

Philosophical thinking on the cultural construction of small and medium-sized private enterprises

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Abstract: *SMPE (Small and Medium-Sized Private Enterprises), as an important force in China's social and economic system structure, is lacking in corporate culture construction due to many factors, which restricts the development and growth of such enterprises to some extent. From a philosophical point of view, corporate culture is the foundation of enterprise survival, the code of conduct and the guarantee of success. Its ideology and material form, such as values and codes of conduct, are all recognized by the members of the organization. At present, corporate culture is the spiritual pillar of an enterprise and the power source of its core competitiveness. It has a strong radiation effect, which affects the production of material products, the innovation of production technology, the occurrence of business behavior and the establishment of corporate image and brand. From the perspective of philosophy, this paper puts forward that grasping the connotation of corporate culture scientifically, establishing a corporate culture system centered on management philosophy, adhering to the people-oriented concept and innovating institutional culture are the key measures to strengthen SMPE culture construction.*

Keywords: *Philosophy; small and medium-sized private enterprises; Corporate culture*

1. Introduction

In order to seek new survival and development, enterprises must improve their internal cohesion and external competitiveness and carry out structural changes, and the core content of the changes is to build a strong corporate culture. The SMPE (Small and Medium-Sized Private Enterprises), as an important force in China's social and economic system structure, are lacking in corporate culture construction due to many factors, which restricts the development and growth of such enterprises to some extent.

From a philosophical point of view, corporate culture is the reflection of the real activities of enterprises and their organizational consciousness on people's values. It is a stable cultural concept and historical tradition formed by enterprises for a long time, as well as a unique entrepreneurial spirit and common values. Guiding the practice of corporate culture construction with philosophical thinking is conducive to enhancing effectiveness and improving efficiency [1]. Grasping the connotation of corporate culture scientifically, correctly understanding the role of corporate culture and vigorously promoting corporate culture innovation are the key measures to strengthen SMPE corporate culture construction from a philosophical perspective.

2. Analysis of corporate culture connotation

Enterprise culture serves as the foundation for a company's survival, guiding its behavior and ensuring its success. Both its ideological and tangible forms, such as values and codes of conduct, gain recognition from the organization's members [2-3]. Corporate culture can be categorized into a broad sense and a narrow sense. Broadly speaking, corporate culture encompasses the company's material culture, behavioral patterns, institutional norms, and spiritual ethos. In a narrower sense, it refers to an ideology centered on corporate values. The author posits that corporate culture evolves during the course of an enterprise's establishment and growth. It's deeply entrenched in the organization's structure, system, environment, and atmosphere. Every member of the company carries its essence in their minds, which manifests in all the company's activities. The company's philosophy, combined with the spiritual concepts and behavioral habits of its members, is reflected in aspects like values, creativity, moral caliber, competitive drive, cooperative capability, interpersonal relations, behavior styles, and the decision-making prowess and unity of its leaders. Moreover, corporate culture isn't stagnant; it evolves

in response to the company's internal and external environments [4].

Corporate culture, a potent force shaping employees' thoughts and actions, cannot be hastened for quick results, much like one can't speed up growth by pulling on seedlings [5]. Hence, building a corporate culture is a gradual process. The aim isn't to address a company's short-term profitability but to ensure its long-term viability and growth. In general, the construction of corporate culture serves five primary functions, depicted in Figure 1.

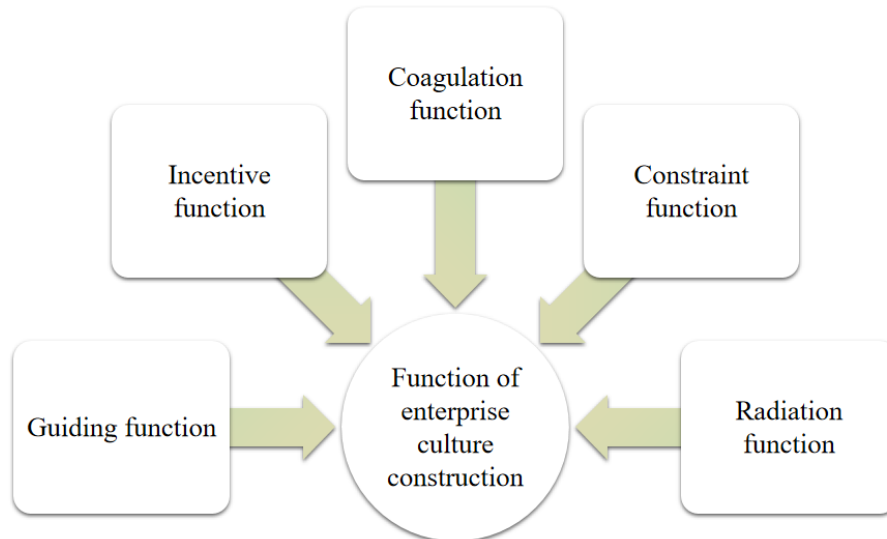


Figure 1 Function of enterprise culture construction

Good corporate culture is the spiritual pursuit and value of all employees, which embodies the common values and interests of employees [6]. The corporate culture's incentive function is to use corporate culture to strengthen employees' motivation and stimulate their enthusiasm, initiative, and creativity. The corporate culture's cohesion function means that an enterprise can unite employees' thoughts, wills, and emotions through effective means, and work together with the enterprise to seek common development and jointly realize the ideals and goals of the cause. The corporate culture's constraint function mainly plays a role through institutional culture and moral constraints. The purpose of restraint is not to let employees deviate from the goals of the enterprise organization. Corporate culture not only plays a functional role in the employees of the enterprise, but also continuously radiates and extends these functions and their subtle influences to society.

3. Problems in SMPE culture construction

3.1. Corporate culture construction pays more attention to form than connotation

Many private enterprises tend to concentrate their efforts on tangible aspects such as slogans, signage, employee attire, and observable behaviors when shaping their corporate culture. Despite significant financial investments in activities like publishing newspapers and periodicals, producing videos, creating picture books, maintaining websites, and external advertising to shape their corporate image, these enterprises often lack a clear understanding of the interplay between corporate brand, reputation, business philosophy, and the construction of corporate culture [7]. This approach to corporate culture construction tends to be superficial, failing to embed corporate culture within the psyche of employees. This superficial approach does not represent effective corporate culture construction but instead becomes a mere facade, concealing the underlying values and principles. Such a corporate culture is devoid of meaning and lacks sustainability, failing to generate the driving force and cohesion required for cultural development. Furthermore, it fails to exert a lasting impact on the growth and success of the enterprise. To establish a more robust and enduring corporate culture, private enterprises should adopt a holistic approach. This involves aligning their brand image, reputation, business philosophy, and internal culture seamlessly. This integration should be deeply rooted in the beliefs, values, and attitudes of employees. A successful corporate culture goes beyond slogans and appearances; it reflects the organization's core principles, guiding behaviors, and fostering a sense of shared purpose among all stakeholders. This kind of culture becomes a powerful force that propels the

enterprise towards sustained growth and success, leaving a lasting imprint on its trajectory. Therefore, private enterprises should prioritize the development of an authentic and deeply ingrained corporate culture to drive their long-term prosperity.

3.2. Corporate culture construction is too one-sided

In contemporary business environments, it is a common misconception among many enterprises that SMPE (Senior Management and Prominent Employees) culture exclusively reflects the culture of top leaders, often overlooking the substantial contribution of employees in the construction of corporate culture. This limited perspective fails to acknowledge that corporate culture transcends the individual culture of entrepreneurs and extends to encompass the collective culture of corporate teams. To some organizations, corporate culture is reduced to superficial employee entertainment activities like singing and participating in sports, which are mistakenly regarded as pivotal indicators of culture development. Furthermore, viewing corporate culture as solely dependent on the physical and aesthetic attributes of the corporate environment is a narrow perspective. Prioritizing factors such as an aesthetically pleasing landscape, well-dressed employees, and meticulously arranged company equipment overlooks the multifaceted nature of culture. In reality, corporate culture is a complex interplay of leadership values, organizational norms, employee behaviors, and shared beliefs. It is nurtured through effective communication, transparent leadership, and the alignment of organizational objectives with individual values. True corporate culture goes beyond surface-level activities and aesthetics; it permeates every facet of an organization, influencing decision-making processes, work ethics, and employee engagement. To establish a robust corporate culture, organizations must recognize the vital role that employees play in its development, fostering an inclusive and collaborative environment where everyone contributes to its evolution. Corporate culture should reflect the collective identity and shared values of all stakeholders, ultimately becoming a powerful driver of organizational success and resilience.

3.3. Corporate culture construction lacks humanistic care

In the realm of SMPE (Senior Management and Prominent Employees) cultural construction, it is noteworthy that a significant portion of entrepreneurs involved in this process often possess lower levels of formal education. Private enterprises, in particular, rely heavily on a workforce composed predominantly of "migrant workers" and unemployed urban youth. Typically, these individuals exhibit limited cultural literacy, high mobility, and may hold traditional or outdated viewpoints. While these workers may initially meet the needs of emerging private enterprises, as these businesses mature and evolve, their workforce requirements become more complex and demanding. The presence of such employees can potentially hinder the growth and development of these private enterprises. As societal and economic progress continues, the material well-being of these workers improves, leading to increased spiritual and intellectual aspirations. Consequently, their awareness and demand for fundamental rights, such as political participation and freedom of expression, intensify. However, when confronted with challenges, many of these workers may lack the necessary psychological preparedness or adequate mental resilience to effectively address these issues. This can result in difficulties in navigating complex social and political landscapes. In light of these developments, it becomes imperative for private enterprises to not only focus on SMPE cultural construction but also invest in the education and development of their workforce. By providing opportunities for skill enhancement, education, and fostering a culture of continuous learning, private enterprises can empower their employees to adapt to evolving societal and economic dynamics, thus contributing positively to both the enterprise's growth and the broader social landscape.

3.4. Corporate culture construction lacks systematic development planning

Corporate culture is the result of long-term, purposeful efforts and the accumulated experiences of an enterprise. Establishing a robust enterprise culture is a multifaceted and rigorous systematic endeavor, and it remains an ongoing and dynamic process of evolution. Despite the existence of numerous scientific development plans in the realm of SMPE (Senior Management and Prominent Employees) culture, they often lack a comprehensive, long-term perspective. These enterprises frequently fail to establish a comprehensive system for corporate culture construction, including guiding principles, strategic frameworks, executive oversight bodies, supportive measures, and realization platforms for corporate culture. Regrettably, many enterprises limit their engagement with corporate culture to superficial aspects or focus solely on specific areas. In some cases, even when

enterprises explore the spiritual dimensions of corporate culture construction, their efforts are sporadic and lack consistent reinforcement. For an enterprise to establish a vibrant and enduring corporate culture, it necessitates a holistic approach. This includes defining a clear set of guiding principles and strategies that align with the organization's long-term vision. Additionally, the establishment of dedicated executive bodies and supportive mechanisms is crucial to ensure sustained efforts in nurturing and reinforcing the corporate culture. Only by adopting a comprehensive, well-rounded approach can an enterprise hope to create a culture that not only reflects its core values but also drives its long-term success and resilience.

4. Philosophical thinking on SMPE culture construction

4.1. Establish a corporate culture system centered on management philosophy

The construction of enterprise culture aims to take management philosophy as the core. It should proceed from the objective reality of enterprise management and development, consciously unify with the construction of advanced socialist culture according to the objective law of enterprise growth and development, and summarize and refine advanced enterprise culture concepts through reflection and criticism of enterprise culture. Philosophy represents the essence of the spirit of the times and the sublimation of history and practice [8]. Marxism and its philosophy have become the guiding ideology and ideology of socialist countries. Enterprises can correctly understand the laws of enterprise development and enterprise culture construction under the guidance of scientific theory and grasp the right to know, take the initiative, and speak in the ideological field only by grasping the nature and direction of enterprise culture construction.

Management philosophy serves as a systematic and theoretical world outlook and methodology of enterprises. Different countries and nations will inevitably produce different management philosophy models because of their distinct cultural traditions, national spirits, and values. Under the market economy system, SMPE has evolved into an independent legal entity. This evolution requires both the support of cultural construction and the conscious planning and construction of corporate culture, thus providing conditions for the establishment of a corporate culture system.

Culture forms the objective basis of management activities, and management plays a pivotal role in promoting the development of culture. Starting from the concrete practice of SMPE cultural construction and innovation and taking dialectical thinking as the philosophical basis and guidance, the SMPE culture with China characteristics becomes a new content of Marxism in China, which will certainly promote the enrichment and development of Marxist philosophy in China. Enterprises should use flexible mechanisms to attract talents, create conducive environments to lure them in, form codes of conduct and ethics suitable for modern life, and realize the all-round and harmonious development of talents. Only by perfecting the talent management mechanism and enhancing the competitiveness of enterprises can the talent team grow and develop continuously. This growth enables enterprises to transform possible enterprise competitiveness into tangible talent competitiveness, enhancing the sustainable development capability of SMPE.

4.2. Adhere to the people-oriented concept

Since the center of enterprise management focuses on people, enterprise culture, as a new management philosophy, should adopt a people-oriented approach. This approach should emphasize cultivating, inspiring, and shaping people as the central content of all management work [9]. Dialectical materialism epistemology posits that whether individuals value something and consider it an object of cognition and practice hinges on its perceived value. To enhance the construction of corporate culture, enterprises must correctly grasp the pivotal role of corporate culture construction. Only by acknowledging the significant influence of corporate culture in fostering the long-term, sustained, and robust growth of enterprises can businesses give due priority to the building of corporate culture and advocate for its further development.

Drawing upon the historical development patterns of human society, historical materialism recognizes that humans are the societal core. The evolution of society is inherently tied to human advancement. People's ongoing creative endeavors consistently drive the progression of social productive capacities. The functioning of enterprises relies heavily on employees, who stand as the cornerstone for the enterprise's survival and prosperity. However, if these employees lose their passion for work, their physical and intellectual capabilities won't translate into genuine productivity. By

igniting employees' enthusiasm, enterprises can bolster internal cohesion and a sense of belonging, encouraging employees to offer suggestions, collaborate, and commit wholeheartedly.

The crux of people-centric enterprise management centers on respecting individuals, comprehending their needs, maximizing their enthusiasm, initiative, and innovation, and fostering a shared sense of enterprise values and objectives, culminating in a harmonious management dynamic. By championing a people-first philosophy, enterprises show genuine care and respect for their employees. This approach, in turn, fosters an allegiance to the company, reinforcing its internal unity and drive. Compared to other business models, SMPEs have a more pressing need to utilize corporate culture to draw in, retain, and maximize the potential of talents. Consequently, it's imperative to replace the outdated "tool-centric" mindset with the contemporary "people-first" perspective, thereby cultivating a talent-friendly environment, mitigating risks, spurring competition, and boosting the overall value proposition for private enterprises.

4.3. Innovation of institutional culture

The approach of China's Marxist philosophical theory is to combine the philosophical theory with China's concrete practice, which is in line with the actual situation. One must adhere to it to guide, especially to guide the practical activities of contemporary corporate culture construction [10]. In the construction of contemporary corporate culture, we must insist on using the China-oriented Marxist philosophy to guide the construction of corporate culture, as this approach is determined by the social nature of contemporary corporate culture.

Innovation is the soul of a nation's progress and an inexhaustible motive force for a country's prosperity. Our theory needs innovation, our systems and technology need innovation, and corporate culture also requires innovation. Only by constantly breaking through stereotypes, can corporate culture be integrated into every corner of the enterprise's production and business activities and into the hearts of every employee. Doing so allows it to become the source power to promote the continuous development of the enterprise, thereby continuously creating a new situation for the survival and development of the enterprise and realizing the enterprise's goals.

When the culture is embodied in the system, it forms the rules, regulations, or guidelines of the enterprise. Institutional culture appears more cohesive, is stable in structure, and persists over time compared to spiritual culture. Corporate culture and systems are interactive; systems within the corporate culture embody this culture. Both systems devoid of corporate culture and corporate cultures lacking systems can be perilous. In the process of SMPE corporate culture construction, it's crucial not to overlook the role of corporate institutional culture. The core concept should be emphasized in the system, maximizing the system's role in regulation, restraint, and motivation during the management process. Enterprises should use the system to safeguard the construction of corporate culture.

5. Conclusions

The concept of corporate culture, as a spiritual force that affects employees' thoughts and behaviors, can't yield results in a short time. Therefore, the construction of corporate culture is also a long-term accumulation process. This approach is not meant to solve the problem of whether enterprises can make money in the short term, but to address the issue of whether enterprises can develop in the long run. Grasping the connotation of corporate culture scientifically, correctly understanding the role of corporate culture, and vigorously promoting corporate culture innovation are the key measures to strengthen corporate culture construction from a philosophical perspective. In the process of developing SMPE, enterprises should combine theory with practice, not only inherit and carry forward the traditional culture of Chinese enterprises, but also learn from the excellent culture of top Western enterprises. They should adopt advanced culture, especially guiding employees to establish a scientific world outlook, a correct perspective on life, and values, thereby understanding the development direction and progress of advanced corporate culture.

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