Creating a *ba* for generating self-transcending knowledge

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Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to introduce a new type of *ba*, called “vocation *ba*” and to describe the main aspects of this type of *ba* as well as its methods.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The paper reviews the literature in the field of self-transcending knowledge and the concept of *ba* and shows the main aspects for the design of a new methodology and framework. Additionally, it analyzes experiences with the new method from several case studies.

**Findings** – First, the concept of vocation *ba* describes a space on the individual level as well as on the collective level for the generation of self-transcending knowledge. Second, the method of Vocation-coachingWaVe is a helpful method within the vocation *ba*. The experiences with these two new concepts from several case studies are very encouraging.

**Research limitations/implications** – The number of case studies at the collective level is still limited, as the authors have been working with the method of Vocation-coachingWaVe at the collective level for two years. At the moment, further research is done in larger systems.

**Practical implications** – This study gives insight and information about the method of Vocation-coachingWaVe and the concept of vocation *ba*.

**Originality/value** – The paper presents one of the few studies, which theoretically and practically deals with the aspect of self-transcending knowledge in the context of vision development processes and knowledge-based management on the individual level as well as on the collective level. The method of Vocation-coachingWaVe at the collective level is a continuous approach of a bottom-up vision development process.

**Keywords** Knowledge creation, Knowledge management, Vocational training, Coaching

**Paper type** Literature review

1. Introduction

The concept of *ba* developed by Nonaka and his colleagues (for example Nonaka et al., 2000; Nonaka and Konno, 1998) has highly influenced the development of knowledge-based management. Nonaka and Konno (1998) consider *ba* as a shared space that is used as the foundation for the creation of (individual and/or collective) knowledge. The creation of knowledge and the conversion of knowledge – as shown in the socialization, externalization, combination, internalization (SECI) model (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995) – are indeed very important factors for the success of a firm.

However, it can be argued that the most important factor for the sustainable and successful future of an organization is the generation of self-transcending knowledge or the access to individual and collective self-transcending knowledge. This sort of knowledge has been introduced by Scharmer (2001) and by Nonaka et al. (2000, p. 8).

This paper will focus on the access to self-transcending knowledge and on the conversion from self-transcending knowledge to embodied knowledge. Therefore, the authors will introduce a new type of *ba* called “vocation *ba*” and describe the main aspects of this type of *ba* as well as the methods for vocation *ba*. Furthermore, some experiences with the
methods of vocation ba and from several case studies at the individual level and the collective level will be described.

The rest of the paper is organized into four sections. Section 2 gives some basic information about the concept of ba. Section 3 introduces self-transcending knowledge and summarizes existing methods which tried to incorporate self-transcending knowledge into the SECI/ba model. In section 4 we will introduce vocation ba and the methods within this new type of ba, will be introduced, describing the experience of the authors with these methods in the context of knowledge-based management in practice.

2. The concept of ba

Nonaka and his associates, known for their various works on knowledge management and their theory of organizational knowledge creation (e.g. Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Nonaka and Konno, 1998; Nonaka and Toyama, 2005), have “[…] identified the importance of the physical or virtual space of interaction called ‘ba’, that is the context for knowledge creation” (Nonaka and Toyama, 2008, p. 34). It is a philosophic construct rooted in Japanese society that can be roughly translated as “place” and was originally proposed by the Japanese philosopher Kitaro Nishida and further developed by Shimizu. Nishida’s concept of ba can be roughly summarized as the kind of space in which the consciousness (of an individual) and an object refer to each other. Ba refers to “[…] the process of opening up a concrete space or ‘lived place’ where human beings can encounter each other and worldly phenomena. […]. Nishida refers to this place not as ‘something’ (= some thing), but as ‘nothing’ (¼ no thing) suggesting a positive space-creating aspect” (Güldenberg and Helting, 2007, p. 112).

For Nonaka, ba can be thought of “[…] as a shared space for emerging relationships. This space can be physical (e.g. office dispersed business space), virtual (e.g. e-mail, teleconference), mental (e.g. shared experiences, ideas, ideals), or any combination of them” (Nonaka and Konno, 1998, p. 40). Ba is the platform for knowledge creation which in Nonaka’s model is based on the concept of knowledge conversions and the evolving spiral movement of knowledge through the SECI process (Nonaka et al., 2000, p.12). Ba can be defined as:

[…] a shared context in which knowledge is shared, created and utilised. In knowledge creation, generation and regeneration of ba is the key, as ba provides the energy, quality and place to perform the individual conversions and to move along the knowledge spiral (Nonaka et al., 2000, p. 14).

Accordingly, there are four types of ba that correspond to the four stages of the SECI model. These types of ba offer platforms for specific steps in the knowledge spiral process. The four types are: originating ba, dialoguing ba, systemising ba and exercising ba, which are defined by two dimensions of interactions (see Figure 1).

One dimension is the type of interaction, that is, whether the interaction takes place individually or collectively. The other dimension is the media used in such interactions, that is, whether the interaction is through face-to-face contact or virtual media such as books, manuals, memos, e-mails or teleconferences.

**Originating ba**

Originating ba is associated with the socialization process where tacit knowledge is shared among individuals, generally in face-to-face interactions. It is the ba where “individuals share experiences, feelings, emotions and mental models. It mainly offers a context for socialization, since an individual face-to-face interaction is the only way to capture the full range of physical senses and psycho-emotional reactions, such as ease or discomfort, which are important elements in sharing tacit knowledge” (Nonaka et al., 2000, p. 16).

**Dialoguing ba**

Dialoguing ba is associated with externalization, when individuals are mixed in teams and convert tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge. It is therefore defined by collective and
face-to-face interactions and it “is the place where individuals’ mental models and skills are shared, converted into common terms, and articulated as concepts […] Individuals’ tacit knowledge is shared and articulated through dialogs among participants. The articulated knowledge is also brought back into each individual, and further articulation occurs through self-reflection” (Nonaka et al., 2000, p. 17).

**Systemising ba**

Systemising ba is associated with the combination of explicit knowledge. It is defined by collective and virtual interactions and often takes place in a virtual world enabled by information technology, such as online networks, groupware, documentation and databanks:

Today, many organisations use such things as electronic mailing lists and news groups through which participants can exchange necessary information or answer each other’s questions to collect and disseminate knowledge and information effectively and efficiently (Nonaka et al., 2000, p. 17).

**Exercising ba**

Exercising ba supports internalization by facilitating the conversion of explicit knowledge to tacit knowledge, through on-the-job training, for example. It “is defined by individual and virtual interactions […] Here, individuals embody explicit knowledge that is communicated through virtual media, such as written manuals or simulation programs. Exercising ba synthesises the transcendence and reflection through action, while dialoguing ba achieves this through thought” (Nonaka et al., 2000, p. 17).

According to the authors (Nonaka et al., 2000, p. 25), there are different possibilities to form ba: it can be built intentionally or it can be created spontaneously. On the one hand, ba can be built by providing physical, virtual or mental space, e.g. in the form of meeting rooms, computer networks or common goals. On the other hand, it is crucial for top managers to locate spontaneously built ba and to utilize this naturally emerging ba. Maybe even more important than building, finding, and connecting ba is to “energize” ba in order to give energy and quality to the SECI process. Nonaka et al. (2000, p. 25) state that “for that, knowledge producers have to supply the necessary conditions, such as autonomy, creative chaos, redundancy, requisite variety, and love, care, trust and commitment.”

![Figure 1: Four types of ba](image-url)
In one of his latest works, Nonaka et al. (2008, p. 35) define *ba* as:

[... ] a shared context in motion because *ba* are constantly moving and changing. Participants bring their own contexts to a *ba* and interact with others and the environment. New knowledge is created through such change in meaning and contexts. In *ba*, the future, or the knowledge to be created, is connected with the past, or the contexts that participants bring to the present, in an emerging relationship that shapes a shared context and perspective.

This connectedness results in the fact that, “*ba* is a process of indwelling in a ‘here-now’ situation that transcends time and space. This means that *ba* emerges not only from the interpenetration of environment, structure, and agency in the dimension of space, but also from the simultaneous occurrence of the past, present, and future in the dimension of time. A good *ba* both transcends and emerges in a time-space nexus” (Nonaka *et al.*, 2008, p. 40).

To sum up, *ba* is the place or context for the creation of both individual and collective knowledge. It is also composed of different forms of knowledge and “can give rise to both tacit and codified knowledge” (Creplet, 2000, p. 368).

A very similar concept to the concept of *ba* are “enabling spaces” (Peschl, 2006; Fundneider and Peschl, 2009). An enabling space is described as a multidimensional space enabling and facilitating the processes of knowledge creation. This enabling space comprises of a physical, social (trust, etc.), mental/cognitive, epistemological, as well as a technological dimension (Peschl and Fundneider, 2008, p. 106).

3. Self-transcending knowledge

The concept of self-transcending knowledge was first introduced by Nonaka *et al.* (2000, p. 8) and by Scharmer (2001). Nonaka and his colleagues describe knowledge creation as a continuous, self-transcending process through which one transcends the boundary of the old self into a new self by acquiring a new context, a new view of the world, and new knowledge. They describe it as a journey “from being to becoming” (Nonaka *et al.*, 2000, p. 8).

Scharmer (2001, p. 138) cited Michelangelo's words about his sculpture of David: “David was already in the stone. I just took away everything that wasn’t David”. The ability to see a David where others just see rock is the essence of self-transcending knowledge. Today’s leaders are often faced with the challenge of figuring out what in their environment may contain the potential new “David” and how to take away everything that is not “David”. Scharmer argues that discussions about and research into knowledge management in the future will revolve around the interplay of the three forms of knowledge – explicit, tacit and self-transcending (Uotila and Melkas, 2008, p. 226).

Scharmer proposes a distinction between two types of tacit knowledge: tacit-embodied knowledge on the one hand, and not-yet-embodied knowledge – called self-transcending knowledge – on the other. With this concept, Scharmer tried to answer the question of what is the force that drives the knowledge spiral – introduced by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) with the SECI model – itself. This approach focuses attention on the thought conditions that allow processes and tacit knowledge to evolve (Scharmer, 2001, p. 139). Figure 2 shows the three forms of knowledge.

Self-transcending knowledge is the ability to sense the presence of potential, to see what does not yet exist (intuition and hunches) (Uotila and Melkas, 2008, p. 225). Self-transcending knowledge captures knowledge about the sources or “place” where thought and action come into being (Scharmer, 2001, p. 141). Self-transcending knowledge will turn out to be the most critical source of future competitive advantage (Scharmer, 2001, p. 149).

In other words, self-transcending knowledge is the knowledge about the highest future possibility.

Therefore an appropriate space is needed to generate this kind of knowledge. *Ba* may also be thought of as the space that allows you to bring your self into reality (Scharmer, 2001, p. 148).
A special challenge is to incorporate self-transcending knowledge into the SECI/ba model. Uotila et al. (2005) therefore introduced the so-called “rye bread model” which is shown in Figure 3. They argue that the incorporation of self-transcending knowledge into the SECI/ba model requires two additional phases:

1. the conversion of self-transcending knowledge to tacit knowledge (embodiment); and
2. vice versa, the conversion of tacit knowledge to self-transcending knowledge (Uotila et al., 2005, p. 859).

Figure 2 Three forms of knowledge

Figure 3 The rye-bread model
Furthermore, they introduce two additional types of \( ba \):

1. “imagination \( ba \)”, in which the conversion of self-transcending knowledge to tacit knowledge takes place; and
2. “futurising \( ba \)”, for the conversion from tacit knowledge to self-transcending knowledge (Uotila et al., 2005, p. 860ff).

Although there are several interesting papers in the context of the incorporation of self-transcending knowledge into the SECI/\( ba \) model (Melkas and Harmaakorpi, 2008; Uotila and Melkas, 2008; Uotila et al., 2005) the description of methods for “futurising \( ba \)” and “imagination \( ba \)” is not very concrete. The authors confirm this impression by writing in one of their recent papers:

Looking into methods of futures research in facilitating the future-oriented knowledge conversion phases may be fruitful. Research on best practice in facilitating these processes is still non-existent. Research should be done on how tacit and explicit knowledge facilitates the creation of self-transcending knowledge (Uotila and Melkas, 2008, p. 230).

In the following section of this paper the authors will argue that there are alternative possibilities of the conversion to and from self-transcending knowledge instead of the conversion via tacit knowledge. Furthermore a somewhat different model will be introduced. Additionally, some concrete methods for the incorporation of self-transcending knowledge into the knowledge-based management approach will be introduced.

4. Creation of a new type of \( ba \): vocation \( ba \)

In an interview Otto Scharmer argued that each of us is two: one – the person we have become through the history that is behind us and the other, the person who we could become in the future but who totally depends on what we do now. It is totally dependent on us both individually and collectively (Scharmer, 2006). Following this, it can be said that one important aspect is learning from the past (this corresponds to the person we have become through our history) and the other important aspect is learning from the future (this corresponds to the person who we could become).

Learning from the future is strongly connected with crossing the boundaries from the old self to the new self and the access and the usage of self-transcending knowledge. Therefore we need an appropriate environment that enables this access. In the following sections the authors will introduce the concept of vocation \( ba \) which can provide such an environment.

4.1 Vocation \( ba \)

It seems to be essential to generate self-transcending knowledge and to access it on the one hand, and to utilize this self-transcending knowledge in the present on the other. Therefore the conversion from self-transcending knowledge to embodied knowledge (which can be tacit or explicit knowledge) is important, as is the access to self-transcending knowledge.

In contrast to the rye-bread model, where access to self-transcending knowledge and a conversion from self-transcending knowledge has always to be done via the implicit knowledge, the authors of this paper argue that it is more helpful to focus on the embodied knowledge on the one hand and the self-transcending knowledge on the other.

In order to enable access to self-transcending knowledge and the conversion to embodied knowledge, a special \( ba \) is helpful. This \( ba \) will be named “vocation \( ba \)”.

Some important factors to enable such a vocation \( ba \) are a trusting atmosphere, enough time for unstructured thinking processes, the use of metaphoric language, several coaching techniques for example systemic constellation work or hypno-systemic interventions, etc.

Within this vocation \( ba \), which can be seen as a form of learning environment, people get various forms of support:
Support for the generation of need knowledge. As self-transcending knowledge is the knowledge about the highest future possibility of a person, self-transcending knowledge has to be closely connected with a fulfilling life, work and happiness. Within the vocation ba people get support to detect their substantial needs for a fulfilling life and work. Therefore they generate “new” knowledge, which the authors call need knowledge. This is the knowledge required to answer the questions: “What do I need to be happy, how can I make my work meaningful and what do I need to do a good job?”

In the work the authors observed, that need knowledge is a precondition for accessing and utilizing self-transcending knowledge.

For example at the individual level and the authors work with Vocation-coachingWaVe (see section 4.2) one person identified some substantial needs for her fulfilling life and work – namely acting and working in a small team of about five to ten persons, not being the leader of this team, making the result of her work visible to other persons, etc (for details see section 4.2.2.). At the basis of this need knowledge she was able to write an attractive vision. This vision was the basis for a coaching session with a backcasting process, which enables the person to learn from the future, while visualizing the future and therefore accessing self-transcending knowledge as important parameters for decisions in her present.

Support for the creation of a sustainable vision. Knowledge creation is a self-transcending process through which one transcends the boundary of the old self into a new self by acquiring a new context, a new view of the world, and new knowledge (Nonaka et al., 2000, p. 8). Knowledge creation can be thought of as a process of realizing one’s vision of the future or personal belief through the practice of interaction with others and the environment (Nonaka, 2007, p. 371). Therefore creating a sustainable vision is essential for accessing self-transcending knowledge.

Within the vocation ba people get support to create a vision which is extremely attractive and intrinsically motivated. This requires a space for generating visionary ideas for the future and to let their imagination “take off” for some moments. The answer to the two basic questions: “Who is my self (what is my highest future possibility) and what is my work (what I am here for)?” (Ray, 2004; Scharmer, 2007, p. 164) makes a vision sustainable.

To sum up, in the vocation ba people get support to detect their own vocation and to cross the boundary between the old self and a new self. Furthermore, they are supported to create a concrete vision based on their vocation which can be realized in the future.

Therefore the vocation ba is an environment for both: access to self-transcending knowledge and conversion to embodied knowledge.

4.2 The Vocation-coachingWaVe model

To enable and to support a vocation ba, the method of “Vocation-coachingWaVe” (in German: BerufungscoachingWaVe®) has been shown to be very helpful and powerful in practice (for the method of Vocation-coachingWaVe see Kaiser 2005a, b, 2007, 2008).

The main ideas of this method will be introduced in the following section.

Vocation-coachingWaVe is based on methods of systemic coaching, enlarges these methods and can be seen as a process model that has its focus on three main aspects:

1. Supporting communication:
   - between the old self and the new self (or supporting the communication between the self and the self) of a person; and
   - between the person and the systems the person is acting in.

2. Making explicit:
   - the substantial needs for a fulfilling life;
   - the personal vocation;
the personal resources;

- one or more personal visions; and

- transcending one’s own boundaries by detecting one’s vocation and the substantial needs in the context of a fulfilling life and meaningful work.

4.2.1 The method of Vocation-coaching WaVe. In this section of the paper the most important aspects of Vocation-coaching WaVe in the work with individuals will be described. The use of the method at the collective level will be shown in section 4.2.3.

Vocation-coaching WaVe is a need-oriented process-model and is focused on the recognition of one’s own substantial needs. “What do I need to be content?” – that is the action-guiding question. Methodologically, Vocation-coaching WaVe is based on the approach of systemic-constructivist coaching, takes all important aspects of systemic-constructivist coaching methods and enlarges these methods with several techniques from the fields of spirituality, holism and knowledge management.

One main focus of Vocation-coaching WaVe is the assistance of individuals to formulate one or more personal visions based on their vocation. These visions include the main substantial needs of the person in the context of a fulfilling life and imply strategies to transform these needs in everyday life. Vocation-coaching WaVe is a holistic accompaniment method (support method) and can be subdivided into three main stages, namely, discovery, strengthening, and conversion/sending:

**Discovery.** Discovering one’s own vocation is the first stage of Vocation-coaching WaVe. This discovery is essentially based on the assumption that the personal vocation is closely connected to the new self (the Self) of the person, which also means that in the process of Vocation-coaching WaVe, the attention of the person must be carefully directed toward one’s own intuition, feelings, one’s own “inner voice”, etc. Calling into awareness situations from the past in which the person had the feeling of having acted consistently, authentically and from the personal center is an important part of the process. In a next step, this good feeling is anchored and therefore retrievable in the person’s future. Furthermore, in this phase the person is supported in making explicit his/her own substantial needs. In this case, substantial needs are those needs which have to be met to live a fulfilled life. To sum up, the generation of need knowledge, which is knowledge about one’s own substantial needs, is a highly important aspect in this phase. Sometimes the generation of need knowledge is more a transformation from implicit need knowledge – which is strongly connected to intuition, etc. – to explicit need knowledge.

**Strengthening.** In the second stage of Vocation-coaching WaVe, strengthening is the focal point. The main aspect in this phase lies therein that the person can recognize, become aware of, and concretely name one’s already existent resources, talents and abilities. The transformation from implicit knowledge to explicit knowledge about one’s own resources is supported in this phase. At the end of this second stage many people have become aware of how many resources and abilities are already present and only need to be activated. Knowledge about one’s substantial needs and vocation – which is output in the discovery phase of the Vocation-coaching WaVe model – and knowledge about one’s own resources and abilities act like important tesserae in a mosaic.

**Conversion.** The main focus of the third stage of Vocation-coaching WaVe is the concrete translation of the vocation into the everyday life of the person. The development of possible scenarios for the satisfaction of the substantial needs is one important aspect in this last phase of the model. What are the possibilities for realization? How realistic are the individual variations? What are the concrete first steps on this path? Which steps have I already taken? These are several of the basic questions which should be answered in the course of the last stage. The most important methodological element in this phase is the accompaniment of the person in the formulation of his or her own vision. In contrast to the vocation or the mission, the vision is something very concrete. The person is required to envision, in as much detail and as exactly as possible, how and what will happen when the vocation is translated into real life and to visualize the situation. The vision can be compared to the storyboard of a film,
and should be just as comprehensive and concrete. It is also essential that the vision should contain and cover as many areas of the person’s life as possible. The vision not only concerns the occupational realm, but rather includes every part of their life. Before starting to write a vision, it can often be helpful to define the roles in which the person finds himself/herself in life and to consider thereby which of these roles should also be fulfilled in the future.

Starting from the concrete vision, the person will be able to formulate several partial goals. This learning from the future can be very efficiently supported with the backcasting technique.

Figure 4 shows the main stages of Vocation-coaching\textsuperscript{WaVe} in combination with the milestones during the process, namely vocation – vision(s) – goals. Most people do not need more than seven coaching sessions (each coaching session takes one hour).

In the last three years in many workshops in Austria, Germany and Switzerland, more than 120 coaches and trainers have been introduced to and trained in the method of Vocation-coaching\textsuperscript{WaVe}.

4.2.2 Results in the context of knowledge-based management. In several hundred Vocation-coaching\textsuperscript{WaVe} sessions with more than 180 people in the past three years, the following effects in the context of knowledge management could be observed:

- The generation of explicit knowledge of one’s own substantial needs in the context of a fulfilling life and fulfilling work (need knowledge). For example one person found out that it is crucial for her to work within a small team of about five to ten colleagues and that she does not like to be the leader of this team. Additionally she found out that the result of her work has to be visible and that the other persons have to mention what was her part in the working process. Furthermore she found out that she needs a job with a continuous working-time and some flexibility within this working-time. She also needs a work where she can integrate one of her main talents namely to organize processes and work in a structured environment.

- The conversion of implicit/tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge, especially in the context of one’s own resources. For example another person identified these resources as his main resources: creativity, stamina, flexibility, organizational skills, up-to-date knowledge of special software.
- The internalization of explicit knowledge over the time, and therefore making it implicit on a higher level. For example one person identified in the coaching-process that it is one of his substantial needs to have a time of quietness in his everyday life of about ten minutes. At the beginning this was some kind of explicit knowledge – especially explicit need knowledge – that he used to integrate this important time for himself in his day. Over the time this became some kind of ritual (or automatic) and therefore implicit knowledge. It was part of his everyday life without having to remind himself explicitly that he has to do it.

- A better utilization of implicit / tacit knowledge in everyday life. For example one person mentions at the end of the coaching process that she can now better trust her “inner voice” and the knowledge which lies within this inner voice. 

- A better utilization of intuition in everyday life, and the generation of knowledge of how to become aware of one’s own intuition. For example another person identified that it is crucial for her to integrate ten minutes of quietness in her everyday life to become quiet and practice some kind of meditation or so. In these minutes, which are like places only for her, she was able to become aware of her intuition and to sense what are appropriate next steps, etc. Another person found out that is very important for him to plan three jogging sessions a week. For him this was a kind of special “ba” to become aware of his intuition.

- The ability to formulate personal visions on the basis of one’s own vocation. This ability enables the person to learn and act from the future as it emerges, making it possible to access self-transcending knowledge. Most of the people taking six to eight Vocation-coachingWaVe sessions have written a vision at the end of the coaching process. Most of the visions were two to four pages long. All visions include the personal substantial needs as well as the key resources of the persons. Most of the visions had a horizon of three to five years.

Within the vocation ba, the self-transcending process, through which one transcends the boundary of the old self into a new self by acquiring a new context, a new view of the world and new knowledge, is strongly supported.

Some helpful techniques to enable such a vocation ba are for example circular questions, working with differences, techniques which focus on exceptions in the past and making explicit how this was achieved, working with metaphors and pictures, constellation work. Generally spoken the most important factor is the attitude of the coach, which has to be based on respect, appraisal, care and the ability to meet the other person eye to eye.

Figure 5 shows the three knowledge-based integral parts on which a vision is based.

One of the most important aspects of Vocation-coachingWaVe is the support of the communication between the “I” of a person and the “self” of a person[1]. In other words, we
can describe this as communication between the “I” of the person and the interior part of oneself. Only this communication allows the formulation of an intrinsically motivated vision. From the perspective of spirituality, the “call” which is an existential part of the vocation comes from the “inner part” of the people themselves. It is only possible to follow this call if I can hear and interpret it. Therefore people generate knowledge within the Vocation-coaching wave process to build a personal “resonating body” for hearing and interpreting their inner voice. In this context, knowledge about the substantial personal needs plays a very important role.

These basic ideas of Vocation-coaching wave have been very helpful and appropriate in the practical work with individuals. For this reason, they were action-guiding for the implementation of the model of Vocation-coaching wave on the level of systems.

4.2.3 Knowledge-based vision development process at a collective level. The method of Vocation-coaching wave can be used for individuals and at the collective level (systems, teams, companies, regions, etc.). While the main focus on the individual level is the support to find a personal vision for the future, the generation of need knowledge and the increase in awareness of one’s personal resources, the main focus on the collective level is the creation of a knowledge vision and a mission statement for the corresponding system.

The knowledge-based vision development process at the collective level (organizations, firms, teams, communities) consequently transfers the main ideas of Vocation-coaching wave from the individual level to the level of systems. The authors will name this method VIKOBAMA (Vision development and knowledge-based management). As a result of this transfer VIKOBAMA is a radical bottom-up approach.

The essential components of the overall vision of the system are the system visions of the individuals acting and working in this system. The essential component of the system vision of each individual is the personal vision of each individual.

The creation of the visions of each member in the system is given sufficient space. Based on this vision, each individual is able to formulate a vision for the company, which is called the “personal system vision”.

The resulting “personal system visions” are the starting point for preparing an overall vision for the company. The personal vision is always action-guiding, and is always used as a corrective during the whole process. The purpose of this knowledge-based vision development process is the formulation of an overall vision for the system in which the “personal system vision” of each person is integrated at the highest possible level. As the “personal system visions” are based on the personal visions of each individual, the connection to several outcomes of the individual vocation ba – need knowledge, knowledge about wishes, knowledge about resources, etc. – is realized in an optimal way. Similar to the work at the individual level, the overall vision created for the system is a very strong intrinsically motivated vision.

Figure 6 shows the process of VIKOBAMA.

The processes of accessing self-transcending knowledge and converting it into embodied knowledge are both individual and collective. Therefore the vocation ba is also both a ba for individuals and a collective ba.

From a methodological point of view, the knowledge-based vision development process in systems combines the work of workshops with all members of the system participating in the process together with several sessions of Vocation-coaching wave with each member. This combination has proved to be very effective in practical work.

Figure 7 shows the main stages of the vision development process at a collective level.

4.2.4 Results in the context of knowledge-based management. The following results are based on observations during vision development processes with small and medium-sized companies in Austria. The authors especially focus on case studies with two companies – one larger company with about 15 employees and one smaller network-based company with six members and one research group at a university which was founded. The processes took about six months. One of these processes was rewarded with the nomination for the TRIGOS Prize 2008 in the category “workplace”.

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All outputs listed above under the description of the individual level are also part of the level of systems. In addition, the following consequences can be observed:

- knowledge sharing and knowledge distribution of explicit knowledge within the workshops with all employees;
- knowledge transfer and knowledge distribution of implicit and tacit knowledge within the workshops with all employees;
- increased awareness of the group’s tacit knowledge of the company and the use of this knowledge;
- knowledge about the priority of tasks in the near future and the goals that have to be achieved; and
- a feeling for the basic orientation of the company, which can be used to find suitable new staff for the company in the future.

5. Conclusion

The generation of self-transcending knowledge and the building of an attractive and intrinsically motivated vision are two of the most important factors for the sustainable and successful future of an organization. In this paper the authors have argued that the access to individual self-transcending knowledge and the creation of a personal vision are essential milestones for the building of a sustainable overall vision of a system.

Two new concepts have been introduced. One the one hand, the concept of vocation ba describes a space on the individual level as well as on the collective level for the generation
of self-transcending knowledge. On the other hand, the method of Vocation-coaching \( \text{VocW} \) is a very helpful method and framework within the vocation \( \text{ba} \).

The experiences from the individual coaching sessions with more than 180 people and the above-mentioned case studies with small and medium sized companies in Austria have shown that these two new concepts can be used effectively in practice.
At the individual level, the self-transcending process, through which one transcends the boundary of the old self into a new self, is strongly supported. Some of the most important results are the generation of need knowledge, the conversion of implicit knowledge into explicit knowledge and the ability to formulate a personal vision.

At the collective level, there are several additional aspects. As a consequence of the intrinsically motivated creation of the company’s overall vision and the orientation to the future, the company as a system obtains the ability to learn and act from the future as it emerges. Therefore it is possible to access self-transcending knowledge on a group level. Overall, it can be said that the vocation of the company can be detected within this process.

The method of VIKOBAMA at the collective level supports the knowledge sharing and knowledge distribution of explicit knowledge and implicit knowledge.

As the vision process not only contributes significantly to the re-definition of the mission statement of a company, but also to the private and professional (re)-orientation of all employees, an increase in corporate feeling within the company can be observed.

Furthermore, the satisfaction of employees and entrepreneurs, improved communication within the company, and a general increase in productivity were other interesting results.

**Note**

1. Some authors describe the “I” as the “self” with a small s and the self of a person as the Self with a capital S. In German it can be translated as *ich* and *selbst*.

**References**


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