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**The Influence of
Knowledge Management
on Internal Control
Operations**

A case study

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Thanks to Prof. Dal Mas, for her invaluable contribution.

Thanks to Giulia.

Thanks to all fellow travelers met along the way:

“life is so strange and so full of desires”

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Introduction

Knowledge Management and Internal Control are two components that contribute significantly to an organization's success. Knowledge Management refers to the process of acquiring, organizing and sharing knowledge to enhance an organization's productivity and effectiveness (Hislop, 2010). Knowledge could be further framed into implicit and explicit knowledge. Concisely:

«Tacit knowledge can be subconscious and difficult to articulate to others. [...] Explicit knowledge on the other hand can be shared more easily as it can be “packaged”.» (Donnelly, 2008).

Internal Control, on the other hand, is the system of checks and balances put in place to ensure that an organization's operations comply with established policies and procedures, safeguard assets, and prevent fraud (Lintsen, 2017).

In combination, these two areas of expertise aid organizations in managing their resources effectively while ensuring regulatory compliance.

There are also some existing studies which explore the impact of Knowledge Management systems on Risk Management practices, in which Internal Control plays a role. As summarised by Haltiwanger et al.:

«Knowledge Management can aid the Risk Management function in reducing the uncertainty of an environment so that risks can be identified, evaluated, planned for and monitored.» (Haltiwanger, et al., 2010)

This thesis will have several objectives: first, it will focus more closely on how Knowledge Management relates, rather generically, to the consultancy/audit business. The reason for this is that Risk Management and Auditing is a typical service offered by consultancy companies, as it provides an added layer of protection to in-place systems in other companies, or become the focus of projects in firms that do not have in-house Risk Management elements. The description is so generic that in-house Risk Management teams, such as Internal Control, Internal Audit or other controlling teams still fall under the “consultancy” umbrella, allowing for a comprehensive comparison in the existing literature.

Secondly, by observing the effects of Knowledge Management systems (or the lack thereof) in an Internal Control team of a multinational company through a case study, it is possible to appreciate how the dissemination and possession of knowledge can influence the risk conception and assessment of a whole geographical cluster in this particular setting.

After this introduction, the rest of this thesis is structured as follows. The next section deals with the steps taken in order to first, create a scoping framework to draw a sample from existing literature regarding Knowledge Management and the consultancy business, and second, analyse the sample obtained to identify useful insights that could be later investigated.

Soon after, the findings of this literary review will be defined and analysed singularly.

A small section presenting an overview of Internal Control duties and origins stemming from prominent literature will be there, in order to frame the Internal Control function for later understanding during the case study.

Third, a quick overview of the business environment and the company where the research will take place is offered, with a small focus on the Internal Control community considered in the research.

Fourth, the case study will be presented, together with the objectives of the observation undertaken, the method employed, the results and a critical discussion paragraph depending on the findings.

Lastly, conclusions will be drawn in order to quickly recap all the insights presented in this thesis in an exhaustive, yet organic fashion.

1. Literature review

One of the goals of this thesis is to analyse the state of worldwide research concerning Knowledge Management and its relationship with consultancy actors, whether they are internal or external.

This section of the paper presents the method adopted to perform the literary review.

The first step was to design a scoping framework in order to ease the writing process of the literary review, and to gain insights into the nature of the sample without even delving deeper in the article itself. The chosen method for this research phase was to adapt the already existing Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework to non-medical articles. The PRISMA framework is an evidence-based minimum set of items for reporting in systematic reviews and meta-analyses in the Medical sector, but its concepts could be well adapted outside its intended scientific field. The PRISMA-like framework adopted for this thesis will be clarified in all its points later on.

1.1 Data source

The main source of data utilised to evaluate the research relationship Knowledge Management and consultancy companies between 2000 and 2023 was through examining references to it in scholarly, academic journals. To access this data the Scopus database of publications (a database of peer-reviewed literature including scientific journals, books, and conference proceedings) was utilised. The main reason why this particular database was adopted is for its relative high literary comprehension (Dumay et al., 2016; Guthrie et al., 2015; Massaro et al., 2016).

The only types of papers accepted in this literature review were either articles (original research or opinions) or reviews (works quoting articles as well as conference papers) in the Business, Management and Accounting subject area. The effect intended is that the sample would contain as much original research as possible related to the thesis field of research without losing coherence and including an enormous range of different processes and activities. A corollary to this filter, but with the same logic, was to limit the source type to journals only.

To reach a broad enough literature sample to be considered, the context of the research was defined through the application of keywords “knowledge”, “management”, “consultancy” and “firms” concatenated by a logical conjunction operator, that is positive only if all the items together return a valid match on a candidate document.

The article extraction was finally performed on February 27th, 2023.

The nature of Knowledge Management is inherently modern: a proof of this is the date of first publication of the three most authoritative journals in the matter: the Journal of Knowledge Management (earliest publication in 1997), the Electronic Journal of Knowledge Management (earliest publication in 2003) and the Journal of Knowledge Management Practice (earliest publication in 1998). For this reason, only papers published from 2000 onwards were kept for the next stage (Serenko & Bontis, 2013; Serenko & Dumay, 2015).

At the end of the Identification step, the search produced 82 candidate papers to be included in the review of this thesis.

To rule out eventual articles not related to the topic of this thesis, reading the individual articles abstracts was required. Please note that, at this stage, all types of activities performed by consultancy companies are still included in the results, in order to reduce any bias that might compromise the scientific effectiveness of the scoping framework itself and to include as many articles as possible as already outlined above.

Since the filters put upstream were exclusive, only one paper was excluded for the Inclusion phase, as the focus of that paper was not relevant for this research: this finally returned the final sample of 27 papers (from now on called “the selected sample”, or simply “the sample”).

Figure 1 graphically outlines the scoping process in all its phases (Liberati et al., 2009; Page et al., 2021).

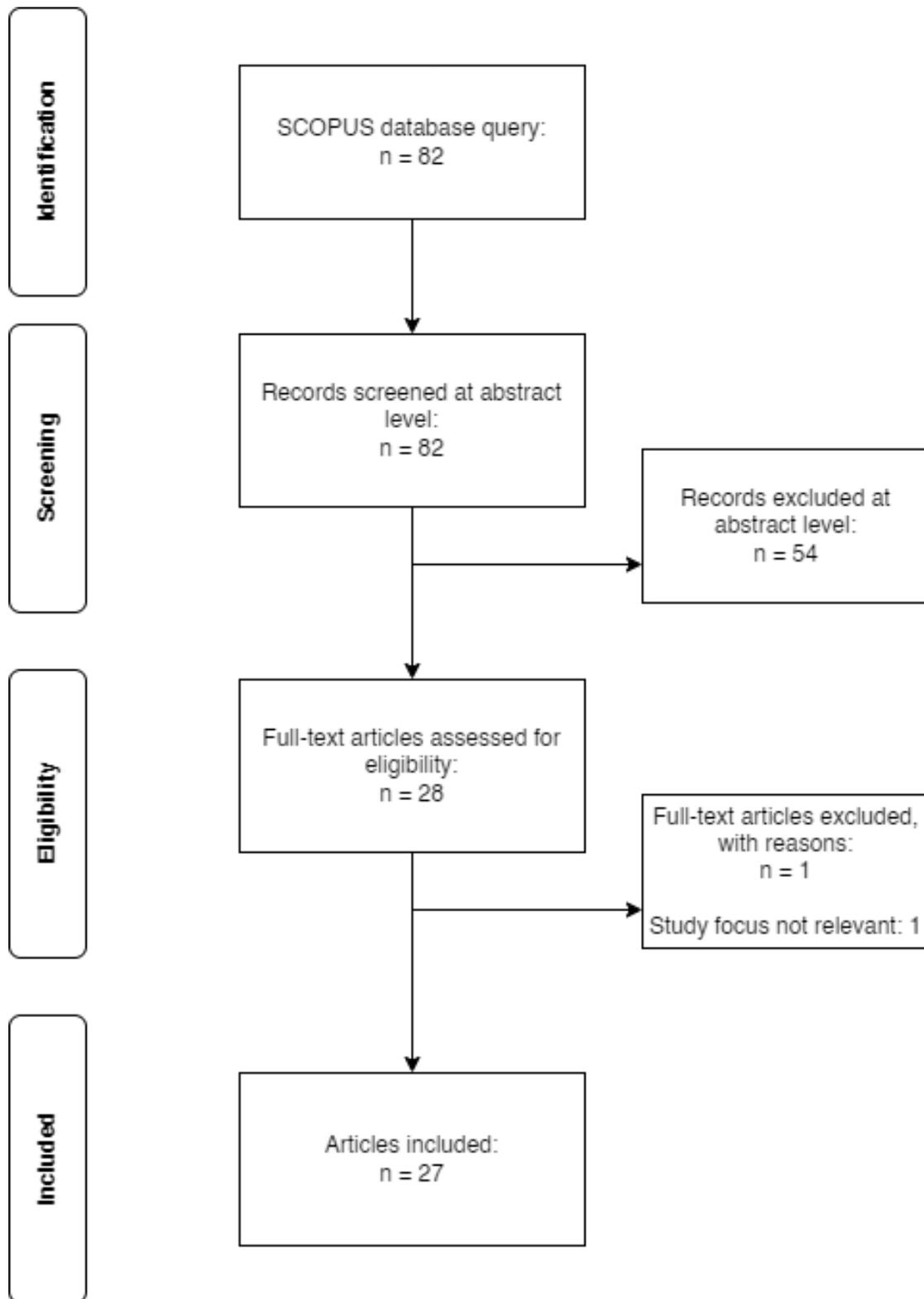


Figure 1: Scoping framework adopted (Source: Francescato, 2023)

1.2 Sample scoping criteria

During the Identification phase, a satisfactory enough sample was obtained, but a normalization process was needed to make relevant research information more clearly accessible in a faster way. The *a priori* criteria identified are:

- Year of publication;
- Sub-discipline of Management (main topic of the paper);
- Authors' background;
- Method of the paper;
- Purpose of the paper;
- A "specialisation topic" (i.e., particular focuses on sub-disciplines other than the main sub-discipline found in criterion 2 that might produce an unique combination, thus an unique sub-set of papers);
- The type of data collection reported in the paper;
- In case of empirical researches, the nature of businesses considered;
- Geographical scope of data collection or business setting for case studies;
- Whether the paper reported the presence of Enterprise Risk Management processes;
- If the previous point was positive, the specific mention to Enterprise Risk Management;
- The conclusions of the paper: a small summary of the findings reported by the authors;
- Any quantitative method, commercial tool, process or software mentioned to achieve the conclusions reported;
- Any hurdle or fallacy met in the paper: implicit hurdles found while reading the paper were reported as well.

Another criterion involving the score of a literary review cited authors was eventually removed as deemed not relevant (only one literary review was found from the Included sample).

In order to assess the Management sub-discipline involved, the work of Kozłowski & Matejun (2018) was put in practice. In their research, the authors report on the occurrence of Management sub-disciplines in 13 different classification systems around the globe. Only the most occurring sub-disciplines (more than 7 occurrences) were counted as possible choices for this thesis.

Points that were not immediately observable from the abstract or already indexed fields (i.e., nature of business considered, hurdles, purpose of the paper and conclusion) were normalised in order to categorise the findings to a number of choices.

The normalisation process involved a deep understanding of each paper method, observations and conclusions in order to assess whether there were possible issues in their own observations: sample representativeness, unexpected drawbacks, everything was accounted for. Then, once all the papers were examined under the previous premises, a set of common statements derived from the author's observations was drawn, in order to make quantitative inferences possible too without redundancies or data incoherence. Where a comment to a certain criterion was not possible or applicable, the fields were populated with "NA" or "*Not applicable*".

Table 1 graphically represents the sample found under the scoping framework defined above.

Further supporting documentation can be found in the Appendix section, at the end of this thesis, from letter A to F.

Index	Authors	Title	Year	Journal title
1	Sánchez Ramírez S., Guadamillas Gómez F., González Ramos M.I., Grieva O.	The Effect of Digitalization on Innovation Capabilities through the Lenses of the Knowledge Management Strategy	2022	Administrative Sciences
2	Aslam M.S., Ali I., Qammar A., Kiwan L., Dhir A.	How knowledge acquisition creates a competitive edge? A qualitative inquiry from international consultancy alliance	2022	International Marketing Review
3	Shaw D.	Aristotle and the Management Consultants: Shooting for Ethical Practice	2020	Philosophy of Management
4	Jøranli I.	Managing organisational knowledge through recruitment: searching and selecting embodied competencies	2018	Journal of Knowledge Management
5	Herbst A.S.	Capturing knowledge from lessons learned at the work package level in project engineering teams	2017	Journal of Knowledge Management
6	Obeidat B.Y., Al-Suradi M.M., Masa'deh R., Tarhini A.	The impact of knowledge management on innovation: An empirical study on Jordanian consultancy firms	2016	Management Research Review
7	Costas J., Kärreman D.	The bored self in knowledge work	2016	Human Relations
8	Pollock N., Williams R.	Industry analysts – how to conceptualise the distinctive new forms of IT market expertise?	2015	Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal
9	Gresty M.	Market intelligence gathering in executive search firms	2014	Business Information Review
10	Galunic C., Sengupta K., Petriglieri J.L.	Deus ex machina? Career progress and the contingent benefits of knowledge management systems	2014	European Management Journal
11	Khuong L.-N., Harindranath G., Dyerson R.	Understanding knowledge management software-organisation misalignments from an institutional perspective: A case study of a global IT-management consultancy firm	2014	International Journal of Information Management
12	Gross A.C., Holtzblatt M., Javalgi R., Poor J., Solyomossy E.	Professional occupations, knowledge-driven firms, and entrepreneurship: A national and regional analysis	2013	Business Economics
13	García-Quevedo J., Mas-Verdú F., Soriano D.R.	The heterogeneity of services and the differential effects on business and territorial innovation	2011	International Journal of Technology Management
14	Hislop D.	Knowledge management as an ephemeral management fashion?	2010	Journal of Knowledge Management
15	van Helden G.J., Aardema H., ter Bogt H.J., Groot T.L.C.M.	Knowledge creation for practice in public sector management accounting by consultants and academics: Preliminary findings and directions for future research	2010	Management Accounting Research
16	Ambos T.C., Schlegelmilch B.B.	Managing knowledge in international consulting firms	2009	Journal of Knowledge Management
17	Taminiau Y., Smit W., de Lange A.	Innovation in management consulting firms through informal knowledge sharing	2009	Journal of Knowledge Management
18	Ojanen V., Xin Y., Chai K.H.	Innovation management in technology-related knowledge-intensive business services	2009	International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management
19	Ojanen V., Hallikas J.	Inter-organisational routines and transformation of customer relationships in collaborative innovation	2009	International Journal of Technology Management
20	Ambrosini V., Bowman C.	Surfacing tacit sources of success	2008	International Small Business Journal
21	Donnelly R.	The management of consultancy knowledge: An internationally comparative analysis	2008	Journal of Knowledge Management
22	Crisuolo P., Salter A., Sheehan T.	Making knowledge visible: Using expert yellow pages to map capabilities in professional services firms	2007	Research Policy
23	Kim S.-K., Trimi S.	IT for KM in the management consulting industry	2007	Journal of Knowledge Management
24	Kärreman D., Alvesson M.	Cages in Tandem: Management Control, Social Identity, and Identification in a Knowledge-Intensive Firm	2004	Organization
25	Dunford R.	Key challenges in the search for the effective management of knowledge in management consulting firms	2000	Journal of Knowledge Management
26	Robertson M., O'Malley Hammersley G.	Knowledge management practices within a knowledge-intensive firm: The significance of the people management dimension	2000	Journal of European Industrial Training
27	Wright T.	Breeding the racing camel - or handy hints on knowledge management projects	2000	Business Information Review

Table 1: Final sample selected (Source: Francescato, 2023)

2. Findings

Since many of the scoping criteria are very bibliographic, thus offering reduced future research inputs if considered alone, and to make consultation easier, the findings are grouped for functional findings, except for those that offer unique insights such as points for further discussion or important remarks emerged by reading the sample. For later easiness of consultation, the papers have been indexed as per the column “Index”. Therefore, indirect citations might include the index number as a quick reference.

2.1 Bibliographic insights

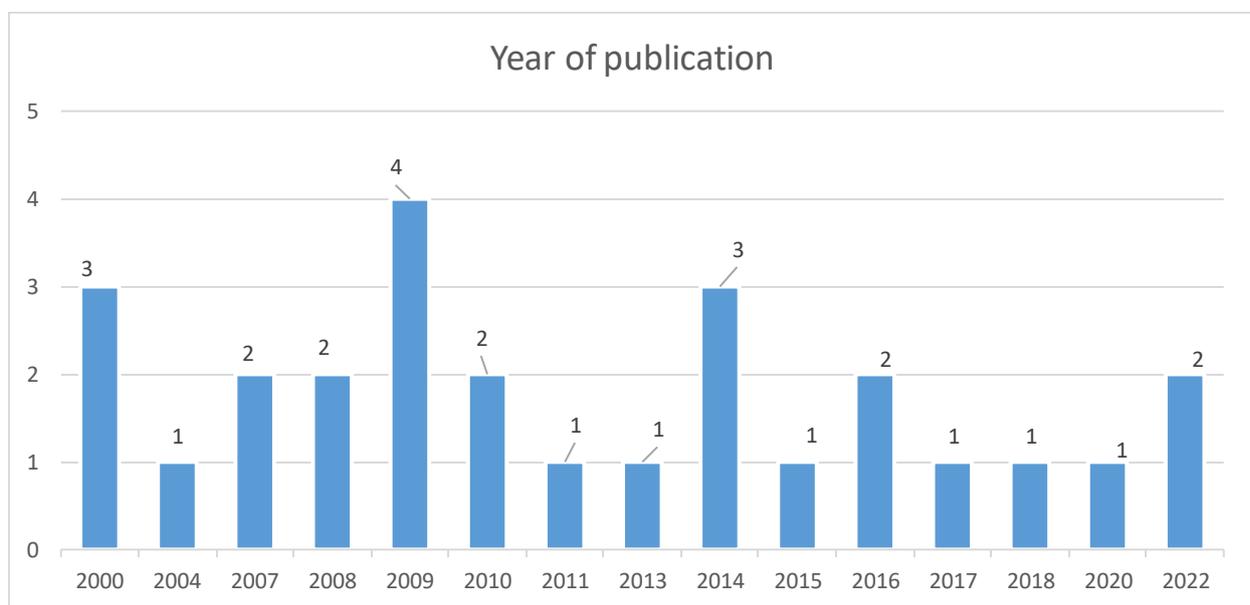


Figure 2: Year of publication of the sample (Source: Francescato, 2023)

Since the turn of the century, the decade 2005-2015 was most prolific in research, dealing with Knowledge Management related to consultancy companies with 16 papers published (Figure 2).

In terms of which publisher was preferred, the Journal of Knowledge Management published a rough 30% of the sample without much surprise thanks to the obviously related topic. What is more insightful, though, are the second placers: the Business Information Review journal and the International Journal of Technology Management. We can affirm that outside the

pure field of Knowledge Management, some authors have already explored the application of Knowledge Management concepts within the strategic setting and practicalities in the IT sector.

However, this should not come as a surprise:

«IT has been generally accepted as a critical enabler for the successful KM implementation.»
(Kim & Trimi, 2007)

«Creating a competitive edge through knowledge acquisition particularly in knowledge-sensitive industries [...] is imperative yet challenging.» (Aslam, et al., 2022)

Knowledge Management is both attractive as a study matter in academy settings as it is for the professional sector that convert it in practice with a possible competitive advantage gain through it.

Following on this and considering the principal topic of the selected sample, 17 of the papers are delving deep mainly into Knowledge Management while 11 others have been categorised as primarily about Strategic Management. For instance, Taminiau et al. (2009) and Aslam et al. (2022) focus more on the competitive advantage of Knowledge Management than its theoretical implications: both of them were categorised under Strategic Management first. A rough 40% of the papers then deals with practicalities connected to Knowledge Management, which reiterates the importance of it in a professional context:

«KM [Knowledge Management] has always been of considerable interest to KIFs [Knowledge-Intensive Firms] even before the concept was 'peddled' by consultants and software suppliers.» (Robertson & O'Malley Hammersley, 2000)

Considering their focus (that is, a specialisation of the principal topic, often dealing with practical aspects), 17 of the sampled articles report none: to avoid redundancy, if there was no applicable focus or the focus itself and the principal topic coincide, this field is considered "Not Applicable". Statistically speaking, since many of the articles have their main topic found in Knowledge Management, the second most common combination found was related to Strategic Management studies with Knowledge Management as a focus.

2.2 Authors' background

This criterion was included in order to see whether the authoring team is composed exclusively of scholars, exclusively of professionals coming from the business world or a mix of both academics and professionals.

Twenty-two papers were redacted by an all-academic pool of authors, while three varied their backgrounds more with both academic researchers as well as business professionals on the authoring list. Only two of the papers had their authors fully coming from the professional world (and always consulting companies), mainly presenting business case studies observed in their workplace.

It is interesting to note that while the filters applied in the Identification phase of the scoping process were quite exclusive, nearly all the papers are drafted in the academic world alone while the actual business serves as an observation opportunity for researchers.

This observational possibility provided authors with case study opportunities or chances to interview its staff: eighteen out of the academic-authored twenty-two papers have a research method with these characteristics. The remainder employs analyse secondary data (that is, data already harvested by previous researchers and not directly attributable to the research developed in the paper itself) in order to test hypotheses.

Further insights on data and paper methods can be found in the later "Methodology" section.

2.3 Geographic scope

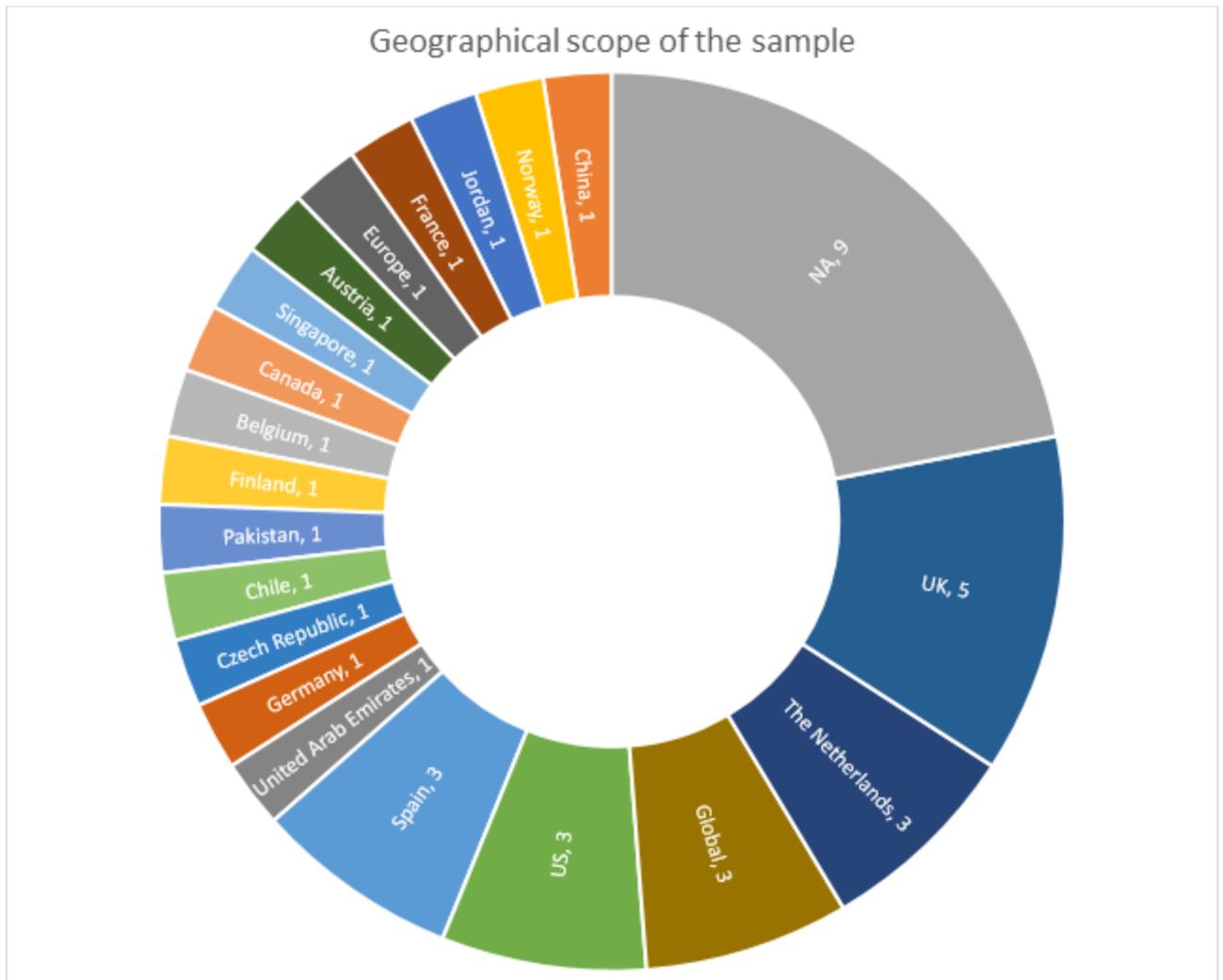


Figure 3: Geographical scope of the sample (Source: Francescato, 2023)

With this criterion the goal was to record where the data collected was collected, or where the organizational observation (i.e. case study, interview or tag-along observation of professionals in their daily activities) took place

Geographically wise, 53% of research observations occurred in Europe, with the UK emerging as leader with five studies taking place there. 22% of the articles had no explicit geographical scope: of those studies, one is the only literary review found in the sample, while the remainder are qualitative research articles. The Americas, Asia and the Middle East are represented by a handful of countries each, with no article coming from Oceania.

2.4 Methodology

This criterion is useful to understand how the research was done to complement further what the authors wanted to find and prove.

The possible values assigned for this point are three:

- qualitative research, if the authors gathered and analysed descriptive data in order to gain an understanding of people and processes in a non-numerical way;
- quantitative research, in case the analysis conducted was performed mainly to obtain numerical data to be further processed in order to test assumptions or find possible connections;
- mixed analysis, if the research involved both qualitative and quantitative methods in any ratio.

Note that there is no reference on the source of the data used in the researches so far: this will be deducted from the “data collection” criterion, which will be explained further in this paragraph.

Due to the human-centred nature of Knowledge Management, 16 studies focused their efforts on a purely qualitative research of their observed sample (enough to confirm hypotheses, describe flows and processes) while seven of the left concentrated on a mixed (qualitative/quantitative) approach.

In the closely related “data collection” criterion we can obtain useful insights on the actual data collection process of the sample, and to define the source of this data (in order to assess the data used in the papers comes from primary or secondary sources).

We can observe that the preferred data collection method employed was by undertaking interviews, with its broader definition “in-company observations” placing second, in order to obtain insights on both the subject of the observation but also on the workplace with all its systems and processes in place.

The third most common method found in the sample is by undertaking case studies (defined as a research process into the development of a particular company/department in multiple time points). While one case study is a presentation of a project undertaken by a management consulting company, the others focus on understanding and definition of particular aspects

related to Knowledge Management (i.e. tacit knowledge surfacing, innovation inter-organizational routines influence, role of Knowledge Management in strategic innovation).

Secondary data in the sample is also employed, mainly to discuss on efficiency in the Knowledge Management field.

2.5 Organizational settings

The organizations considered by each author for their empirical research greatly vary with the broadness of the main topic of the article: there are 14 different business lines, ranging from tax to training consultancies even by reconciling the different descriptions given by the sample authors. However, the most common company considered were Management consulting firms with fourteen occurrences in the sample. In most of these occurrences there is no direct quote of the company involved (for privacy reasons), but it is mentioned that it belongs to one of the Big Four consulting firms. More rarely, the company is named directly (for instance, Egon Zehnder International is explicit in paper 27): if we exclude this sample, the other two occurrences of direct naming come without surprise from the samples with a “mixed” author pool composition. This is because, as stated by the authors, the companies allowed for the observations and researches to take place.

A graphical representation of this point is reported in Figure 4.

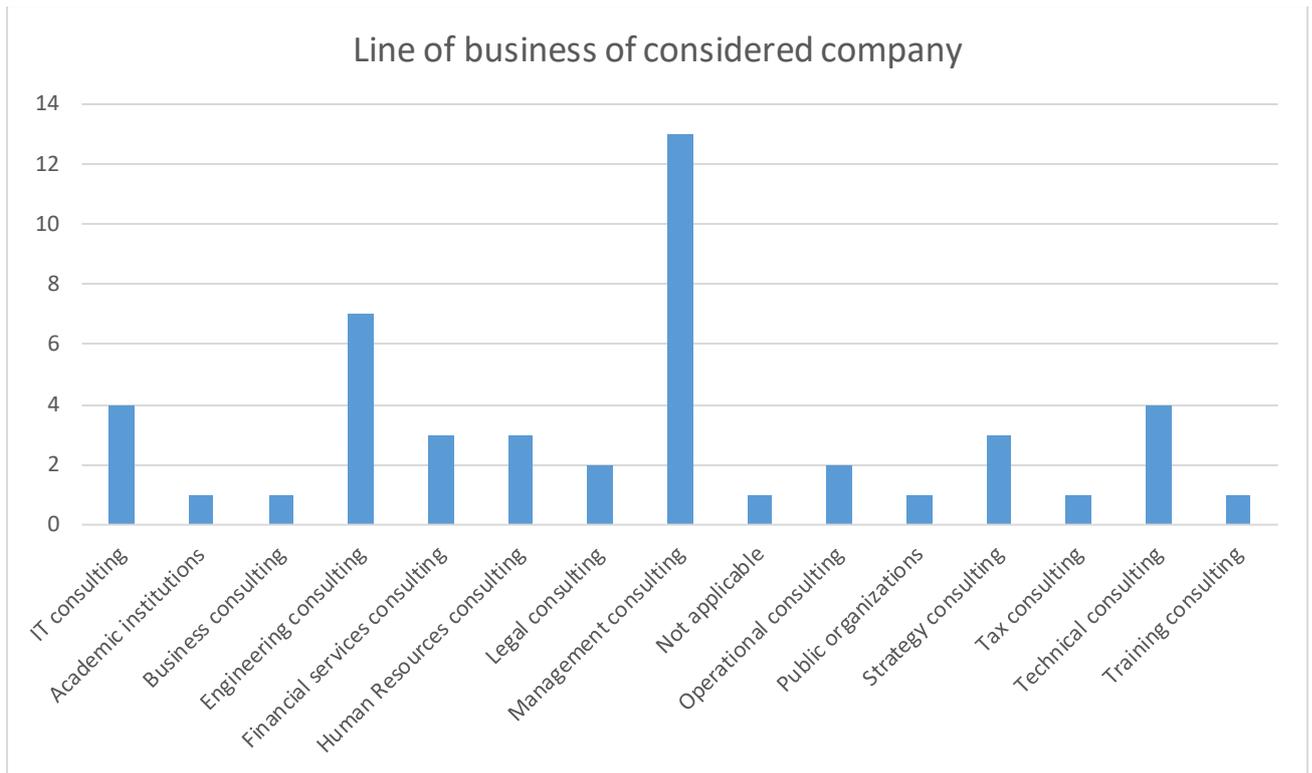


Figure 4: Line of business of companies considered in the sample (Source: Francescato, 2023)

2.6 Enterprise Risk Management

With the two criteria related to Enterprise Risk Management a mention of Enterprise Risk Management structures (such as Internal Control) or processes (such as Segregation of Duties, a control designed to prevent error and fraud by ensuring that multiple individuals are responsible for different parts of a task) was sought after.

This was done in order to have a shortcut for the other objective of this thesis: establish the relationship of Internal Control with Knowledge Management. Unfortunately, only a single match turned up in sample 3, referencing only to a Human Resources risk-related process.

For this reason, these criteria are deemed irrelevant were not further used.

2.7 Tools employed

Originally conceived as a bibliographical criterion to understand the tools (defined as every commercially found tool, software, formula or statistical process named by the authors) used to elaborate the data obtained to support theories, it is partly populated because of the lack of matching entries found. The matches mainly refer to data analysis software, but the lack of information make it irrelevant for the purposes of this thesis.

2.8 Hurdle and fallacies

The last criterion observed regarded the explicit or implicit recognition of possible fallacies in each paper. This was classified by reading the whole paper: the authors either explicitly state their bias risks or the possible ineligibility of their papers under different hypotheses, or implicitly make it known in the methodology section of their paper.

Since there is not a universal, normalised hurdle/fallacy dictionary to reference, one was drafted for this thesis: all the hurdles met were fully understood and later categorised for easiness of understanding later. The categories vary according to the object considered (the company in which the observation took place, whether reaching a wide enough generalization was possible or not and so on) and are further explained as follows:

- Sample representativeness (i.e. the sample used for the research is not representative enough of the overall population potentially represented);
- Generalisation issues (a derivative of the previous hurdle concerning findings);
- Geographic scope missing
- Various biases or conflicts of interest that are self-explanatory when met throughout the sample.

The most difficult hurdle to tackle for the authors was, paradoxically, to make their own sample representative enough: 16 out of 27, implicitly or explicitly, observed that their hypotheses were to be tested again at best if not requiring a theoretical background check *mutatis mutandis*. A sum up is provided by Taminiau et al. (2009), reporting that «more research is needed in other business cultures to be able to compare and ultimately generalize the main findings». Ambos & Schlegelmilch (2009) add that:

«even smaller and more specialized boutique consulting companies may have developed more innovative and effective knowledge management practices»

that makes a wide generalisation harder to reach. Of course, most companies in the same business area differ greatly in organisation, capabilities and strategy to ultimately reach their goals.

The second most found hurdle is the missing geographic scope with five occurrences reported.

3. Discussing findings

It can be understood that consultancy firms (thus professionals) and not academics were pioneers in the Knowledge Management field (Hislop, 2010) because of the need for competitive advantage through organisational measures:

«[Knowledge Intensive Firms] have always been in the business of managing knowledge - knowledge being their primary asset and source of competitive advantage.» (Robertson & O'Malley Hammersley, 2000)

Ambos & Schlegelmilch make a step forward in this sense:

«embedding knowledge management along the dimensions of people, systems, and business processes is probably equally applicable to other – particularly to knowledge-intensive – industries.» (Ambos & Schlegelmilch, 2009)

This is of course with the caveat of aligning the systems to all company particular functions and divisions.

Another insight is significant: only three papers out of 27 explicitly deal with tacit knowledge, with two of those really delving deeper into more technical aspects, while one focuses on the observational part of the case study, thus on the practical, observed aspects of it.

Tacit knowledge, defined as «personal, context specific and difficult to formalize» (van Helden, et al., 2010), is indeed part of the knowledge researchable scope, as they report:

«consultants create knowledge that is initiated by problems stemming from practice, that has to be customised for application in practice, and that is a combination of both explicit and tacit knowledge.» (van Helden, et al., 2010)

Only a handful of those, as we have seen, actually deal with it. The first, authored by van Helden et al. in 2010 deals specifically with public sector management accounting, while Ambrosini & Bowman (2008) point the focus on emerging tacit sources of knowledge. They employed a causal mapping process in order for the case study firm to replicate and sustain those sources, eventually employing those as a propeller for the firm's growth.

The lack of further distinction between tacit and other types of knowledge in a consulting setting is a gap could be further explained.

Another gap identified is that, in the sample, consultancy work is considered as performed by separate entities providing services and their expertise at a charge.

But what if the consultancy work was handled internally? Moreover, if this is the case, do these settings share the same set of objectives to be attained?

Bigger companies tend to interiorize Risk Management processes instead of outsourcing them: it is logical to think that controlling teams have a different set of goals compared to an auditor team coming from an outside consulting company, whether it is for a project or for law-required book auditing.

As an example, we could imagine that while the latter is focused on delivering results in a timely fashion, the first is concerned with business performance as well: it is in the same company after all, and depending on the company responsibilities, internal teams could have authority to enact action plans as well.

4. Internal control definition

In 1985, a commission was set up, sponsored and funded by five United States major professional organizations to investigate the causal factors that led to fraudulent financial reporting. This commission, the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission (COSO), defines Internal Control (IC) as follows:

«Internal Control is a process, effected by an entity's board of directors, management and other personnel, designed to provide reasonable assurance regarding the achievement of objectives relating to operations, reporting and compliance.»
(Graham, 2015)

This definition is very broad on purpose: in the last fifteen years, a shift in view from a predominantly accounting and financial focus to a much broader integrated and holistic approach took place (Maijoor, 2000; Pfister, 2009; Graham, 2015).

The comprehensive view emphasizes operational effectiveness, efficiency and dealing with regulation and internal policies. An example of this comprehensive view is the Framework provided by the Commission itself: COSO created a Framework in order to provide broadly accepted criteria for establishing, monitoring, evaluating and reporting on IC. Kinney (2000) states that the COSO Framework is widely accepted in practice, as other major professional organizations apply similar definitions: some examples are the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) and the European Federation of Accountants (FEE).

According to the 2013 COSO Framework, IC has five key concepts:

- It is aimed towards attaining objectives in three categories: compliance with law and regulations, reporting reliability and effectiveness of operations;
- It is a process that consists of ongoing activities and tasks;
- It is affected by employees, not only about rules and procedures but also the actions that people take affect internal control;
- It provides ability for reasonable assurance to Management in attaining objectives in operations, compliance, and reporting;

- It is adaptable to the particular organizational structure (no One-Size-Fits-All approach).

These five concepts translate into the five components of the COSO Framework:

- Control environment;
- Risk assessment;
- Control activities;
- Information and communication;
- Monitoring.

These five components are then translated at all the dimensional and functional levels of a company as shown by the so-called “COSO cube” in Figure 5.



Figure 5: The COSO cube (Source: COSO Committee, 2013)

A control environment is the set of standards, processes and structures that supplies the foundation for how the organization carries out internal control. The management team is responsible for setting up the tone at the top concerning IC, which includes the expected code of conduct. Managers strengthen these expectations across the company.

All companies face different sorts of risks both from internal and external sources: risk assessment is a process for recognizing and evaluating risks to the attainment of company goals. Risks are defined as the possibility that an event will occur that has an effect on the

likelihood that a company attains its goals (Lintsen, 2017). Risks to the achievement of company goals are compared to risk tolerances that are established. Therefore, risk assessment is the foundation for deciding how risks will be managed (Lintsen, 2017).

Control activities are the actions that are there to ensure that the actions established by the rules and procedures made by the Management team to mitigate risks to the attainment of companies goals are carried out. Control activities can be both preventive and detective, and contain a range of manual/automated activities (Simons, 1994).

Management obtains information in order to carry out internal control responsibilities so that company goals can be validated. This information is both quantifiable and qualitative in nature, and coming from both internal and external sources in order to support the functioning of other components of IC.

Monitoring activities are a combination of ongoing evaluations and separate evaluations that measure if each of the five components of internal control and each principle within each component is present and functioning properly. Findings are evaluated against norms set by regulators, standard setting organizations or Management.

In this comprehensive view, Internal Control is represented as structured and rigid, with no possibility to escape from the underlying concepts. Chauvidul presents an important step, adding an informal dimension to IC:

«In contrast to formal systems, the characteristic of informal control is expressed implicitly in the everyday behaviour of an organisation, and not simply just on paper.»
(Chauvidul, 2002)

To best describe an informal system, they are most similar to the concept of patterns of cultural behaviour and useful in analysing social conduct, eventually controlling social interactions in an organisation.

In other words, when speaking of Internal Control the formal mechanism of balances and checks is intended, while an IC system encompasses informal controls too. An example: Segregation of Duties is part of Internal Control as a formal procedure, whereas an informal discussion between two managers is part of the informal environment.

This is an important concept, as it allows the framing of informal knowledge, in a sense, into the otherwise structured and formal Internal Control environment.

There is a further distinction in Control activities that can be drawn and integrated in the corresponding component of the COSO Framework, especially in light of this:

- "Hard" controls are defined as measurable agreements and guidelines. Often it is possible to measure these controls because they are rules set in an organization: hard controls are based on compliance, and they aim to enforce desired behaviours, by procedures, job separations and administrative systems for instance (Kaptein & Wallage, 2010; Vink & Kaptein, 2008);
- Conversely, "soft" controls are behavioural factors in organizations that can help to realize goals and manage risks. They do not substitute rules, protocols or procedures. Such hard controls are needed to clarify what behaviour the organization desires, but hard controls alone prove ineffective if they are misunderstood or circumvented in the absence of well-developed soft controls (KPMG N.V., 2016; De Heus & Stemmelaar, 2000).

While Internal Control can be effective, it has its limitations. One of those argues that IC will only provide reasonable assurance instead of absolute assurance (Pfister, 2009). Pfister identifies two main limitations of IC:

- People that are in charge can make errors and omissions, or commit fraud;
- The benefits might be perceived lower than the costs.

The 1992 COSO Framework provides some examples of what can go wrong, even when IC is well designed:

«Personnel may misunderstand instructions. They may make judgment mistakes. Or they may make errors due to carelessness, distraction or fatigue. An accounting department supervisor responsible for investigating exceptions might simply forget or fail to pursue the investigation far enough to be able to make appropriate corrections. Temporary personnel executing control duties for sick or vacationing employees might

not perform correctly. System changes may be implemented before personnel have been trained to react appropriately to signs of incorrect functioning.» (Graham, 2015)

In addition to these, there is also the risk of Management override for personal gain or meddle with the company results, hindering its fair value. Besides individuals, two or more employees can circumvent controls by collusion: IC attempts to minimize all these risks but cannot provide guarantees of them not happening entirely (Dorminey, et al., 2012). When designing an IC system, Management has to take into account the related costs and benefits (Kinney, 2000). Figure 6 shows that the total cost is the sum of the decision error cost, asset loss and residual risks, plus the total amount spent on IC. Investing in an Internal Control system is no longer efficient as there is always some residual risk past the minimum point of the Cost per year curve (Kinney, 2000).

The ability to invest in IC is also constrained by time and resources available: a poor performing organization might not spend as much on IC because their focus will be on their core business to raise revenues and on cost effectiveness (Krishnan, 2005).

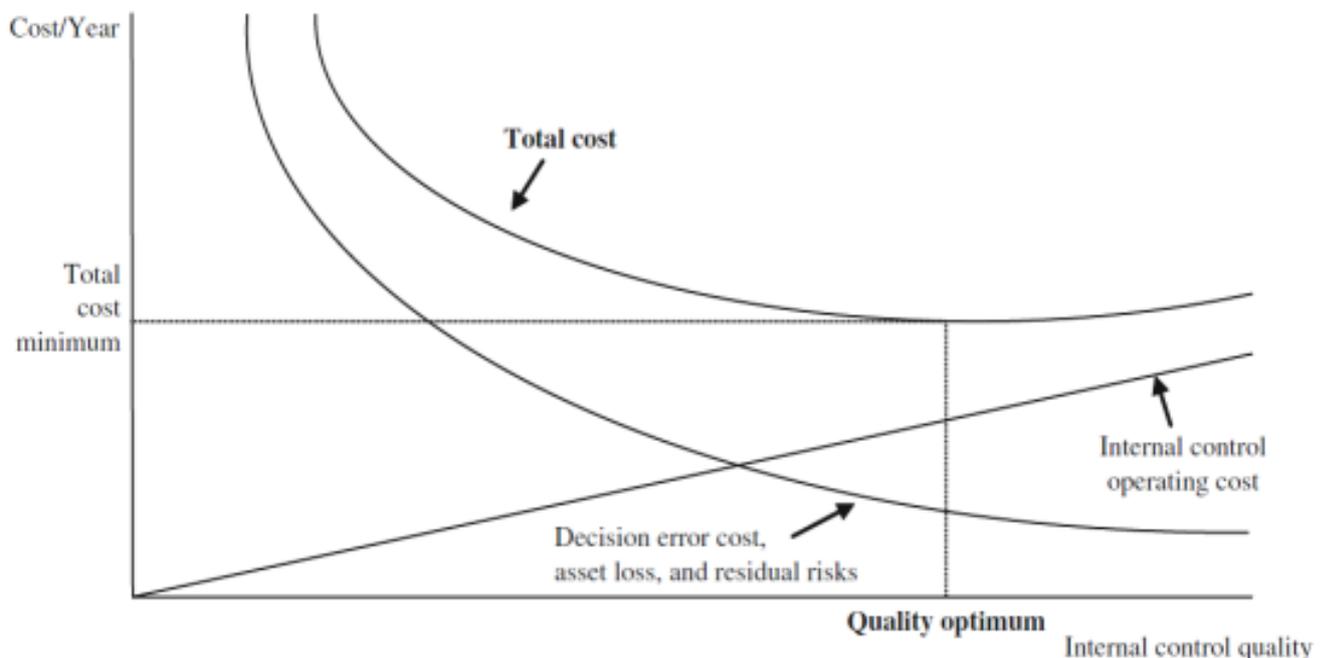


Figure 6: Cost/Benefit curve of Internal Control (Source: Kinney, 2000)

5. Background of the Study

In order to better understand the context of an organisation, it is important to evaluate the environment and background of the company. Organisational processes, structures, information technology, social and cultural environments, all play a significant role in determining the organisational events and actions. In this paragraph, ABC will be introduced with a brief history and an overview of the business and structure, followed by an overview of IC in ABC.

ABC is a multinational food products corporation founded in 1919. The mission of the company is to bring health through food by improving the nutritional quality of products, proposing innovative formats and packaging and by improving its distribution channel.

Even as a food company, it is much focused on its social responsibilities, becoming in 2020 a “Société à Mission” under French law: it is a company whose objectives in the social, societal, and environmental fields are set out in its by-laws.

With time ABC has become widely present worldwide (its factories and offices are present in over 55 countries, organized by geographical clusters), becoming a worldwide market leader in dairy products and plant-based foods and beverages sales.

In its product portfolio dairy and plant-based products, specialized nutrition solutions (for both infants and adults) and different brands of waters are present: 91% of this portfolio is sold under healthy categories.

The company, as mentioned before, has a strong orientation towards sustainability, fairness, equality and responsibility towards third parties: contingent to this, a particular culture has been nurtured over the years.

Employees put in practice a double set of shared principles, whose objective is to provide guidance when facing complex or difficult decisions: these principles are both applied internally (among employees) and externally (every other stakeholder). Failure to do so might result in disciplinary actions: whistleblowing is hence strongly encouraged for the sake of the company itself through anonymous channels or through escalation to managers.

Even if a lower boundary for behaviour is established by its culture, ABC pushes every employee to bring some subjectivity in the workplace by providing motivation and resources to pursue improvement projects in the workplace for the sake of continuous improvement: this is also a tangible goal that is measured yearly. ABC prides itself in the diversity of its work environment: in the Benelux Business Services alone, at least 50% employees are not Dutch or Belgian.

The organization of the company has settled a few years ago in a matrix fashion. All portfolio components are in reality a network of different, national legal entities, reporting to the same General Manager in the geographical cluster but with each function also coordinating horizontally through different entities.

In the Benelux cluster, these companies are augmented with a company dedicated to worldwide supplier contract drafting and one dedicated to export of Benelux-produced products to other clusters worldwide. Business Services (i.e. Employee Services and Finance) are not an entity per se; instead, they belong to one of the companies present in the cluster and provide their services for all the others. There are some centralized functions, like Internal Audit (with local teams in each cluster), which all report to the operational headquarter in France.

5.1 Internal Control in ABC

According to ABC policies, Management yearly publishes the global procedures (around 106 controls, split in several sub controls) so to have a regular procedure update: in case of disagreement between company procedures and local laws, the highest priority is always attributed to local regulations. The set of controls could have a reduced set of ratings: Not Applicable in case of extremely low risk or no test performed, Low risk, Low With Watch out or High risk. The rating itself is theoretically attributed after testing alone. The test happens yearly in a campaign fashion: the campaign is split in two year halves, and the mix between the specific business entity, previous high risks and specific control deadlines build up a precise calendar of risks to be covered in the two halves.

The controls set is designed to address all types of risk (i.e. reputational, operational, legal, criminal) that can be incurred by ABC and internal controllers are responsible for checking activities and controls to ensure that all procedures are followed.

In ABC, the first line against risk are the Business Process Owners (BPOs, identified as managers responsible for processes) themselves: through its strong culture and regulation, common employees are expected to be on the front line.

Internal Control forms the second line of defence: IC checks the controls in a yearly campaign regulated and dictated by Management, with the ultimate goal of document and understand each process deeply, eventually assigning a rating. Furthermore, Internal Control is also engaged on smaller, consulting-like projects on demand and manage the company platform for automated control performance.

Internal Audit, the third and last internal line, acts independently from IC, having their own audit campaign to follow: previous agreements with IC in order not to double test the same processes are common. They act based on IC findings and ratings.

Lastly, external auditors might become a fourth line of risk defence on request.

Segregation of Duties is also in place for Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software accesses, which are validated by IC.

In Benelux, a team of six (comprising the author of this thesis) makes up Internal Control, without a Head of Internal Control since March 2023: of these six two are Italians, one is Dutch, one is French and two are Indonesians. The team is augmented from May 2023 with two Internal Controllers (a Brazilian and a Pole) coming from Corporate functions and directly reporting to the head of Business Services Benelux, thus being horizontally placed to the proper Internal Control team. These two Controllers are in a coordination agreement with the IC team. Lastly, given a still open vacation, two external controllers (both Belgian) from one of the Big Four consultancy companies are tagged along the IC team from May 2023: one acting as Controller and one as Manager for the external controller for Quality Assurance purposes.

The team's composition is a reflection of the variety in the Business Services environment. All of them have different alma maters and professional backgrounds before entering in ABC in case of internal staff, or providing services to ABC in case of external staff, but this point will be further clarified later on during the Discussion phase.

6. Methodology

In this chapter, the empirical research undertaken in company ABC will be explained from its inception.

We already noted the existing gaps in modern literature concerning consultancy and knowledge management and presented the environment in which this research will take place, together with all the actors involved in the consultancy-like setting.

A primary goal of this thesis is to understand the influence of implicit knowledge on Internal Control actors and its impact in IC best practices and stakeholders.

A mix of theoretical knowledge and findings, deriving from the methods employed by the authors of the Literature review sample was applied in order to choose the best possible methodology for this research.

A mixed research style was agreed upon early on, in order to capitalize on existing quantitative data to drive all the qualitative findings further to get useful insights.

Since we have noted that:

- knowledge is hard to capture with a purely quantitative research method, taking into consideration the various methods applied by the sampled papers in the Literature review part of this thesis;
- a focal point is to have the possibility to hold open conversations with individuals that have experience in the research focus (King, 2004);

individual interviews were determined to be the best approach to data collection in this case (King, 2004).

A set of questions was then drafted aimed at these two goals:

- Determine and quantify the knowledge needed in each member's role, distinguishing hard from soft skills and frequency of usage of both;
- Determine and quantify the level of usage of implicit knowledge in each member's work.

For the first goal, questions aimed at understanding each interviewee's study and professional past in an aggregate form was found out to be the best approach.

For the second goal, questions about each interviewee's work routine were drafted. The snapshot provided by the whole sample will give understanding to the type and flow of information. (Gioia, et al., 2013)

During the interviews, a mix of past and present data (such as facts and each interviewee's actions, ideals and background) had to be described, encoded and later explored (Hindle, 2004; Hlady-Rispal & Jouison-Laffitte, 2014).

Another design point considered was that all of the questions had to be equally applicable to every member of IC, Corporate Internal Controllers (CC) or externals without distinction of background or role in order to ease the normalisation process of the answers, needed to extract insights from the findings after.

The question sheet, with questions and possible allowed answers, is summarised in Table 2 below.

Please note that, partly due to time constraints but especially due to the main focus of this thesis, this research will not focus much on each interviewee's professional or study background, but will focus on the knowledge transferred or acquired from these sources instead: the focus is always on the transfer and application of all types of knowledge inside ABC.

Index	Question	Answer set
1	Describe the knowledge required in your role (i.e. financial, technical) and quantify in percentage how much of it is acquired on the workplace (specific role skills or job-related knowledge)	List of indicated hard skills
		List of indicated soft skills
		%Soft skills over hard skills
2	Describe and quantify in percentage how workplace-acquired knowledge is catered (i.e. CampusX, training, word of mouth, experience)	% of cater medium
		Cater medium
3	Describe and quantify in percentage the impact of workplace-acquired knowledge in your job, compared to your education or previous experiences	% of impact of workplace acquired knowledge
		100-%
4	Describe the overall level of agreement and collaboration with the process owners (open question that will be "normalized" in a closed set of options)	Normalised results from 1-5
5	Rank from 1-5 (where 1 = never) how frequently you make exceptions (positive or negative) to your responsibilities when dealing with individual entities (i.e. knowing how a team performs, providing an action plan: company-wide, action plans must come from process owners and merely approved and later retested by internal control, eventually audited by internal audit) and explain the reasons (i.e. knowing how a team performs, provide a ready made action plan to be approved by process owners)	Normalised results from 1-5
		Reasons for positive or negative deviation from guidelines
6	In case of deviances described in the previous 2 questions, describe the level of perceived usefulness from process owners (i.e. when providing an action plan to a process owner, describe how does he interpret this exception: by company rule, they are aware of their responsibilities and they are aware of your deviance)	Process owners perceived deviance usefulness and collusion
7	In case of deviances described in question 2 and 3, describe the level of perceived quality provided by the business services leadership team (i.e. knowing that deviances have occurred, is there collusion between internal control actors and leadership and what is their view on this?)	Management perceived deviance usefulness and collusion

Table 2: Questions/answers sheet (source: Francescato, 2023)

Questions from one to three are referring to the first goal, mainly an application of the works of Pollock & Williams (2015), Saunders et al. (2015) and Campion et al. (2011) with the objectives of this research in mind.

Questions from four to seven relate to the second goal. These questions are an original elaboration, basing their foundations on the frameworks put forward in the work of Mian (2022) and Chell (2004). These frameworks concern operational aspects in qualitative research.

Since those latter questions implicitly involved a level of extensive knowledge for answer framing, basing on the work of Cortellazzo (2018), while carefully sticking to the main topic of this research, we can resume them in Table 3 divided per related question:

Index	References
4	Spencer and Spencer, 1993; Boyatzis, 2009; Salas et al., 2016; Messman and Mulder, 2012
5	Spencer and Spencer, 1993; Palansky and Yammarino, 2007; Messman and Mulder, 2012; Scott and Bruce, 1994
6	Puccio, Mance & Murdock, 2011
7	Puccio, Mance & Murdock, 2011

Table 3: Set of references involved per question (Source: Francescato, 2023)

Through this set of references a baseline for behaviours could be established when comparing it with the answers given. This step was done *a priori*, as the interviews still were to be conducted. Thus, this part of the research was conducted on an adaptation of Cortellazzo (2018).

The interview sample had to be wide enough to cover most consultancy-like jobs in ABC, while respecting the time constraints of this thesis, in order to get as many original insights as possible.

Eventually, all of the above-presented Internal Control community was considered part of the acceptable sample in full accordance with Gläser & Laudel (2009), who state that the interviewees most preferably are:

«people who possess special knowledge of a social phenomenon which the interviewer is interested in.» (Gläser & Laudel, 2009)

For the exception of one CC and an IC team member that, for time constraints, could not schedule an interview in time, all of the above mentioned team members have been contacted and returned a positive feedback. This means that nearly all the IC team, one CC and both the externals have been interviewed, for seven interviews overall. Interviews took place from June 1, 2023 to June 7, 2023.

Table 4 presents a clear explanation of the roles of the sample and their index letter for anonymity reasons.

Interviewee:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Role:	Internal Control Manager	Internal Control Manager (Corporate)	Internal Controller	Internal Controller	Internal Controller	Internal Controller (External)	Internal Control Manager (External)

Table 4: Overview of interviewees and their roles (Source: Francescato, 2023)

The working papers with all the notes taken during each interview can be found in the Appendix section, at the end of this thesis, from letter G to M.

7. Findings

In this section of the thesis the findings will be presented in a similar fashion used for the Literature review. Grouping of clusters of discussion will take place, based on the two goals stated in the earlier Methodology (previous knowledge, its source and application; knowledge application in the present), but each question will be discussed along with the answers given by the pool of interviewees. This grouping is done to better understand the overall picture of both goals, without delving in trivial findings.

The first three questions are related to the first goal, the remainder to the second.

The answers have been rearranged in Table 5 (split into two parts) for easiness of consultation, ordered by question and by interviewee. The open-ended answers have been summarised in a few lines, maintaining the important bits of this research for easiness of consultation.

It is important to remind that even if there are interviewees with Manager status, the only difference is on the “managing” side of the job, somewhat similar to a *primus inter pares* role: otherwise, they perform the same tasks as all the others, without apparent distinction from the outside. This is slated to change with the upcoming arrival of a new Head of Internal Control.

Recapping what we can draw from the sample pool alone: all of the interviewees perform the same kind of job, with the same kind of routines and procedures but depending on their role, they report to different people in the organisation (Manager, Corporate or externals). Their seniority, apart one of an Internal Controller who is newly hired, is quantifiable in years and all of them have received a promotion in the past year inside ABC.

Interviewee:		A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Index	Role:	Internal Control Manager	Internal Control Manager (Corporate)	Internal Controller	Internal Controller	Internal Controller	Internal Controller (External)	Internal Control Manager (External)
1	Describe the knowledge required in your role (i.e. financial, technical) and quantify in percentage how much of it is acquired on the workplace (specific role skills or job-related knowledge)	List of indicated hard skills						
		financial imprint, accounting	financial imprint, accounting	accounting	accounting, IT general control (more than a regular user, tasked with systems management)	accounting, business ropes	official training as external auditor (certification), tailored trainings depending on your function	accounting, official training as external auditor (certification), tailored trainings depending on your function
		List of indicated soft skills						
		relational, analytical mindset , logical analysis,	communication, ERP and IT tools	practice, analytical mindset, communication, IT tools	experience, adaptability, communication	experience, analytical mindset, communication	continuous training (ethics, IT, compliance mandatory)	continuous training (ethics, IT, compliance mandatory)
		%Soft skills over hard skills						
		70	80	70	75	80	80	80
2	Describe and quantify in percentage how workplace-acquired knowledge is catered (i.e. virtual or traditional training, word of mouth, experience)	% of cater medium						
		100	90	95	75	95	85	75
		Cater medium						
		experience	experience	experience (courses 5%)	experience (courses 25%)	experience and networking (courses 5%)	internal courses	internal courses
3	Describe and quantify in percentage the impact of workplace-acquired knowledge in your job, compared to your education or previous experiences	% of impact of workplace acquired knowledge						
		90	70	70	75	80	80	90
		100-%						
		10	30	30	25	20	20	10
4	Describe the overall level of agreement and collaboration with process owners during routine interactions	Normalised results from 1-5						
		4	5	4	3	3	5	5

Table 5.1: Answers given by interviewees (Source: Francescato, 2023)

Index	Interviewee:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
5	Rank from 1-5 (where 1 = never) how frequently you make exceptions (positive or negative) to your responsibilities when dealing with individual entities (i.e. knowing how a team performs, providing an action plan: company-wide, action plans must come from process owners and merely approved and later retested by internal control, eventually audited by internal audit) and explain the reasons (i.e. knowing how a team performs, provide a ready made action plan to be approved by process owners)	Normalised results from 1-5						
		3	5	5	4	3	2	2
		Reasons for positive or negative deviation from guidelines						
		subjectivity due to contextualization (only on processes, not on people) and on objective risk	if there is cooperation subjectivity will kick in; depending to the control	only for efficiency reasons, rules only for guidance	only for risk coverage increase and with previous approval to superiors	first, to tailor guidelines in order to comply with local regulations and customs; second, to cover the materiality of the risk while tailoring the controls to the single process	assess and objectify the difficulties in order to move around with the controls	assess and objectify the difficulties in order to move around with the controls
6	In case of deviances described in the previous 2 questions, describe the level of perceived usefulness from process owners (i.e. when providing an action plan to a process owner, describe how does he interpret this exception: by company rule, they are aware of their responsibilities and they are aware of your deviance)	Process owners perceived deviance usefulness and collusion						
		if explained to process owners, they will understand its usefulness because of contextualization (more detailed evaluation) and of collective soundness assurance (find root of problems)	depends on the testing reception of the process owner: in general, useful when they understand that it's beneficial for themselves too	depends on the testing reception of the process owner: in general, useful when they understand that it's beneficial for themselves too	no communication on how the testing is actually performed, so process owners do not know about deviances	no communication on how the testing is actually performed, so process owners do not know about deviances	sometimes process owners won't understand, but as externals we have to report truthfully what happens in our processes. Escalation is used as last resort.	sometimes process owners won't understand, but as externals we have to report truthfully what happens in our processes. Escalation is used as last resort.
7	In case of reported deviances in the previous questions, describe the level of perceived quality provided by the business services leadership team (i.e. knowing that deviances have occurred, is there collusion between internal control actors and leadership and what is their view on this?)	Management perceived deviance usefulness and collusion						
		no collusion, management does not know the level of depth provided and the work performed	no collusion, management does not know the level of depth provided and the work performed, but they know if I will further test particular cases as I will communicate how I work to them	no collusion, management does not know the level of depth provided and the work performed	new hire, not applicable	management will care only in case of high risk, that requires them to dig deeper into the testing itself	not applicable	not applicable

Table 5.2: Answers given by interviewees (Source: Francescato, 2023)

7.1 Knowledge sourcing

The sample was unanimous in reporting that the only hard skills required for their roles are sound accounting and business operation concepts. This is to be expected as controllers easily deal with many aspects in a company ranging across many functions: understanding the basics of how a business daily runs is indeed paramount to know.

Interviewee D also advanced the idea that a strong IT focus (more specifically referring to ITGC, short for IT General Control: this is a course specifically aimed at auditing IT-related controls, understanding the user as well as the manager side of those systems) is required, especially in nowadays companies.

External members are easily standing out from the sample average due to their strong reliance on internal trainings (that always depend on the function where the consultant belongs in his/her home firm) for hard skills sourcing that are mandatory at all levels. Furthermore, external controllers both put their Belgian external auditor certification (Bedrijfsrevisoren status) on the forefront of the skills needed for their jobs, both for the effective employable skills but also as a guarantee of the quality and transparency of their work):

It is worth to note that the Bedrijfsrevisoren certificate is mandatory for all auditing personnel and whose regulating entity registers audit forms too, as reported by the International Federation of Accountants on their website.

Speaking of soft skills instead, communication and relational skills are highly valued upon due to the nature of the job itself: a lot of communication is involved with many different stakeholders, which all have their own set of objectives. Another prized skill is to possess an analytical mind-set, in order to dig deeper into the core of each matter without stopping at the first appearance and to quickly connect the dots and understand the logic behind other business actors' actions. A less popular skill was the easiness with IT tools and systems.

Again, external staff is standing out due to their heavy reliance on internal courses, some of which are compulsory (each employee has to undertake 40 hours of courses yearly on different topics, ranging from ethics, transparency but also IT skills and updates on accounting standards).

In general, the sample is agreeing on a 75-80% reliance on soft skills with respect to hard skills. Much is dependent on the organisational setting one finds himself in: ABC will have a different culture and business compared to other companies, while external staff will have to adapt to how different companies fast in order to take out their assignments.

While asked where the workplace-sourced was exactly originating from, externals were of course coherent with their previous answer in saying that internal courses make up about 80% of their workplace-acquired knowledge

There is another aspect worth pointing out: there is a 10% gap between the two external staff (Controller and Manager) pointing towards the first. This is probably linked to their seniority, and given their answers in the previous question permanence inside the firm, thus number of internal courses followed, becomes relevant. The Controller is basing its work more on hard skills from University and internal trainings than experience as one could expect.

Speaking of the internal staff, the consent is unanimous again in saying that experience is a fundamental part of their actual skill baggage. Familiarising with a company's set of rules will have a very strong impact on one's daily job in the end. The percentage given to experience as part of the workplace-acquired knowledge is ranging from 75% to 100%.

The lowest rating was given by the newly hired Internal Controller, basing his answer on his short tenure, while the more senior staff scored the impact of that type of knowledge from from 90% up.

The second provider of workplace knowledge are courses, but these do not fully satisfy the sample, who rate them from 10% below. Again, the newly hired Controller rated them at 25%: his knowledge comes more from a theoretical approach provided by ABC than stemming from experience due to his short tenure at the time of the interview.

Lastly, speaking of the effective daily impact of workplace-acquired knowledge, all the sample is from 70% up. This means that no matter the task, in their daily activities 70% of the workload is connected to the knowledge related to the workplace.

Externals rated the knowledge stemming from their jobs at an average 85%: they learn from the company and from the projects assigned to them, reinvesting that knowledge in the following projects they will have on their plate.

Internal staff is, seniority wise, more or less agreeing on their rating, which is at slightly more than 70% on average. It is interesting to note a discrepancy: Manager staff (from IC and Corporate) differ in their rating of workplace-related knowledge: the IC manager asserted in his interview that 90% of his daily activities are all about workplace-acquired knowledge, while only 10% comes from hard skills proper. The Corporate Manager instead put that percentage at 70%. A possible key to understand comes from the question: past work experiences are not considered part of workplace-acquired knowledge (because of the missing ABC scope). The Corporate Manager, being senior in his role, might have had more influences coming from his past work experiences with respect to the IC manager.

7.2 Knowledge application

In this set of questions, the focal point was on how each interviewee applied his/her knowledge in daily activities, namely the Control campaign, and the perceived impact of that on Management and Process Owners, which are the other real actors in control testing.

Note that the eventual focus will be on implicit knowledge, not on practical or technical skills as this is not in scope with the goals of this thesis.

While describing the level of agreeability and cooperation with business owners, there is again a clear distinction between three classes of interviewees:

- Externals: their rating was 5 (full cooperation): first, they are professionals coming from outside the firm paid to do exactly what it has been agreed upon, so not receiving cooperation from the business is a paradox and useless for both stakeholders.

Second, they are focused on the eventual planned objective: if they encounter any issue during their task, they will eventually escalate the issue. This is done to be extremely transparent in how they conduct their work.

- Internal Controllers: most of the staff rate their actual cooperation with Process Owners at around 50%: it is to be noted that eventually everything is boiled down to the single Process Owner. This point will be further explained later.
- Managers: they can boast the higher cooperation rates among internal staff. This is because of their seniority in their role. Because of that, they have had more time to familiarise with every process and Process Owner, meaning that when a close enough relationship is reached, both parties will be more fruitfully cooperating towards reaching the end rating faster.

All of the internal staff reported that the single Process Owner makes the entire testing: relationships and communication skill prove invaluable in this, confirming their skill assessment in the previous paragraph of this thesis.

Considering the frequency of positive or negative deviations from the guidelines and the rationale behind those, again there is a clear distinction between internal and external staff.

Externals do deviate from guidelines too, but it is only done to assess and objectify the difficulties in order to actually make progresses in their tasks. As said before, they are professionals paid to perform tasks under guarantee of absolute transparency to the client: in case of any shortcomings, an escalation to Management will take place eventually. Therefore, their ranking is a two out of five (with five being deviations happening in 100% of their work).

Internal staff, predictably, are concerned not with the exceptional traceability of their job, but more with the objectification of deviances needed to reach the ultimate goal: raise flags on the risk status of an entity, not just completing their testing. By comparison, external staff has different objectives by profession.

All of the internal staff commits deviances in at least 50% of their testing, reaching peaks of 100% in some controllers. The rationale behind is, with some nuances, shared by every internal controller and best exemplified by interviewee F: first, a deviance is made to tailor guidelines in

order to comply with local regulations and customs (since the guidelines are global); second, to cover the materiality of the risk while tailoring the controls to the single process. The definition of materiality provided is that testing should reach the kernel of an issue (in this case a control), without stopping at the first gap detected in testing. This implicates a level of discretion in order to “tailor” each control to the particular case. In any case, this concept applies to processes only, not on Process Owners.

More interestingly, we can understand how deep the risk culture in ABC is with the last two questions. The latter, inquiring into the possible knowledge from Management of deviations and their stance on this, made clear that in a non-Corporate team (so for the majority of the sample), Management is not interested in the way testing was conducted, focusing their attention more on the findings and the level of risk attributed. Even at a Corporate level, Management will not enquire in the way testing was performed except if a flag was raised by a Controller himself/herself due to potential exceptional high risk of a specific control.

There is no collusion between Controllers and Management, as there is no communication about testing. This question was not applicable for the newly hired Controller and the external staff of course.

Speaking of Process Owner impact instead, we find again that there is much dependence on the singular Process Owner: mostly everybody agreed in saying that if the PO understands that sharing the way IC testing is conducted is also beneficial for him/her, they will explain more about their work. On the contrary, if there is no interest from POs in the Control process, Controllers will not share the rationale behind their work at a so deep level.

If POs understand the importance of testing, they will understand that deeper enquiries into their processes involving the concept of materiality is in the Controller’s interests, and because of this, there is a level of described “subjectivity” (as reported by interviewees A and B) in the testing itself. This term was quickly clarified in both cases: subjectivity does not mean personal judgement, as it is contrary to the Controller job, which is to objectify, but as stated before it is a reflection of the materiality concept in testing.

8. Discussion

There is an important concept that has to be clarified in order to proceed with the actual discussion of the case study findings: experience is the key to acquire implicit knowledge (Lam, 2000). This was also confirmed by the findings themselves, where senior roles would, in an ideal setting, employ more of their work-acquired knowledge. It is important to keep in mind that whenever experience is mentioned, we are referring at a component of implicit knowledge (Lam, 2000).

Being a Controller in a company means that there is a clear shift of environmental focus: both external and internal staff work on cooperating with stakeholders to identify the risks: internal staff does it in a way that is equally coherent with guidelines, but focusing more on the particular processes themselves. External staff will pursue the same objectives to the extent that their work relationship with Process Owners will allow, and in a less “tailored” way.

Another insight is relevant: internal staff seem to roughly agree on the primal conception of their job regardless of role and seniority: always putting a focus on materiality, using guidelines not as a solution but as a starting point, leaving the rest to their expertise and experience.

There is a Knowledge Management system in ABC: speaking of global knowledge systems, a video training platform is primarily used to on board new joiners on certain themes and concepts such as ERP introduction, ethics, roles and functions introduction. On local terms (Benelux), an Intranet is where critical documents or notions are stored, mostly in the HR field (expense claim, HR themes, life and administration in Benelux and so on). Workplace groups for functions or interests form the backbone of work-related knowledge, speaking of formalised structures. Apart for cultural pressure, there is little way to interact with each other’s knowledge in a formal way, leaving that to teams and employees to share knowledge between each other, still not addressing the formalisation topic. This practice is widely diffused in Business Services, where worldwide sharing of best practices is encouraged.

There is seemingly no formal control on workplace-related knowledge. This could prove a point of improvement, as if there was a tighter control on the existing structure (Workplace groups), a

formalised and easy to share and consult Knowledge Centre could actually arise, with an extremely wide audience too.

One could also remark that the seemingly homogeneous behaviour of Controllers could be an advantage on one side. Actually pushing the boundaries of testing further and covering more of the process for risk's sake could nurture a network of trust with the rest of the business, fed by setting a common standard in engagement and testing and exhibiting similar professional behaviours. For this exact reason, the risk level could actually increase in case of a difference of common goals between different stakeholders. A Process Owner could know in advantage how to manipulate his risk rating knowing how Controllers behave, whereas a diversity in approaches could reduce risks.

In the case of the sample, this is not taking place, as the reported Low With Watch out and High risks in Benelux are actually more than any of the other European clusters. The deeper level of knowledge of Processes and their Owners enables Controllers to effectively spot more risky gaps and highlight them for improvement: in the end this is the goal of IC.

Diversity in IC could present an extension to the traditional definition of diversification as risk lowering strategy (Wagner & Lau, 1971). By diversifying the approaches, or allowing the creation of new ones, that Controllers take to their job, potential risks derived from collusion, hindrance or other strategies could be lowered. In the case of the sample, all Controllers excluded collusion or favouritism as a possible influence in their testing: ABC culture and personal ethics still have a strong impact on their daily activities.

Conclusions

In this thesis we have analysed the state of worldwide research concerning Knowledge Management and its relationship with consultancy actors, whether they are internal or external.

A quick overview of the Internal Control function was also made, in consideration of the work reported in the COSO Framework.

We found that only few papers deal with tacit (or implicit) knowledge, and none of those papers are set in a private, non-consulting business. All the consultancy work assumed in the literary sample was considered to be performed by separate companies, but there are roles in companies that roughly respect the ones of consultancy firms but are not considered.

This thesis tried to gap these findings by looking at a food-processing multinational company and its Internal Control function, its relationship with Knowledge Management and a quick comparison with their external counterparts.

This was done through a case study research that involved interviewing the actual team members, including external staff.

The findings of this research are that:

- tailored approaches to control testing, while respecting the concept of materiality, are effective in spotting potential risks (equalling to lowering them as far as IC responsibilities are concerned);
- in ABC, a Knowledge Management system is in place, but IC relies more on individual communication than on a formalised set of rules, and doesn't employ its KM system at all for their daily activities, relegating that to an introductory role for new hires instead;
- since all Controllers share a homogeneous view of their duties and processes conduction, a possible bias could take place as there will be little diversity in approaches during testing, leading to predictable behaviour to be taken advantage of as well as complacency and groupthink. In practice, a strong organisational culture and personal value integrity make this possibility remote in the case considered.

However, there are limitations to this thesis.

This thesis was done on a single IC team in ABC, whereas different countries probably adopt different approaches. Again, ABC is a single company, and since IC is by definition adaptable, findings in ABC are not easily applicable to other companies: this was also the most common limitation reported by the Literary review authors in their papers. More research will be needed in different settings to generalise those findings. It could be beneficial to observe the IC Benelux team in a wider time frame in order to assess any change in behaviour, but because of the time constraints of this thesis it was not possible to do that.

Another point that could be further investigated is the influence of each employee's professional background. For time and scope reasons this wasn't analysed in this thesis, but given the findings offered that could be relevant for this research, especially concerning the homogeneity of approaches finding.

Appendix section

Appendix A - Literary review: sample mapping

Index	Authors	Title
1	Sánchez Ramírez S., Guadamillas Gómez F., González Ramos M.I., Grieva O.	The Effect of Digitalization on Innovation Capabilities through the Lenses of the Knowledge Management Strategy
2	Aslam M.S., Ali I., Qammar A., Kiwan L., Dhir A.	How knowledge acquisition creates a competitive edge? A qualitative inquiry from international consultancy alliance
3	Shaw D.	Aristotle and the Management Consultants: Shooting for Ethical Practice
4	Jøranli I.	Managing organisational knowledge through recruitment: searching and selecting embodied competencies
5	Herbst A.S.	Capturing knowledge from lessons learned at the work package level in project engineering teams
6	Obeidat B.Y., Al-Suradi M.M., Masa'deh R., Tarhini A.	The impact of knowledge management on innovation: An empirical study on Jordanian consultancy firms
7	Costas J., Kärreman D.	The bored self in knowledge work
8	Pollock N., Williams R.	Industry analysts – how to conceptualise the distinctive new forms of IT market expertise?
9	Gresty M.	Market intelligence gathering in executive search firms
10	Galunic C., Sengupta K., Petriglieri J.L.	Deus ex machina? Career progress and the contingent benefits of knowledge management systems
11	Khuong L.-N., Harindranath G., Dyerson R.	Understanding knowledge management software-organisation misalignments from an institutional perspective: A case study of a global IT-management consultancy firm
12	Gross A.C., Holtzblatt M., Javalgi R., Poor J., Solymosy E.	Professional occupations, knowledge-driven firms, and entrepreneurship: A national and regional analysis
13	García-Quevedo J., Mas-Verdú F., Soriano D.R.	The heterogeneity of services and the differential effects on business and territorial innovation
14	Hislop D.	Knowledge management as an ephemeral management fashion?
15	van Helden G.J., Aardema H., ter Bogt H.J., Groot T.L.C.M.	Knowledge creation for practice in public sector management accounting by consultants and academics: Preliminary findings and directions for future research
16	Ambos T.C., Schlegelmilch B.B.	Managing knowledge in international consulting firms
17	Taminiau Y., Smit W., de Lange A.	Innovation in management consulting firms through informal knowledge sharing
18	Ojanen V., Xin Y., Chai K.H.	Innovation management in technology-related knowledge-intensive business services
19	Ojanen V., Hallikas J.	Inter-organisational routines and transformation of customer relationships in collaborative innovation
20	Ambrosini V., Bowman C.	Surfacing tacit sources of success
21	Donnelly R.	The management of consultancy knowledge: An internationally comparative analysis
22	Criscuolo P., Salter A., Sheehan T.	Making knowledge visible: Using expert yellow pages to map capabilities in professional services firms
23	Kim S.-K., Trimi S.	IT for KM in the management consulting industry
24	Kärreman D., Alvesson M.	Cages in Tandem: Management Control, Social Identity, and Identification in a Knowledge-Intensive Firm
25	Dunford R.	Key challenges in the search for the effective management of knowledge in management consulting firms
26	Robertson M., O'Malley Hammersley G.	Knowledge management practices within a knowledge-intensive firm: The significance of the people management dimension
27	Wright T.	Breeding the racing camel - or handy hints on knowledge management projects

Appendix B - Literary review: sample analysis (1)

Index	Year	Area referral inside of management discipline (HR, Economics, Marketing,...)	Authors' background (professionists, academics, mixed)	Methodology (mixed, qualitative, quantitative)
1	2022	Strategic Management	Academic	Mixed research
2	2022	Strategic Management	Academic	Qualitative research
3	2020	Strategic Management	Academic	Literature review
4	2018	Human Resource Management	Academic	Qualitative research
5	2017	Knowledge Management	Academic	Qualitative research
6	2016	Knowledge Management	Academic	Mixed research
7	2016	Knowledge Management	Academic	Qualitative research
8	2015	Strategic Management	Academic	Qualitative research
9	2014	Knowledge Management	Professional	Qualitative research
10	2014	Human Resource Management, Knowledge management	Academic	Mixed research
11	2014	Knowledge Management	Academic	Qualitative research
12	2013	Strategic Management	Academic	Quantitative analysis
13	2011	Strategic Management	Academic	Quantitative analysis
14	2010	Knowledge Management	Academic	Quantitative analysis
15	2010	Strategic Management	Mixed	Mixed research
16	2009	Knowledge Management	Academic	Qualitative research
17	2009	Strategic Management, Knowledge Management	Mixed	Qualitative research
18	2009	Strategic Management, Knowledge Management	Academic	Qualitative research
19	2009	Strategic Management	Academic	Qualitative research
20	2008	Strategic Management, Knowledge Management	Academic	Qualitative research
21	2008	Knowledge Management	Academic	Mixed research
22	2007	Knowledge Management	Mixed	Mixed research
23	2007	Knowledge Management	Academic	Mixed research
24	2004	Human Resource Management	Academic	Qualitative research
25	2000	Knowledge Management	Academic	Qualitative research
26	2000	Human Resource Management, Knowledge Management	Academic	Qualitative research
27	2000	Knowledge Management	Professional	Qualitative research

Appendix C - Literary review: sample analysis (2)

Index	Purpose of study (theory confirmation, new finding,...) or review focus	If study: specialization topic
1	Quantitative analysis of effect of digitization on knowledge management, and how this contributes to the improvement in IT, technology, consulting and programming sectors	IT, Knowledge Management
2	Impact of of knowledge acquisition from international companies and acquisition processes	Knowledge Management
3	Define Aristotelian virtues in management consultancy in order to create a model to be referenced to.	Human Resource Management
4	Define how external knowledge plays a role in selection processes and career progression, define a framework under which clarifies how recruitment affects skills of employees and how these relate to collective learning dynamics.	Knowledge Management
5	Define advantages and limitations of the Knowledge Management loop in the STBQ method in engineering consultancy work packages teams	NA
6	Examine the effect of knowledge management processes and approaches on innovation.	NA
7	Observe the impact of boredom and its impact on knowledge intensive consultancy firms and how it could be offset through HRM	Human Resource Management
8	Suggesting ways forward for analysing new forms of knowledge in business and accounting involving detailed study of the means through which knowledge is produced, consumed and validated through the analysis of a new expertise: IT industry analyst	Knowledge Management
9	Define the specific types of intelligence required by executive search consultants and the ways in which that intelligence is found	NA
10	Track the impact of KM use on the career progress of service professionals	NA
11	Identify potential sources of misalignment between knowledge management software and the implementing organisation from an institutional theory perspective.	NA
12	Provide a picture of consulting services in the Western world, their growth, their services and their customers.	NA
13	Examining the relationship between consultancy firms and business innovation and understand its effects on the latter	NA
14	Understand how interest in knowledge management has evolved between 1998 and 2008 and to evaluate the claim that knowledge management is a fashion.	NA
15	Explore the practice of knowledge creation in public sector management accounting by consultants and academics and its impact.	Knowledge Management
16	Investigate how knowledge management is embedded in consulting firms and with which critical issues these firms still struggle.	NA
17	Describe the main obstacles for innovation and proposing informal knowledge sharing as a possible solution	NA
18	Understand role of innovation in consultancy companies, role of knowledge integration in strategic innovation	NA
19	Introduce an approach to understand the influence of inter-organisational routines in the transformation process towards customer-orientated collaboration in innovation	Innovation management
20	Through the use of causal mapping, define which are the information sources of success and surface tacit knowledge in order to nurture them.	NA
21	Examine whether the knowledge management practices deployed by a multinational consultancy differ according to the national context in which they are implemented and whether the practices that are deployed are effective in diffusing consultancy knowledge.	NA
22	Develop a new approach based on co-word and proximity analysis to map the knowledge and skills of professional services firms, to allow such firms to better understand what they know and help them to deploy their skills.	NA
23	Examine the underlying components of information technology (IT) that support different models of knowledge management.	IT
24	Identify organizational and individual consequences of identification in a context of social, structural, and cultural 'closures' and contradictions.	Knowledge Management
25	Define the key challenges for an optimal knowledge management system in consulting firms	NA
26	Understand people management practices that facilitate knowledge management	NA
27	Explain knowledge coding project undertaken by Egon Zehnder International across its offices	NA

Appendix D - Literary review: sample analysis (3)

Index	If study: type of observation (survey, in-company research,...), or source of data if different	If study AND in-company research: line of business of considered company (management consulting, accounting consulting, construction, food production...)	Geographical scope	If not review: includes risk management practices	If positive: type of risk management practice
1	Survey	IT consulting	Spain	No	
2	Interviews	Engineering consulting	China, Pakistan	No	
3	Research papers	Not applicable	NA	Yes	Human Resources management
4	Interviews	IT consulting	Norway	No	
5	In-company observation	Engineering consulting	NA	No	
6	Survey	Management consulting, Engineering consulting, Legal consulting, Technical consulting, Training consulting, Human Resources consulting, Financial services consulting	Jordan	No	
7	Interviews, In-company observation	Management consulting	NA	No	
8	Interviews, In-company observation	Management consulting, IT consulting	US	No	
9	Interviews	Human Resources consulting	NA	No	
10	In-company observation	Strategy consulting	France	No	
11	Interviews, In-company observation	IT consulting, Management consulting	Europe	No	
12	Database	Management consulting, Financial services consulting, Engineering consulting	Global	No	
13	In-company observation	Management consulting, Technical consulting	Spain	No	
14	Database	Management consulting	Global	No	
15	Interviews	Management consulting, Academic institutions, Public organizations	The Netherlands	No	
16	Interviews	Strategy consulting, Operational consulting	Austria, Belgium, Chile, Czech Republic, Germany, Spain, United Arab Emirates,	No	
17	Interviews	Strategy consulting, Operational consulting, Financial services consulting	The Netherlands	No	
18	Case study	Technical consulting, Engineering consulting	Singapore, Finland	No	
19	Case study	Engineering consulting	NA	No	
20	Case study	Management consulting	UK	No	
21	Case study	Tax consulting, Legal consulting	UK, The Netherlands	No	
22	Case study	Engineering consulting	UK	No	
23	Survey	Management consulting	US, Canada	No	
24	Interviews, In-company observation	Management consulting	NA	No	
25	Secondary data analysis	Management consulting	NA	No	
26	In-company observation, Interviews	Business consulting, Technical consulting	UK	No	
27	Case study	Management consulting, Human Resources consulting	Global	No	

Appendix E - Literary review: sample analysis (4)

Index	If study: findings put forward (frameworks, remarks, concepts,...)	If findings: reported	If findings: hurdles met
1	Digitization can improve Knowledge Management efforts towards innovation	NA	Sample representativeness
2	Integrated teams, confirmation seeking, technical and social adaptability all played an important role in the case study success though qualitative analyses	NA	Sample representativeness
3	Not applicable	NA	NA
4	Personal networks are critical to prospective learning opportunities, which if too outward-directed will influence employees' sense of organizational belonging. A balance between external and internal labour markets has to be struck to maintain stable knowledge linkages.	NVivo	Sample representativeness
5	Work-package based project can capture granular lessons that could be integrated then at project level first, then company one through the KM loop in the STBQ method.	NA	NA
6	Knowledge creation or acquisition, sharing and leverage build employees' skills that are relevant to innovate. Facilitating collaboration between employees and sectors will enhance knowledge sharing to increase innovation.	NA	Sample representativeness
7	Boredom analysis showed 5 coding pairs that explain expectations vs stagnation in employees' job or career. Company culture cannot completely offset individuals' self-need for creativity and fulfillment.	NA	Geographic scope missing
8	IT industry analysts' category is not static or uniform (drawing similarities to the management consultant profile), but tackle the same challenges as traditional technical experts. In the case study, the company did provide itself with rigid decision support structures in order to provide sound and credible consulting to customers (Ombudsman appointment).	NA	NA
9	Executive search makes heavy use of both explicit and implicit information roughly in a 50/50 ratio, making knowledge management a critical offer to customers. Suggestions of testing the findings in other knowledge intensive markets is put forward.	NA	Geographic scope missing
10	KM systems effects on career will reduce with the seniority of the employees' level, up to a point where it doesn't add enough value. Furthermore, the presence of these systems is not enough to create horizontal bridges in an organization	AMOS 16.0, Markov Chain Monte Carlo	Sample representativeness
11	IT systems are deeply rooted in enabling changes (new ways of working, collaborating, managing). Before implementing KM processes, a business has to conduct a strategic review in order to align itself with the desired track, and then implement IT-augmented KM systems. Misalignments in the KM software are mostly due to uncertainty	NA	Risk of conflict of interest
12	Big Four firms are still trying to expand, while medium and small consultancies are uniting in network associations. Entrepreneurship is still important for all markets and countries, and given that 99% of companies are SMEs consultancies will play even a more important role	NA	NA
13	The influence of consultancy services differs according to the technological content of business innovation and requires that consultants possess substantial technological capabilities in order to be able to contribute to business innovation.	NA	NA
14	Knowledge management cannot be regarded as a transient fashion, showing that academic interest in the topic has increased in the period considered. However, the opposite is true speaking of professional interest.	ABI Proquest	Sample representativeness
15	The study hints at two intermediary groups, i.e. consultant-researchers and consultants working in the expertise centres of their firms, both of which can potentially overcome hindrances in the communication between consultancy and research (as consultants are more oriented to practical solutions, while researchers tend to be focused on a more restricted set of management accounting issues). Only big consultancy firms can afford to create a so-called expertise centers, whose objective is to develop 'new tools and templates'.	NA	Sample representativeness
16	The study reported that knowledge management is key in international consulting firms, as their product is knowledge. However, knowledge management can only be realized if people are open to changing business processes and adopt new ways of thinking: the level of embeddedness is the key to create value. The study collected four critical issues concerning knowledge management systems in place: lack of worst practices collection, lack of feedback, maintenance of the system and quality control of the content. On a more personal level, consultants still have unclarity on knowledge management impact evaluation and more detailed achievements of these systems.	NA	Generalization issues

Appendix F - Literary review: sample analysis (4) continued

17	Understanding flow of innovation within consultancy firms, cultural setting of innovation and creativity in the current consultancy workplace, promotion of organizational culture as innovation catalyst	NA	Sample representativeness
18	Framework to map innovation constructive/disruptive effects on TEC firms, promote knowledge innovation in technology-related consultancy firms.	NA	Sample representativeness
19	The lack of routines for exploration seems to be a bottleneck for the development of deeper, more long-term relationships between consulting and client firms. Inter-organisational learning mechanisms play a significant role in contributing to the recognised drivers, restrictions and routines: innovation collaboration requires more extensive usage of explorative inter-organisational routines, effective transformation process requires continuous execution of routines to enable relationships to contribute to the driving forces and prevents/slow down the restricting forces, there is a need for development of inter-organisational learning and feedback mechanisms to continuously improve said routines.	NA	Sample representativeness, Geographic scope missing
20	The case company benefited from the study as it has now a basic understanding of the actual tacit potential of knowledge in their firm and have a base to think about their future. Continuous examination is the key to uncover aspects of their work that hadn't been recognized before.	NA	Generalization issues, Sample representativeness
21	Knowledge management practices of the case firm (team-based interaction; electronic libraries/databases and intranet-based knowledge forums; a coach/apprentice training model; and network relationships) are not modified by national context, as the practices were the same throughout the scope.	NA	NA
22	The underlying skills of the organization strongly overlap, beyond the extent envisaged in the organization. It also shows that these overlaps may be a source of competitive advantage. This analysis also identifies the lack of synergies among different knowledge domains.	NA	NA
23	IT has been generally accepted as a critical enabler for the successful KM implementation. The most widely used IT by management consulting firms was the internet-related technology (e-mail, internet, and search engine). The second important IT component was data management technology (document management, data warehousing, data mining, knowledge repositories, and database management). The third important IT was collaborating technology (videoconferencing, workflow management, groupware, group decision support systems, and knowledge maps). The least important IT was artificial intelligence	NA	Sample representativeness
24	Technocratic control mainly circles around the use of bureaucracy and performance measures, socio-ideological control addresses values, meanings and ideas. The combination of the two controls create two loci of control that together make the overall system of work in a company: work hours and days, tools, procedures and such.	NA	Sample representativeness, Geographic scope missing
25	Competitive advantage still has to be found as an effect of knowledge management system. Staff should be trained in diagnostic skills that allow them to make an informed assessment in a given situation. Staff should be aware of the limitations of specific tools so that they are better placed to make an informed assessment of the applicability of tools. The reward systems should be geared to providing the most appropriate solution.	NA	Generalization issues, Geographic scope missing
26	Knowledge stemming from company environment that also acts as employee retention system. IT employed only on low level communication and misused regarding KM.	NA	Sample representativeness
27	Description of successful knowledge management coding platform implementation and steps undertaken to achieve the project	NA	Self-serving bias, Sample representativeness

Appendix G - Interview answer sheet: A

Date	01/06/2023				
Role	Internal Control Manager				
	A		B (workplace) relational, analytical	C	
Describe the knowledge required in your role (i.e. financial, technical) and quantify in percentage how much of it is acquired on the workplace (specific role skills or job-related knowledge)	financial imprint, accounting				70
	A		B		
Describe and quantify in percentage how workplace-acquired knowledge is catered (i.e. CampusX, training, word of mouth, experience)	100		experience		
	A (workplace)		B (rest)		
Describe and quantify in percentage the impact of workplace-acquired knowledge in your job, compared to your education or previous experiences	90		10		
	1-5				
describe the overall level of agreement and collaboration with the process owners (open question that will be "normalized" in a closed set of options)	4				
	1-5		B		
rank from 1-5 (where 1 = never) how frequently you make exceptions (positive or negative) to your responsibilities when dealing with individual entities (i.e. knowing how a team performs, providing an action plan: company-wide, action plans must come from process owners and merely approved and later retested by internal control, eventually audited by internal audit) and explain the reasons (i.e. knowing how a team performs, provide a ready made action plan to be approved by process owners)	3		subjectivity due to contextualization (only on processes, not on people) and on objective risk		
	A				
in case of deviances described in the previous 2 questions, describe the level of perceived usefulness from process owners (i.e. when providing an action plan to a process owner, describe how does he interpret this exception: by company rule, they are aware of their responsibilities and they are aware of your deviance)	if explained to process owners, they will understand its usefulness because of contextualization (more detailed evaluation) and of collective soundness assurance (find root of problems)				
	A				
in case of deviances described in question 2 and 3, describe the level of perceived quality provided as per SLA+deviances by the business services leadership team (i.e. knowing that deviances have occurred, is there collusion between internal control actors and leadership and what is their view on this?)	no collusion, management does not know the level of depth provided and the work performed				

Appendix H - Interview answer sheet: B

Date	01/06/2023				
Role	Internal Control Manager (Corporate)				
	A		B		C
Describe the knowledge required in your role (i.e. financial, technical) and quantify in percentage how much of it is acquired on the workplace (specific role skills or job-related knowledge)	financial imprint, accounting		communication, ERP and IT tools		80
	A		B		
Describe and quantify in percentage how workplace-acquired knowledge is catered (i.e. CampusX, training, word of mouth, experience)	90		experience		
	A		B		
Describe and quantify in percentage the impact of workplace-acquired knowledge in your job, compared to your education or previous experiences	70		30		
	1-5				
describe the overall level of agreement and collaboration with the process owners (open question that will be "normalized" in a closed set of options)	5				
	1-5		B		
rank from 1-5 (where 1 = never) how frequently you make exceptions (positive or negative) to your responsibilities when dealing with individual entities (i.e. knowing how a team performs, providing an action plan: company-wide, action plans must come from process owners and merely approved and later retested by internal control, eventually audited by internal audit) and explain the reasons (i.e. knowing how a team performs, provide a ready made action plan to be approved by process owners)	5		if there is cooperation subjectivity will kick in; depending to the control		
	A				
in case of deviances described in the previous 2 questions, describe the level of perceived usefulness from process owners (i.e. when providing an action plan to a process owner, describe how does he interpret this exception: by company rule, they are aware of their responsibilities and they are aware of your deviance)	depends on the testing reception of the process owner: in general, useful when they understand that it's beneficial for themselves too				
	A				
in case of deviances described in question 2 and 3, describe the level of perceived quality provided as per SLA+deviances by the business services leadership team (i.e. knowing that deviances have occurred, is there collusion between internal control actors and leadership and what is their view on this?)	no collusion, management does not know the level of depth provided and the work performed, but they know if I will further test particular cases as I will communicate how I work to them				

Appendix I - Interview answer sheet: C

Date	06/06/2023			
Role	Internal Controller			
	A		B	C
Describe the knowledge required in your role (i.e. financial, technical) and quantify in percentage how much of it is acquired on the workplace (specific role skills or job-related knowledge)	accounting		practice, analytical mindset,	70
	A		B	
Describe and quantify in percentage how workplace-acquired knowledge is catered (i.e. CampusX, training, word of mouth, experience)	95		experience (courses 5%)	
	A		B	
Describe and quantify in percentage the impact of workplace-acquired knowledge in your job, compared to your education or previous experiences	70		30	
	1-5			
describe the overall level of agreement and collaboration with the process owners (open question that will be "normalized" in a closed set of options)	4			
	1-5		B	
rank from 1-5 (where 1 = never) how frequently you make exceptions (positive or negative) to your responsibilities when dealing with individual entities (i.e. knowing how a team performs, providing an action plan: company-wide, action plans must come from process owners and merely approved and later retested by internal control, eventually audited by internal audit) and explain the reasons (i.e. knowing how a team performs, provide a ready made action plan to be approved by process owners)	5		only for efficiency reasons, rules only for guidance	
	A			
in case of deviances described in the previous 2 questions, describe the level of perceived usefulness from process owners (i.e. when providing an action plan to a process owner, describe how does he interpret this exception: by company rule, they are aware of their responsibilities and they are aware of your deviance)	depends on the testing reception of the process owner: in general, useful when they understand that it's beneficial for themselves too			
	A			
in case of deviances described in question 2 and 3, describe the level of perceived quality provided as per SLA+deviances by the business services leadership team (i.e. knowing that deviances have occurred, is there collusion between internal control actors and leadership and what is their view on this?)	no collusion, management does not know the level of depth provided and the work performed		questions to be dropped?	

Appendix J - Interview answer sheet: D

Date	07/06/2023			
Role	Internal Controller			
	A	B	C	
Describe the knowledge required in your role (i.e. financial, technical) and quantify in percentage how much of it is acquired on the workplace (specific role skills or job-related knowledge)	accounting, IT general control (more than a regular user, 75)	experience, adaptability, 75		
Describe and quantify in percentage how workplace-acquired knowledge is catered (i.e. CampusX, training, word of mouth, experience)	A 75	B experience (courses 25%)		
Describe and quantify in percentage the impact of workplace-acquired knowledge in your job, compared to your education or previous experiences	A 75	B 25		
describe the overall level of agreement and collaboration with the process owners (open question that will be "normalized" in a closed set of options)	1-5 3			
rank from 1-5 (where 1 = never) how frequently you make exceptions (positive or negative) to your responsibilities when dealing with individual entities (i.e. knowing how a team performs, providing an action plan: company-wide, action plans must come from process owners and merely approved and later retested by internal control, eventually audited by internal audit) and explain the reasons (i.e. knowing how a team performs, provide a ready made action plan to be approved by process owners)	1-5 4	B only for risk coverage increase and with previous approval to superiors		
in case of deviances described in the previous 2 questions, describe the level of perceived usefulness from process owners (i.e. when providing an action plan to a process owner, describe how does he interpret this exception: by company rule, they are aware of their responsibilities and they are aware of your deviance)	A no communication on how the testing is actually performed, so process owners do not know about deviances			
in case of deviances described in question 2 and 3, describe the level of perceived quality provided as per SLA+deviances by the business services leadership team (i.e. knowing that deviances have occurred, is there collusion between internal control actors and leadership and what is their view on this?)	A new hire, not applicable	question s to be dropped ?		

Appendix K - Interview answer sheet: E

Date	07/06/2023				
Role	Internal Controller				
	A		B		C
Describe the knowledge required in your role (i.e. financial, technical) and quantify in percentage how much of it is acquired on the workplace (specific role skills or job-related knowledge)	accounting, business ropes		experience, analytical mindset, communication		80
	A		B		
Describe and quantify in percentage how workplace-acquired knowledge is catered (i.e. CampusX, training, word of mouth, experience)	95		experience and networking (courses 5%)		
	A		B		
Describe and quantify in percentage the impact of workplace-acquired knowledge in your job, compared to your education or previous experiences	80		20		
	1-5				
describe the overall level of agreement and collaboration with the process owners (open question that will be "normalized" in a closed set of options)	3				
	1-5		B		
rank from 1-5 (where 1 = never) how frequently you make exceptions (positive or negative) to your responsibilities when dealing with individual entities (i.e. knowing how a team performs, providing an action plan: company-wide, action plans must come from process owners and merely approved and later retested by internal control, eventually audited by internal audit) and explain the reasons (i.e. knowing how a team performs, provide a ready made action plan to be approved by process owners)	3		first, to tailor guidelines in order to comply with local regulations and customs; second, to cover the materiality of the risk while tailoring the controls to the single process		
	A				
in case of deviances described in the previous 2 questions, describe the level of perceived usefulness from process owners (i.e. when providing an action plan to a process owner, describe how does he interpret this exception: by company rule, they are aware of their responsibilities and they are aware of your deviance)	no communication on how the testing is actually performed, so process owners do not know about deviances				
	A				
in case of deviances described in question 2 and 3, describe the level of perceived quality provided as per SLA+deviances by the business services leadership team (i.e. knowing that deviances have occurred, is there collusion between internal control actors and leadership and what is their view on this?)	management will care only in case of high risk, that requires them to dig deeper into the testing itself		question to be dropped?		

Appendix L - Interview answer sheet: F

Date	07/06/2023				
Role	Internal Controller (External)				
	A		B		C
Describe the knowledge required in your role (i.e. financial, technical) and quantify in percentage how much of it is acquired on the workplace (specific role skills or job-related knowledge)	official training as external auditor (certification),		continuous training (ethics,		80
	A		B		
Describe and quantify in percentage how workplace-acquired knowledge is catered (i.e. CampusX, training, word of mouth, experience)		85	internal courses		
	A		B		
Describe and quantify in percentage the impact of workplace-acquired knowledge in your job, compared to your education or previous experiences		80	20		
	1-5				
describe the overall level of agreement and collaboration with the process owners (open question that will be "normalized" in a closed set of options)		5			
	1-5		B		
rank from 1-5 (where 1 = never) how frequently you make exceptions (positive or negative) to your responsibilities when dealing with individual entities (i.e. knowing how a team performs, providing an action plan: company-wide, action plans must come from process owners and merely approved and later retested by internal control, eventually audited by internal audit) and explain the reasons (i.e. knowing how a team performs, provide a ready made action plan to be approved by process owners)		2	assess and objectify the difficulties in order to move around with the controls		
	A				
in case of deviances described in the previous 2 questions, describe the level of perceived usefulness from process owners (i.e. when providing an action plan to a process owner, describe how does he interpret this exception: by company rule, they are aware of their responsibilities and they are aware of your deviance)	sometimes process owners won't understand, but as externals we have to report truthfully what happens in our processes. Escalation is used as last resort.				
	A				
in case of deviances described in question 2 and 3, describe the level of perceived quality provided as per SLA+deviances by the business services leadership team (i.e. knowing that deviances have occurred, is there collusion between internal control actors and leadership and what is their view on this?)	not applicable				

Appendix M - Interview answer sheet: G

Date	07/06/2023			
Role	Internal Control Manager (External)			
	A	B	C	
Describe the knowledge required in your role (i.e. financial, technical) and quantify in percentage how much of it is acquired on the workplace (specific role skills or job-related knowledge)	accounting, official training as external auditor	continuous training (ethics,		80
	A	B		
Describe and quantify in percentage how workplace-acquired knowledge is catered (i.e. CampusX, training, word of mouth, experience)	75	internal courses		
	A	B		
Describe and quantify in percentage the impact of workplace-acquired knowledge in your job, compared to your education or previous experiences	90	10		
	1-5			
describe the overall level of agreement and collaboration with the process owners (open question that will be "normalized" in a closed set of options)	5			
	1-5	B		
rank from 1-5 (where 1 = never) how frequently you make exceptions (positive or negative) to your responsibilities when dealing with individual entities (i.e. knowing how a team performs, providing an action plan: company-wide, action plans must come from process owners and merely approved and later retested by internal control, eventually audited by internal audit) and explain the reasons (i.e. knowing how a team performs, provide a ready made action plan to be approved by process owners)	2	assess and objectify the difficulties in order to move around with the controls		
	A			
in case of deviances described in the previous 2 questions, describe the level of perceived usefulness from process owners (i.e. when providing an action plan to a process owner, describe how does he interpret this exception: by company rule, they are aware of their responsibilities and they are aware of your deviance)	sometimes process owners won't understand, but as externals we have to report truthfully what happens in our processes. Escalation is used as last resort.			
	A			
in case of deviances described in question 2 and 3, describe the level of perceived quality provided as per SLA+deviances by the business services leadership team (i.e. knowing that deviances have occurred, is there collusion between internal control actors and leadership and what is their view on this?)	not applicable			

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