was very important but also indicated that life choices made so far have indicated the importance of oneself over the group. The findings from questions in regards to individualism versus collectivism are in line with Hofstedes's findings.

c) Masculinity versus Femininity

This dimension interrelates with the individualistic versus collectivistic dimension and the researcher has therefore combined the question for this with the questions towards power distance and collectivism. The questions asked were directed towards the behaviour in conflicts. Does the participant rather follow the approach of negotiation and compromise or argument and fight?

According to Hofstede all three countries scored similar in the middle range with the Arab-speaking countries a little lower, indicating a bigger influence of femininity. Whereas Germany scores higher, which indicates a bigger influence of masculinity. The responses of the three participants have been very similar. All three would argue their point. However, the participant

form the Arab-speaking countries would much faster consider negotiation and a compromise when noticing that argument would not bring the result wished. This is in accordance with Hofstede's findings.

d) Uncertainty Avoidance

Australia has the lowest score on uncertainty avoidance, which indicates a lower need for rules and regulations than for example the Arab-speaking countries with the highest score out of the three countries. The researcher asked several questions in regards to rule orientation and feelings toward unknown situations; also the researcher analysed the personal history of each individual. Have there been situations in life when the participant willingly did not know what to expect from the future? This would indicate openness to unknown situations.

The Australian participant had this experience several times. The participant moved several times due to career changes. Those moves included moving abroad, not knowing what to expect from the future and with the need to adapt to an unknown situation. This indicates openness and flexibility. Furthermore, the participant indicated that there are certain rules within the current work placement, which need to be followed and which are considered to be important. However, it should not correlate with the goals to be reached. This finding is in accordance with Hofstede's findings for Australian people.

The German participant had also the experience of entering into an unknown situation but only did so after very careful consideration and evaluation of the facts provided. The participant laid emphasis on the careful evaluation of this step several times. This indicates openness towards unknown situations but only after careful consideration and is therefore more moderate than the Australian participant. This finding is again reflected in the scores provided by Hofstede. However, the participant smiled about the rule following question, as it is obviously a question asked to all Germans. Rules should be followed if they make sense and rules should be questioned. But the participant also admitted that most of the rules do make sense and should therefore be followed.

The participant from the Arab-speaking country also entered into unknown situations by moving abroad for educational and work related reasons. However, always knowing to a certain extent what to expect and with the view of a better future when leaving the comfort zone and trying something new. Careful consideration was therefore also necessary in order to evaluate this. This participant also indicated that rules should be followed as they are there for a reason, however it should not be underestimated that rules can be wrong. However, if a rule is considered to have a negative impact the options of changing the rule should be considered instead of ignoring the rule in total. The answers given by this participant accommodate the findings of Hofstede.

2) Knowledge management process

The following will provide the findings about the interview questions regarding KMP and will show how the participants acquire and create knowledge, share and disseminate knowledge and to which extent a reuse of knowledge is exercised.

a) Knowledge acquisition/accessing

The researcher has asked several questions about how knowledge is acquired and accessed. As lawyers all three agreed that reliable legal knowledge could only be acquired through books and legal online databases where access needs to be requested and paid for. The internet is another important tool for the lawyer, however only for informational reason but not for gaining reliable knowledge. For example, a lawyer would use the internet to inform herself or himself about a company or about a subject area she or he does not feel confident about. Quoting from a webpage is not considered appropriate and legal decision would not be based on it. For example if a lawyer does not understand a technical matter of a contract or what a company really does, she or he would research the information on the internet but would then look for confirmation on it by either talking to a technical person or phoning the point of contact within the company. Further to this a lawyer might get ideas from the internet on how to solve a certain problem but would not rely on it without researching the appropriate legal literature.

However, when the researcher asked in what order they would use the tools and options provided the answers among the three participants differed. The Australian participant as well as the participant from the Arab-speaking countries preferred talking to a peer or a superior who might have the appropriate knowledge or who might know whom to contact. An email to the team of lawyers within the company is an option with the request if others have worked on an issue like this. Following this the participant would start using available tools such as internal and external databases, online databases or the library. The German participant on the other hand would start with a research on the subject matter before considering contacting another lawyer.

The differences in approaching this situation between the German participant and the one from the Arab-speaking countries could be explained due to the cultural differences individualistic versus collectivistic, as the Arab-speaking countries follow the group rather than being individualistic. The Germans however are more individualistic which explains the approach of the German participant. The Australian participant however was the biggest surprise as according to Hofstede Australians are highly individualistic people, still the Australian participant prefers to talk to someone instead of individual research.

The researcher was further interested on how one would acquire the information necessary to get the facts for a legal case right. The answers thereto differed significantly.

The Australian participant would firstly research within internal databases and secondly request further information from the business team requesting the legal input. The German participant would differentiate on the client relationship and would either call the client if the relationship is steady and comfortable but would prefer an online search and a follow up email or letter if the relationship is fresh and unknown.

The participant from the Arab-speaking countries would use the phone first in order to get the facts right and would follow up with a written summary to get the facts summarised correctly. Further, the participant would not hesitate to contact the client directly in order to get the knowledge required.

Differences in the fact acquisition can be traced back to the individualism/collectivism dimension. As outlined above the group is strong within the Arab-speaking countries and it is therefore apparent that the participant from the Arab-speaking country would firstly call the person asking for the legal task rather than doing the research firstly alone, as the Australian participant would prefer it. The Australian culture shows a high index for individualism. The Germans can be found in between which is also reflected here by first evaluating how the relationship is and basing the decision how to act on the outcome of this evaluation.

b) Knowledge creation

Knowledge creation is considered with the question how new knowledge is generated and developed. The researcher asked questions about how one would approach a difficult and unknown task, something one has never dealt with before. Again, the answer about the approach differed between the three participants.

The Australian participant would firstly to ask herself if it looks sensible what has been created and would then as a second step think about who might have dealt with this before to discover a second opinion or thought on the subject matter. The person asked could be a peer or a superior. The German participant would firstly try to get the facts right and tries then to get a first opinion on it and again double check this with the facts available. At a later stage the participant would consider asking and would also not differentiate between a superior and a peer.

The participant from the Arab-speaking countries would also research the available information tools in order to create the knowledge required to solve the task given. Mainly, to get a general idea on the subject matter and in order to be able to ask the right question. As a next step the participant would question a more senior lawyer or a superior on this matter.

There is no major difference at the beginning of how the three participants are handling a complicated task and creating new knowledge. However, the second step in the process differs amongst the three participants and this can be traced back to the power distance dimension discovered by Hofstede. Australian people as well as Germans scored low in the power distance dimension, indicating limited dependence on superiors, whereas the Arab-speaking countries

scored very high in the power distance dimension, which indicates a high dependence on superiors. This explains the approach of the Arab-speaking participant of contacting mainly a senior lawyer or a superior instead of a peer. The Australian and the German participant would not differentiate between a peer, a senior and a superior.

The researcher then asked how one would find out whom to contact and the Australian as well as the German participant are relying on their own knowledge about the appropriate person to contact but also admitted that there may be an internal database where one could search for a name to contact. The participant for the Arab-speaking countries replied without hesitation that there is an internal database to look for information on a special subject matter and it also provides the appropriate name of the person with in-depth knowledge.

c) Knowledge sharing and dissemination

This is concerned with the question of if and how knowledge is shared and disseminated. The researcher was also interested about the participants regularity of updating databases and whether knowledge, which is no longer useful to the participant, is deleted. Several questions about how to teach a junior lawyer have been asked in order to discover the way knowledge is shared with juniors.

According to the Australian participant a junior lawyer should shadow a senior lawyer in order to learn and adopt. The German participant follows the approach of review and advising and the participant from the Arab-speaking country would observe and advise the junior lawyer. The differences are small but existent and can be explained with the differences in the slight differences in the Masculinity and Femininity dimension described by Hofstede. Australia and Germany scored higher on the masculinity than the Arab-speaking countries. In more masculinity cultures learning appears from top to down whereas in less masculinity cultures learning is more equal as being on the same level. The Australian and the German approach are following a top to down theory as the shadowing as well as the reviewing indicates more seniority and therefore represents different levels. In the Arab-speaking countries however observation and advice that does not indicate different levels as an advice can be given between peers as well.

The Australian as well as the participant from the Arab-speaking countries pointed out another aspect of sharing knowledge. Both indicated that knowledge could be shared by sending an email about the new knowledge created. The email should be addressed to the people with a general interest in the subject matter and not to everybody in order to not overload people with information. The German participant however did not consider this option, even though admitting to have received informational emails as described.

The researcher was also interested if and how the participants would update internal databases. "The intranet is only as good as we make it." This quote from the German participant best describes the thoughts all three participants had in common. However, when the researcher

asked if they would update the internal database themselves, only the participant from the Arab-speaking countries answered without hesitation that this is the appropriate thing to do and even if no or limited time was available it would still be on the list and would be done as soon as time was available. The German and the Australian participant on the other hand admitted that the updating was not really done by them but was left to others. This different behaviour can be explained by again looking at the differences of the individualism/collectivism dimension defined by Hofstede. Australia scored extremely high, whereas the Arab-speaking countries scored low, indicating a strong collectivistic behaviour. Hence, the Arab-speaking participant has the attitude that one can only find information on the intranet if it is kept updated, but in order to expect an updated intranet one needs to be a good example for others as this is how a group ought to be working and how a group is working together. The German participant admitted that the participant did the update of the database for the smaller team in which the participant was mainly working in occasionally, however, the main database was rarely updated. This indicates the score the Germans had in Hofstede's study as they scored 67%, which indicates a higher individualistic attitude than a collectivistic. This score reflects the behaviour of the German participant, as to a certain extent the collectivistic thinking is embedded within the participant, however not to the extent that it is embedded for the participant from the Arab-speaking country. On the other hand the individualistic thinking is not as embedded as it is with the Australians as occasional updates are performed.

Finally the researcher was interested if and how one would delete outdated knowledge found on internal databases and how informational emails received are handled. The participant from the Arab-speaking countries indicated that deletion is necessary in order to make room for new knowledge and in order to make sure that others would not be misled by outdated knowledge. However, before considering the deletion of knowledge the participant would consult with others as "what is outdated for me might still be of interest to others or might not be considered outdated for others". Next step would be to consult with a superior about the deletion of this knowledge. The German participant would not delete from internal databases, as outdated knowledge would probably not be found, as this would require the usage of internal databases, which is rarely the case with this participant. However, yet again if it comes to the database for the small team, deletion would probably be considered, but has not been undertaken by the participant to date. The Australian participant admitted that to date no deletion was undertaken but could not explain why. The behaviour of the Arab-speaking participant again reflects the high score of collectivism as careful consideration of what "the group" might think is evaluated first. The next step indicates the high score in power distance, as a superior would be consulted prior to deletion. The partly ignorant behaviour of the German as well as the Australian participant is reflecting the low scores on collectivism and power distance.

"I never delete emails!" was the reply of the Arab-speaking participant when asked if informational emails that are not of concern (e.g. "Tax law in Italy has changed", "The phones in the Boston office are temporarily unavailable") are received and deleted. All three would "scroll through it" or "fly over it" but only the German as well as the Australian participant would delete those emails if they were not of interest to them. This attitude again shows the differences in the power distance dimension as the participant from the Arab-speaking country would not delete an email as it might have its usage again for example when referencing is required or evidence needed to be given to a superior. It shows the respect the participant from the Arab-speaking countries has towards its superiors and the emails received on their request.

d) Reuse of Knowledge

Questions concerning the reuse of knowledge were directed towards the usage of internal databases provided by the company as well as the handling of informational emails, e.g. "The tax law in China has changed", "News from Italian politicians", which might not be useful for the time being but at a later stage.

The differences in power distance are reflected yet again in the behaviour of the three participants as only the participant from the Arab-speaking country would firstly and mainly look internally before considering using external databases and other sources. This indicates that this participant prefers company sources or in other words "group- sources" before looking externally. The Australian and the German participant on the other hand would rarely use the knowledge provided on internal databases. However, the German participant also indicated that this was mainly because the internal database does not provide the necessary information needed in his language. Key words in the German language could not be used for a database kept in English. Following this it cannot be redirected to the power distance. The Australian participant rarely refers to internal databases but outlined that over the years an individual database has developed by adding constantly new knowledge created and received. Therefore the first source to look for the knowledge needed would be the individual database created over the years. This also has the advantage that the storage system has been developed by the participant and the hit rate to find what one was looking for is higher. This reflects the high score in individualistic behaviour for Australian people.

Finally the researcher was interested if the participants would store informational emails, which are not of interest for the time being but might be needed at a later stage. The Australian participant keeps some of those, some others would be printed and read in more detail when the time for it was available and some would be deleted after a quick look over their content. The whole process of deciding whether the email should be kept, printed or deleted does not take very long. The German participant admitted that those emails would most likely be ignored and deleted as most likely when the knowledge is needed again the law has changed anyway and

one will need to start the research anyway. A few emails might even be kept but the participant also admitted that not once throughout the career did the participant go back to one of those emails filed. The participant from the Arab-speaking countries would “fly” over those emails and keep them, as a deletion of emails does not take place. When asked if the participant would go back to those emails at a later time, it was admitted that most likely a random search through the emails would be done but if the knowledge required cannot be found quickly and easily it may be easier to search the internal databases as it is very likely that the information received through internal emails will also be stored on an internal database and search functions of those databases have proved to be better than those provided for the main email programs available. This again shows the differences in power distance as this participant again prefers the knowledge provided by “the group” before considering researching knowledge or creating new knowledge.

Chapter 5: Conclusion, Recommendations and Further Research

1) Conclusion and Recommendations

At the beginning of this research project the researcher has shown the need and the background of this research and has outlined that further research on this subject matter is necessary. Further, the researcher has developed a research question and has presented the research objects for this research. The following intends to answer the research question and addresses the research objects previously set.

The purpose of this research was to develop and understanding of how national culture has an influence on the KMP. The researcher has analysed which cultural differences have an impact on the KMP using Hofstede's four dimensions and the data collected from the in-depth interviews. This resulted into conclusions, which will be outlined below.

The research and analysis of the primary and secondary data has shown that the differences in national culture have an influence on the KMP. The different approaches can be traced back to the national culture, however, it should not be underestimated that there is a high impact of personality in those approaches and a lot of experience is used and therefore those approaches might have changed over time. The German participant for example indicated that due to the increase of experience and knowledge a few approaches have changed over the years. And the Australian participant is using knowledge stored and collected over the years; a phenomenon not existing at the beginning of the career.

Even though Hofstede's framework and the discovery of the four dimensions have attracted criticism it is the most commonly used framework to explain variations in national cultural differences. As outlined in Chapter 2 of this research other researcher such as Trompenaar have also discovered dimensions of national culture but they can be linked with Hofstede's four dimensions. The researcher therefore believes Hofstede's framework to be the most appropriate for the underlying research and concludes that the national cultural differences have an impact on KMP. The main influences on KMP can be traced back to the dimensions power distance, individualistic versus collectivistic and masculinity versus femininity. The fourth dimension, uncertainty avoidance, however had little influence on the KMP of lawyers. The researcher believes that the profession as a lawyer influences a lawyer's attitude towards rule behaviour and the education received. The small differences in this dimension as shown in the previous chapter can therefore be traced back to the fact that the research subjects are lawyers. Following this belief, it cannot be concluded that Hofstede's dimension uncertainty avoidance has no influence on the KMP in general.

The findings further show how the national culture influences the KMP. The participant's individualistic respectively collectivistic behaviour influences the acquisition of knowledge but also

the knowledge sharing behaviour in a positive way. As shown in the previous chapter the acquisition and accessing of knowledge is different among the three participants and that can be traced back to the differences in national culture. Lawyers coming from a different cultural background than their client should therefore address those differences. It should be addressed if the client is from a more collectivistic culture such that including the client in the solution process by requesting more facts and discussing possible solutions is appropriate whereas in more individualistic cultures it may not be considered a sensitive move. A high score on individualism however has a negative impact on the knowledge sharing behaviour.

The analysis has further shown that all lawyers considered the internet as a useful but as a less reliable source than for example external databases which one needs to request access and pay for. It should therefore be considered that companies and law firms provide the appropriate tools to their lawyers. In addition, the appropriate books should be made available to the lawyers.

Regarding the knowledge creation no major differences were shown between the three different national cultures researched for the first step of the process. However, a difference was shown at the second step when involving a third person and how one would find out about this third person. A high score on the power distance index has a negative impact on the knowledge creation as a senior lawyer or a superior would be asked first. This prohibits or reduces the possibility of knowledge creation among peers in high power distance countries. Following this, an internal database showing the people with in-depth knowledge on certain subject matters should be provided. This database should also be able to accept key words from the main languages supported by the company, which would facilitate the search for the lawyer. While creating such a database it should also be considered that with a higher power distance score it would prefer contacting a more senior lawyer or a superior. However, it is also believed that if the database shows a certain person as a lawyer with in-depth knowledge, this person would be considered as more knowledgeable and therefore as the appropriate person. It goes without saying that the database should also provide the correct contact details, which need to be kept up to date.

The biggest difference between the three national cultures has been in relation to knowledge sharing. Even though, knowledge sharing was regarded as very important from all three participants the behaviour towards it differed immensely. It is the researchers belief that the knowledge sharing and the re-use of knowledge as well as the level of use of internal databases are a vicious circle. The three participants as well as other researcher on this subject matter agree with this belief. However, in order to change the knowledge sharing behaviour and with this get the lawyers to regularly update internal databases, the level of usage of internal databases needs to be changed. One way would be to extend the key word range of databases to accept all the languages supported by the company. The increase of the level of usage of internal databases could also be achieved through better communication and the nomination of a "knowledge management officer". This is a person within a team of lawyers or within a

department responsible for the update of internal databases that includes deletion as well as adding of new knowledge. Also, this should not be treated as a less important task and should be valued by superiors. This could also be achieved through superiors encouraging the use of internal databases and setting a good example by using it as well. Following the outcome of this research, within an international team of lawyers it should be considered to fill this position with someone from a more collectivistic culture, as knowledge sharing is valued and therefore the task would be considered as important.

As indicated above the reuse of knowledge is linked to the level of usage of internal databases as well as the updating of databases. However, the use of informational emails needs to be addressed. Especially as every incoming email distracts the lawyer from the task she or he is working on for the time being. All three have agreed that every email is read but with limited interest and further all three agreed that the number of incoming emails has increased immensely and needs to be handled properly. The researcher suggests consolidating all informational emails into one, which should be sent once a day and at the same time during the day. This email should contain every update made during the day with an appropriate link where the knowledge concerning a specific subject matter can be found. This would give every lawyer the opportunity to read what is of interest and to ignore what is not important. This involves one person within the company to be responsible for sending this email; hence every knowledge management officer within a team should be forwarding their updates to this person, who is then consolidating all inputs and summarising it in one email. Finally, the researcher suggests that informational emails such as "The printer xyz is down" or "The phones in the Boston office are not working" should be avoided altogether or should be kept to a minimum, meaning they should only be sent to the department affected by this, e.g. the people in the Boston office. The information could be posted via a banner on the main intranet site, visible for everybody, to inform the rest of the company.

The differences how one trains a junior lawyer also differed among the three participants and according to the findings this can be traced back to the masculinity versus femininity dimension. However, the researcher believes that this influence is neither negative nor positive as it also depends on the way the junior lawyer prefers to learn which again might be traced back to her or his national culture. It should therefore be considered to evaluate those facts when training a junior and not only refer from personal preferences on this matter.

The importance of handling knowledge properly has been recognised by all three participants. The German participant indicated that the amount of knowledge available and the number of different tools available "prohibits people from having a decisive opinion on something" and the Australian participant backed this opinion by saying "You can bury yourself in information instead of stopping and thinking". The participant from the Arab-speaking countries referred to the increased expectations of the business due to the amount of information available and that replies are expected faster. The Australian participant who referred to the number of

communication tools available nowadays also backed this up. Hence, it is important to understand the importance of KM and how to handle it properly. This research has shown that national culture has an influence on the KMP of a lawyer. It has further outlined, how the differences in national culture have affected the KMP and concludes that a high score in power distance has a negative impact on knowledge creating but also on knowledge sharing as new ideas might not be spread when in contradiction with a superiors ideas or opinion. In addition, a high score in individualism influences the knowledge sharing behaviour negatively.

This research contributes to the research in the area of KM of KW and national culture and the interrelation of it.

2) Recommendations for further Research

On the basis of the importance of KM for KW further research needs to be conducted. While conducting this research project the researcher discovered distinct limitations of the research and framed research recommendations, which are summarised below.

The main limitation of the underlying research was time and this needs to be taken into consideration when conducting further research on this field. Time has restricted the researcher in conducting more interviews with lawyers from the same jurisdiction as well as with lawyers from other jurisdictions. As outlined above one participant from each country is not as convincing as a group of lawyers from the same national culture would be. Therefore, the sample size will need to be extended when conducting further research. Following this the research should also be extended to other national cultures, which have not been subject of this research. Finally, the researcher suggests a differentiation between in-house lawyers and lawyers from a law firm as it has shown during the process of this research that the different approaches may appear because of the different types of work an in-house lawyer is doing compared to a lawyer from a law firm. In addition to this an age differentiation should be considered. Experience and knowledge gained throughout the professional years of a lawyer should not be underestimated and it came to the attention of the researcher that two of the participants had distinguished work experience whereas the other participant was lacking those. The researcher therefore suggests dividing the research participants into age groups or into senior and junior lawyers for future research on this subject area.

Chapter 6: Self Reflection on own learning and performance

1) Introduction

“Education is an admirable thing, but it is well to remember from time to time that nothing that is worth knowing can be taught.” – Oscar Wilde

Following the Oscar Wilde quote, the aim of this chapter is to outline the key skills acquired as well as the progression of personal learning by the researcher throughout the process of this thesis. It shall further document how this can be further developed and extended beyond the course and how this can benefit the researcher.

Previous assignments in the course of this MBA involved research activities, but none of these have reached the level of this thesis as none of them involved primary research. Hence, the learning outcomes and skills acquired by completing this thesis are substantial for future development.

In order to demonstrate the development of the researcher this chapter will firstly provide an overview of the learning styles according to Honey and Mumford (1992). This enabled the researcher to determine which learning style can be best identified with the researcher. This provides guidance, which skills shall be deepened and which skills need further attention and development in order to extend the range of learning experience. Secondly, this chapter will outline the skills acquired during the process of this thesis. Thirdly, the researcher will propose a way to further develop these skills and how they can be applied in the workplace.

2) Learning styles

“Learning has happened when people can demonstrate that they know something they didn’t know before (insights and realisation as well as facts) and/or when they can do something they couldn’t do before (skills).” (Honey and Mumford, 1992)

People discover preferences in learning over time and learning styles are the key to understanding these preferences (Honey and Mumford, 1992). Honey and Mumford have discovered four learning styles: Activists, Reflectors, Theorists, Pragmatists.

Activist: enjoy new and challenging activities. They mostly benefit by learning from experience and working with others.

Reflector: They prefer to view things from many different perspectives. They think things through before coming to a conclusion.

Theorists: They like to analyse and synthesise. They are keen on basic assumptions, principles, theories, models and systems thinking.

Pragmatist: They are keen to try out new ideas, theories and techniques to see if they work in practice and they learn through experiments.

The researcher completed a questionnaire generated by Honey and Mumford (2006) to assist with the discovery of a particular learning style. Following this, the researcher has a very strong tendency to the theorists learning styles, which enables her to adapt and integrate observations into complex but logically sound theories. Furthermore the researcher has a strong tendency towards the pragmatists learning style, which makes her keen on new ideas and trying them quickly.

Theorists philosophy is “If it’s logical, it’s good” whereas pragmatists follow the philosophy “If it works, it’s good”. The researcher therefore follows the philosophy “If it works, it is logical and if it is logical, it is good”.

Another aspect of the Theorists learning style is the way they approach problems. They tend to be perfectionist who will not rest until things are tidy and fit into a rational scheme. The Pragmatist on the other hand tend to be impatient with ruminating and open-ended discussions and they are essentially practical and down to earth people who like to make practical decisions and solve problems.

The researcher realised the influence of her theorists learning style behaviour on the write up of this thesis and the evaluation of the research topic.

3) Background of the researcher

a) Academic Background

The researcher completed high school in Germany in summer 2000 and followed her passion of studying law at the University of Potsdam in Germany. After passing the first state law exam in Berlin in 2006 the researcher undertook the necessary traineeship in order to become a qualified lawyer for Germany. The traineeship was successfully completed in November 2008 after passing the second state law exam.

The skills acquired at law school are theoretical skills about the German legal system and enforced critical thinking as well as research and data analysis skills.

b) Professional Background

The researcher left the traineeship with an excellent law degree but lacking professional English language skills. Hence, the researcher started an 11-month contract with an US IT company in Dublin. Communication and customer relation skills have been developed during this time as well as becoming more adaptable and flexible. After this contract the researcher moved to a position

as a Legal Counsel in an international Insurance company and following this the researcher started her current position as an in-house Legal Counsel in a multinational IT Company, and part of a multicultural global legal team comprising of lawyers from over 14 different countries.

4) Skill Development

a) Cognitive decision-making skills

Prior to commencing the MBA program with Dublin Business School the researcher felt the need to increase her knowledge on certain business areas, which have been difficult to grasp during her day-to-day work. Especially the decisions made by the finance department had been a challenge for the researcher. The completion of the two modules “Theory of Finance” and “International financial institutions and markets” provided the researcher with the necessary knowledge needed in this field and it further enabled the researcher to draw the line between theory and practice. The researcher is now able to take the knowledge gained during those modules and apply it in her day-to-day work. Understanding the written theoretical word and applying it in practice has also proved to be an important skill to have while undertaking the research for this thesis. The research on national culture provided the researcher with in-depth knowledge on this topic and will help her to become a better leader for an international team in the near future.

The increased knowledge as well as the confidence gained through good results during the course of the MBA enabled the researcher to increase her decision-making process. Combined with the benefits of theorists learning style the researcher is now able to make decisions based on logical conclusions and successfully defend them. This encouraged her not only for the underlying research but also for the progression of her professional career.

b) Interpersonal skills

The researcher always considered herself a very talkative and extrovert person with strong communication skills. During the research for the thesis the researcher therefore believed that the interviews with the research subjects would probably be the easiest part of the research for her. However, it proved to be a challenge for the researcher. Conducting interviews does not only involve strong communication skills or being able to talk and articulate but also requires attentive listening skills. Further the interviewer needed to be able to react quickly to the answers given and build upon it. This proved to be challenging in two out of three interviews conducted as the interviewee provided the researcher with so much input that the researcher feared to miss parts or give the interviewee the impression this was not important for the research. Another challenge for the researcher was the ability to get the interviewee to talk and provide answers needed for the underlying study. The latter proved to be especially challenging in one interview as the interviewee tended to answer a different question than asked or provided examples, which did not

fit the situation described. A polite strategy to lead the interviewee back to the research topic was necessary. The researcher managed this by quickly rephrasing the question previously asked or by taking the example provided and restructuring it so it fitted the researcher's needs. This proved to be a successful tactic.

The interpersonal skills developed during the MBA program and especially during the research for the MBA thesis will help the researcher to progress her career because attentive listening skills and adaptation of what has been said as well as polite direction in speech are in the opinion of the researcher essential skills for business leaders nowadays.

c) Time Management Skills

Although time management skills have already been developed during the researchers time at law school in Germany, this skill proved to be the most challenging one to deepen and to further develop. The researcher undertook the MBA while working full time as a Legal Counsel within an international IT company. The nature of her day-to-day work is a fast paced environment with the need to adapt quickly and to be flexible in regards to working hours. Last minute business trips are a regular occurrences as well as late night or early morning conference calls.

The researcher therefore developed the ability to be more efficient in her professional work as well as in her academic research while setting deadlines ahead of the official deadline. Even though the setting of deadlines and the drawing of project plans and keeping lists have always been a strength for the researcher, the abiding by the plan on the other hand proved to be a challenge. The researcher therefore combined the achievement of certain deadlines and the reaching of certain milestones with a personal reward system. This allowed her to stay ahead in her professional work life as well as with her academic research. During the write up process of the thesis the personal reward system has been repeated for reaching intermediate targets. This required a weekly review of the progress made which enabled the researcher to adapt quickly and change the plan when it showed an error in the executions either because the target was set too high or too low. Advanced planning was the result of this.

As the researcher had to adopt the deadline setting and project-planning tactic for her daily job she realised the impact on her tasks and her ability to respond quicker and to administer her work better. This skill will therefore be very important for her future career development as the ability to meet deadlines and at the same time stay ahead of other important things is a requirement of every employer.

5) Future Application of Learning

"Develop a passion for learning. If you do, you will never cease to grow." – Anthony J. D'Angelo

In the opinion of the researcher you never stop learning and if you do you will lose what had been achieved before. It is therefore essential to constantly use the skills developed in order to keep

them at the level they are now. Furthermore the researcher believes it is necessary to enhance the skills developed. As outlined, the skills have already helped the researcher in concluding the underlying research as well as assisted her in her day-to-day work. As the impacts of the skill application have been experienced positively the researcher intends to continue using these skills on a day-to-day basis and to further develop as the task load develops and as tasks are getting more challenging.

6) Conclusion

The researcher believes that there are more than the outlined skills, which have been developed or deepened during the undertaking of the MBA and the underlying research. All skills will be beneficial for the researcher in her future career as long as the experience will not be forgotten and therefore free up the ability to apply the developed skills daily.

The MBA program and the experience during the program, not only in regards to the modules taught or the research undertaken but also the people the researcher encountered during the course have positively influenced the researcher not only on an academic or professional level but also in her personal life. The every day life experience of working, living and studying in a foreign country with a foreign language has contributed to her personal development. The researcher believes to have matured as a person and as a lawyer during the course of her studies. This is not only because of the skills' development outlined above but also because of the personal relations built and the connections to Ireland and especially to Dublin.

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Appendix 1: Hofstede's cultural dimensions for countries

Country	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	LTO
Africa Easter region	64	27	41	52	
Africa Western region	77	20	46	54	
Arab speaking countries	80	38	53	68	
Argentina	49	46	56	86	
Australia	38	90	61	51	31
Austria	11	55	79	70	
Bangladesh	80	20	55	60	40
Belgium Flanders	67	78	60	93	
Belgium Wallonia	61	72	43	97	
Brazil	69	38	49	76	65
Bulgaria	70	30	40	85	
Canada	39	80	52	48	23
Chile	63	23	28	86	
China	80	20	66	30	118
Colombia	67	13	64	80	
Costa Rica	35	15	21	86	
Croatia	73	33	40	80	

Czech Republic	57	58	57	74	
Denmark	18	74	16	23	
Ecuador	78	8	63	67	
El Salvador	66	19	40	94	
Estonia	40	60	30	60	
Finland	33	63	26	59	
France	68	71	43	86	
Germany	35	67	66	65	31
Great Britain	35	89	66	35	25
Greece	60	35	57	112	
Guatemala	95	6	37	101	
Hong Kong	68	25	57	29	96
Hungary	46	80	88	82	
India	77	48	56	40	61
Indonesia	78	14	46	48	
Iran	58	41	43	59	
Ireland	28	70	68	35	
Israel	13	54	47	81	
Italy	50	76	70	75	

Jamaica	45	39	68	13	
Japan	54	46	95	92	80
Korea South	60	18	39	85	75
Latvia	44	70	9	63	
Lithuania	42	60	19	65	
Luxembourg	40	60	50	70	
Malaysia	104	26	50	36	
Malta	57	59	47	96	
Mexico	81	30	69	82	
Morocco	70	46	53	68	
Netherlands	38	80	14	53	44
New Zealand	22	79	58	49	30
Norway	31	69	8	50	
Pakistan	55	14	50	70	00
Panama	95	11	44	86	
Peru	64	16	42	87	
Philippines	94	32	64	44	19
Poland	68	60	64	93	32
Portugal	63	27	31	104	

Romania	90	30	42	90	
Russia	93	39	36	95	
Serbia	86	25	43	92	
Singapore	74	20	48	8	48
Slovakia	104	52	110	51	
Slovenia	71	27	19	88	
South Africa	49	65	63	49	
Spain	57	51	42	86	
Sweden	31	71	5	29	33
Switzerland (French)	70	64	58	70	
Switzerland (German)	26	69	72	56	
Taiwan	58	17	45	69	87
Thailand	64	20	34	64	56
Trinidad and Tobago	47	16	58	55	
Turkey	66	37	45	85	
United States	40	91	62	46	29
Uruguay	61	36	38	100	
Venezuela	81	12	73	76	
Vietnam	70	20	40	30	

Appendix 2: Interview question (semi-structured)

1. Could you tell me a little bit about yourself as a person, especially, where are you from, when were you born, how many siblings, your upbringing?
2. Would you consider yourself as a religious person? If this impacts your day-to-day life, could you explain to me, how?
3. Are you married? If yes, for how long, do you have kids, are you planning to have kids?
4. How would you describe perfect family life from your point of view?
5. How do you value family life in comparison to your work life?
6. Have you ever had a misunderstanding with your boss or your partner? How did you handle the situation? Would you tell me a little story about it?
7. Have you ever had the feeling your boss is wrong about something and have you told him or her?
8. Would you consider yourself a “water cooler information lawyer”? E.g. would you discuss legal matters with a colleague over the water cooler or coffee machine if you meet someone there unintentionally?
9. If you are working on a complicated task and you are missing knowledge in order to understand and evaluate the task. How would you proceed?
 - a. Could you give me an example from your work life?
 - b. Could you give me an example from your private life?
10. What do you do with information you receive and you used but you do not longer need it?
11. Have you ever gone back to previously used data? How would you retrieve it?

12. In your current work placement, do you have an internal database to retrieve information, data and knowledge?
13. Do you use it? If yes, how frequently, in what way to what extent? If No, why not?
14. Would you update the database with your own knowledge?
15. Imagine, a colleague is calling you with a legal issue he or she is working on and he would like your professional advice. How do you handle a situation like that? Could you maybe give me an example?
16. Do you receive emails with "VERY IMPORTANT" and information in it, which you don't need for the moment but it might come in handy at a later date? What do you do with it? How do you ensure you remember that email in a week's time?
17. Do you think due to all the information available nowadays (online, databases, e-books), that the expectations have changed? For example for students or lawyers in a law firm?
18. Do you think that work has become easier since people started using internet and have access to the internet every time during the day?
19. Do you have an advice how to best capture every day's information flow?
20. Is there anything you would like to add?