



Research Framework of Human Resource Development Based on Competency about Knowledge Enterprise

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Abstract

Former studies of competency focus on individuals, regarding individuals as primary units of understanding enterprise performance. Beginning from the competency, this paper constructs a systematic research framework for knowledge enterprise. The framework is based on the theory of human capital, theory of knowledge management, theory of team role, and the theory of organizational learning, taking enterprise strategy as the core, chiefly studying the development of competency of individuals, teams, and organizations in knowledge enterprises. Its ultimate objective is to improve the performance of individuals, teams, and organizations.

Keywords: Competency, Knowledge enterprise, Human resource development, Research framework

1. Introduction

The competency concept was firstly advanced by a professor in Harvard University, McClelland (1973) in a thesis "Testing competence rather than intelligence" (McClelland D.C., 1973, p1-14). This thesis has aroused a tide of studying competency in both academic and industrial fields. Boyatzis (1982) applied the competency concept to management and made it popular soon (Boyatzis R.E., 1982). Raven (1984) carried out the studies of competency in practice (John Riven, 1995). Spencer & Spencer (1993) summarized relevant studies and practices in nearly twenty years and advanced The Iceberg Model and The Onion Model, forming a database of competency models (Spencer L.M & Spencer S.M., 1993). In 2006 in the *Development Strategies for Management Sciences*, the Department of Management Sciences of National Natural Science Foundation in China took competency-based human resource management as an important project in organizational behavior and human resource management fields and gave it prior financial support (Department of Management Sciences of National Natural Science Foundation in China, 2006). Today, the competency model has already become a mainstream practice in human resource development. In America a survey shows that about 75% or so enterprises have implemented the competency idea into human resource management practice to a different degree and achieved excellent performances (Schippmann J.S & Ash R.A, Battista M, et al, 2000, p703-740).

2. Literature review and comment

2.1 Literature review

Viewing all literatures of competency, typical representatives are: Yukl (1989) concluded competencies of managers into technology, interpersonal relationship, and concept (Yukl G., 1989). Spencer (1993) systematically studied more than 200 occupations in industries and organizations, including science and technology field, education field, manufacture industry, distribution industry, services, government institutions, military, medical and health care, and religion, analyzed amounts of activities related with excellent work performances, summarized others' studies in twenty years, and advanced five universal competency models, including special technologists, salesmen, community workers, managers, and entrepreneurs. Each model consisted of more than ten different competency factors (Spencer L.M & Spencer S.M., 1993). Paul Sandwich (1993) put forward a competency model for organizational training by researching a large organization. Based on former studies, he defined five fields for manager competencies: concept, leadership, interpersonal relationship, administration, and technology (Paul Sandwich, 1993, p43-62). Lawson & Limbrick (1996) studied the competency model of top human resource managers, including objective and activity management, human resource management technique, functional and organizational lead, influence management, and commercial knowledge

(Lawson T.E & Limbrick V., 1996, p67-85). McClelland (1998) adopted the Behavioral Event Interview (BEI) to help two transnational companies construct a competency model for top managers (McClelland D.C., 1998, p331-339). Siu thought that managers at the same level have similar competencies and belong to a same competency model, based on which Siu chiefly studied the competency model of middle-level managers (Siu, V., 1998, p253-273). Pepermans took junior managers in a hospital as objects in a research and studied the competency model by observation and interview (Pepermans R, Mentens C & Goedee M, et al., 2001, p281-295). Kan Shi, Jicheng Wang and Chaoping Li (2002) adopted the Behavior Event Interview (BEI) and made an empirical research on the competency of managers in China telecommunication industry (Kan Shi, Jicheng Wang and Chaoping Li, 2002, p306-311). Chongming Wang and Minke Chen (2002) analyzed competencies of junior managers and senior managers in China and concluded that manager competencies consists of two dimensions, management quality and management skill. But in specific aspect, managers at different levels possess different competency structures (Chongming Wang & Minke Chen, 2002, p513-516). Aguta, Graub & Peiro (2003) selected 80 senior managers in restaurants and hotels in Spain and studied their competency model (Aguta S, Graub R & Peiro J.M., 2003, p281-295). Lifeng Zhong and Kan Shi (2004) adopted the BEI method and studied the competency model of senior managers in China's family firms (Lifeng Zhong & Kan Shi, 2004, p110-115). Shuming Zhao and Juan Du (2007) assessed the competencies of professional managers and concluded that managers must possess abilities of scientific decision, communication, organization, learning, and social activity (Shuming Zhao & Juan Du, 2007, p33-40).

2.2 Literature comment

By reviewing literatures, we find that former studies of competency focus on individuals (especially the competency of managers), taking individuals as primary units of understanding enterprise performance. Along with changes of business environment, former relatively steady environment becoming more complex and changeable, roles of human resource development changes constantly. In a steady environment, the function of human resource development centers on providing with necessary skill training for employees based on organizational needs. This role aims at supporting the enterprise strategy. Due to globalization of economy, especially since 80s last century, enterprises face an external environment with higher uncertainties, what arouses challenges for traditional theories of human resource development that focus on simply improving employees' certain work skill. Organizations usually face a dilemma: the improvement of employee's individual competency can not bring about the improvement of team or organizational performance. In the new environment, many enterprises convert their pyramid organizational structures into flatten ones or procedure-driven configurations. Team work becomes an important way. Therefore, researches of competency-based human resource development should not focus on merely individuals but also teams and even the organization. It inspires us that researches of competency-based human resource development should focus on not only individual competency but also competencies of teams and organization.

Meanwhile, for the sake of deep researches, we discuss the competency-based human resource development in certain kind of enterprises. Because of coming of knowledge economy, knowledge enterprises play an important role in knowledge economy. Knowledge workers gradually become the principal part today. The work of knowledge workers widely concern processing of information and uses of knowledge, which is far different from traditional industrial workers. It is relatively more complex, unpredictable and non-in-time-supervising. Besides, because of the indirect explicitness of knowledge activities results and the collectivity displayed by many knowledge creative activities means higher requirements for knowledge enterprises and competencies of knowledge workers. Therefore, this paper focuses on studying competency-based knowledge enterprises' human resource development.

Wilson in his *Consilience: the Unity of Knowledge* emphasizes "the inner unity of knowledge". He thinks that for studies of social sciences, the theoretical consilience, based on facts by trans-sciences and fields, is necessary. Taking the competency as a trigger, this paper is to study related problems on human resource development in knowledge enterprises. Therefore, we need to construct a systematic research framework ----- use it to make an overall summarize for the main contents, necessary theories, analysis methods, and relevant technologies of the research.

3. Research framework

3.1 Basic concepts

(1) Knowledge enterprise

Knowledge enterprises take knowledge as the production factor, management factor, and resource allocation factor. In knowledge enterprises, knowledge runs through every aspect of enterprises. Enterprises' existence and development mainly depend on their products and services' knowledge contents. Knowledge has already become a key factor in value creation.

(2) Knowledge worker

Knowledge workers are the most important resource for knowledge enterprises. To completely develop and use their knowledge can bring about more returns for knowledge enterprises. In this paper, we define the concept of knowledge

worker as: employee who increases values of enterprises by producing, creating, developing, and applying knowledge in work.

(3) Competency

Former studies of competency focus on individuals but seldom teams or the organization. In this paper, the competency chiefly includes individual competency, team competency, and organizational competency. In specific, the connotations are:

Individual competency means the collection of personalities that drives knowledge workers to use all kinds of work skills and behaviors to achieve excellent work performance under the specific background of enterprise strategy and enterprise culture. It reflects the knowledge, skills, incentives, personalities, and drives displayed by different ways.

Team competency is the integrated capability of knowledge workers' individual competency displayed in specific work flow and tasks under the guidance of certain enterprise aim.

Organizational competency refers to, on one hand, the capability of integrating the enterprise and the external market, realizing a match of organization and environment. On the other hand, it is the capability of cultivating, developing, integrating, and allocating organizational resources, implementing strategies, and realizing strategic aims in the enterprise strategy framework.

(4) Human resource development

The two connotations of human resource in macro and micro aspects determine the two meanings of human resource development in the two aspects. This paper merely discusses the human resource development in micro aspect. Therefore, we define the human resource development as: a series of human-resource-oriented development and practice activities in a specific organization for the sake of improving performances of individuals, teams, and the organization.

3.2 Construction of research framework

Based on literature review and basic concepts, this part aims at constructing a research framework for the competency-based knowledge enterprises' human resource development. See to figure 1. We use it to direct further studies. This framework is chiefly used to define the competency-based knowledge enterprises' human resource development's main contents, theoretical bases, analysis methods, and main technologies. In specific:

(1) The competency-based knowledge enterprises' human resource development chiefly begins from individuals, teams, and the organization. Knowledge workers are the most important resource for knowledge enterprises. To completely develop and use their competencies is an important task of knowledge enterprise. Therefore, development of individual competency is the base and start of the whole study. The team work of knowledge workers and the inseparability of individual performance and team performance determine that knowledge enterprises must enhance and emphasize on development of team competency based on development of individual competency. Knowledge enterprise is in nature a system of capabilities and a net of skills. Its capability connects closely with individual capabilities and team capabilities. The knowledge, skills incentives, and drives of individual and team capabilities are deeply endowed with characters of the organization. Therefore, based on researches on the development of individual competency and team competency, we should further discuss the development of organizational competency. The development of organizational competency and that of individual and team competency have close connections and are interdependent. It is a gradual process from the development of individual competency to that of team competency and that of organizational competency. The former serves as the base and precondition of the later. However, from the development of organizational competency to that of team competency and that of individual competency, it reflects knowledge enterprise competencies' vertical conformity. The three connect mutually and form the core of competency-based knowledge enterprises' human resource development. The ultimate objective is to improve performances of individuals, teams and the organization in knowledge enterprise. The development of competency at the three levels must take enterprise strategy as the base. Meanwhile, the results of development can support the implementation of enterprise strategy. Therefore, in figure 1 the arrows connecting enterprise strategy and competencies at three levels are bidirectional.

(2) The framework of competency-based knowledge enterprises' human resource development is based on many theoretical researches. Its theoretical bases include theory of human capital, theory of knowledge management, theory or team role, and theory of organizational learning.

(3) In order to realize the goal of this research, we adopt some theoretical analysis methods, mainly including systematic analysis, case analysis, goal programming, logistic deduction, and decomposing analysis.

(4) The competency-based knowledge enterprises' human resource development needs the support of a series of relevant technologies, mainly including training skills, enterprise tutor system, professional career programming, individual learning, team learning, and organization learning.

4. Conclusion

Due to the coming of knowledge economy, the knowledge enterprise plays a more important role in knowledge economy. How to perform effective human resource development becomes an urgent issue. Taking the competency as a trigger, this paper constructs a systematic research framework for knowledge enterprises. This framework is based on theory of human capital, theory of knowledge management, theory of team role, and theory of organization learning. It takes the enterprise strategy as the core and focuses on the development of individual, team, and organizational competencies. The ultimate goal is to improve performances of individuals, teams and the organization. The construction of this framework will benefit the knowledge enterprises' human resource development that can start from the individual, team, and organizational aspects.

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- levels are bidirectional.

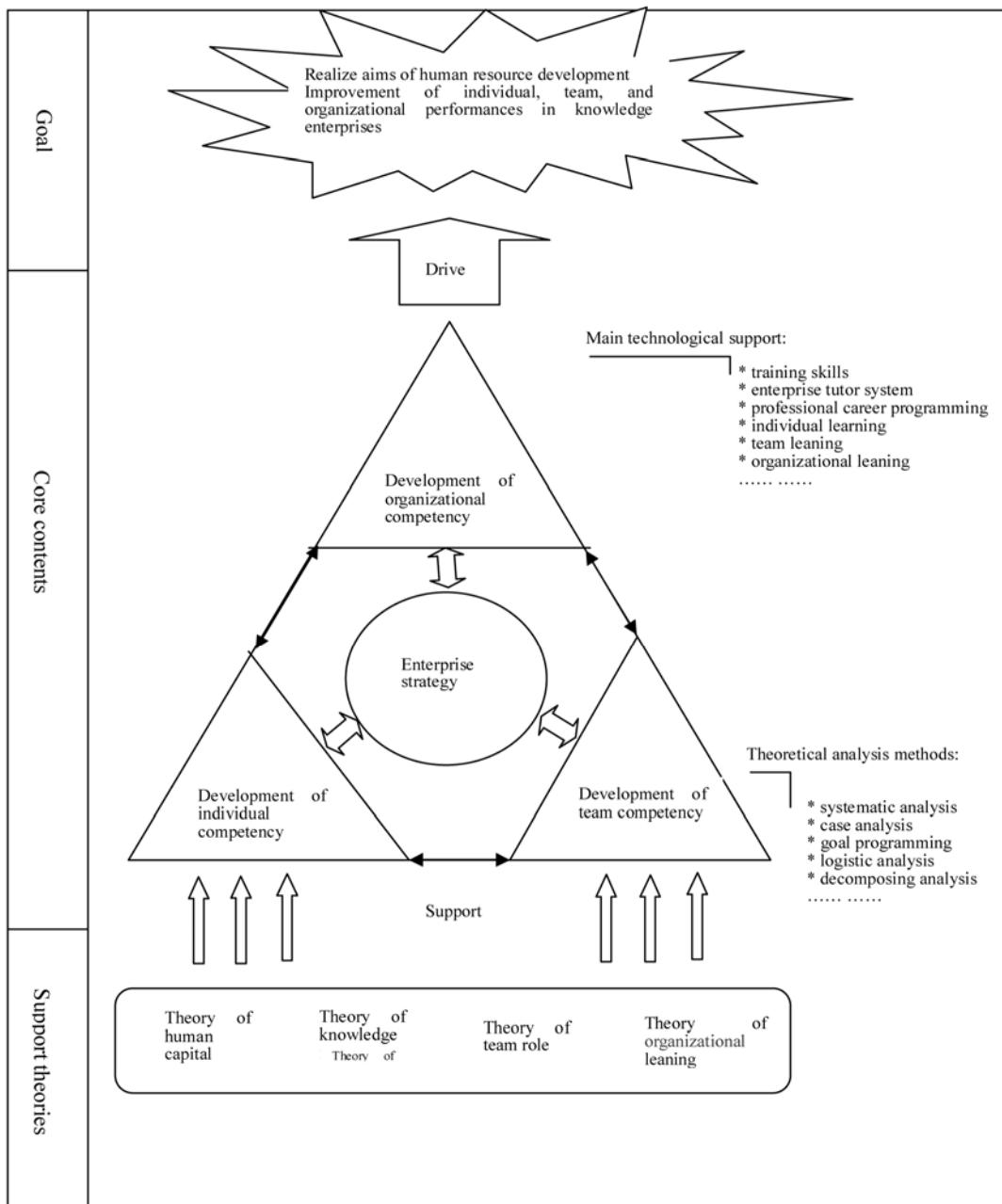


Figure 1. The Research Framework of Human Resource Development
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