Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer in Knowledge-Intensive Enterprises

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Abstract — The knowledge is more and more high in the enterprise competition status, with the aggravation of an ageing society, intergenerational issues are becoming increasingly complex in knowledge-intensive enterprises. Intergenerational transfer of knowledge becomes a research question that cannot be ignored in practice. This paper discusses the trend of knowledge transfer about the characteristics of knowledge intensive enterprise, the intergenerational division and the factors of intergenerational knowledge transfer in the future.

Keywords - Knowledge intensive enterprise; Intergenerational difference; Knowledge transfer

I. INTRODUCTION

In the 30 years since the reform and opening up, with the development of Chinese rapid economic at the same time, the competition between enterprises has gradually shifted to knowledge competition, and competition of enterprises need continuous acquisition and learning new knowledge and skills. In the 21st century, most enterprises entered for four generation people side by side working of period. With the increasing of the population aging in our country, old employees continue to retirement, and experienced employees leaving, before learning and saving, some of the key knowledge has been lost. For knowledge intensive enterprises, the price is enormous, and the problem of intergenerational knowledge transfer has become increasingly prominent, which has become an important research problem in academic practice.

II. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

A. Knowledge Intensive Enterprise

Domestic scholars have formed a variety of knowledge intensive enterprise defining cognitions. According to the different types of enterprise human capital income distribution, Shannong Mo [1] believed that knowledge intensive enterprise is defined as a kind of rely on knowledge innovation, which is for the process of acquiring the survival and development, and the intangible capital and human capital less tangible assets are becoming more and more important in enterprises. Jiabin Wang, Wei Shao [2] according to the knowledge in the enterprise and different function approaches, knowledge intensive enterprises are divided into three categories, knowledge production, knowledge application and dissemination of knowledge. From the knowledge of the operational nature of characteristics, Bingjie Han [3] believes that knowledge existed in the entire knowledge-intensive companies, based on knowledge as a key resource to create the greatest value of the enterprises. Chuhong Zeng, Danming Lin [4] by analogy, show that in the knowledge intensive businesses, the major factors of production and value-added sources are information and knowledge.

Foreign scholars mainly study the characteristics of knowledge intensive enterprises, Orr and Nissen [5] by comparison with other types of enterprises, which found that knowledge intensive business has agility. At the same time, there is no one mode can be applied to all cases, but knowledge intensive enterprise is particularly obvious advantage in the emergency. Looney and Nissen [6] reveal the dynamic structure of the knowledge intensive enterprise. The static mode is not suitable for knowledge intensive enterprises, because their working processes are complexity and degree of change is more challenge. From incentive mechanism research, Chang [7] show that incentive system of the knowledge intensive enterprises is not the pursuit for personal heroism, but for the success of team work and encouraging information sharing. According to the structure of knowledge management frame, MacKinnon [8] combined with inventory management and supply chain management, through researching proposed the concept of the knowledge chain management. And Levitt and Ramsey [9] through the establishment of the POW-ER model, in order to solve the knowledge intensive enterprise's differences and cultural background, which is caused by the knowledge mobility. Skerlavaj [10] studies show that enterprise learning culture directly affects consumers, suppliers and employees in the knowledge intensive enterprises, while indirectly affects the financial performance of the enterprise.

Through the study of the above literature, this paper believes that knowledge intensive should have the following features.

1) Organizational Agility

Knowledge intensive enterprise has agility. Enterprises can use the new way to integrate information in time, so that the assets can be used in different ways to adopt to the needs of various situations. Because of which, one of the intergenerational differences can be accommodated by the knowledge intensive enterprises. As long as providing more knowledge, experience and technology, companies can be better to deal with uncertainty and unfamiliar businesses.
2) **Shared awareness**

Shared awareness includes shared understanding of command intents. Power to edge is inherently a joint and coalition concept. The cross-generational biases-trust, reciprocity, motivation, values, and societal, organizational culture – will have a great impact on the success of the organizations. Furthermore, the size of each group will significantly affect the sharing of knowledge among them too in the knowledge intensive organizations. Malseed and Vise [11] research found the ideal team between three to five persons.

3) **Collaboration capability**

Collaboration is the ability to work together. Collaboration provides for a high level of information sharing, cooperation and synchronization in knowledge-intensive enterprises. These can greatly improve efficient, sharing, cooperation and synchronization in knowledge transfer.

4) **Situational leadership**

In the knowledge intensive companies, leadership is reflected in its super ability rather than its status, dictatorship will not work in here, who has access to a large quantity of information which can be a leader. When the task is completed, immediately collapsing, and the individual as a member of the team. Knowledge-intensive teams promote their team toward a common goal, which is rather than a single leaders’.

5) **Personnel competence**

In the knowledge intensive enterprises is based on competencies rather than other factors, such as gender, age or experience. Such as a high level of competency, when staff increases the stock of knowledge, businesses would not be affected. Employees of the job competency, which can directly impact on how to achieve the purpose of knowledge transfer through knowledge sharing.

6) **Stability**

Stability is the symbol of knowledge intensive enterprises. In the knowledge intensive enterprises, the exchange of tasks will make them more stable.

**B. Employees Intergenerational Category**

The "generation gap" is often used to describe the conflict between parents and children. Nowadays, the generation gap is more often in the management of human resources. This kind of generational difference is affecting the knowledge transfer of enterprise in different degree. The definition of "generation" mainly has the following: KupperSchmidt [12] believes that "generation" is by a common birth age, in the same age stage, which has common experience of individual key growth stage on its main life events of identifiable groups. Mannheim [13] Karl pointed out that "generation" has the social and cultural characteristics, that is, which has the basic same social and cultural conditions and environment. Westerns about intergenerational characteristic researches and the enterprise managements are more perfect, however, because of the special situation of China, the characteristics of the intergenerational division and the different generations are different, so it can only serve as reference of China.

"Generations" has two properties, first of all, nature, mainly refers to the people because of the different time periods, different ages and natural formation of different generations. Secondly, social property, mainly refers to the generation difference in another generation is the essence of the socio-cultural characteristics, such as thinking ways, values, socialization, emotional experience and behavior.

In the history, humans during four generations work side by side for the first time, generational diversity were identified as the most likely the diversity of the conflict problem in 21st century. Currently, foreign studies generally use United States scholars have suggested that the "generation" of standards, namely the traditional generation (1925-1945), baby boomers (1946-1964), generation x (1965-1980), generation y (1981-present). According to the specific conditions of our country, the major historical event after the founding of new China as the boundary points, our country employees are divide d into four generations of [14-15].

**C. Characteristics of generational employees**

According to the background of each generation of employees environment, each generation of staff characteristic is bright.

- The first generation of employees, as this generation of employees, they were born poor, less high levels of literacy. But they have the traditional virtues of the Chinese nation, and concentrate on the values of the life of this generation. In their work, career, respecting selfless dedication, bears the burden of responsibility, for the construction of the motherland dedicated his life. They are typical generation of the dedication.
- The second generation of employees, in the 1950 of the 20th century, our country is immersed in a new kind of society, bringing great hope for the future. The habit of collectivism and discipline is to a superior style, creating the persevere and the virtues of hard work, they are a generation period of socialist transformation.
- The third generation of employees, although this generation of people instability is not the actual participants, but they receive completely the Cultural Revolution style education. Therefore, over the previous generation, which is a lack of personality characteristics of the generation. Usually, they are often in the face of an onlooker or followers appear, however, they have live in the reform and opening up economic construction. They have the new ideas, new opportunities, which are greeted the first batch of new information age. They pay more attention to the balance relationships between the work, family, friends.
- The fourth generation of employees, "new generation" has a more obvious differences, they stand for the forefront of the era of entrepreneurship and innovation, being full of vigor and vitality of a generation. The trend of globalization makes their outlook on life and values gradually converge with the youth of the same age in western countries. They are highly educated, and willing to accept information which is characteristic of this generation, they also have creative thinking, focus on balance the life and work. However, due to less experienced setbacks and poor compression capability, they have the lack of a clear goal.
D. Intergenerational Differences Features

From many relevant literatures, we can understand the influence of intergenerational difference on knowledge transfer.

Walker and Derrick[16], by comparing the differences between older workers and younger workers, show that young employees are loyalty is very low, who love the pursuit of personal values, while older employees is committed to giving. Purdum[17] believes that older employees have a more responsible, but also in life and work to find a balance. But the young staff is too the pursuit for personal value, loving challenge. Thibodeau[18] based on 179 surveys related to IT managers found that 50% of managers thinking that older workers has been retiring, businesses need at least three months to fill senior technical and management positions. Through the survey, Lahai[19] found that cultural differences are the key factor of intergenerational differences. Schwartz[20] through empirical studies also confirmed this point. In addition, family values, communication styles[21-22] are one of the factors of intergenerational differences.

E. Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer

From the comparison of the existing literature, domestic and foreign scholars have significant differences in the study of intergenerational knowledge transfer, domestic scholars pay more attention to the intergenerational knowledge transfer of family enterprises. Shengli Wan [23] technical innovation based on knowledge sharing and research perspectives. Studying the intergenerational inheritance of family enterprise issues, which is related to the competitiveness of family businesses, the more family businesses competitive, the better healthy and sustainable development of family enterprises, at the same time, promoting China's industrialization process. Junsheng Dou[24] based on tacit knowledge and networks of entrepreneurs of the inheritance mechanism of thought, family businesses of intergenerational knowledge transfer refer to a range of elements in the intergenerational transmit or transfer. Foreign literatures mainly pay attention to the problem of intergenerational knowledge transfer in high-tech enterprises, which is the knowledge transfer between the employees. Such as the field of aerospace and IT fields. Kuyken[25] Kerstin, by the analogy method, these studies focus on how to transfer intergenerational knowledge, to solve the "baby boomers" retirement problem, which caused by loss of a large number of knowledge, western scholars tend to research the knowledge loss.

Through the relevant literatures, these studies have found that tacit knowledge is good for management decisions; he is able to plan for better management. In the enterprise competition, tacit knowledge is at the core, even determines the success or failure of the enterprise. There are lots of researches about the influence factors of knowledge transfer. Connell [26] studies have shown that corporate culture is a key element of enterprise death transfer, through the method of formal or informal interviews, which can promote the transfer of knowledge between employees. Trust enhance both explicit and tacit knowledge exchange, especially, it is important to the acquisition of tacit knowledge. Through the transnational study on the influence of enterprise knowledge flows inside and outside, Yamin[27] showed that tacit knowledge flows, including the internal and external impact of synergetic innovation performance, has a strong complementary. At the same time, through the exchange of enterprise strategic alliances to enhance the liquidity of the knowledge, it can enhance the exchange of experience between enterprises, and thus enhance the core competitiveness of enterprises. Organizational structure determines feasibility of knowledge transfer. Through organizational learning and face-to-face contact, Enterprises can promote the complementarities of knowledge transfer.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This paper holds that knowledge transfer has become an important technology application in recent years. One of the key reasons is the intangible assets and knowledge workers. With the development of the age, enterprise will be conscious of their advantages, which are these people, these technology. Enterprises can acquire, share and create knowledge through knowledge management technology, in order to improving employee productivity and their creativity, meanwhile, which can fund the knowledge base and knowledge map. Over the years, academic world has been studying the mechanism and influence factors of knowledge transfer.

Through the analysis of the factors affecting the characteristics, the intergenerational difference and the knowledge transfer of the knowledge intensive enterprises. This paper argues that intergenerational differences are the important factors of intergenerational knowledge transfer, which will become an important theoretical and practical problem in the field of knowledge management. Intergenerational knowledge transfer theory reveals the importance of intergenerational differences. Based on the research of intergenerational knowledge transfer, the characteristics of employee differentiation in intergenerational knowledge transfer can be analyzed, so the theory of intergenerational knowledge transfer can be enriched. In the future, we can establish the relationship model of intergenerational difference and knowledge transfer, and carry out the relevant empirical analysis to provide practical value for enterprises.

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