

Five Points of Domestic Research on Flexible Management

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Abstract

Based on 4289 Chinese literatures collected from 1987 to 2019 in HowNet database, this paper describes the time, discipline and journal distribution of flexible management research, reviews the generation and development process of flexibility theory, sorts out the essence, characteristics, functions, dimensions and theoretical basis of flexible management, and summarizes the financial flexibility, human resource flexibility, strategic flexibility and organization Seven flexible management extensions, including organizational flexibility, R & D flexibility, marketing flexibility and cultural flexibility, are summarized. The results show that: flexible management can strengthen the adaptability of enterprises (or other organizations) to the changes of market environment, actively respond to, manufacture and utilize changes, and create market competitive advantages.

Keywords

Flexible management; "Five Points"; Course; Connotation; Extension.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since human beings have entered the era of knowledge economy, the changes of external environment and market such as network, information, intelligence and digitalization have deeply affected the production and operation activities of enterprises, and spawned the "three new" economy of new industries, new formats and new business models. In the face of changes in market environment, strengthening flexible management is a sharp tool to enhance the core competitiveness and survival and development ability of enterprises; strengthening the research of flexible management can provide reference for enterprises' production and operation decision-making. In this paper, the domestic research focus, difficulties, focus, hot spots and highlights of flexible management "five points" are combed.

2. THE HISTORICAL TRACK OF FLEXIBLE MANAGEMENT RESEARCH

As early as 1987, foreign literature appeared, but there was no Chinese literature. Literature has been increasing since 1994; Since 2000, the number of literatures has been maintained at 20-70, and the number of Chinese has surpassed that of foreign languages. After 2006, the growth rate of literature has accelerated, and the attention to flexible management has continued to increase. As shown in figure 1.

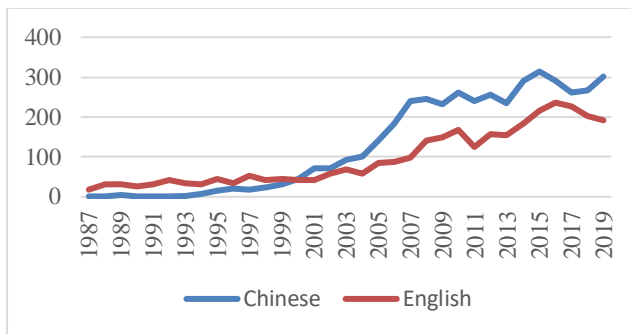


Figure 1. Historical evolution of the research literature

For the discipline distribution of literature, enterprise economy accounts for 39%, higher education and vocational education account for 25% and 7% respectively, clinical medicine accounts for 10%, and other proportions are relatively small. Flexible management disciplines are widely distributed and tend to combine enterprise economics with higher education. As shown in figure 2. The periodical distribution of literature, scientific and technological progress and countermeasures, scientific and technological management and research are listed in the list, which is inclined to the field of management, indicating that domestic scholars still regard it as a management tool or means. Table 1.

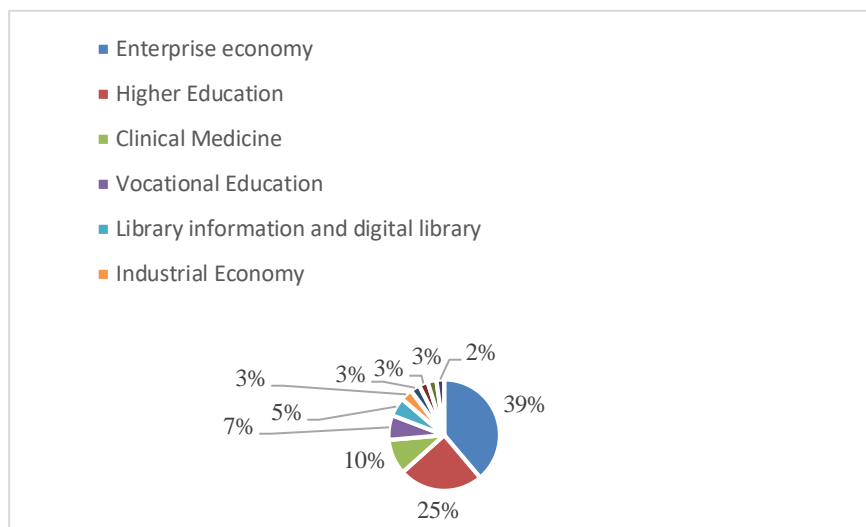


Figure 2. Distribution of research literature disciplines

The connotation of flexible management is constantly enriched and its extension research is rapidly expanded. At present, researches on financial flexibility, human resource flexibility, strategic flexibility, organizational flexibility, R & D flexibility, marketing flexibility and cultural flexibility are the evidences of the extension research of flexible management.

(1) Financial flexibility research

Nowadays, most scholars generalize financial flexibility from the perspective of financial management system, which is composed of financial buffering ability, adaptive ability, coordination ability and innovation ability. It has the characteristics of essential ability, effective integration, rigid and flexible coupling and the functions of automatic adaptation to the environment and financial appreciation. We should pursue integrated and flexible management, actively carry out activities around financial resources, and innovate financial management.

Domestic scholars focus on the characteristics of flexible management, limited to the theoretical discussion.

Table 1. Distribution of research literature and journals

Journal	Number of articles retrieved	Proportion (%)
Scientific and technological progress and countermeasures	37	12.6%
Science and technology management and research	35	11.9%
Shopping Mall modernization	26	8.9%
Education and Occupation	23	7.8%
Leadership science	23	7.8%
Accounting communication	22	7.5%
Business research	20	6.8%
Journal of Mechanical Engineering	19	6.5%
The enterprise management	19	6.5%
Business economics Research	18	6.2%
Science and management of science and technology	17	5.8%
School party construction and ideological education	17	5.8%
Jiangsu higher education	16	5.4%

Financial flexibility increases the ability to obtain cash. External factors include financing constraints, investment opportunities and environment. Internal factors include agency cost, operating cash flow, company structure and maturity. It is found that the uncertainty of enterprise, industry and macro environment positively affects the financial flexibility. The research shows that financial flexibility enhances enterprise value, and environmental uncertainty increases the role of financial flexibility in improving the value of listed companies. Both financial ecological environment and financial flexibility can promote enterprise R&D, and appropriate financial flexibility can provide sufficient financial support for R&D. Robust supply chain relationship will strengthen financial flexibility and enhance enterprise value. Through the perspective of financial flexibility to explain how to play a positive role in enterprise investment and financing. In particular, the high debt financing flexibility and the high cash flexibility use the funds in advance to help enterprises to grasp the investment and realize the maximum value, but the higher the financial flexibility, the better. In addition, financial flexibility and capital structure are interrelated and function. The conservative capital structure enhances the financial flexibility; Under the new normal, enterprises need to increase their core competitiveness and combine the traditional "outside-in" system with the "inside-out" system to form a flexible financial management system.

From 2004 to 2012, the study on financial flexibility was in its initial stage (less than 10 articles per year), and after 2013, it was in a stable development stage (20-50 articles per year). 44% of the research field is distributed in enterprise economy, finance accounts for 14%, investment and securities account for 12% respectively, the rest is distributed in accounting, industrial economy, macro economy and trade economy and other fields. The research on financial flexibility mainly focuses on enterprise management, which can be carried out from the aspects of environmental change, enterprise and industry characteristics, etc.

(2) Research on the flexibility of human resources

The flexibility of human resource is introduced into human resource. According to dynamic theory and flexible theory, it can be divided into human capital flexibility and human resource system flexibility. First, about the flexible dimension of human resources. From the dynamic environment, enterprise organization and human resources, the reasons for the formation were analyzed, and four flexible evaluation dimensions of function, quantity, time and salary were established. From the perspective of functional flexibility, the humanistic view uses non-mandatory means to influence the heart of employees; From the perspective of functional flexibility, the resource view enhances the competitiveness by increasing resources and coordinating flexibility. According to the attributes, it is divided into quantity and functional flexibility. According to the content is divided into remuneration, time, distance and coordination flexibility; According to the scope is divided into external and internal flexibility. Secondly, the flexibility of human resources has a positive effect. First, reduce personnel costs, improve employee attitudes, and improve the overall performance of the organization; Second, stimulate creativity, adapt to the external environment, to meet the needs of flexible production; Third, promote the harmony of human resources, teamwork, flexible organizational structure; Fourth, increase enterprise performance. Improve the flexibility of human resources by means of coordination and communication, caring for employees and authority behavior.

The research on the flexibility of human resources from 2002 to 2006 is in the initial stage (less than 10 articles per year), and after 2007 is in the steady development stage (10-20 articles per year), which belongs to the minority research. The research field of enterprise economy accounts for 69%, higher education accounts for 10%, and the rest is distributed in industrial economy, macroeconomic management and sustainable development, service economy and other fields. There is a lack of systematic analysis and quantitative research in the existing research, and the measurement is differentiated, and the influencing factors mainly focus on environmental changes. Human resource management flexibility is not the higher the better, should adapt to the overall flexible strategy. Human resource flexibility is a combination of strategic flexibility and functional flexibility, which can be adjusted to acquire the overall flexibility and form a complete system.

(3) Research on strategic flexibility

Strategic flexibility was first proposed in the 1950s. Firstly, it constructs the framework of strategic flexibility through core competence, including pre-emptive, development, protection and correction strategies, and improves strategic flexibility through information of decision-making institutions, flattening of management structure, flexibility of production system and networking of marketing organizations. Secondly, the key influencing factors are summarized as follows: the brand maintenance and strategic decision-making ability of the flexible ability, the crisis handling ability of the flexible organization, the innovation ability, the cultural shaping of the flexible culture, the learning interaction and the resource availability of the flexible resource. In addition, strategic flexibility can promote enterprise performance and innovation performance, effectively deal with environmental uncertainty, and maintain competitive advantage. Adding strategic flexibility into the study of the relationship between strategic human resource management and enterprise performance is an important way to improve enterprise performance. Appropriate strategy flexible integration, development and utilization of resources, improve enterprise performance. Therefore, strategic flexibility can promote development and enhance innovation ability under the circumstance of environmental uncertainty.

Strategic flexibility research, which started from 1998 to 2007 (less than 20 articles per year) and developed steadily after 2008 (20-50 articles per year), belongs to niche research. His

research interests are mainly in enterprise economy, macro economy and industrial economy, and a few in information technology and higher education.

(4) Research on organizational flexibility

Organizational flexibility is the ability to respond to changes in internal and external environments without seriously affecting organizational structure. The pursuit of various departments flexible and diverse, flexible quantity of labor and flexible function; It can be divided into four kinds of structure: rigid, planned, flexible and mixed. The characteristics are summarized as follows: core operation, flat management, self-management, intelligent supremacy, interdependence, multi-form alliance, network structure and global management idea. Flexible organization originates from saving transaction costs, but its development is also inevitable. It maintains innovative thinking and achieves the balance of "control and freedom". The traditional organizational structure is inefficient, slow in response and limited in innovation. The change of enterprise environment strategy, scale and technology requires the organizational structure to reform towards the direction of flattening, flexibility, networking, virtualization. Adjust the organizational structure, build a task-oriented team organization, and maintain a balance between change and stability. By virtue of its flexible and convenient features, it makes full use of resources, enhances its responsiveness and reduces costs, and promotes the development of human resources. In today's complex and dynamic environment, organizational designers need to strengthen their relationships with suppliers, employees and customers. At this point, the emphasis on management and structure of flexible response, not too rigid, flexible change. Flexible organizational structure in the future should not be overlooked.

The research on organizational flexibility began in 1994, and the development of the research was still slow after 1994 (about 10 papers were published annually). Research direction: Enterprise economy accounts for 65%, industrial economy accounts for 9%, higher education accounts for 5%, the rest are distributed in computer, management, light industry, mathematics, mechanical industry, scientific research and macroeconomic management.

(5) Research on R&D flexibility

Although the research on flexibility is more, the research on flexibility is less involved. First of all, in terms of its meaning, the concept of development flexibility has been proposed, which refers to the ability of enterprises to respond to and adapt to environmental changes in product development, but the "research" link before development has not been considered. On this basis, it is pointed out that in the process of directional research and product development, the ability of enterprises to cope with environmental changes with a certain time, scope and acceptable cost is not considered, but the basic research in R&D activities is still not considered. Combined with the shortcomings of previous studies, R&D flexibility is based on the future environment, with acceptable time, scope and cost to adjust the R&D system, and integrate resources to develop the comprehensive flexibility of marketable products. Combined with the idea of flexible management, innovative management methods, but the existing literature is still lack of research on specific ways to improve R&D flexibility.

The research on R&D flexibility started in 2005 and started late. From 2005 to 2018, progress was still relatively slow (the number of articles published per year was less than 10). 77% of his research interests are in the field of enterprise economy, while the rest are in macroeconomic management, industrial economy, management, investment finance, computer, mathematics, etc.

(6) Research on marketing flexibility

Marketing strategy research originated from the vertical form of strategic control in the 1960s. Firstly, flexible marketing means to adjust resources quickly and flexibly according to customers' demands based on sufficient resources. Flexible allocation of resources in the

system; Organize learning and innovation in culture. The organization ADAPTS to the new environment, responds quickly and flexibly, and makes functional positioning for the marketing functional departments. Second, from the perspective of new products, business management is ultimately for customer satisfaction, to achieve marketing objectives. In a sense, flexible marketing is the center of flexible management as well as the advanced stage of its development. It is customer-oriented, so that consumers can get a sense of value when they consume. Third, new modern marketing methods need to understand customers' needs better than competitors, and make flexible use of resources, systems and corporate culture. Flexible marketing is characterized by rapid change, active creation, systematic integration and people-oriented. It flexibly applies new marketing methods such as customized marketing, symbiotic marketing, homeopathic marketing and reverse marketing. Fourth, build the basic model of flexible marketing theory, take the customer demand as the starting point, take the system concept and contingency concept as the guiding ideology, integrate the enterprise's human, material, financial and other resources to form a complete management system. Based on the concept of relationship marketing, customer satisfaction and value service, the flexible cultural resources and a variety of marketing models are used to give marketing vitality and form a unique competitive advantage.

The research on marketing flexibility was started in 2000, and now the number of literatures has not exceeded 10, so the research enthusiasm is not high. The research direction is distributed in enterprise economy (53%), market research (27%), trade economy (13%), and macro-economy (7%), which involves not a wide range of disciplines.

(7) Research on cultural flexibility

Flexible culture encourages learning and innovation. It is characterized by goal-driven, consensus-based decision-making, pursuit of excellence, emphasis on overall interests, close concern for employees, and emphasis on innovation diversity. It is also characterized by rapid learning. Cultural flexibility affects enterprise value. The first is to improve the competitiveness of enterprises, which affects the strategy from the aspects of enterprise values, business philosophy and organizational atmosphere, etc., but a long period of cultural running-in will restrict the quality and implementation effect of the strategy. Second, as the core of the flexible strategy, the unique corporate culture provides the value foundation for the enterprise organization, ability and resources, which is the huge core competitiveness. The third is the foundation and soul of flexible management, which affects the enterprise value in spirit, system, behavior and image. However, the influence on enterprise performance should be treated dialectically. On the one hand, cultural rigidity is the premise and foundation of the role of enterprise culture; on the other hand, cultural flexibility has guiding significance for the role of enterprise culture. In order to promote the construction of cultural flexibility and gain recognition from employees, it is necessary to match corporate strategy, emphasize the spirit of innovation, and make corporate culture become the power source to improve corporate performance.

The research on cultural flexibility was started in 2000, with no more than 10 articles per year. His research interests are mainly in enterprise economy (64%), macro-economy, industrial economy and higher education (7% each), and the rest are in trade economy, mathematics, clinical medicine, computer software and other fields, covering a wide range of fields.

3. CONCLUSION

Enterprises should not regard "flexibility" as a goal, but as a means to improve their strength. Flexible management promotes enterprises to adapt to the changes of external environment, take the initiative to manufacture and utilize the changes, and form unique competitive

advantages. Grasp the essence of flexible management, flexibility, adaptability and incentive characteristics, combined with financial flexibility, human resources flexibility, strategic flexibility, organizational flexibility, research and development flexibility, marketing flexibility, cultural flexibility and other aspects, improve the flexible system, improve the quality of personnel; Implement flexible management of human resources; Increase the flexibility of organizational structure and establish a flexible organization; Implement the marketing flexibility and cultural flexibility, maintain the advanced nature of enterprise marketing and cultural times; Improve strategic flexibility, pay attention to environmental changes, combine enterprise objectives with internal and external environment, and integrate resources to avoid risks. Grasp the relation and function of each type of flexibility, combine flexible management with incentive measures, flexible management with rigid management organically. Finally, flexible management is not invariable, and the development of the times needs to keep pace with the times and timely enrich its connotation. In the future research, the academic community can increase quantitative research, apply theoretical knowledge into practice, summarize the general rules guiding the development of enterprises, and improve the flexible management system.

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