



Problems and Countermeasures of Soft Science Research in Central Enterprises

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Abstract. The investment in soft science research of central enterprises is growing steadily. Under the guidance of policies, an investment orientation centered on the construction of new think tanks is formed, focusing on the output of a series of achievements in key areas such as the reform of state-owned assets and state-owned enterprises and high-quality development. The investment system has been gradually improved, and the intellectual resources have been integrated through Industry-University-Research's cooperation and "revealing the list", but there are still some problems such as unbalanced investment structure and insufficient application of digital intelligence research methods. In the future, it is necessary to strengthen strategic guidance, optimize investment mechanism, promote the deep integration of soft science research and enterprise practice, and better serve the national strategy and enterprise development.

Keywords: Soft Science, Research Investment, Problem Analysis, Countermeasures, Suggestions.

1 Introduction

Judging from the situation faced by the soft science research investment of central enterprises, external pressure and internal test are superimposed. Under the background of global restructuring, external pressure continues to increase. In response to high-quality development, the internal test is constantly escalating ^[1]. Judging from the current situation of soft science research investment of central enterprises, it is currently in the period of dual promotion of policy guidance and practical exploration, showing the stage characteristics of "scale expansion, field focus and carrier upgrade". The general secretary Xi Jinping pointed out that a country without developed natural sciences cannot be in the forefront of the world, nor can a country without prosperous philosophy and social sciences be in the forefront of the world. At present, the world's unprecedented great changes have accelerated its evolution, and all kinds of risk challenges and difficult problems have become increasingly severe and complicated. Social sciences are of vital supporting significance in helping central enterprises to enhance their core competitiveness, enhance their core functions, give play to the supporting role of scientific and technological innovation, industrial control and security, and accelerate the process of building world-class enterprises. In May 2023, the Opinions on the

Construction of New Think Tanks for Central Enterprises (No.19 [2023] of the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Department, hereinafter referred to as the Opinions) was officially issued, which set off an upsurge in the construction of new think tanks within the scope of central enterprises and local state-owned enterprises and triggered a warm social response. However, through the investigation and exchange of think tanks of central enterprises, it is found that the soft science research investment of central enterprises (in this paper, it mainly refers to the research funds and manpower investment of central enterprises in social science fields such as corporate strategy, enterprise management, industry development, market and customer research) has some outstanding problems, such as inconsistent statistical caliber, insufficient funds investment and inadequate talent incentive. To this end, the research center put forward three core suggestions: first, the soft science research investment should be included in the enterprise R&D investment; The second is to build a sustained and stable research funding input mechanism; The third is to optimize the introduction and evaluation incentive mechanism of research talents [2].

2 Bottleneck and Deficiency of Soft Science Research Investment of Central Enterprises

2.1 There are Differences in the Statistical Caliber of Funds Input, and it is Difficult to Count Social Science Input

From the international experience, the United States began to count non-scientific and engineering research funds in 2003 [mainly referring to research funds in education, business, management, humanities and so on.], officially included in the total R&D funds together with scientific and engineering research funds from 2013; Japan has competitive scientific research funds, and soft science researchers are defined as important categories of researchers in scientific research grants, scientific and technological revitalization adjustment fees, industrial and technological research grants and other scientific research funds. From the domestic practice, China's R&D expenditure is mainly counted from the aspects of executive departments, administrative divisions, economic industries and activity types, while social science R&D expenditure is not in the traditional statistical category. The Accounting Standards for Business Enterprises of the Ministry of Finance clarifies that the expenditure of research and development projects within enterprises should be distinguished from that of development, but the composition of research and development expenses is not clearly defined. Therefore, in the actual process of preparing financial statements, whether it is the "R&D expenses" under the "period expenses" or the judgment of intangible assets development expenses in the current period, it largely depends on the professional judgment of accountants and the decision of enterprise managers, which provides a certain operating space for enterprise earnings management. According to the questionnaire survey, 29.3%(22 companies) of the central enterprise think tanks have not made independent statistical accounting for their soft science research investment, 74.6% of the central enterprise think tanks think that the soft science research investment should be included

in the R&D expenses, but only 52% of the central enterprise think tanks include it in the R&D expenses. It is common that some expenses actually used for soft science research are included in accounting subjects such as management expenses and consulting services, so it is difficult to make statistics on the soft science research investment^[3].

2.2 The Application of Research Results is Difficult and Effective, and the Research Funding is Difficult to Guarantee

Theoretically, it is generally believed that philosophy, social science and natural science are two wheels of a car and two wings of a bird, both of which are indispensable, but in practice there are great differences in their treatment. It is difficult to quantify the actual contribution and economic value of social science research results to the development of enterprises, and the problems such as slow and insignificant application exist objectively. For the sake of the economy and profitability of enterprises, even the central enterprises that undertake more social responsibilities and are committed to sustainable development and social well-being pay less attention to soft science research than to natural science and thinking science. According to the questionnaire survey, 38.7%(29) think tanks of central enterprises spend less than 50% on social science research and development. Among 40 comprehensive think tanks with statistics on social science R&D investment, 70%(28 think tanks) have social science R&D investment accounting for less than 30% of all think tanks' R&D investment. Compared with other scientific research investment, soft science research investment is insufficient. In this sample think tank unit, there are 37 think tank units whose annual soft science research investment is less than 10 million yuan, of which 21 units are less than 5 million yuan. The "lame" phenomenon of scientific research investment is obvious, which is difficult to provide solid intellectual support for central enterprises to accelerate the construction of world-class enterprises^[4].

2.3 The Salary Level of Research Talents is not High, and the Evaluation Mechanism is Difficult to Break Through.

Low salary standard, inflexible salary structure and rigid assessment mechanism are the important reasons for brain drain in central enterprises. Although in recent years, with the in-depth implementation of the three-year reform of state-owned enterprises, the three system reforms have played a positive role in stimulating the vitality of the talent team, but the objective existence of the system such as the total wage limit and the mismatch between the incentive policy and the actual demand have made the salary of soft science researchers in central enterprises still at a low level. The questionnaire survey found that the salaries of soft science researchers in 17 central enterprise think tanks were lower than those of managers or technical researchers at the same level in the same unit. At the same time, the evaluation of soft science research by some central enterprises is a mere formality, the evaluation mechanism is unreasonable, and the incentive policy is difficult to land, which seriously restricts the enthusiasm of researchers. According to the questionnaire survey, only 23 think tanks of central enterprises

have clearly indicated that they have carried out differentiated assessment for social science researchers and technical researchers, and the assessment and incentive mechanism for soft science researchers of central enterprise think tanks needs to be further improved^[5].

3 Suggestions on Soft Science Research Investment of Central Enterprises

3.1 Incorporate Soft Science Research Investment into Enterprise R&D Investment

From "two benefits and three rates", "two benefits and four rates" to "one benefit and five rates", R&D expenditure has always been an important indicator of the evaluation index system of central enterprises. The Measures for Evaluating the Operating Performance of the Persons in Charge of Central Enterprises (Order No.40 of the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission) clearly stipulates that when calculating the economic benefit index, the R&D investment can be added back as profit. In order to further improve the statistics and assessment of R&D investment of central enterprises, especially soft science research investment, it is suggested that appropriate policy support should be given to the social science investment of central enterprises from the assessment system, the statistical scope of R&D funds should be further clarified, the statistical caliber of soft science research investment should be unified, the soft science research investment should be included in the R&D investment of enterprises, and the soft science research investment should be regarded as an important indicator of the evaluation index system of central enterprises, so as to comprehensively grasp the investment of state-owned central enterprises in soft science research and promote the development of soft science research of central enterprises.

3.2 Constructing a Sustained and Stable Research Funding input Mechanism

Sustained and stable investment in soft science research is an important foundation for building a philosophy and social science system with China characteristics. In order to strengthen the investment guarantee of central enterprises in soft science research, it is suggested to deepen cooperation with Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China Social Science Office in the fields of the establishment of national social science fund projects and the cultivation of national high-end think tanks, and discuss with the State Administration of Taxation and other relevant ministries and commissions the feasibility of including the research and development expenses of soft science research in the pre-tax deduction range, so as to form a joint policy force to support state-owned central enterprises to participate in soft science research-related work. Explore adding the index of "soft science research investment" to the second index of the general evaluation index system of world-class enterprises, actively guide central enterprises,

especially world-class demonstration enterprises, increase the investment in soft science research, and provide sustained and stable financial support for soft science research.

3.3 Optimize the Introduction and Evaluation Incentive Mechanism of Research Talents

Scientific and reasonable assessment and incentive mechanism is an important means to improve the efficiency of enterprise management and operation. In order to further optimize the construction of soft science research team in central enterprises and stimulate the vitality of soft science research, it is suggested that: first, actively guide central enterprises to increase the construction of social science talent team, increase the introduction of leading talents and young talents, and strive to build an age ladder structure for the old, middle and young, so as to provide stable and reliable talent support for the development of social science in central enterprises; The second is to build an evaluation mechanism for social science talents with the characteristics of central enterprises, focusing on different research talents such as basic theoretical research, applied countermeasures research and social science popularization, highlighting peer experts and social benefit evaluation, and combining qualitative and quantitative methods to conduct differentiated evaluation; The third is to combine salary incentives with spiritual incentives, expand the autonomy and discourse power of soft science researchers, and implement incentive policies such as separate salary for departments or teams that carry out major social science projects to enhance researchers' sense of happiness and gain.

4 Conclusion

Driven by the national strategic guidance and the deepening reform of state-owned enterprises, the soft science research investment of central enterprises has been growing steadily, and the investment scale and quality have been improved simultaneously, which has become an important support for promoting the high-quality development of enterprises and serving the country^[6]. Under the guidance of relevant policies, enterprise soft science research has formed an investment orientation with the construction of a new type of think tank as the core, focusing on key areas such as deepening the reform of state-owned enterprises, industrial chain and supply chain security, green and low-carbon transformation, and the integration of digital economy and real economy. A number of research achievements with both theoretical value and practical significance have been produced in the form of tackling key problems and transforming achievements, which has provided strong intellectual support for major decision-making, risk prevention and strategic layout of enterprises.

From the perspective of investment system, the central enterprises have gradually established a diversified investment mechanism, integrated internal and external intellectual resources through Industry-University-Research collaborative innovation platform, "unveiling the list" project system and external think tank cooperation, and promoted the optimal allocation of soft science research resources. At the same time,

however, there is still a structural imbalance in the investment field. Some enterprises have insufficient investment in basic theoretical research, the research layout focusing on emerging fields is lagging behind, and the application of digital intelligence research methods is not sufficient, which restricts the research efficiency and the transformation efficiency of achievements. In addition, the connection mechanism between research results and enterprise production and operation practice still needs to be improved, and there is a phenomenon of "emphasizing research and neglecting application".

In the future, central enterprises need to further strengthen strategic guidance, accurately meet the national strategy and enterprise development needs, and optimize the investment structure and resource allocation mechanism. On the one hand, it is necessary to increase investment in soft science research in emerging fields and basic fields, and promote the digital upgrading of research methods; On the other hand, it is necessary to improve the achievement transformation and incentive mechanism, promote the deep integration of soft science research with enterprise management and reform and development practice, effectively improve the pertinence and effectiveness of soft science research, and make it better serve the implementation of major national strategies and the high-quality and sustainable development of enterprises.

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