The Investigation and Analysis of the Status Quo of Cultural Activities in Enterprises

Jiang Tianying  Zhang Zhijun
College of Zhijiang, Zhejiang University of Technology, P.R.China, 310024

Abstract: On the basis of empirical investigations and researches of 48 enterprises in China’s developed area, this article analyzed the status quo of corporate cultural activities in our country, and pointed out the existing deficiency of the practice. Moreover, it has given several suggestions, such as implementing innovative practice of cultural activities in enterprises, deepening corporate cultural activities by regarding "humanistic management" as the core, and shaping the first-class entrepreneurial culture.

Key Words: Corporate culture, Implement practice, Analysis of the status quo, Countermeasures and suggestions.

1 Introduction

As a kind of irrational management theory, the corporate culture theory originated from U.S.A. at the very beginning of 1970s. At that time, Japan, a defeated nation in World War II, quickly emerged on the international economic arena, which caused much attention from USA. After a batch of management and economics scholars had done a number of researches in some representative Japanese enterprises, they found out that the greatest difference existing behind the different management modes and efficiency is the discrepancy of two countries’ cultures, that is, the divergences between the macroscopic (society) and microcosmic (enterprises) cultures[1]. Corporate culture theory causing wide attention and spreading quickly on one hand dues to the discoveries of "Japanese enterprises". On the other hand, it should be attributed to scholars’ (Hosfstede, 1990; G.A.Marcoulides, 1993; Karen L.Newman ,Standley D.Nollen ,1996)[2-4] long-time empirical investigations and researches of enterprises, which were very convincing. Because the research results showed to people the contribution of corporate culture in the managing performance. Among those researches, the most famous one was done by Kotter and Heskett (1992) [5]. Their research suggested that the corporate culture generates an enormous impact on enterprise’s staff and its business achievements, especially when the market environment is in a fierce competition. The influence from culture is even much greater than those functional factors appearing in documents and materials about researches of business administration and management tactics, such as management strategy, enterprise's framework, enterprise's management system, enterprise's financial analysis method, as well as the art of leadership and management in enterprise.

Since the 1990s, scholars and entrepreneurs in China have gradually begun to inquire into the corporate culture domain. Chen Zhengnan and Huang Wenhong (1994) [6] hold that the corporate culture of a successful enterprise (having high management achievements) was unique and was the kernel competitiveness in an enterprise. Ma Huawei (1997) [7] theoretically elaborated on the contingent viewpoint of the connection between corporate culture attributes and enterprise achievements. Zhan Degan and Zhang Binlin (1998) [8] put forward the conclusion that promoting the study type organizational culture was the core of corporate culture activities and the key was to pursue a match between the corporate strategy and organizational culture.

However, at this stage, the majority of Chinese enterprises have just started their practice of corporate cultural activities, and the academic circle mainly focuses on theoretical analysis and individual case study. There are relatively less empirical researches about the overall corporate activities in China. Thus the countermeasures researches which can reveal the overall corporate culture situation and possess universal significance are deficient. On this account, the author of this article conducted a sample survey of 48 enterprises in Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Zhejiang, Guangdong and other economically developed areas in China, and had in-depth interviews with study objects. On this basis, we’ve tried to analyze the status quo and the existing problems of Chinese corporate culture activities,
aiming at making a number of suggestions about enhancing the level of Chinese corporate culture activities and promoting business achievements.

2 The analysis of the status quo of corporate culture activities in China

Enterprise cultural activities is the practice which regulates and guides a set of concepts, beliefs, values, norms and system arrangements gradually formed in the production operation as well as the management activities. It is shared by the entire staff [9]. As a practice, it is not only reflected in the formation and regulation of the awareness and values in the sense of enterprise and its staff, but also in a code of conduct and enterprise system. The survey results showed that the majority of Chinese enterprises and their employees are able to understand the importance of corporate culture activities, and have carried out a variety of corporate culture practice, among whom a few have established a relatively complete system for implementing corporate culture activities and have carried out it effectively.

From the types of investigated enterprises, staff from foreign enterprises and joint ventures have a high degree of agreement on corporate culture activities, and about 40% of the enterprises have established a relatively complete system for building a corporate culture system and developed corporate culture activities that match the development of enterprises. State-owned and state-holding enterprises focus on the implementing of corporate cultural activities. Most of them have set up special institutions for enterprise culture activities, and gradually enhanced their core capability through the means of implementing enterprise culture activities. Chinese private enterprises and their employees have a lower degree of agreement on corporate culture activities. Many companies believe that culture activities in enterprises are simple means to enhance the cohesiveness of the staff. About 10% of employees in private enterprises even think that enterprise culture activities is only a corporate image projects, and it won’t be helpful for the development of enterprises in essence. (The results of investigations and researches are shown in Table 1 and Table 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1 the research results of enterprise employees' understanding of corporate culture activities’ importance in China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enterprise’s attention to corporate culture activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate culture activities can effectively increase enterprise’s core capability, enhance business achievements, and is necessary means of modern enterprise management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate culture activities can effectively increase staff cohesion and is supplementary aids to modern enterprise management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate culture activities is a need to build modern corporate image, but won’t promote enterprise development in essence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2 the research results of enterprises carrying out corporate culture activities in China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practice of Corporate Culture Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprises vigorously advocate corporate culture activities, possess a fairly complete system for enterprise culture activities, and function effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprises Focus on culture activities and have specialized agencies engaged in enterprise culture activities, but not really implement it in operation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprises are aware of the importance of corporate culture activities, but are simplistic and stay at the recreation level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprises have very little concept of enterprise culture and don’t implement any corporate culture activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

241
In terms of the specific practice of corporate culture activities, the existing practice of culture activities in the majority of enterprises is cultural management activity which is under the guidance of traditional ideology and methodology in the enterprises and is not systematic. Thus, a comprehensive system of enterprise culture activities has not yet been established. The status quo is mainly manifested in the following aspects.

2.1 Corporate culture activities have fully reflected entrepreneurs’ values and have initially implemented the "humanistic management".

Researches showed that under the pressure of survival and development, many entrepreneurs have been aware of the fact that it is an internal need to abandon the backward operating concept, and to carry out corporate culture activities with enterprise developing strategies to match in the process of management [10]. Corporate culture depends to a great extent on entrepreneurs’ individual accomplishments, the essence of which is a reflection of entrepreneurial culture. Entrepreneurs are not only the "chief architect" of corporate culture but also a "chief engineer" in corporate culture activities. Through investigation, we found that the entrepreneurs’ values in private enterprises, foreign enterprises and joint ventures appear to have more pronounced influence on corporate culture than their counterparts’ in state-owned enterprises do. At present, by the dominance of entrepreneurs’ values, many enterprises have a better understanding of the concept, the function and the essence of corporate culture. Therefore, the corporate culture activities can fully reflect the values of entrepreneurs. In the actual operation, enterprises can combine corporate culture activities with production and business activities. Human is the magic formula for the development of enterprises [11]. From the results of this research, after a series of both successful and failed practices, the majority of enterprises have fully recognized the importance of "humanistic management". On this account, they have expanded the investment in improving the intelligence of the officers, strengthened the training and education of the staff, cultivated innovative ability of the staff, and improved satisfaction of the staff with the job, so as to give them plenty of opportunities for development. They have taken the "humanistic management" --- a flexible management model as an important part of corporate culture activities.

2.2 Study type of corporate culture activities has become the main target mode but misunderstandings still exist.

In layman's terms, building study type of corporate culture refers to guiding the whole enterprise to a learning atmosphere through effective management tools. It contains four points. Firstly, it emphasizes the "life-long learning"; secondly, it stresses the "all staff learning."; thirdly, it focuses on "learning through the whole process"; fourthly, it underlines "learning in group." From the surveys, we have noticed that, at present, the majority of Chinese enterprises have made plans of career development for each employee, and paid much attention to the inputs of staff training as well as staff learning which aim at implementing learning behavior through the whole process of enterprise operating. Furthermore, they have actively built teams with innovative and learning spirits and vigorously advocated the corporate culture atmosphere of study-style enterprises. The building of study-style corporate culture has become the main target mode of corporate culture activities.

In the study we found that there are still two typical misunderstandings of corporate culture activities from enterprises. The first one is to think corporate activities are tantamount to recreational and sports activities. Many private enterprises have always called a regular reading activity, a theatrical performance, and several issues of bulletin boards as the expansion of corporate culture activities or as "our corporate culture." Admittedly, they are all the content of corporate culture without any doubt, but they are not corporate culture. They can only be described as the recreational activities in enterprises. The second typical misunderstanding is to hold that corporate culture is equivalent to the CI (corporate identity). Many enterprises have now introduced the CI system, but the CI is only a form and means to fulfill the goals of business operations and development, not all the elements of corporate culture. If enterprises do not pay attention to the accumulation of cultural details, but blindly pursue the superficial impact of CI, they will eventually go into decline due to a divergence between internal and external.

2.3 Enterprises do not establish an effective operational framework for corporate culture activities.
China has explored much in the study and practice of corporate culture, but hasn’t performed well in specific operation process. The understanding of corporate culture activities is either a list of key elements of corporate culture which has failed to have a reasonable and logical sequence or given prominence to some relatively tangible parts, such as the design of corporate image and the establishment of enterprise system. It has fallen into a one-sided understanding of corporate culture activities. A final version of this phenomenon is that once see a framework of the code of operating system in corporate culture activities, enterprises will have an understanding of corporate culture. Although this reflects the multi-angle of theoretical exploration and the characteristics of diversification, it also shows that corporate culture activities in China's enterprises are still in the early stages.

There is a great difference between the understanding and practical operation of culture activities in enterprises. The lack of authoritative points of view make many enterprises fall into confusion in the implementation process. They are unable to find a main line which runs through the progress of corporate culture activities and stay in a blind state. While many enterprises have set up institutions which are devoted to corporate culture activities, organizations are running sluggishly and most of them have become an empty shell. Thus, with regard to surveys, the lack of an effective framework of corporate culture activities is a major problem lying in corporate culture activities in China.

2.4 The personality and characteristics of entrepreneurial spirit and the values shaping is not obvious and lacking of innovation

There are no two pieces of leaves are identical in the world. The history of every enterprise, the industry they engaged in, the geographical environment and competition conditions are different, so their entrepreneurial spirit and values are also different. Each enterprise has its own characteristics. However, we have discovered in our investigation that many enterprises have the same entrepreneurial spirit and values as "unity," "exploration", "innovation", "realism", "rousing" and "fighting", which reflect the spirit of the current era, but don’t have every enterprise’s characteristics blended in. The spirit and the values of enterprises are specific and vivid reflection of enterprise’s personality and characteristics. These "identical" spirits and values which are lack of personality and characteristics are unable to play its due role in corporate culture. The main reasons are as follows. Firstly, the spirits and values of private enterprises don’t have a clear-cut shaping purpose. They just blindly copy others’. Secondly the goal of shaping the values of enterprises is not on the basis of analyzing the existing situation.

This research also indicates that the senior management staff in many enterprises, especially in private enterprises believes that once built, corporate culture will have a "long-term stability" at the expense of timely "innovation" of culture according to the changes of the micro environment and the macroeconomic environment the enterprises in. Therefore the corporate culture has turned from a positive role into an obstacle in the development of corporate culture, which is a widespread problem in corporate culture activities in China. When a corporate culture has been transformed into a closed system due to indolence, it is likely to stifle the creative spirit of enterprises, and thereby exclude foreign talents to join the enterprises to make full use of social resources. At present, as many enterprises haven’t paid enough attention to cultural innovation, corporate culture activities are ultimately divorced from the actual needs of enterprises’ survival and development.

3 The countermeasures and suggestions of corporate culture activities in China

3.1 Promote innovative practices in corporate culture activities

Innovation is the soul of a nation, but also the soul of corporate culture. In the 21st century, enterprises must realize that corporate culture is the core competitiveness of enterprises, and consider the innovation of corporate culture as competitive strategies. As the mainstay of innovation, the content of innovation is very colorful. It is an all-encompassing innovation, including technical innovation, product innovation, management innovation, concept innovation, as well as system innovation. All of them are forms of innovation of corporate culture. These innovative interaction and mutual influence constitute the main organism in corporate innovation. In the rich content of enterprise innovation, the corporate culture innovation has a certain degree of command.

Through innovative thinking, corporate culture can be divided into three layers as spirit level layer,
systematic layer and physical layer. In the innovative implementing of corporate culture activities, it
should be noted the coordination of these three levels. The innovation of any layer should consider the
demands of other two layers to ensure the overall coordination of three layers in corporate culture. At
the same time, we should make certain the saving and forsaking of the original enterprise culture. The
carried forward and inherited parts should be strengthened and highlighted while the forsaking parts
should be eliminated without hesitation through various ways and means in innovation.

Innovating enterprise culture lies in acting according to actual circumstances and building the
cultural system suitable to the specific enterprise. The premise of achieving this goal is to have a
comprehensive understanding of corporate culture. When an enterprise is still in its start-up stage, the
entrepreneur needs to know the business goals. If the enterprise has developed over a period of time, the
entrepreneur should learn the problems lying in the development and refine widely recognized concept
from the staff. Carrying out corporate culture activities scientifically and reasonably which is
innovation-oriented should abide by the following procedures. That is, the confirmation and analysis of
the existing corporate culture, the goal setting, the necessary changes, the strengthening of stability and
the sound development. In addition, enterprises also need to strengthen the scientific plan and design of
corporate cultural activities, set stage goals and form the supervision and control over the progress.

3.2 deepen the corporate culture activities with the "humanistic management" as the core content

Employees of enterprises are the creators of corporate culture as well as the recipients [12]. We
must strengthen the "people-oriented" concept in corporate culture activities, focusing on
humanity-oriented management and "psychological tactics" as well as increasing "sentiment
involvement" in staff through certain forms and ways. While wages as well as rewards and punishments
is necessary means of incentives, staff members are in need of care and respect. The value of individual
existing needs to be further realized, thus stimulating staff initiative by materials is not a panacea. The
desired effect can only be played by the combination with spiritual encouragement. Entrepreneurs
should not often talk about "leadership" but treat employees equally, focus on employees' psychological
requirements, and respect for their dignity and rights so as to achieve "humanistic management". Only
in this way, the sense of responsibility and loyalty of the staff members will be greatly increased, and
they will be willing to work hard for the enterprises.

Deepening corporate culture activities with the "humanistic management" as its core content
includes "break favors management, and attract the capable from the world." The essence of a first-class
enterprise culture is "people-oriented." However, whether they are traditional family enterprises, or
foreign-funded enterprises or state-owned enterprises, most of them do not follow this concept.
Enterprises should not be limited to a "circle" to find management talents, instead they must broaden the
vision so that the people with the ability can operate and manage the enterprise. Otherwise the enterprise
will be at a disadvantage in the brutal market competition. Whether selecting talents under the criteria of
"qualities" or "favors" decides the enterprise can implement a "people-oriented" culture management.
Therefore, the "humanistic management" is the most important strategy for the promotion of enterprise
culture.

3.3 Create a first-class entrepreneurship culture

Western economists maintain that the labor, the capital, the capability of entrepreneurs and the land
are four basic elements of economic production function. A successful enterprise cannot be run without
an outstanding entrepreneur. Entrepreneurs are the leaders of enterprises, playing as the role of creators,
nurturers, promoters, organizers, demonstrators and drivers in culture activities. The type of a
entrepreneur’s cultural qualities determines the type of an enterprise’s culture, while the location of
entrepreneurial culture is the reflection of a entrepreneur’s temperament, spirit, and ideological realm.
Thus, only by cultivating the entrepreneurial culture which is suitable for the growth and development
of enterprises, can we truly build enterprise culture and can an "entrepreneurs" grow to a true
"entrepreneur." Zong Qinghou, chairman of Wahaha Group in Zhejiang has the values, the work style
and the management style which embody the first-class entrepreneurial quality. Thanks to the existence
of such outstanding entrepreneurial culture, Wahaha Group has shaped first-class corporate culture.

The author of this article believes that we need to fulfill the following points when building a
first-class entrepreneurial culture in private enterprises, First, it is necessary to take the lead in making a
breakthrough out of closed operating methods and narrow thinking of small producers; second, we need to have a broader vision, that is the economic vision, the technological vision, the political vision and the international vision; third, not only professional knowledge, but also the management expertise is in need, striving for "generalist" transition gradually; fourth, we have to think ahead, decide ahead, work ahead and do precautions ahead; fifth, we should have the sense of innovation, think hard, and be good at thinking. In short, entrepreneurs must keep up with the development pace of times, cultivate good characteristics, have broad-minded version, form the lofty integrity, and improve the overall quality of themselves.

4 Conclusion

At present, more and more enterprises have recognized that no enterprise can survive and develop for a long time without advanced the corporate culture as a support. Only by building corporate culture to match the development of enterprise, can enterprises grow up, become strong, and stay ahead in the increasingly fierce competition of international market. The investigations and researches of this paper are based on the practice of corporate culture activities in economically developed areas of China, which to some extent represent the latest trends in corporate culture activities in China. The results indicate that even though Chinese enterprises pay much attention to corporate culture activities, there are still existing deficiencies such as poor in operation and lack of innovation. Successful management is from practice while practice needs feedback from the management. Good practice examples can provide an effective guidance for enterprise management. In China, the best pattern of and the best way to corporate culture activities need further exploration.

Reference